



## Heartfelt gratitude

Actress Shradha Kapoor expresses her heartfelt gratitude to her fans for their unwavering love and support

LEISURE | P2



## TikTok restores service

TikTok restores its service after President-elect Donald Trump says he would revive the app's access in the US when he returns to power

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## FPIs turn sellers

Foreign investors have pulled out ₹44,396 crore from Indian equities this month, driven by strength of the dollar

BUSINESS | P11



## Axelsen, Young win

Viktor Axelsen of Denmark and South Korea's An Se Young clinch the men's and women's singles titles in the India Open

SPORTS | P12

## SHORT TAKES

### All set for Trump's inauguration today

**Washington:** Donald Trump is all set to be sworn in as 47th President of the United States in the Rotunda of the Capitol Monday, after the forecast bitter cold prompted planners to move the ceremony under the building's neoclassical dome for the first time in four decades. That shift means that Trump will take the Oath of Office in the 29m across, 55m high sandstone hall at the Capitol's centre, the same spot where some of his supporters rioted January 6 in 2021, in an attempt to overturn his 2020 election defeat. Meanwhile, thousands of people have gathered in Washington to protest against Donald Trump's policies ahead of his inauguration January 20.

### India men, eves bag Kho Kho WC titles

**New Delhi:** On a memorable night at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here, both the Indian contingents - men's and women's teams - emerged champions in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup Sunday. While the Indian women's team scripted history claiming a dominant 78-40 victory in the summit clash against Nepal dishing out a clinical show in a masterclass of speed, strategy, and skill, the Indian men's team in a similarly spectacular show beat Nepal 54-36 in the final to win the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup title. The Men in Blue dominated the final against Nepal with captain Pratik Waikar and tournament standout Ramji Kashyap leading from the front. PM Modi hailed both the teams for Kho Kho World Cup win, calling the day "a great day for Indian Kho Kho".



**FIRE AT MAHA KUMBH:** Smoke rises from a massive fire that engulfed a tented camp during the 45-day-long Maha Kumbh festival in Prayagraj, Sunday. The fire broke out reportedly due to a cylinder blast. Though no casualty was reported, the incident raises serious questions about the government's preparation and security measures for such a massive gathering organised using funds collected from taxpayers. Such incidents cast doubt on how effectively public resources are being utilised for the well-being of attendees, who trust that their safety will be prioritised in such a large-scale event.

### GSI study indicates presence of lithium deposits in Odisha

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** A recent Geological Survey of India (GSI) study has indicated the presence of lithium - a widely used metal in the production of glass, aluminum products and batteries - in some districts of Odisha, a senior GSI official said Sunday. Lithium reserves have earlier been found in parts of Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir, he said. "As such there is no major finding, but there are some indications of lithium presence (in Odisha). We are in a very preliminary stage, and therefore, should not make any claim. However, speaking geologically, some indications are there in the Eastern Ghat belt like in Nayagarh," Deputy DG of GSI Pankaj Kumar said. Kumar was speaking on the sidelines of a GSI meeting here ahead of the two-day National Mines Ministers' Conference in Konark, which commences Monday.

# Fighting finally halts in Gaza

## CEASEFIRE TAKES EFFECT AFTER 3-HOUR DELAY

**Fighting in the Gaza Strip finally halted Sunday as a ceasefire deal between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas took effect after a 3-hour delay, pausing a 15-month-old war that has brought devastation and seismic political change to the Middle East. The truce was implemented, only after Hamas provided a list naming the first three hostages it had to release Sunday as part of the agreement. During the first phase of the ceasefire, extending for 42 days, Hamas will release 33 Israeli detainees in exchange for Israel releasing more than 1,890 Palestinian prisoners. As the truce started taking effect, Palestinians poured into the streets to celebrate and headed back to the rubble of their bombed-out homes as the first humanitarian aid trucks entered Gaza from Egypt. The ceasefire agreement follows months of on-off negotiations brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and comes into effect on the eve of the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, who put pressure on both Hamas and Israel to bring fighting to a halt before he takes office.**



- Ceasefire deal takes effect at 0915 GMT
- Ceasefire was due at 0630 GMT, delayed over Hamas not providing hostage list
- Hamas says delay in hostage list due to 'technical field reasons'
- Three female hostages released Sunday afternoon
- Israeli forces start withdrawing from parts of Gaza, says Hamas media

ASSOCIATED PRESS

start by nearly three hours and highlighted its fragility. A Red Cross convoy was on its way to pick up the first Israeli hostages in Gaza. It was not clear how long the process would take. Even before the ceasefire took effect, celebrations erupted across the territory and some Palestinians began returning to their homes. Israel, meanwhile, announced the names of the first three hostages expected to return home later Sunday, in exchange for the planned release of 90 Palestinian prisoners. The truce, which started at 11.15am local time, is the first step toward ultimately ending the conflict and returning nearly 100 hostages abducted in Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack. An Israeli official con-

firmated that Romi Gonen, 24, Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31, were set to be released later Sunday. Gonen was abducted from the Nova music festival, while the others were kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Damari is an Israeli-British dual citizen. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity

in line with regulations, said the families had approved the publication of the names. Hamas was supposed to provide the names before the start of the ceasefire, originally planned for 8.30am. It released the names about two hours later, citing technical reasons and saying it was still committed to the agreement. In the interim between 8.30am and when the ceasefire took hold, Israeli fire killed at least 26 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It did not say whether they were civilians or fighters. The military has warned people to stay away from Israeli forces as they retreat to a buffer zone inside Gaza. Israel's hard-line national security minister, meanwhile, said his Jewish Power faction was quitting the government in protest over the ceasefire agreement. Itamar Ben-Gvir's departure weakens Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition but will not affect the truce.

## NABA DAS MURDER Will write to CM for CBI probe: Dipali

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** BJD leader Dipali Das Sunday said she and her family will soon write to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, seeking a CBI probe into the murder of her father and ex-minister Naba Kishore Das. Dipali Das, the former Jharsuguda MLA, made the comment after state Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said the family of the ex-minister should make a formal complaint and give in writing for a CBI probe into the matter. "We have already urged the Chief Minister for a CBI probe into the murder of our father. We will also write to the government in this regard," she told reporters. The Crime Branch of the Odisha Police probed into the killing of the ex-minister and arrested a policeman. Naba Kishore Das was shot dead by a policeman

January 29, 2023. He was a cabinet minister and held the Health and Family Welfare portfolio in the previous Naveen Patnaik government. "If the state government is sensitive to the matter and respects my late father without any self-interest, I must request the administration to order a CBI probe into the murder of our father. Our family will fully cooperate with the investigation," Dipali said. Her statement came a day after the State Forensic Science Laboratory (SLSF) revealed that multiple firearms were used in the murder of Naba Kishore Das. Dipali also claimed BJP leaders had alleged that her family did not appeal for a CBI probe into the murder of Das. "Now I have made a demand. They want me and my family to lodge a written complaint. We are prepared for all, but they should go for a CBI probe," she added.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Instead of calling homemakers and self-employed 'employed,' let's just term the unemployed 'employed'

## Missing 4-year-old girl's body found; murder suspected

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bonai, Jan 19:** A four-year-old girl who went missing near her house during play two days back was found brutally murdered and dumped on a farmland close to her residence at Jada village under Gurundia police limits and Bonai sub-division in Sundargarh district, Sunday. The deceased was identified as Deepali Munda, daughter of Raju Munda in the village. Family members cried foul over the incident and termed it as murder. The incident sparked tension in the area as villagers caught a couple and beat them up black and blue before handing them over to the police. Police registered a case of kidnapping and murder in this connection, detained the couple and interrogated them on their involvement. Hrushikesh Pradhan, investigating officer in the case, said that the actual reason behind the girl's death could be ascertained after the post-mortem report is available to them. Meanwhile, police conducted a post-mortem of the body at Bonai Sub-Divisional Hospital and handed it over to her family members. Police said that the girl went out of her house to play Thursday but never returned home.

## ATTACK ON SAIF

### Police nab third suspect after letting 2 others go

**Mumbai, Jan 19:** After detaining and subsequently letting go two suspects over the past 72 hours in connection with the attack on Saif Ali Khan, police Sunday arrested and produced in court yet another suspect, this time from adjoining Thane city. A Mumbai court remanded the latest suspect Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad (30) in 5-day police custody. Police told court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi national residing illegally in India and there was need to find the motive behind his act. Police also told court they needed to find out if there was an international conspiracy linked to the case. Earlier in the day, a man who was detained in Chhattisgarh's Durg railway station was released. Another man had been detained Friday by the police in Bandra and brought in for questioning. However, five hours later, he was let go as the police found that the man had no link with the case. Police sources said he had been picked up because he resembled the accused, who was caught on CCTV at Saif's building and had a history of petty crime. Khan (54) was stabbed multiple times in the attack, after which he underwent a five-hour surgery in nearby Lilavati Hospital.

## India's first flying taxi prototype unveiled

### Sarla Aviation is developing India's most sophisticated electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft

**New Delhi, Jan 19:** In a bid to realise the dream of air taxis and transform urban mobility in India, the country's first flying taxi prototype, called 'Shunya', has been unveiled at the 'Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025' here. Precision manufacturing firm Sona SPEED signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU)

with Bangalore-based Sarla Aviation towards this goal. Sarla Aviation is developing India's most sophisticated electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft. Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, HD Kumaraswamy, visited the Sarla Aviation booth, and showed keen interest in the flying taxi prototype, considered a historic step towards sustainable and futuristic mobility in the country. Sona SPEED motors have been part of several space missions of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The agreement positions Sona SPEED as a key partner in revolutionising urban air mobility in the country. "This partnership is a



significant step in Sona SPEED's evolution as a hub for aerospace innovation. Together, we aim to shape a cleaner, faster, and more efficient future for urban transportation," said Chocko Valliappa, CEO of Sona SPEED. Under the MoU, Sona SPEED will utilise its state-of-the-art facilities in Karnataka to design and manufacture critical components, like the motors and landing gear among others for Sarla Aviation's eVTOL aircraft. "Sona SPEED's expertise in precision engineer-

ing perfectly complements our vision for electric flying taxis. This collaboration reinforces our mission to redefine urban mobility with cutting-edge eVTOL technology," said Rakesh Gaonkar, CEO of Sarla Aviation. The development highlights India's growing aspiration in sustainable urban air mobility and underscores the importance of synergies in driving innovation. Focused on developing eVTOL aircraft, Sarla Aviation aims to transform urban mobility with faster, cleaner, and more efficient transportation solutions. The company plans to initiate test flights and develop additional prototypes, with a market launch targeted for 2028.

# leisure



## HENRY CAVILL WELCOMES FIRST CHILD WITH NATALIE VISCUSO

Henry Cavill and his girlfriend Natalie Viscuso have welcomed their first child. The couple has not yet announced the news publicly, but they were spotted in Australia Saturday, strolling with a baby carriage. Last year, Cavill had confirmed that he is expecting his first child with Viscuso.

## MESCAL, ABRAMS SPARK SPLIT RUMOURS AFTER HEATED DINNER

The clouds of uncertainty seem to be hovering over Irish actor Paul Mescal and his girlfriend Gracie Abrams. The actor could possibly be a single man once again as his latest outing with girlfriend sparks rumours of a split, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today is an ordinary day, it is business as usual, but there will be some progress. You can while away your time doing petty chores. And, Ganesha says, while day-dreaming think about that coveted home, as that's how the first plans materialise.

**TAURUS**  
Feel your imagination run wild as you star-gaze throughout the day wondering about the existence of the extra terrestrial. You will paint the workplace in your flavour of innovation, combined with a drive to work equally hard. Add some smooth talk to the equation and you will find a lot of people in awe of your charm, says Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you may encounter unusual challenges, says Ganesha. You will come up with new thoughts and tactics, which will bring about positive changes and results. Avoid any confrontation with those living around you. Ganesha advises you to keep your cool during the day.

**CANCER**  
Financially, you may be in a bit of a bother today. Payment of bills, taxes and loans may keep you busy for most part of the day. You may even contemplate borrowing money to meet the demands. However, you are likely to receive one of your pending payments, which will be enough to get you out of the fix.

**LEO**  
Being good to oneself is not vanity. To Ganesha, it seems as if you take this statement to heart, since it looks quite possible that you make your personal care number one priority today. On the flip side though, you become aware of the fact that the harder you try the more it seems you have to.

**VIRGO**  
The time today is ripe to venture into a new business. Projects that have been put-off will finally be completed. Looking into the week ahead, you are most likely to give yourself an energy zap. Parties will be all fun and entertainment. Your kids will bring home joy and pride and this will brighten the mood even more, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
The Bhagavad Gita says, "Do your duty without expecting the fruit." Remember this important lesson and strive hard to put in extra efforts to finish off whatever you undertake to do. Worrying about results will only hamper your progress.

**SCORPIO**  
At work, you would want to change the perspective with which people see you. Your colleagues recognise you as the emerging alpha-lion. Ideas and opinions will impress your bosses. But keep a level head and learn where to stop when winning, counsels Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Going to private parties is a high probability today. All in all, make the most of it as you get nostalgic with old friends and make plans with new ones. Moreover, relatives will be pleased to meet you after a long time.

**CAPRICORN**  
Whether you're an artist, performer, professional or an entrepreneur, career issues will take the foreground today, while personal matters will wait in queue for your attention, says Ganesha. Your performance will be at its all-time high, and your efforts will be duly rewarded, but credit for this must go to your loved ones who will lend their unceasing support for all your endeavours.

**AQUARIUS**  
Aim. Shoot. Achieve. Today, you will concentrate your energies to execute your plans with precision. Naturally, your work progresses by leaps and bounds. By sundown, you will achieve far more than everyone's estimation. That's the way to go, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Of late, the harder you try, the more it seems you have to do. You are likely to put your foot down today and spend some time taking care of yourself and playing truant with your responsibilities. Recharge your batteries fully while you are at it, says Ganesha.

## Shilpa's nostalgic dive

**Mumbai:** As *Indian Police Force* completes one year since its release, actress Shilpa Shetty recalled working in the series and said that she enjoyed the action needed to pull off those stunts and that it was worth the pain.

In Rohit Shetty's thriller series *Indian Police Force*, the actress played the role of the first female police officer in the cop-verse as she played the role of ATS Chief Tara Shetty. "It's been a year since *Indian Police Force* released, and it makes me realise that time flies by so fast. It feels like yesterday when I was training for my role. I remember the sheer pride to be playing the part of an ATS chief, Tara Shetty will always be special," Shilpa said. "I enjoyed the action needed to pull off those stunts... Was worth the pain and sweat. It was an amazing experience to be a part of Rohit Shetty's cop verse and work alongside some amazing actors," she added.

Shilpa shared that she is filled with gratitude towards the audience for showering immense love and appreciation towards the series. *Indian Police Force* also stars Sidharth Malhotra, Shilpa Shetty and Vivek Oberoi.



## Shraddha's 'pillars'

**Mumbai:** Shraddha Kapoor has long been celebrated as one of the most adored stars in Hindi film industry, but what truly sets her apart is the unique bond she shares with her fans.

Shraddha referred to her fans as her "pillars" and expressed heartfelt gratitude for their unwavering support. "From the very start, there have been a few people in my life, a few fans who have been with me all along the way, and they have been my pillars," she shared, highlighting their significant role in her journey.

**Mumbai:** Mandana Karimi, the Iranian actor-model known for *Bigg Boss 9* and Hindi films like *Kya Kool Hai Hum 3* and *Thar*, has transitioned from the entertainment world to academia and interior design.

time in entertainment, Mandana admits acting never fulfilled her. "It was a job I didn't love. I'm thankful for the opportunities, but it wasn't something I was crazy about," she shares. Now focused on design projects, teaching and events, Karimi has been turning down modeling and acting offers. "It's hard to say no to

## Mandana quits showbiz

Reflecting on her journey, the 36-year-old says, "I became a model at a young age to support myself, but I always regretted not going back to school." Karimi's passion for interior design was sparked when a friend, who owns a design firm, invited her to explore the field. "When I started, I found myself enjoying it," she says. After completing a year-long course, she now works actively in the industry and serves as a visiting professor at various institutes. Though grateful for her

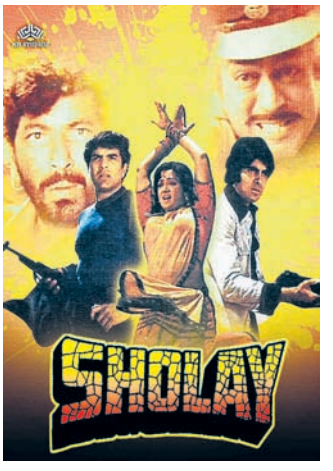
money, but I can't devote time to auditions now," she explains. Adjusting to her new routine, she adds, "My life has changed, but I'm loving it."



# 1975: When creativity peaked in Hindi cinema

**New Delhi:** It was a standout year, and not just in Indian politics. 1975, the year of the Emergency, spelt gold for Hindi cinema with memorable films such as *Sholay*, *Deewar*, *Aandhi* and *Nishant* making their way to theatres. Fifty years on, they live on in public memory, each a classic in different genres and in different moods. It was also the year of *Chupke Chupke*, *Mili*, *Julie*, *Chhoti Si Baat* and *Jai Santoshi Ma*.

and gave play to working class angst of the time, *Aandhi* was the lyrical lament of love that was not to be and *Nishant*, a parallel cinema pioneer, was an angry exploration of feudalism in rural India. It was not just about the actors but also blossoming of writers and directors like Salim Khan-Javed Akhtar, Gulzar and Shyam Benegal. So what propelled this creative surge in a landmark year? "It was really a happy confluence of writers, directors and actors blooming in the era but particularly in 1975... There



were so many great films one after the other. Writers Salim-Javed, filmmakers Ramesh Sippy and Yash Chopra were coming of age... And the spectrum is so different," Anjum Rajabali, known for writing the screenplays of films such as *Rajneeti* and *Drohkaal*, told the agency in an interview. Film historian, author and archivist S M M Ausaja added that many things got balanced in 1975. It was a year when commercial cinema was at its peak, parallel cinema was rising and middle-of-the-road films were thriving.

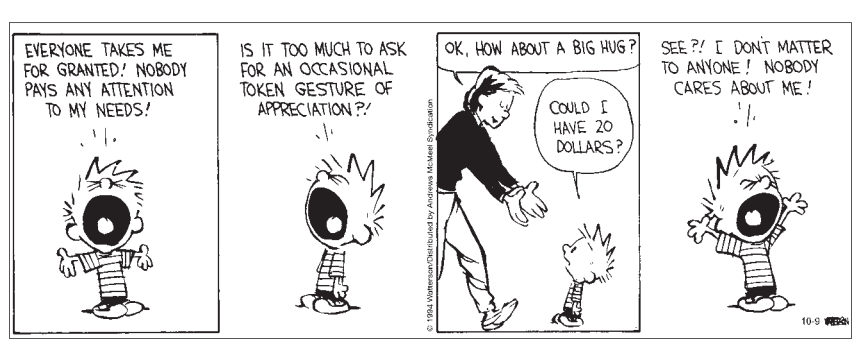
"Writing played a big role in the success of these films. Whether it was the winning pair of Salim-Javed, Gulzar or Rahi Masoom Raza, who wrote many films for Hrishikesh Mukherjee, writers had their ear to the ground and understood the public," Ausaja said. *Stree 2* writer Niren Bhatt agreed. "Writing was very strong in those days. There was no PR, social media or any other things. There were only films and if the public liked them, they became massively popular. Writers became big," he said.

While Hindi cinema was churning out great stories, other languages and documentaries were also contextualising the times through their stories. "On the timeline of India's political and cultural history, which includes cinema, the year 1975 distinguishes itself - imposition of emergency and the emergence of the 'Angry Young Man' on screen, that is Amitabh Bachchan in *Deewar*, which had its roots in *Zanjeer* of 1973," said Amrit Gangar, film scholar, historian and curator.

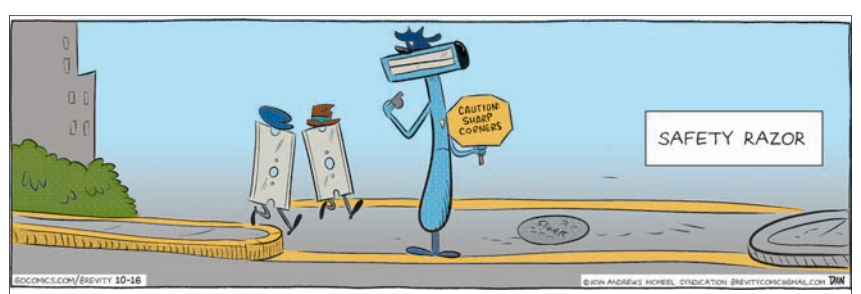
### PEANUTS



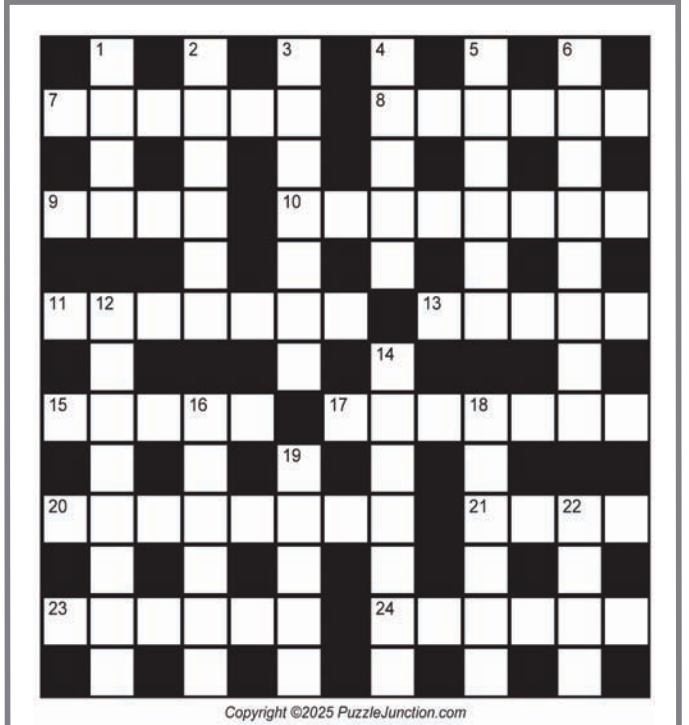
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



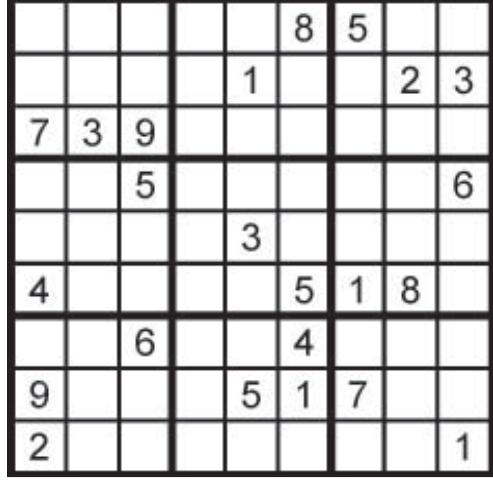
### CROSSWORD



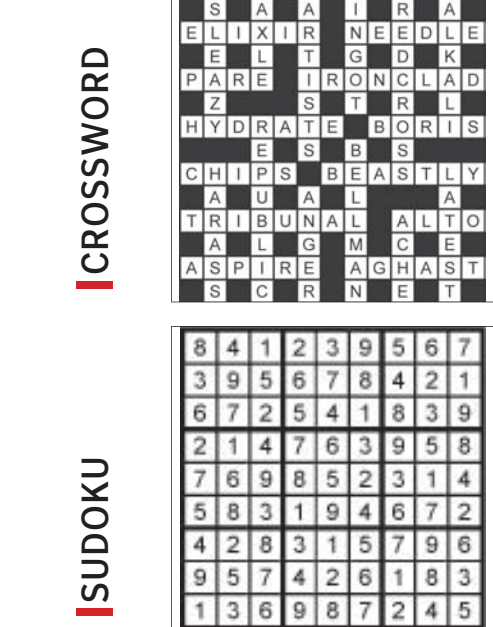
- Across**
- 7 Dome
  - 8 Capital of Portugal
  - 9 Hack
  - 10 Add a footnote
  - 11 Cowboys of South America
  - 13 Danger
  - 15 Hit the books
  - 17 Oil source
  - 20 Deepest of the Great Lakes
  - 21 Widespread
  - 23 Sci-fi author
  - 24 Cruel
- Down**
- 1 Surrounding glow
  - 2 Heavenly group
  - 3 Role model
  - 4 Lacking flavour
  - 5 Bloodsucking African fly
  - 6 Nanine author
  - 12 Charitable soul
  - 14 Undress
  - 16 After pipe and day
  - 18 Enjoy
  - 19 It won't hold water
  - 22 Crushing blow

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## Auto driver's body found; kin cry murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Jan 19:** Gokulpur village under Durgapur gram panchayat of Begunia block woke up to a mysterious death of an auto-rickshaw driver while his family members alleged that it was a preplanned murder.

Sadar police have recovered the body of Akhura Sethi, 45 near the playground in Kolasingh village around 6:30am Sunday. The police began an investigation after registering a murder case (No-12/25) on a complaint lodged by the deceased's daughter Lakshmi-priya. The cops also seized the auto-rickshaw. The body has been sent for post-mortem.

According to the victim's family, Akhura was lured out of his house before he was murdered as part of a premeditated plan. The family has demanded an impartial investigation into the matter. Police have detained a suspect in the incident. Sadar police station officer-in-charge Kanhucharan Swain confirmed that they have started an investigation into the incident.

The family claimed that Akhura had been working as a hired auto driver for a local owner. Previously, disputes had arisen between the owner and Akhura over financial and work-related issues. His daughter Lakshmi-priya said the auto owner called her father late Saturday night and instructed him to transport a consignment early Sunday morning. Akhura left home at around 5am Sunday but was later found dead near the playground an hour and a half later.

When family members, on being informed, reached the spot, they found Akhura's body pinned under the auto-rickshaw, in an isolated area. Significantly, the vehicle had no visible damage, leading the family to suspect a foul play. They believe Akhura was killed, and his death was staged to appear as an accident.

Akhura's brother-in-law Chandan Sethi said there were no signs of vehicular movement or struggle in the open field where the body was found. This further strengthens the suspicion of a planned murder. Another relative, Madhab Sethi, stated that early in the morning, two passersby discovered the body and informed others. Upon arrival, the family found Akhura's lifeless body under the auto-rickshaw, which showed no signs of a crash or accident damage.

The police, after receiving the family's complaint and statements, called in a scientific team to examine the spot.

The family has demanded a thorough and impartial investigation to uncover the truth and take swift action against the culprits. The mysterious circumstances surrounding Akhura's death have caused grief and anger among his relatives and the local community.

## Odisha troupe shines at Mahakumbh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** Rudraksha Foundation of Bhubaneswar has recently performed "Gangavataram" at Mahakumbh being held at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, under the Ministry of Culture.

The artistes performed "Gangavataram" (Odissi) dance choreographed by Guru Sri Bichitrana-da Swain, founder of the 'Rudraksha' Foundation at Ganga Manoh, Parade Ground Sector-1.

The performance by the artistes of this Odissi foundation mesmerised lakhs of devotees and audiences present there. "It is a matter of great pride, glory, privilege and joy for us to have the opportunity to perform at a large fair like Mahakumbh," said the artistes of the foundation.

Artistes Dushasan Sahoo, Santosh Ram, Samir Kumar Panigrahi, Sanjeev Kumar Jena, Prasanta Kumar, Biswajit Jena, Basistha Jena, Roji Swain, Avipsa Biswal, Lopamudra Sahoo, Anjali Dash, T Tulika Reddy and Suchismita Sahoo of the troupe performed during the mega cultural show.

# Mahanadi Riverfront to take shape soon



KARTIK SAHU, OP

**Cuttack, Jan 19:** The Mahanadi Riverfront project, envisioned in line with Sabarmati Riverfront project, is set to become a reality as the detailed project report (DPR) has been approved by the state government. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had announced the project during the inauguration of Cuttack Bali Jatra last year, stating that riverfronts would be developed in both Sambalpur and Cuttack.

According to Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Commissioner Anam Charan Patra, the high-level committee of the state government has approved the DPR for Mahanadi Riverfront.

The project will utilise 586 acre land from the 620-acre area adjacent to Bali Jatra ground, leaving 34 acres reserved for the annual fair.

In adherence to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) guidelines, afforestation will be carried out under the project, particularly in Hadiapatha area, with massive plantation drives to promote greenery.

The development will follow National Disaster Management guidelines, ensuring minimal use of concrete. The selected agency responsible for the project has already presented the riverfront's design to the state government, marking significant progress toward its realization.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The state govt has earmarked ₹200 crore for the project**
- The project will utilise 586 acre land from the 620-acre area adjacent to Bali Jatra ground**
- 34 acres will be reserved for the annual maritime fair**
- Afforestation will be carried out at Hadiapatha, in adherence to NGT guidelines**
- Minimal use of concrete will be ensured**

During the inauguration of the Cuttack Bali Jatra last year, the Chief Minister had highlighted the significance of developing the riverfront on Mahanadi, akin to Sabarmati model. He had expressed confidence in the project's potential to transform the region, fostering economic, cultural, and environmental growth.

With the government's focused efforts, the Mahanadi Riverfront is set to emerge as a major attraction, creating a blend of natural beauty and urban development in Odisha.

The Cuttack district administration has initiated the process of earmarking the 34 acres for Bali Jatra while paving the way for work on the remaining land. A meeting held at the Collector's office Saturday, involving officials from CMC, Forest department, and Water Resources department, discussed the project in details and reviewed implementation strategies.

Further, a state-level meeting to discuss the project has been scheduled for January 21, underlining the government's commitment to expediting the initiative.

The state government has earmarked ₹200 crore for the project, with ₹50 crore already allocated for the first phase in Sambalpur and Cuttack. The remaining ₹150 crore will be provided in subsequent phases.

The Commissioner has assured that the project will be executed promptly, with the selected agency starting construction soon after final approval.

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## REGALING POSE

Artistes from Dhruv Global School, Maharashtra perform Odissi on the fifth evening of Global Theatre Festival, organised by Theatre Movement at Kala Vikash Kendra auditorium in Cuttack, Sunday



## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# Fraudster duo Hansita & Anil booked for women trafficking

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** Trouble mounted for fraudsters Hansita Abhilipsa and Anil Mohanty after the Infocity police here booked the duo for allegedly trafficking young women to induce businessmen and politicians into securing business deals.

The duo has been booked under relevant Sections of Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, along with Information Technology (IT) Act after their involvement in running a trafficking racket surfaced recently during an investigation by Special Crime Unit, said Infocity IIC Mahendra Kumar Sahu.

Sahu said the case has been registered under Sections 120



(B) (Criminal Conspiracy), 67 of IT Act (publication and transmission of obscene material), and 5 of Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act. Hansita lured young women into 'flesh trade' in order to enable financial agreements from influential individuals and businessmen. The police, after examining her smart phone, revealed that Hansita used to have a 'rate-chart' of women for her potential customers.

Meanwhile, Sahu said the duo's bail application was dismissed Saturday, owing to complications surrounding her legal name. Since, Hansita had previously changed her name from Bishnupriya Chand in passport to evade police action, confusion remains for establishing her true identity in local court.

Notably, the charges have come close on the heels of a complaint by Infocity police last week, which booked the duo under Sections 417 (cheating), 419 (impersonation), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 468 (forgery), 471 (using a forged document as genuine), along with Section 12 of the Passport Act.

# CM takes stock of law & order situation in state



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi chaired a high-level meeting on the state's law and order situation at Lok Seva Bhavan here Sunday.

The meeting addressed key issues facing the state's police department, focusing on road safety, cybercrime, and cannabis cultivation.

The Chief Minister was briefed on the current challenges in maintaining law and order. In particular, the discussion highlighted the need to reduce road accidents, combat rising cybercrime, and curb cannabis cultivation.

The state currently employs 2,198 traffic police officers, and CM Majhi has directed the creation of 2,000 additional posts for the traffic system to enhance road safety.

In 2024, Odisha recorded 2,633

cybercrimes, with 14 existing cyber police stations working to address the issue. Recognising the growing problem of cyber fraud, the Chief Minister instructed the establishment of 20 more cyber police stations across the state.

Additionally, Majhi called for stricter measures to prevent cannabis cultivation and distribution. He also directed the police commissioners of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack to enhance night time patrolling and security checks. This initiative is set to be extended to all urban areas in the state.

The Chief Minister also urged the Director General of Police to focus on improving security in Maoist-affected districts. The review meeting emphasised strengthening the police force and improving crime prevention measures across Odisha.



**STREET FEST:** Citizens participate in the Third Patha Utsav-2025 at Info City Square in Bhubaneswar that witnessed an overwhelming response, Sunday

# High water levels: Migratory bird count in Chilika dips

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chilika, Jan 19:** The Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey-2025, conducted jointly by Odisha State Wildlife Organisation, Chilika Development Authority (CDA), and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), in Chilika Lagoon recorded a total of 11,27,728 of 196 species this year as against 11,37,759 of 187 species of the previous year.

The survey further revealed that the number of migratory birds visiting the lagoon this year stands at 10, 87,226 of 109 species as against 10, 98,813 of 108 species in the previous year. Similarly, the number of resident birds has been recorded at 40,002 of 87 species this year as against 38,946 of 79 species in 2024.

The survey was conducted



in the 1,165 sq km lake January 18, 2025. Training on survey methodology was provided January 17, 2025 at the Wetland Research & Training Centre, Chandraput, according to a release issued by the Chilika Wildlife Division.

A total of 126 participants, including bird experts from government and non-government organisations, honorary wildlife wardens, and retired and active forest officers, participated in the survey.

The entire lagoon was divid-

ed into 21 strategic units, including four sectors of Chilika Lake. While 19 units were accessed by boats, two units were surveyed by road. Each unit was led by a bird expert, assisted by 3-5 participants and a local guide. Teams were

**Although the number of bird species has increased from 187 to 196 this year, the count has declined by 10,031**

provided with survey kits containing maps, binoculars, bird reference materials of CDA, and annotated checklists of bird species prepared by the DFO, Chilika Wildlife Division and Balugaon waterfowl status survey form.

The bird census covered all waterbird and wetland-dependent bird species, including passerine birds. Smaller flocks were counted individually, while estimates were made for larger flocks. The survey

was conducted from 6am to 12 at noon, under the supervision of the DFO and other senior officials of Chilika Wildlife Division, Balugaon. Sujit Narwade, Deputy Director of BNHS, provided technical guidance.

The survey revealed a slight dip in bird numbers in Nalabana Wildlife Sanctuary, where 3,43,226 birds of 92 species were counted this year compared to 3,47,280 in 2024. Experts believe this reduction is linked to higher water levels in the lake resulting in reduced mudflats areas - crucial feeding and resting habitats for waterbirds.

The survey underscores the need for continued habitat management to maintain the lagoon's status as a critical wintering site for migratory birds.

# Third Nat'l Mines Ministers' Conference at Konark today



Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy calls on Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at NALCO Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** Ministry of Mines, in collaboration with the state government will host the 3rd National Mines Ministers' Conference January 20 and 21 at Konark in Puri.

The two-day event aligns with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' and will bring together more than 16 state mining ministers, including Deputy Chief Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister of Jharkhand, along with senior officials from the Central and state governments.

The conference will be presided over by Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will grace the in-

augural session as the chief guest. A report on states' best practices in mining: showcasing innovative governance models implemented by states will be released on the occasion which aims to improve efficiency and transparency in mining practices.

In order to streamline mining operations and enhance accountability, Mining Tenement System (MTS) Module will be launched at the event. A few selected startups will receive sanction letters under various initiatives promoting innovation in sustainable mining practices. States, excelling in mineral auctions and mining reforms will be honoured for their outstanding contributions in the conference.

With an aim to accelerate exploration and attract private sector investment in critical minerals and reducing import dependency, 5th Tranche of Critical Mineral Blocks will also be launched at the two-day ceremony.

The conference will provide a platform for state mining ministers, senior government officials, and stakeholders to discuss critical strategies. Officers from the Ministry of Environment and Forest, DGMS, and Railways will be making presentations on key issues in the mining sector, such as safety, sustainability, environmental concerns, and transportation challenges. The focus will be on fostering collaboration to ensure efficient, safe, and eco-friendly mining operations nationwide.

These deliberations aim to strengthen India's mining ecosystem in line with sustainable development goals. The event was chaired by Ministry of Mines secretary VL Kantha Rao, with director general of the Geological Survey of India (GSI) Asit Saha and additional secretary of the Ministry of Mines Sanjay Lohiya in attendance.

**In order to streamline mining operations and enhance accountability, Mining Tenement System (MTS) Module will be launched at the event**



**FOR THE WORKERS' RIGHTS:** Members of trade unions CITU, AIKS and AIAWA stage a demonstration at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar on the occasion of Workers-Peasants Solidarity Day, Sunday

# 64TH CGPB MEETING HELD IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 19:** The 64th Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) meeting was held Sunday at the State Convention Centre, Lok Seva Bhawan.

The event was chaired by Ministry of Mines secretary VL Kantha Rao, with director general of the Geological Survey of India (GSI) Asit Saha and additional secretary of the Ministry of Mines Sanjay Lohiya in attendance.

The conference brought together key stakeholders from the exploration, research, and mining sectors to discuss advancements in geosciences, mineral exploration, and sustainable practices.

Topics included mineral resource augmentation, clean energy initiatives, geohazard



management, and collaborative strategies for sustainable development.

In his address, Rao highlighted the CGPB's pivotal role in advancing geosciences and shared updates on recent initiatives such as the Critical Mineral Mission and Offshore Mining.

He noted the successful auctioning of 24 critical mineral blocks in 2024-25 and the launch

of India's first auction for 13 offshore mineral blocks.

Rao highlighted the importance of innovation in accelerating mineral exploration, hazard mitigation, and the green energy transition to achieve net-zero goals.

Rao urged exploration agencies to leverage NMET funding and legacy geological data available on the NGDR portal to

boost mineral exploration and R&D efforts.

The meeting also emphasised critical mineral exploration, with 227 dedicated projects targeting resources like REE, lithium, graphite, and vanadium—a 16 per cent increase from the previous year.

Additionally, GSI has launched 167 mineral discovery projects and 141 initiatives under natural hazard studies, climate change research, and fundamental geosciences.

GSI is incorporating advanced technologies, including AI/ML modeling and Magnetotelluric surveys, through 65 geoinformatics projects to enhance exploration efficiency and disaster resilience.

The meeting underscored the Ministry's commitment to sustainable mining and geoscience innovation.

WEATHER table with columns BBSR, CTC and rows Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, FORECAST.

## 21st DHW explores temples, airstrip



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Jan 19:** The 21st edition of the Dhenkanal Heritage Walks (DHW) was organised Sunday, drawing over 80 heritage enthusiasts from across Odisha. Participants from Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Kendrapara, Dhenkanal College, and Mathakarakola College joined the walk, making it a memorable celebration of history and culture.

The walk began at the historic 16th century Balaram Temple which is renowned for its unique stone statue of Lord Balaram, accompanied by Sri Krishna, Rukmini, and Subhadra. DHW convenor Suresh Prasad Mishra shared insights about the temple. Next, participants visited the Kapileswar Temple, located in the scenic Ramiala river valley in Kamakhyanagar sub-division. Prafulla Kumar Panigrahi, 83, narrated folklore and stories about the temple, which was built by the Deo family of Jagannath Prasad in the Kalinga architectural style (Rekha Deula). The

temple lacks "Parshwa Devata" statues, as many have been stolen, and its deities and architecture bear signs of damage.

The group then explored the Birasala airstrip, also known as the Dhenkanal airstrip, a World War II-era site. One of the founding members of DHW, Malay Ranjan Pati briefed the walkers on the airstrip's historical significance and current uses. The airstrip has hosted landings by former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, as well as political leaders like Biju Patnaik and Sanjay Gandhi.

The Flight Training Institute owned by GATI now operates at the site, using it as a pilot training centre. The airstrip is also linked to Captain Rajkishor Mishra, a local figure who championed its revival.

The final stop was Sanskar School in Rahani, where participants interacted with 600 students to raise awareness about heritage conservation. The school's "gurukula parampara" system of education delighted the visitors.

# Mangrove tree roots, stems seized in Bhitarkanika, 4 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kendrapara, Jan 19:** Four people were arrested Sunday after roots and stems of mangrove trees were seized from their possession in Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district, a senior official said.

They were nabbed by a forest patrol squad at Kalibhanjadhia forest in the core area of the national park, and the roots and stems of Salacia, an important mangrove species, were seized from their possession, he said.

Salacia, locally called Batara, is a medicinal plant which is most often used for diabetes



and blood sugar.

Timber smugglers sell the dry roots of Salacia as fake sandalwood as the colour of the root is yellow, the forest officer said.

The arrested persons hail from villages, which are locat-

ed on the fringes of the national park, and were remanded to judicial custody for felling trees in the reserve forest.

Bhitarkanika is one of the richest storehouses of storehouses of mangrove species.

Researchers have come across 11 of the 70 mangrove species, which were at elevated threat of extinction in the world, in Bhitarkanika. Mangroves are regarded as natural barriers against tidal surges and cyclones.

Because of its rich mangrove cover, cyclonic storms from time to time have failed to make inroads into the wetland sites.

## ODESA celebrates 80th anniversary

**Bhubaneswar:** Infrastructure development is the key for country's progress and the role of diploma engineers are indispensable in the construction and development of infrastructure, said Labour Minister Ganesh Ram Singhkhuntia at the 80th anniversary celebration of Odisha Diploma Engineers Service Association (ODESA) at Odesa Bhawan here Sunday. The diploma engineers work at the grassroots level. Therefore, without their skills, technical knowledge, and sense of responsibility, the development cannot be successfully achieved, the minister added. Attending as the chief guest on the 79th annual general body meeting of ODESA, Minister Singhkhuntia said, "Diploma engineers have made a meaningful contribution towards the economic progress and all-round development of the state by working in important sectors such as Works, Water Resources, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Housing and Urban Development, Power, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Steel and Mining, Commerce and Transport. The contribution is evident in every field."

# Scientists discover new superconductor material for wider use

Combining iron, nickel, and zirconium in different ratios, the team discovered an alloy, descending from a family of promising superconducting materials

**R**esearchers from Tokyo Metropolitan University have discovered a new superconducting material which can be more widely deployed in society.

They combined iron, nickel, and zirconium, to create a new transition metal zirconide with different ratios of iron to nickel.

While both iron zirconide and nickel zirconide are not superconducting, the newly-prepared mixtures are, exhibiting a "dome-shaped" phase diagram typical of so-called "unconventional superconductors," a promising avenue for developing high temperature superconducting materials, according to the study published in the Journal of Alloys and

Compounds.

Superconductors already play an active role in cutting-edge technologies, from superconducting magnets in medical devices and maglev systems to superconducting cables for power transmission.

However, they generally rely on cooling to temperatures of around four Kelvin, a key roadblock in wider deployment of the technology.

Scientists are on the lookout for materials which can show zero resistivity at higher temperatures, particularly the 77 Kelvin threshold at which liquid nitrogen can be used to cool the materials instead of liquid helium.

Now, a team of researchers led by Associate Professor Yo-



shikazu Mizuguchi from Tokyo Metropolitan University have conceived a new superconducting material containing a mag-

netic element.

For the first time, they showed that a polycrystalline alloy of iron, nickel, and zirconium shows superconducting properties. Curiously, both iron zirconide and nickel zirconide are not superconducting in crystalline form.

Superconductors already play an active role in cutting-edge technologies, from superconducting magnets in medical devices and maglev systems to superconducting cables for power transmission

Scientists are on the lookout for materials which can show zero resistivity at higher temperatures, particularly the 77 Kelvin threshold at which liquid nitrogen can be used to cool the materials instead of liquid helium

nium shows superconducting properties. Curiously, both iron zirconide and nickel zirconide are not superconducting in crystalline form.

According to the study, in

experiments which began as an undergraduate student project, the team combined iron, nickel, and zirconium in different ratios using a method known as arc melting, confirming that the resulting alloy had the same crystal structure as tetragonal transition-metal zirconides, a family of promising superconducting materials.

The lattice constants, or the lengths of repeating cells, were also found to change smoothly with the ratio of iron to nickel.

Crucially, they found a region of compositions where the superconducting transition temperature rose, then fell again. This "dome-like" form is a promising hallmark of unconventional superconductivity. IANS

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# February census to reveal livestock status

### BOVINE POPULATION IN KENDRAPARA REPORTED AN ALARMING 66% DECLINE IN 19 YEARS FOLLOWING 1999 SUPER CYCLONE



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Jan 19:** All eyes are set on the 21st Domestic Animal and Bird Census, scheduled for February this year, to know if the downward trend of livestock population in the district has stabilized in the last five years following initiatives by both the Central and state governments to increase bovine population.

According to reports, livestock population in the district, which was severely impacted by the 1999 Super Cyclone, witnessed a sharp decline in the next 19 years following the natural disaster. According to the statistics compiled by the district Animal Husbandry Department, the livestock count stood at 924,590 in 2000. The figures came down to 3,13,715 in the 2019 census - recording a 66 per cent drop.

Researchers attributed the primary cause of the decline to climate change, which has also adversely affected the district's economy and environment.

Khitish Kumar Singh, a lecturer who is conducting research on the issue, said that changing weather patterns have

exacerbated coastal erosion in the district. "Since 1960, the sea has advanced about 12 kilometers inland, submerging significant land areas. By 2000, Kanpur village and many areas under Satabhaya panchayat were in the district's revenue map. However, they have now disappeared due to coastal erosion for which all residents have been forced to relocate," he said.

He said villages in about 28 kilometers of coast (of the district's 48-kilometer coastline) have been swallowed by the sea, resulting in the loss of agricultural land and housing. "This has made livestock farming increasingly unviable," he pointed out.

Deviprasad Sahu, a Zoology Professor, maintained that groundwater salinity in the district's coastal regions has risen, further reducing the availability of green fodder for livestock. "Shrinking of pasture land has also led to a decrease in livestock population. Additionally, prawn cultivation has encroached on traditional pasture lands, leaving little room for sustainable livestock rearing," Sahu said.

The decline in cattle and

buffalo populations is primarily attributed to the lack of grazing land, according to environmentalist Hemant Kumar Rout. He stated that of the 3,21,934 families in the district, 3,05,868 rural families rely on livestock as a major source of livelihood. "These families not only meet a portion of their economic needs through livestock but also use animal waste to fertilize their farmlands, and as a natural pesticide, contributing to ecological balance," he said.

He said, while the 1999 Super Cyclone severely impacted livestock populations, unregulated construction of illegal prawn gheries in its aftermath has rendered grazing and farmland saline. "Despite efforts by both Central and state governments, departmental officials are not paying adequate attention to the drop in livestock numbers," he added.

Pramila Mallik of Tantiapala observed that in agrarian Kendrapara district, cattle and buffaloes play a crucial role not just in farming but also in dairy production. "However, pasture lands are increasingly being encroached upon as milk and milk-based products are coming from outside the district. The saline climate is unsuitable for crossbred cows, leading to higher mortality during rearing. These factors collectively contribute to the reduction in livestock numbers," she said.

Meanwhile, when contacted, ADVO Mrutyunjay Mohanty said that the 21st Livestock Census will continue till February end. "Both the Central and state government initiatives aim to increase cattle and buffalo populations. The final census report will reveal the outcomes of these efforts," he added.

# Rare 'Savanna Nightjar' sighted in Nilagiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nilagiri, Jan 19:** A rare species of bird, Savanna Nightjar (Bhuin Chadhe), has been spotted at the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary in the Nilagiri region of Balasore district.

This bird is typically found in regions including India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, and other parts of South and Southeast Asia.

On Saturday, tourist guide and bird researcher from Nilagiri, Manoranjan Das, successfully captured the first-ever sighting of the Savanna Nightjar in the Panchalingeswar hills of the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary in his camera. This bird is nocturnal by nature.

The Savanna Nightjar prefers to live in open natural environments like jungles. Das said the discovery of this rare species in the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary has added to the bio-



diversity of the region. The bird hides itself during the day, blending with the surroundings as its colors are similar to rocks and leaves, making it difficult to spot. At night, it becomes active as a nocturnal creature and mainly feeds on insects and bugs.

## ADMIN APATHY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nabarangpur, Jan 19:** A pyrolyzer plant at Umerkote in this district, established by the Centre, remains non-functional 18 months after its inauguration, allegedly due to administrative negligence.

As a result, machinery worth lakhs of rupees has deteriorated, showing signs of rust and decay in Umerkote, a predominantly agrarian region of Nabarangpur district.

The state and Central governments had implemented several initiatives to promote small-scale industries in underdeveloped regions. As part of this effort, the Centre invested approximately ₹50 lakh to establish India's

# Pyrolyzer plant inoperative 18 months after inauguration



first-ever mobile pyrolyzer plant under the National Agriculture Industry Scheme.

The plant was designed to convert agricultural waste, such as wood, husks, twigs, straw, and corn cobs, into cooking gas, bio-fertilizers, and other by-products like pitch. It had the potential to generate local employment, but prolonged inaction has left the expensive machinery obsolete.

The plant was also expected

to empower women financially through Mission Shakti initiatives in the remote area of Umerkote. However, despite its inauguration 18 months ago, it remains idle, failing to serve its intended purpose.

Farmers and locals have expressed frustration, pointing out that such projects, while promising on paper, often become mere showcases after ribbon-cutting ceremonies. They believe that making the plant operational

could provide farmers with additional income and empower women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under Mission Shakti.

The previous government reportedly overlooked the issue, and locals are now urging the current administration to take swift action to make the plant functional.

When contacted, Uma Mahesh, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of ORMAS, stated that two women SHGs had been trained and handed over the plant after its inauguration.

He added, "We are investigating why the plant has not yet become functional. The district Collector has been informed, and steps will be taken soon to make it operational."

## RICE PROCUREMENT

# Pujari asks Ganjam dist admin to open more mandis

DWARKA PATNAIK

**Chhatrapur, Jan 19:** Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Chandra Pujari has directed the Ganjam district administration to float fresh tenders for opening more mandis for procurement of rice from farmers as the present number of mandis are falling insufficient to the needs.

The minister's direction came during a review meeting with the district administration and other departmental officers during his one-day visit to Ganjam district Friday. Issues related to the ongoing paddy procurement, women SHGs, industries and revenue department were discussed during the meeting.

According to reports, paddy procurement process was the major focus during the early part of the review. The minister was told that 111 out of the 478 PACS (Primary Agriculture Co-operative Credit Societies) in the district are run by women SHGs. The procured paddy-filled gunny bags are supplied to around 361 rice mills across the district.

About 1,73,424.47 quintal of



paddy have been procured so far from 4,079 farmers out of 1,46,504 registered farmers in 435 PACS, Ganjam Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida said.

The mandis, which opened since January 3, are currently running. However, the untimely incessant rainfalls last month has slowed down the procurement process, the minister was informed.

Digapahandi MLA Siddhant Mohapatra, who was present in the meeting, urged Pujari that the

procurement process be taken up for those farmers who could not produce the specified quality of paddy due to rains.

To this, the revenue minister said that the government will support the needs of the farmers, and asked the district administration to float fresh tenders to open more mandis for procurement.

Later, Pujari also reviewed the mutation OLR of the revenue department, providing RoR to the Basundhara institutions, land acquisition and collection of rev-

enue in the district. Till date, 703 cases have been reported in the e-mutation and 629 cases have been resolved.

Out of the 8,667 applications under Basundhara scheme, 1,643 eligible beneficiaries had received land RoR, and another 757 beneficiaries will receive the same by the end of this month.

The minister asked the administration to provide land to members of various Scheduled Tribes (STs) after proper identification of the lands.

The minister also directed the revenue department to initiate action and acquire land allotted to industries by the state government if they failed to utilize the space properly or left any portion of it vacant.

Berhampur MP Pradeep Kumar Panigrahi, Transport, Commerce and Steel & Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, Chhatrapur MLA Krushna Chandra Nayak, Aska MLA Saroj Kumar Padhy, ADM (Revenue) Sudhansu Kumar Bhoi, ADM (GA) Pramod Kumar Prusty were amongst the other departmental officers present in the review meeting.

## Jungle View Point opens for visitors

**ROURKELA:** A picturesque Jungle View Point at Tensa township, developed by the Barsua Iron Mines (BIM) - belonging to the Odisha Group on Mines of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) - has been thrown open to the public following its inauguration by Himansu Mishra, CGM (BIM-TIM), recently.

Senior officers, students and residents of Tensa township were present at the inaugural function of the landmark facility which has been built to promote nature appreciation and community well-being. The view point that provides a stunning panoramic view of the lush Tensa jungle has tiled raised platforms and railing for safety. It offers a serene retreat for residents and visitors alike. It is expected to become a popular destination for residents to relax, rejuvenate and appreciate the natural surroundings. Tensa is a hill station of the district, and has a small township for those operating the iron mines of SAIL. Besides, it is also surrounded by thick jungles making it a scenic location. Visitors from different parts of the district and outside come to this place regularly to unwind and enjoy in the lap of nature. Not very far from Tensa, the state government has opened a nature camp with provisions for stay.

# Unwanted girl child to IAS officer: The inspiring journey of Sanjita Mohapatra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amravati, Jan 19:** From being an unwanted girl child to becoming an IAS officer, Sanjita Mohapatra's story has been about overcoming obstacles with sheer grit and determination.

Mohapatra is the chief executive officer (CEO) of Amravati Zilla Parishad in Maharashtra, who has focused on improving education and health facilities in the district.

At a press conference a few days ago, Mohapatra said she was born into a poor family in Rourkela and her birth had disappointed her mother, who yearned for a male child after her elder sister.

The 34-year-old officer said her family had nearly abandoned her, but it was on the insistence of her



elder sister that her parents kept her. Mohapatra's childhood was fraught with obstacles due to her family's poor financial condition.

She had to rely on social organizations, teachers and scholarships to complete her education.

After earning a degree in mechanical engineering, she was appointed as an assistant manager

with the Steel Authority of India, and during this period, she helped her parents build a house in their village.

She said her parents were now proud of her achievements.

Mohapatra aspired to become an IAS officer right from her childhood, and with the motivation and support of her husband, she cleared the UPSC examination on her fifth attempt in 2019.

As the CEO of Amravati Zilla Parishad, Mohapatra said she wishes to empower women in self-help groups and improve the quality of education in Zilla Parishad schools.

She has focussed on creating a niche market for products from SHGs, right from their branding and packaging to their launch.

## Man hacked to death over past enmity

**Sorada:** The mutilated body of a 45-year-old man was recovered from near a pond at Raibandh village under Badagad police limits in Ganjam district, Saturday night. The victim was identified as Dambaru Swain. On a complaint by Swain's wife, the police Sunday detained two persons for questioning. Police said Dambaru worked as a labourer in Surat and had returned home few days back for his daughter's wedding. Three days ago, a fellow villager, with whom Dambaru had some past disputes, sent him a message over phone threatening to kill him. Dambaru then lodged a complaint at the Badagad police station. On Saturday night, Dambaru's family members grew suspicious after he did not return home. On Sunday morning they found Dambaru's body lying near a pond in the village.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
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4	Bid Identification No.	ACEMC/MDRGL: 01/2024-25	dt.	10.01.2025	
5	Estimated cost	11.62 lakh to 12.63 lakh (Excluding GST)			
6	Period of completion	Two calendar months each			
7	Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	From dt.24.01.2025 (10.00 A.M.) to dt.06.02.2025 (5.30 P.M.)			
8	Last date / time for receipt of bid	Dt.06.02.2025 (Upto 5.30 P.M.) in the portal			
9	Date and place of opening of bid	Dt.07.02.2025, 11.00 A.M. onwards in O/o the undersigned			
10	Name of the officer inviting bids	Additional Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Hirakud			

Further details can be seen only from e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./Additional Chief Engineer,  
Mechanical Circle, Hirakud

OIPR-32344/11/0001/2425

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
File No.: DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/E-Tender/97  
Dtd.: 09.01.2025

1) Tender No.: e-TenderSouthKUR-285-2024  
Dtd.: 07.01.2025

Name of Work: PROPOSED 10 BEDDED LADY RPF BARRACK-CUM-REST ROOM FOR LADY TRAIN ESCORTING STAFF AT PALASA STATION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
Approx. Cost of the Work: Rs. 65.12Lakh  
EMD: Rs. 1.30.300/-

2) Tender No.: e-TenderSouthKUR-286-2024  
Dtd.: 07.01.2025

Name of Work: RAISING OF PFS FROM LOW LEVEL TO HIGH LEVEL IN DHAULMUHAN AND GOLABAI STATIONS IN SOUTH SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
Approx. Cost of the Work: Rs. 377.09Lakh  
EMD: Rs. 3.38.600/-

3) Tender No.: e-TenderBRIDGEKUR-284-24  
Dtd.: 07.01.2025

Name of Work: STRENGTHENING WORK OF CRACKED RAIL BEARERS OF DIFFERENT SPANS OF BR. NO. 544 UP & RAIL BEARER-CROSS GIRDER JOINTS OF BR. NO. 449 UP IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
Approx. Cost of the Work: Rs. 507.63Lakh  
EMD: Rs. 4.03.800/-

4) Tender No.: e-TenderSOUTHKUR-282-2024  
Dtd.: 06.01.2025

Name of Work: PROPOSED REPAIRS TO STAFF QUARTERS SUCH AS TOILET, BATHROOMS, KITCHEN, SEPTIC TANK, SEWAGE LINE AND DRAINS IN SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD-GANJAM UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ADEN BALUGAO OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
Approx. Cost of the Work: Rs. 249.18Lakh  
EMD: Rs. 2.74.600/-

Completion Period: 12 (Twelve) Months (For Sl No. 1 & 2) and 10 (Ten) Months (For Sl. No. 3 & 4)

Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. on 29.01.2025 (For All Tenders)

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

The tenders/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)  
PR-886/P24-25 Khurda Road

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** No. I-422  
**PANCHAYATIRAJ & D.W. DEPARTMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, ERSAMA**  
'e' mail ID : [ori-ersama@nic.in](mailto:ori-ersama@nic.in)  
'e' Procurement Notice No. BDO-EPS-01 of 2024-25

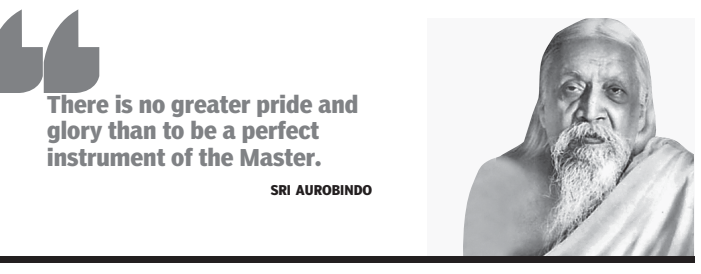
Sl. No.	Name of work	Approx. Value of work (Rs. in lakhs)	Security Amount (Online Payment)	Cost of Bid documents (Online Payment)	Class of Bidder	Period of completion
1	Construction of Additional Class Building at Dharijanga of Gadabishunpur GP of Ersama Block in the District of Jagatsinghpur	12.64	12,700/-	Rs. 6,000/-	'D' & 'C'	06 (Six) Calendar months

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender		Date & Time of opening of BID	Place of opening of Bid
		From	To		
Block Development Officer, Ersama	BDO-EPS-01/2024-25	20.01.2025 at 10.00 Hours	31.01.2025 at 17.30 Hours	01.02.2025 upto 11.00 A.M. during office hours	O/o the Panchayat Ersama

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>"  
All corrigendum/cancellation of tender if any, will only be uploaded in the above website

Sd./-  
Block Development Officer, Ersama

OIPR-19286/11/0001/2425



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

# Peace At Last

After fifteen months of relentless violence, peace, though in a fragile form, is finally returning to Gaza and its 2.2 million unfortunate citizens. The long-awaited ceasefire between Israel and Hamas brokered by the United States, Qatar and Egypt commenced after a three-hour delay at 11:15 AM local time on 19 January as Hamas named the three female hostages it plans to free. Celebrations broke out throughout the war-torn enclave, while some Palestinians started to return to their homes, though the delay highlighted the tenuous nature of the agreement. During the initial 42-day phase of the ceasefire, a total of 33 Israeli hostages are expected to be returned from Gaza, along with the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

It is pertinent to note here that the terms of the current agreement are essentially identical to those suggested by the Biden administration more than eight months ago. So, what has changed in those months? It is widely believed that the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential elections, and especially a comment made by him on 7 January, were the trigger for the quick agreement of both parties for the ceasefire. "All hell will break out. If those hostages aren't back, I don't want to hurt your negotiation, if they're not back by the time I get into office, all hell will break out in the Middle East," Trump had told reporters. At that time, many analysts wondered what more harm could Trump cause Hamas that Israel hadn't already done? However, Trump's message, it appears, wasn't truly directed at Hamas; it might have been intended for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Arab leaders had been urging the Biden administration for months to take steps for a ceasefire, but to no avail. The reluctance of Biden and his team likely stemmed from concerns about losing Jewish-American votes and political donations ahead of the US elections. Additionally, they seemed cautious about providing Republicans with a chance to claim that Democrats were abandoning a crucial ally in the Middle East. However, the dynamics changed dramatically the moment Trump returned to power. Trump's pressure tactics and warnings successfully reinvigorated the stalled negotiations. Netanyahu, for his part, was also apprehensive that antagonizing Trump could jeopardize other efforts he sought support for, such as stronger measures against Tehran and shielding himself from Arab demands for a two-state solution. Also, Netanyahu has become highly unpopular among Israelis – at least half of the country's electorate doesn't support him. Many Israelis are unwilling to forgive him for allowing the 7 October terror attack to happen in the first place.

Meanwhile, negotiations for the significantly more challenging second phase of the ceasefire are set to commence in just over two weeks. Key issues remain unresolved, such as whether hostilities will resume after the initial six-week period and how the remaining nearly 100 hostages in Gaza will be released. These questions arise because Israel has not met its primary war objective, as stated by Netanyahu, which is the annihilation of Hamas. Likewise, Hamas has not achieved its aim of destroying Israel. The leaders responsible for the terrorist attacks on 7 October, 2023 are no longer alive, and the organisation's capabilities have been greatly diminished. However, it has managed to endure, which its supporters interpret as a triumph of Palestinian resilience.

The war in Gaza, like all other mindless conflicts, had a huge human cost. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, more than 46,000 Palestinians have lost their lives, most of them being women and children. Besides, approximately 90 per cent of the population in Gaza has been displaced. The United Nations reports that the health system, road infrastructure, and other essential facilities have suffered significant damage. If the ceasefire is fully established, the rebuilding process is expected to take several years.

With one war coming to a pause for the time being, all eyes are now on the other theatre in Europe. Can Trump, who assumes office on 20 January, end the Ukraine war in his promised "one day?" While the strong arms of the US have reached the Middle East, they appear weaker when it comes to crossing the Atlantic. It is easier for the US to influence an ally like Israel, but equally difficult to tame Vladimir Putin. The US has managed to broker a ceasefire in Gaza, but doing the same in Ukraine, where an older war has been going on, seems a remote possibility. Besides, Trump's territorial claim over Greenland, close to 5,000 kilometres away from the nearest point in US mainland, doesn't serve the US cause. While Trump has claimed that US ownership of Greenland, an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, is about "protecting the free world," it's difficult to see how NATO would view the use of military force against Greenland as anything other than an armed attack on one of its members. Trump's threats have already put the NATO in a spot. He must understand that a weaker NATO means a stronger Russia and diminished US influence as the "world's policeman."

## WISDOM CORNER

I define nothing. Not beauty, not patriotism. I take each thing as it is, without prior rules about what it should be.  
BOB DYLAN

Nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own; and from morning to night, as from the cradle to the grave, it is but a succession of changes so gentle and easy that we can scarcely mark their progress.  
CHARLES DICKENS

People demand freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use.  
SOREN KIERKEGAARD

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1778: British explorer James Cook landed at Waimea, on Kauai island, becoming the first European to visit Hawaii.
- 1942: Nazi officials meet to organize the extermination of Jews. During the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, the Nazis discussed what they called the "Final Solution to the Jewish question".
- 1945: US President Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated for an unprecedented fourth term in office.
- 1969: The killing of a student activist sets the stage for the Bangladesh Liberation War. The war resulted in the secession of East Pakistan from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the establishment of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation.
- 1981: The Iran hostage crisis ended when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini released 52 Americans who had been held hostage for 15 months.

## FOCUS LEAD EXPOSURE

# INVISIBLE HEALTH THREAT

Lead is everywhere, often hiding in plain sight – in the water you drink, the air you breathe, the food you eat, your personal care products, and your children's toys. Despite being a useful metal, it is highly toxic and difficult to detect: its fumes and dust are odorless, and exposure to them does not immediately cause overt symptoms in most cases.

This is particularly worrying because exposure to and ingestion of lead can negatively affect almost every part of the body. Recent research finds that exposure contributes significantly to cardiovascular disease, killing millions worldwide. But while lead poisoning is responsible for more deaths annually than HIV/AIDS and malaria combined, it receives a small fraction of the funding allocated to these better-known diseases.

The health effects are often irreversible and unequally distributed. For example, lead is especially harmful to children's cognitive development, leading to lower IQs and behavioural problems. Today, one in three children worldwide have dangerous levels of the metal in their blood, and nearly all of them live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This inequality in exposure accounts for more than 20% of the learning gap between high- and low-income countries.

Moreover, the annual economic losses from lead poisoning are enormous, amounting to around 6.9% of global GDP. Health care for those sickened by the toxin, coupled with additional financing for special-education services to address the developmental and behavioural issues caused by lead poisoning, costs millions of dollars each year in the United States alone. Lead poisoning



While lead poisoning is responsible for more deaths annually than HIV/AIDS and malaria combined, and more than tuberculosis, it receives a small fraction of the funding allocated to these better-known diseases

also reduces an individual's lifetime earning potential, leading to lost tax revenue.

This makes it all the more important to reduce and eliminate lead exposure. The good news is that it is possible to detect lead in soil, spices, food, paint, cookware, and other solid materials using a portable X-ray fluorescence analyzer (pXRF), which provides near-instantaneous results and has already proven effective in many settings.

In Nigeria, health officials used pXRFs to help identify and clean up the source of a lead-poisoning epidemic that killed more than 400 children, ultimately saving thousands of lives. An assessment of lead levels in consumer goods and foods used the devices to test samples in 25 LMICs, finding that 45% of ceramic tableware, 52% of metallic cookware, and 41% of paint exceeded regulatory limits. The technology has enabled some governments to test the safety of toys and playgrounds, enforce lead-paint regulations in houses, and investigate whether lead exposure is the cause of health incidents. Researchers using pXRFs identified dangerous

levels of lead paint – which is still sold in many LMICs – in schools and playgrounds in Guyana.

But very few LMICs currently use pXRFs to determine the sources of lead poisoning. In some cases, policymakers lack awareness that lead exposure is a major public-health issue. Perhaps most importantly, these devices are expensive to buy and maintain, and training on how to interpret the data they produce remains limited.

What would it take to improve access to this valuable technology, so that LMICs can identify and eliminate the sources of lead poisoning that put their populations – especially their young people – at risk? To answer this question, a working group comprising global lead-poisoning experts, practitioners, policymakers, and funders gathered in "Room 3" – linked to Sustainable Development Goal 3 for Good Health and Wellbeing – within the 17 Rooms Initiative. In our discussions about how to make pXRFs universally available by 2030, we agreed that the recently launched Partnership for a Lead-Free

Future (PLF), supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is best positioned to bring together stakeholders to support such an initiative.

Regional hubs, centrally coordinated by the PLF, could be established to provide pXRFs at low cost, training for authorised users, and technical support – both in terms of maintenance and data analysis – for governments, NGOs, and academic partners. With sufficient demand, the proposed hubs can negotiate directly with pXRF manufacturers to lower prices and tailor device design to ensure cost-effective and accurate screening for lead in different sources.

The PLF could thus roll out this technology on a global scale – a breakthrough that would serve as a mechanism for international and local organisations to work together to raise awareness among LMIC governments about the importance of lead poisoning. This could include setting clear protocols and guidelines for using pXRFs to screen for lead in different sources and for acting upon the results.

When it comes to lead exposure, prevention is the only option, because there is no cure. Increased access to pXRFs could help us win the fight against lead poisoning, safeguard the health and future potential of millions of children and young people, and unlock billions of dollars in economic benefits.

Angela Bandemehr is International Environmental Protection Specialist focusing on Lead Pollution Capacity Building at the US Environmental Protection Agency. Albert Park is Chief Economist at the Asian Development Bank.



Angela Bandemehr & Albert Park

WHEN IT COMES TO LEAD EXPOSURE, PREVENTION IS THE ONLY OPTION, BECAUSE THERE IS NO CURE

## SPECTRUM NATION

# Awaiting an economic miracle

The Union Budget is to be presented on 1 February and Indians eagerly await a miracle. They have been hoping for one, but it hasn't happened since long. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's faith in 'Manmohanomics' is leading to free-flow exploitation through taxes and inflation choking growth.

India must learn from the economic vision of the first decade after Independence, bubbling with many aspirations. Some were fulfilled with the Five-Year-Plans, power projects, new roads, new industries, new institutions and giant public sector units. It was a vision of the galaxy of leaders led by first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Along with the vision came a host of rights-based labour law reforms for a large number of sectors. But these have unfortunately been nullified mostly in the past few years. The founders' visionary approach led the country to a rise of 18% growth in income, says the International Monetary Fund, against an envisaged growth of 11-12%.

During the First Plan period, national income was expected to rise by 11-12%; the actual increase was over 18%, despite a shortfall in Plan outlays. The success of the First Plan, under

conditions of economic and financial stability, prompted more ambitious goals and a bolder approach in formulating the Second Plan, the IMF adds.

This raises a fundamental issue why since 1991's so-called liberalisation and end of licence-permit raj, India's progress has been sluggish or at best tilted towards the corporate, ignoring the welfare of the masses. With loss of "concessions and incentives," investments in real terms had been peanuts or largely a government responsibility. The common man was only a peg, if not a pawn.

Industries did not invest much from their profits. They emptied bank coffers and took the robust system into an abyss of unprecedented non-performing assets (NPAs). It meant they did not repay the loans. Many fled the country and others preferred write-offs. The budget expressed concern but never penalised them. People suffered with job losses, which the corporate did not create or inflicted on them with closures of PSUs helping create monopolies without responsibility.

Of late, a new phenomenon has developed. Many large corporates, having stacks of funds, shy away from investment. Their apprehension is not unfounded. In private, the owners

confide that they fear if they invest and grow, some predators among them would force merger or takeover their thriving units. The budget, which is now the only instrument to check, lacks the capability to deal with the disastrous situation.

Even foreign funding is plummeting, and foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) are witnessing a faster flight. After a robust 2023, foreign investors significantly scaled back their investments in Indian equities in 2024, with net inflows amounting to over Rs 5,000 crore. In October alone FPIs withdrew Rs 22,194 crore from Indian equities, driven by expectations of a weak earnings season.

No wonder that India's growth plummeted to two-year-low of 5.4% and the annual growth being continuously revised from over 7% to 6.6%, 6.5% and now FICCI estimates 6.4%. This speaks volumes for those who had been critical of the remarkable Plan process and India's early growth statistics.

The government's new National Education Policy (NEP), implemented without social discussion, calls for a deep review. While government funding in education has not been increasing, it has dumped on the people a system that keeps children bound to the educational

system to cover up the inability of providing jobs or delay the arrival of the unemployed into the job market. The 4-year-BA/BSc is a mess as even after four years progress syllabus could not be tailored. There is an unheard-of 3-year-preparatory nursery. It dumps each parent with additional expenses of Rs 3 lakh per child in higher and nursery classes – higher education has now 4.33 crore students and nursery one crore.

But the average Indian does not need those estimates to spell out the slowdown: a rise in retail-loan defaults, even as personal loan growth has almost halved from a year ago; continued gloomy news on how consumer spending is sputtering; a wash-out year for entry-level cars; and the steady and intense pinch of household inflation. The writing is on the wall, for those who choose to read it.

The country needs to strengthen its reviewing and planning process. Growth is not a responsibility of the finance ministry, which at best is the finance, not economic, manager. It's not an easy path but not that difficult either. Still sparks are there and with course correction, none can prevent India emerging as the world's most vibrant economy.



Shivaji Sarkar

INDIA MUST LEARN FROM THE ECONOMIC VISION OF THE FIRST DECADE AFTER INDEPENDENCE, BUBBLING WITH MANY ASPIRATIONS

## Letters

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



## Gig economy challenges

Sir, This refers to "Gig workers' woes." The gig economy in India has experienced exponential growth, with a rising number of gig workers contributing significantly to the workforce. This trend is indicative of the evolving employment landscape at a time when the job crisis is looming large by the day. Although the gig sector has grown in popularity in recent years, challenges persist for gig workers, including the need for job security and benefits such as health insurance. The Central and state governments should therefore invest in education and training programmes to support gig workers and ensure fair treatment and work-life balance for them by introducing clear regulations and policies. Flexible work arrangements and regulatory challenges underscore a critical need for a balanced approach that respects the rights and addresses the vulnerabilities of gig workers. While the gig economy presents opportunities for innovation and economic empowerment, its sustainability hinges on ensuring that the rights and welfare of gig workers are adequately protected.

## Good Samaritan

Sir, We learn with a sense of great relief and satisfaction that the compassion and kindness and the timely help of Bhajan Singh, an auto-rickshaw driver has saved the life of actor Saif Ali Khan who was attacked by an intruder in his residence. When at the wee hours of the day, Bhajan Singh saw Saif's domestic aid Hari signalling him to stop his auto and he saw a man with him profusely bleeding, he didn't go away, fearing unnecessary problems but stopped the vehicle and helped the injured into his vehicle and rushed him to the hospital. His kindness was at the top when he did not ask for his fare as well after dropping Saif in the hospital. Much later only, to his great surprise, he came to know that the one whose life he saved is none other than Saif Ali Khan, the celebrated Bollywood actor. It is heartening to note from the adorable gesture of Bhajan Singh that humanism has not been totally lost in our society which is sadly becoming self-centered and insensitive.

## Good Samaritan

Tharcus S. Fernando, CHENNAI

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

# Katra-Srinagar rail trial run successful

TRAIN TO KASHMIR



22-bogie train's trial run successful on Katra-Srinagar line

**Jammu, Jan 19:** A 22-bogie train chugged between Katra and Srinagar railway stations Sunday, officials said, marking the first successful trial run on the newly completed line to connect Kashmir with the rest of the country via rail. The train, comprising 18 AC coaches, two luggage carriers and two engines, left the Katra railway station at around 8 am, successfully reaching its destination within four hours under the watchful eyes of the railway authorities, the officials said. This was the first trial run between Katra and Srinagar, and came within six days after the Commissioner of Railway Safety (Northern Circle) Dinesh Chand Deshwal authorised the opening of the newly constructed Broad Gauge line. He had given the authorisation for the start of public carriage of goods and passenger traffic in a seven-page letter to the ministry and railway authorities, based on his detailed inspection of the track

January 7 and 8. The CRS referred to his inspection of the newly constructed BG line between the Katra and Reasi section by a motor trolley and on foot, followed by a speed trial on the entire section from Katra to Banihal. He had then authorised regular opening of the section for passengers and freight traffic at a maximum permissible speed of 85 Kmph on the main line and 15 Kmph on turnout. The work on the dream project to link Kashmir by train was started in 1997 and it missed several deadlines given geological, topographical and meteorological challenges. Out of the total 272 km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, 209 km was commissioned in phases with the first phase of the 118 km Qazigund-Baramulla section commissioned in October 2009, followed by 18 km Banihal-Qazigund in June 2013, 25 km Udhampur-Katra in July 2014 and 48.1 km long Banihal-Sangaldan stretch in February, last year.

# Kashmiri migrant Pandits observe 35th exodus anniversary

The Kashmiri Pandit community observes January 19 as the 'holocaust day' to mark their migration from the Valley in 1990 following the eruption of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Jan 19:** Hundreds of Kashmiri migrant pandits gathered Sunday at a sprawling ground near their Jagti settlement here to mark the 35 years of their exodus from the valley, demanding justice and a roadmap for their return and rehabilitation. The Kashmiri Pandit community observes January 19 as the "holocaust day" to mark their migration from the Valley in 1990 following the eruption of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Several migrant organizations like Panun Kashmir, Youth All India Kashmiri Samaj (YAIKS) and Kashmir

Pandit Sabha (KPS) held separate events during the day to pay tributes to the victims and to reaffirm commitment to the cause of the Kashmiri Pandits. At a joint event organized by Panun Kashmir and Youth 4 Panun Kashmir, a photo exhibition, displayed at Jagti Pandit settlement along Jammu-Srinagar national highway highlighted the pain of exile and sufferings of the community. They also showcased life in tents after their migration from Kashmir. "This is a crucial moment of remembrance, resilience, and a call for justice. We want the government to carve out a homeland for the community in

the valley," a spokesperson of Panun Kashmir said. He said the organization has taken a renewed pledge to re-dedicate itself to the cause of a "separate homeland" in the valley. Sushma Pandita, a woman who was present in one of the tents, said the community has suffered a lot over the past three decades and wants the government to come forward and announce a special package for the community's proper rehabilitation. "The government should pay attention towards the displaced community and announce a job package for our unemployed youth," she said, adding that they have moved from the tents to one or two-room settlements but "now it is time for us to get a permanent house".

## REVIVING GIANTS

# The conservation battle for bison in Jharkhand



Jharkhand Forest dept initiates study to revive dwindling Bison population at PTR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Jan 19:** The Jharkhand Forest department has initiated a study to revive the dwindling population of Bison, popularly known as Gaur, at Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR), an official said. The bison, a food source for big cats, has already gone extinct from across Jharkhand, excluding the PTR where merely 50-70 bison are surviving, he claimed. According to wildlife experts, poaching, infection and habitat disturbance by local cattle have been the major reasons for the vanishing of bison from Jharkhand. "Once Bisons were abundant in Jharkhand's Saranda, Dalma, Hazaribagh, Gumla and some other forests. But, they went extinct from across the state. PTR, mainly Betla range, is the last destination where it is surviving but numbers are on the decline," said former state wildlife board member DS Srivastava. He alleged domestic cattle was posing a major threat to the animal in PTR. "Over 1.5 lakh domestic cattle from around the villages in PTR have occupied most of the space of Bison. They are eating food of the Bison and are also spreading several infections such as mouth and foot diseases. The forest department needs to check the cattle grazing," he said. PTR director Kumar Ashutosh said they are carrying out a study to ascertain the parameters that impact the animal. "Various aspects are being studied right from their behaviour to survival requirements so that their population could be increased," Ashutosh told PTI. Giving more details, PTR deputy field director Prajesh Jena said, "We are also studying species of grass they prefer, how to improve their

habitats and grow their population. After the study, we will prepare a comprehensive plan for their revival." He said that the bison population in PTR was around 150 in the 1970s. "The population is currently between 50 and 70. Its revival is also important from a tiger point of view. They are a good source of food for tigers, other than the Sambar and Cheetah," he said. The tiger count in Jharkhand's Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR) rose to one in the latest tiger estimation report, released in 2023, from nil recorded in 2018. The reserve official, however, claimed that currently, the population of tigers in the reserve is around five. "We have evidence of five tigers in camera trapping captured recently in the reserve," Jena said. In a bid to protect bison and other animals from zoonotic diseases, the PTR authority in association with district administration has also initiated a massive vaccination drive under which around 1.5 lakh domestic cattle will be vaccinated. Around 190 villages spread around the reserve area. The villagers let out their cattle

Poaching, infection and habitat disturbance by local cattle have been the major reasons for the vanishing of bison from Jharkhand. In a bid to protect bison and other animals from zoonotic diseases, the PTR authority in association with district administration has also initiated a massive vaccination drive under which around 1.5 lakh domestic cattle will be vaccinated.

# Army provides training to Village Defence Guards in Poonch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mendhar/Jammu, Jan 19:** The Indian Army Sunday provided comprehensive training to Village Defence Guards (VDGs) in a forward area of the Mendhar sector in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, security officials said. A total of 43 VDG members attended the training session, which aimed to enhance their skills in minor tactics, endurance and firing, the officials added. The training was conducted by the Rashtriya Rifles battalion under the aegis of the counter-insurgency force, Romeo, at Balnoi, located near the Line of Control (LoC). The session covered detailed instructions on weapon maintenance for the newly issued Self-Loading Rifles (SLR), insights into the modus operandi of terrorist groups and grievance redressal. Participants also received practical guidance in cleaning and performing minor repairs on their personal weapons.



Members of J&K Police Dare Devils team perform stunts on bikes during rehearsal for the Republic Day 2025 parade at police ground, in Jammu

PTI PHOTO

# MLA alleges ₹30 crore blanket distribution scam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Ranchi, Jan 19:** The Jharkhand government has begun distributing blankets to the needy across all 24 districts of the state, even as winter draws to a close. However, widespread complaints have surfaced regarding irregularities in the supply and quality of the blankets being distributed. For the year 2024-25, the state government approved the procurement of 9,20,245 blankets at a cost of approximately ₹30 crore. Following the tender process, orders were awarded to Om Shakti Textiles of Panipat, Haryana, and Bihari Lal Chaudhary Tradelink Private Limited of Dhanbad. The companies were required to complete their supplies by January 11, but delays in delivery have been reported in several districts. As per the tender terms, the blankets were to be handloom-made with a composition of 70 per cent wool and 30 per cent synthetic fiber. However, numerous complaints reveal that powerloom-made blankets are being distributed instead. Additionally, the wool con-

tent in many blankets reportedly falls between 35-40 per cent, far below the stipulated standard. The tender also specified that the weight of the blanket after washing should be at least two kg. Inspections in various districts have found the weight of several blankets to be significantly lower, ranging from 1,596 to 1,662 grams. Former Minister and Jamsheerpur West MLA Saryu Rai has raised concerns over irregularities in the distribution of blankets in a letter addressed to Chief Minister Hemant Soren. He pointed out that despite an increase of ₹75-100 per blanket compared to last year's price to ensure better quality, suppliers have failed to meet the required standards. Rai alleged that approximately 90 per cent of the supplied blankets are of substandard quality, while only 10 per cent comply with the tender's terms. He further claimed this tactic is used to present those samples during investigations which fulfil the criteria. Rai has urged the Chief Minister to initiate a thorough probe into the matter.

# Modi highlights Netaji's connection to Jharkhand's Gomoh

The memory of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's courage remains immortalized at Gomoh Junction, reminding generations of his relentless pursuit of freedom and justice

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 19:** Jharkhand's Gomoh holds a special place in India's freedom struggle, as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose touched the soil here the last time before embarking on his mission to secure India's Independence. This historical connection was brought to light by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 118th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' Sunday. Recalling the dramatic events of 'The Great Escape', PM Modi said, "It was January in Kolkata during the peak of World War II. India's anger against British rule was rising. Police patrolled every corner of the city, with special attention to a house in the heart of Kolkata. Amid this tension, a man in a brown coat, pants, and a black hat stepped out of the house under the cover of darkness. Dodging several checkpoints, he reached Gomoh station in Jharkhand. From there, he boarded a train, eventually making his way to Europe via Afghanistan, despite the Brit-

ish Empire's watchful eyes." PM Modi added, "This thrilling story might sound like a movie scene, but it reflects the extraordinary courage of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Today, we celebrate January 23, his birth anniversary, as 'Parakram Diwas', commemorating his bravery and indomitable spirit." The events of January 18, 1941, mark one of the boldest episodes in India's freedom movement. Under house arrest at his residence on Elgin Road, Kolkata, by the British authorities, Netaji orchestrated a meticulously planned escape. Disguised as a Pathan, he left his home with the assistance of his nephew, Dr Shishir Bose, travelling in a Wanderer car (registration number BLA 7169). By 8 pm, he reached the home of his lawyer friend, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, in Gomoh's Loco Bazar. With Sheikh Abdullah's help, a Pathan outfit was hastily prepared by Amin Tailor of



'MANN KI BAAT'

Gomoh. Amin himself escorted Netaji to Gomoh station at 1 am in the dead of night, where he boarded the Howrah-Peshawar Mail (later came to be known as the Kalka Mail). This train, renamed Netaji Express in 2021, carried him to Delhi. From there, he continued his journey via the Frontier Mail to Peshawar, eventually leaving India and evading the British authorities. To honour Netaji's legacy, Gomoh station was renamed Netaji

Subhas Chandra Bose Junction in 2009. A life-sized bronze statue of him now stands between platforms 1 and 2, accompanied by a plaque narrating the tale of his daring escape. Shishir Bose vividly described the emotional moment in his book, At Gomoh station, a sleepy porter carried Netaji's luggage as he climbed the overbridge and disappeared into the darkness. Moments later, the Kalka Mail arrived, and I stood outside the sta-

- To honour Netaji's legacy, Gomoh station was renamed Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Junction in 2009
- A life-sized bronze statue of him now stands between platforms 1 and 2, accompanied by a plaque narrating the tale of his daring escape

tion, listening to the sound of its wheels which carried him further into history. Historical records reveal that the British only realized Netaji's disappearance nine days later, January 27, 1941. His escape was a meticulously planned operation involving key figures like Satyaranjan Bakshi and freedom fighters Alijan and Chiranjeev Babu. Netaji's audacious journey from Gomoh inspired countless Indians to fight for Independence. Today, the memory of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's courage remains immortalized at Gomoh Junction, reminding generations of his relentless pursuit of freedom and justice.



The NCP worker base should be created in villages and every nook and corner. Everyone should work in coordination

AIT PAWAR | MAHA DY CM

COLD WEATHER PERSISTS IN PUNJAB, HARYANA

Punjab and Haryana continued to reel under cold weather Sunday with fog enveloping many places in both states. Amritsar was the coldest place with a low of 4.8 degrees Celsius, followed by 6.6 degrees Celsius in Bathinda, the meteorological department said



of the day quote

Today our Congress leader says fighting against the Indian state. He has no knowledge of history, nor does he have anything to do with it



JP NADDA | UNION MINISTER

Keeping a strict vigil along the Indo-Bangladesh border, @ assampolice apprehended 2 Bangladeshi nationals and pushed them across the border



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

Rohingyas have settled in parts of Salt Lake, North Kolkata and besides fish bheries (small ponds for aquaculture) with the help of the Trinamool Congress leaders



SUKANTA MAJUMDAR | WB BIP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Four killed as fire breaks out in house

Ghaziabad (UP): Four people, including three members of a family, were charred to death in sleep after a fire broke out in a house here due to a short circuit early Sunday, officials said. The fire broke out in a multi-storey building in the Kanchar Park area under the Loni police station jurisdiction. According to the fire department, information about the incident was received at the Loni fire station at 7.06 am and three fire engines were pressed into service.

Three dead as car crashes into tree

Maharajganj (UP): Three people died after their car rammmed into a tree in the district, police said Sunday. The accident occurred near Bahuwar village on last midnight, when the three were returning to Kushinagar from Nichlaul after meeting a relative, Nichlaul police station in-charge Gaurav Kannaujia said. Rakesh (23), Shobhit (30) and Devanand (28), who were all from Kushinagar, died on the spot, police said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination, they said.

3 dead, 4 missing as boat capsizes

Katihar: Three people were killed and four others went missing after a boat capsized in the Ganga in Bihar's Katihar district Sunday, officials said. The boat, with 17 people on board, capsized near Golaghat in the Amdabad area, they said. Ten people have been rescued so far, officials said, adding that most of them managed to swim to the bank. "The rescue operation is still underway for the four missing persons. An investigation has been ordered to find the cause of the incident," District Magistrate Manesh Kumar Meena told PTI.

Tiger crushed to death by train

Chandrapur: A sub-adult tiger cub was crushed to death by a train in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district Sunday morning, forest officials said. The female big cat, aged 12-15 months, lost its life on the Chanda Fort-Gondia railway line near Alewahi village in the Sindewahi tehsil, they said. Forest officials said the wild animal was hit by train 07051 (Hyderabad-Raxaul). After following the necessary formalities, including post-mortem, the carcass was cremated, said a senior forest official.

Sentence for convict to be pronounced today

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 19: A Kolkata court will Monday pronounce the quantum of punishment of Sanjay Roy, convicted of raping and murdering an on-duty doctor at the state-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital here.

The charges under which Roy has been convicted entail a minimum sentence of life imprisonment, while the maximum can be capital punishment. Additional District and Sessions Judge Anirban Das, Sealdah court, had Saturday declared Roy guilty of rape and murder of the postgraduate trainee at the hospital August 9 last year.

The gruesome crime had led to nationwide outrage and prolonged protests. Roy, a former civic volunteer with the Kolkata Police, was arrested August 10, 2024, a day after the 31-year-old medic's body was found in the seminar room of the hospital

Roy, a former civic volunteer with the Kolkata Police, was arrested August 10, 2024, a day after the 31-year-old medic's body was found in the seminar room of the hospital. Found guilty of sexually assaulting the doctor and throttling her to death, Roy was convicted Saturday by the judge under Sections 64, 66 and 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Section 64 (rape) of the BNS entails a punishment of not less than 10 years and can go up to life term. Section 66 (punishment for causing death or resulting in persistent vege-

RG KAR HORROR



If guilty, no objection if he's hanged: Roy's mother

Kolkata: The mother of Sanjay Roy, who was convicted for the rape and murder of an on-duty medic of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, Sunday said if her son is guilty then he should get the punishment he deserves, even if it means hanging. The 70-year-old woman said she would "cry alone" but would accept his punishment as destiny. A Kolkata court, where Sanjay Roy's trial was held, will announce the quantum of punishment Monday. A former civic volunteer with the Kolkata police, Roy was the only person arrested in the case. Initially reticent to speak to the media after the court convicted Roy January 18, his mother Malati told reporters Sunday that being a woman and a mother of three daughters, "I can feel the anguish and pain of the mother of the woman medic who is also like my daughter."

tative state of victim) provides for punishment of not less than 20 years that may extend to imprisonment for life, which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of that person's natural life, or with death.

Section 103(1) (murder) of BNS provides for death penalty or imprisonment for life to a person convicted of the crime. The judge said the over 160-page judgement, which will be completed after the pronouncement of the sentence Monday, will also categorically answer some questions raised by the complainant, the father of the victim. Das said that he has, in the judgement, criticised some activities of the police authority as well as the hospital authority. The investigation into the case was transferred from the Kolkata Police to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by the Calcutta High Court. The judge said that Roy's statement will be heard at 12:30 pm Monday, and the sentence will be pronounced thereafter. At the time of delivery of the verdict Monday, Roy claimed in court that he had been framed. The parents of the deceased doctor have expressed gratitude to the court for delivering justice.

SKM welcomes govt decision to hold talks



The SKM also called upon all farmers to "respond and rise in protest" against the Union government and force it to "roll back its anti-farmer policies"

They termed the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM) an attempt to bring back the repealed farm laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Samyukt Kisan Morcha Sunday hailed the Union government's proposal of talks with farmers as

a great victory and welcomed fasting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal's decision to receive medical support.

"SKM considers union government's decision to hold discussions with farmers organisations a great victory," they said in a statement. The group, which led the 2020-21 farmers' protests against the three now-repealed farm laws, said the government was forced to hold discussions due to the farmers' growing unity.

"SKM welcomes the decision of fasting farmer leader Sardar Jagjit Singh Dallewal to receive medical support and wishes him a quick recovery and good health. The continuous efforts made by SKM leaders for farmers' unity and pan-India agitation against the anti-farmer union government has forced the Govt. to retract from its divisive strategy," the collective said.

Rahul launches 'White T-shirt movement' for equality

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi Sunday announced the launch of a 'White T-shirt Movement,' championing the rights of the masses, even as he accused the Narendra Modi government of turning its back on the poor. Gandhi announced the launch in a post on X and urged people to be a part of it. "If you believe in economic justice, oppose rising wealth inequalities, fight for social equality, reject all forms of discrimination, and strive for peace and stability in our country, wear your white T-shirts and join the movement," said a video voiceover posted by Gandhi on X.

Gandhi said, "Today the Modi government has turned its back on the poor and the working class and has left them to their own devices. The government's entire focus is on enriching a select

few capitalists." He said that because of this, inequality is constantly increasing and the condition of the workers "who nourish the country with their blood and sweat" is getting worse and they are forced to endure various kinds of injustice and atrocities.

"In such a situation, it is the responsibility of all of us to raise our voice strongly to get them justice and rights. With this thought, we are starting the #WhiteTshirt-Movement," he said on X.

"I appeal to my youth and working class colleagues to participate in this movement in large numbers. To join this campaign and get detailed information about it, visit this link -https://whitet-shirt.in/home/hin or give a missed call on this number -- 9999812024," the post further read. The website of the 'White T-shirt Movement' states that a 'white T-shirt' is not just a piece of cloth



Newly-initiated Naga sadhus of Shri Panchayati Akhara Niranjani perform rituals during Mahakumbh, at Sangam in Prayagraj



but is a symbol of the party's five guiding principles - compassion, unity, non-violence, equality, and progress for all. "These values resonate the spirit of India's 8000-year-old civilisation, which is based on harmony and diversity. Today, growing inequalities that are rooted in income, caste and religion demand action beyond ideology," it says. The message further reads, "Our commitment

MYSTERIOUS DEATHS IN J&K

Centre's team reaches Rajouri; toll rises to 17



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 19: A high-level inter-ministerial team Sunday reached Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district where a mysterious illness is wreaking havoc, killing another person Sunday and taking the death toll to 17.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had Saturday ordered the constitution of an inter-ministerial team to ascertain the causes of deaths that took place within weeks in three families linked to each other in the remote Badhaal village.

Yasmeen Kousar, the last of the six children of Mohd Aslam undergoing treatment at SMGS hospital in Jammu, died this evening, officials said.

Kousar's five siblings and grandparents died last week. Nine other members of two families had died in the village between December 7 and 12.

"J&K health department and other departments probed the deaths but the exact cause has not been found yet. The Home Minister has constituted a team of inter-ministerial experts

and they have reached here," Lt Governor Manoj Sinha told reporters on the sidelines of a function here. He said police have set up a special investigation team to probe the events from other angles.ber team arrived at Rajouri district headquarters this evening and is likely to visit the mountain village, 55km from the town, Monday. The central team will work in collaboration with the local administration to provide immediate relief to the victims.

Experts from some of the most reputable institutions in the country have been roped in to understand the causes of the deaths.

The patients complained of fever, pain, nausea and loss of consciousness before dying within days of their admission to hospitals.

Earlier, a Jammu and Kashmir government spokesperson said investigations and samples empirically indicated that the incidents were not due to a communicable disease of bacterial or viral origin and that there is no public health angle.

BEANT SINGH ASSASSINATION CASE

Apex court to hear Rajoana's plea today

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 19: The Supreme Court is slated to hear Monday a writ petition filed by Balwant Singh Rajoana, a death row convict in the 1995 assassination case of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh and others, seeking commutation of his death penalty on the ground of over 12-year-long delay in deciding his mercy petition.

As per the causelist published on the website of the apex court, a Special Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai, P.K. Mishra and KV Viswanathan will resume hearing the matter January 20.

In an earlier hearing, the Justice Gavai-led Special Bench had granted the Union government four weeks more to decide Balwant Singh Rajoana's mercy petition. It had agreed to defer till January 20 the hearing after Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, the second-highest law officer of the Centre, submitted that more inputs from agencies were needed, considering the "sensitivities" involved in the matter.

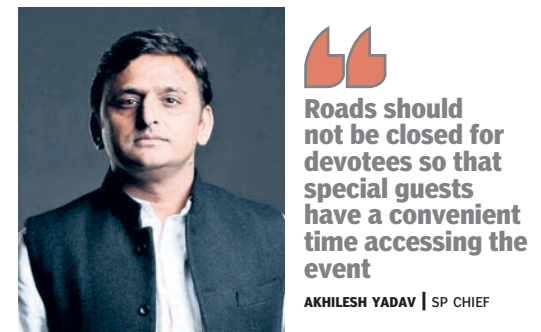


In an order dictated in open court on November 18, the top court had requested President Droupadi Murmu to consider within two weeks the mercy petition filed on behalf of Balwant Singh Rajoana. It had asked the Secretary to the President of India to place before President Murmu the mercy petition filed by Rajoana, clarifying that if Rajoana's mercy petition is not decided within two weeks, it will proceed to consider his application for interim release. Within hours, the Supreme Court agreed to not uphold its order after SG Mehta made an urgent mentioning before the Justice Gavai-led Bench.

The website of the 'White T-shirt Movement' states that a 'white T-shirt' is not just a piece of cloth but is a symbol of the party's five guiding principles -- compassion, unity, non-violence, equality, and progress for all

change and embrace this way of life with pride. The white T-shirt is our symbol - a call for a just and unified India. By wearing it, we honour the spirit of Bharat Jodo, which echoes the goals of the Bharat Jodo Yatra: bridging divides and building a cohesive, equitable nation," it says.





**Roads should not be closed for devotees so that special guests have a convenient time accessing the event**  
 AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

**MANU BHAKER'S GRANDMOTHER, UNCLE KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT**  
 Paris Olympic medallist shooter Manu Bhaker's grandmother and maternal uncle died in a road accident Sunday, police said. The accident occurred on Mahendragarh bypass road in Charkhi Dadri area when a car hit their scooter, officials said. The two died on the spot and the car driver fled from the spot after the accident, Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Suresh Kumar said



**of the day uote**

Today I can say with confidence, NDRF's implementation of NDMA policies on the ground has played a pivotal role in positioning India as a global leader in disaster management. India has taken a lead in the entire world in disaster-resilient infrastructure by setting up CDRI



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The state government has implemented the The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, which allows for the detention of habitual offenders in drug trafficking to protect public interest



SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKHU | HP CM

A large number of devotees are arriving at the Maha Kumbh from across the country and abroad. Many foreign devotees were deeply moved after taking a holy dip at the Sangam



YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

**POST OF THE DAY**

As per my latest ground report from Delhi  
 AAP: 38  
 BJP: 28  
 INC: 04  
 There is significant dip in popularity of Arvind Kejriwal  
 @Politix2029

**Suspected hooch leaves 7 dead in dry Bihar, probe ordered**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bettiah (Bihar), Jan 19:** Seven people died allegedly after drinking spurious liquor in dry Bihar's West Champaran district, prompting the administration to order an inquiry, a police officer said Sunday.

The police came to know about the deaths Sunday, though the first fatality occurred four days ago and the bodies of all seven were already cremated, the officer said.

District Superintendent of Police Shaurya Suman said all the deaths were reported from the Lauriya police station area.

Locals blamed the deaths on consumption of spurious liquor, but the SP asserted that the reason behind at last two fatalities was not hooch. One had been hit by a tractor, while another had suffered a paralytic attack, Suman said.

"The first death took place January 15 though we came to know about the episode only today. The cause of the remaining five deaths was unclear as all seven bodies were cremated before the police were informed. We have set up an investigation team to find out the cause of the deaths," Suman told PTI.

West Champaran's Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC), Sumit Kumar said it is difficult to ascertain the cause of the deaths as all the bodies were cremated.

"The investigation team was directed to submit its report within 24 hours," Kumar told PTI.

**Goons involved in attack on Kejriwal, claims AAP**

*A day after the alleged attack, Kejriwal said his life is dedicated to the country, while complaining that Delhi has never witnessed such poll campaigning when a "murderous attack" was attempted on a former Chief Minister*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 19:** The AAP and the BJP indulged in a blame game Sunday, with the former claiming that the "attackers" involved in an alleged assault on party supremo Arvind Kejriwal were "criminals" and the saffron party asserting that three Dalit men were injured after being hit by Kejriwal's vehicle and they are now being labelled as "goons".

A day after the alleged attack, Kejriwal said his life is dedicated to the country, while complaining that Delhi has never witnessed such poll campaigning when a "murderous attack" was attempted on a former chief minister.

"This is their way of campaigning because they are badly losing (the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls)," the AAP national convenor said, targeting the BJP. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) contests elections by "orchestrating deadly attacks, while I fight on the basis of work and people's welfare", he said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged that Kejriwal's vehicle was attacked by "goons" of Parvesh Verma, the BJP candidate in the February 5 polls from New Delhi, while he was campaigning in the constituency Saturday.

Verma claimed at a press conference that three men belonging to the "Valmiki" community were injured after being hit by Kejriwal's vehi-

**Sambhal violence: 10 more arrested**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sambhal (UP), Jan 19:** Police Sunday arrested 10 more people in connection with the November 24 violence near the Shahi Jama Masjid in this Uttar Pradesh district, officials said.

With this, 70 people have so far been arrested in connection with the incident, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Srish Chandra said. Those arrested were Tahzeeb, Azhar Ali, Asad, Danish, Suhaib, Alam, Mohammad Danish, Shane Alam, Bakir and Mulla Afroz, the officer said, adding that they were nabbed after police scanned CCTV footage and photographs that had gone viral on the social media.

The ASP said Afroz, son of Afzar, is a active member of the Sarik Sata gang that is involved in vehicle and arms trafficking. He was reportedly present at the scene during the

commotion and had allegedly fired at the police party during the chaos.

The bullets struck several individuals, including Bilal and Ayan, who succumbed to their injuries. Police have seized a .32-bore pistol, three live cartridges and 15 blank cartridges from Afroz's possession.

The arrested accused have been sent to jail, Chandra added. A court in Sambhal November 19 had passed an ex-parte order for a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid by an advocate commissioner, following a plea filed by Hindu petitioners that claimed that the mosque was built by Mughal emperor Babur in 1526 after demolishing a temple.

During a second round of survey of the mosque November 24 last year, protesting locals clashed with security personnel, leading to the violence that led to the deaths of four people and injuries to dozens.

**POK 'crown jewel of India': Rajnath Singh**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaunpur (UP), Jan 19:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Sunday described Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the "crown jewel of India" and asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was incomplete without it.

The senior BJP leader also accused Pakistan of continuing its conspiracy to foster terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Singh was speaking to reporters in the Nizamuddinpur village of Jaunpur district, where he attended a ceremonial event at the home of senior BJP leader Jagat Narayan Dubey.

"It (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) is the crown jewel of India and Jammu and Kashmir is incomplete without it," he said. "For Pakistan, the Kashmir occupied by it is nothing more than a foreign territory being used to promote terrorism and anti-India propaganda. Terror camps and launch pads there (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) should be dismantled or it will face an appropriate response,"



Singh added. The defence minister also hit out at Pakistani leader Anwar-ul-Haq over his alleged anti-India rhetoric. "Pakistan is trying to provoke people against India on religious grounds while oppressing citizens there," he said. He also claimed that India had emerged as the world's largest digital economy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. India, which now has the highest number of 5G users, is on track to becoming a developed nation by 2047, Singh asserted. "Today, when India is the world listens attentively. Our scientists are manufacturing defence equipment on Indian soil and exporting those to other nations."

**Mahakumbh fire: PM speaks to Adityanath**

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday spoke to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to take stock of the situation after a fire gutted several tents in Sector 19 of the Mahakumbh venue in Prayagraj. No one was injured in the incident. PM Modi and Chief Minister Adityanath also discussed fire-control arrangements at the venue to prevent a repeat of such an incident. The Uttar Pradesh CM has sent senior officials to the site to assess the situation. The fire broke out reportedly following the explosion of two gas cylinders inside a tent at the Mahakumbh venue. The fire quickly spread to several nearby tents, burning them to the ground. Thankfully, no injuries have been reported. According to police, the fire started in Sector 19 of the Maha Kumbh site, where the cylinders exploded. Fire trucks, which were already stationed at the venue as part of safety measures for the large-scale event, rushed to the scene and managed to control the blaze. As a precautionary measure, people living in surrounding tents were promptly evacuated to ensure their safety. The incident, though alarming, did not result in any casualties, thanks to the swift response from the authorities.



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) volunteers take part in a route-march in Ajmer, Rajasthan  
 PTI PHOTO

**CPI(M) rejects charges of woman councillor's abduction**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Jan 19:** The ruling CPI(M) in Kerala Sunday rejected the allegations of abduction levelled by its party councillor ahead of a no-confidence motion moved in the Koothattukulam Municipality here and said no physical assault took place.

A day after the incident, the Marxist Party even came out with an explanation that the woman councillor Kala Raju and her children had been allegedly abducted by the Congress leaders and workers some days ago. Dramatic scenes unfolded outside the LDF-ruled Municipality Saturday ahead of the motion moved by the opposition UDF, as Raju, a CPI(M) woman councillor, was allegedly abducted in broad daylight upon her arrival to vote in the motion.

As the issue triggered a huge political controversy, P B Rathi, the area secretary of the CPI(M) in Koothattukulam, Sunday rejected the allegations and claimed that she didn't suffer any physical assault by the party workers and leaders.

**SHORT TAKES**

**Minor rape: 57 of 59 accused held**

**Pathanamthitta (Kerala):** As many as 57 of the total of 59 people accused in the sensational case of alleged sexual abuse of a Dalit girl in the district, have been arrested so far, police said Sunday. Since the first case in this regard was registered at Ilavumthitta police station January 10, all the listed accused, except two who are currently abroad, have been arrested through a comprehensive probe, district police chief V G Vinod Kumar said. A 25-year-old youth was the last person who was taken into custody in the incident and he was held from nearby his house here Sunday morning, the officer said in a statement here.

**Man held for bomb hoax call**

**Mumbai:** A man was arrested for allegedly calling up the Mumbai police control room and falsely claiming a bomb had been planted in Dharavi, an official said Sunday. The call was made Friday, after which a case was registered and a probe began, he said. "We arrested Narendra Ganpat Kawal from Dharavi itself on Friday night through technical intelligence. He had claimed a bomb had been placed in Rajiv Gandhi Nagar in Dharavi. Our probe has found he was booked by Azad Maidan police station for a similar crime," the official said.

**Encounter breaks out**

**Srinagar:** An encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the Sopore area of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, officials here said. The encounter started after terrorists opened fire at security forces during a search operation in Zaloor Gujjarpati in Sopore police district, they said. According to the officials, there are no reports of any casualties in the operation so far.

**MAHAKUMBH 2025**  
**Inside integrated command centre, a resolve to avoid stampedes**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mahakumbh Nagar (UP), Jan 19:** A sprawling temporary city spread over 10,000 acres, more than a crore pilgrims and seers living at a time and about 20 lakh visitors daily -- the Integrated Control Command Centre here is keeping a hawk's eye to ensure smooth crowd management through continuous monitoring and avoid untoward incidents.

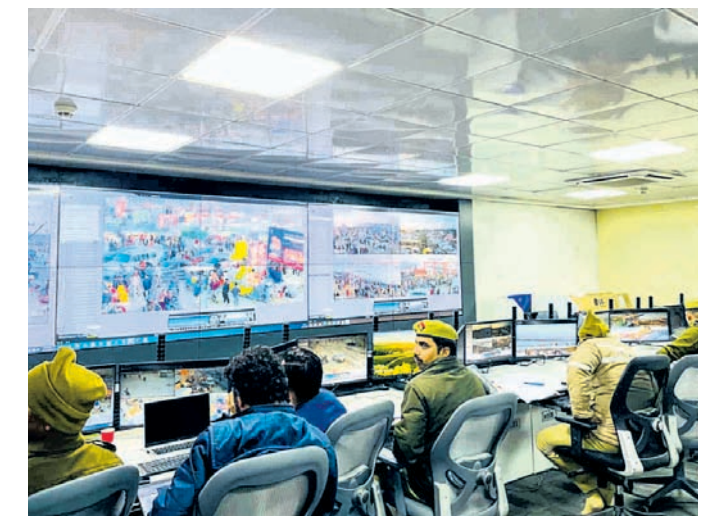
More than 400 people each in four Integrated Control Command Centres (ICCC) keep a continuous watch on big screens displaying live footage and data from hotspots to alert the personnel on crowd density and pilgrim flow. The source of the visuals -- more than 3,000 cameras, underwater drones and a battery of over 60,000 personnel on the ground.

The mega-religious event, organised every 12 years, is being held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days. More than seven crore pilgrims

have so far taken a holy dip at the Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers. A PTI reporter spent a day inside the main ICCC and learnt about its inner workings, including the conduct of surveillance from three angles -- security, crowd management and crime prevention.

According to Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar, an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre and the ICCC in-charge, the data being captured was accurate to ensure there were no more "guesstimates".

"This is the first time in the world that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being used for crowd management at this scale. We have installed more than 3,000 cameras across the mela area and the city, of which 1,800 are AI-enabled. There is absolute no guess work, everything is based on real-time data being captured extensively," Kumar told PTI.



"Whenever the crowd density at a particular place rises above the marked threshold, an alert pops up on the screens and the information is communicated to the wireless grids. Teams on the ground swing into action at this point and diversions are made accordingly. There are 13 contingency schemes

eighteen tents, was doused in 22 minutes and no casualties were reported.

A cop deployed as an observer in the command centre told PTI that they undertook 10-hour shifts each to continuously monitor the live feed pouring in while a dedicated call centre attended to complaints and intimations from the pilgrims.

Four ICCCs are operational in the Maha Kumbh -- the head office and in the city and two in the Jhansi and the Arai areas. More than 60,000 police personnel and 56 police stations are in place to ensure safety.

Additionally, 30 pontoon bridges and grand entry and exit gates are also under the scanner of cameras, besides the ghats and other areas in

the mela ground. Mahakumbh Nagar Additional District Magistrate Vivek Chaturvedi said the administration maintained regular touch with the Railways and the roadways to corroborate pilgrim influx data.

The Uttar Pradesh government has also written to the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy to send officers to the Maha Kumbh "to study crowd management and other varied aspects" of their duties.

In 1954, more than 400 people were killed in the Kumbh after being trampled or drowned in one of the deadliest crowd-related disasters worldwide. At least 36 people died during the 2013 festival, the last time it was held in Prayagraj.

**MORE THAN 400 PEOPLE EACH IN FOUR ICCCs KEEP A CONTINUOUS WATCH ON BIG SCREENS DISPLAYING LIVE FOOTAGE AND DATA FROM HOTSPOTS TO ALERT THE PERSONNEL ON CROWD DENSITY AND PILGRIM FLOW**

**THE SOURCE OF THE VISUALS -- MORE THAN 3,000 CAMERAS, UNDERWATER DRONES AND A BATTERY OF OVER 60,000 PERSONNEL ON THE GROUND**

# international

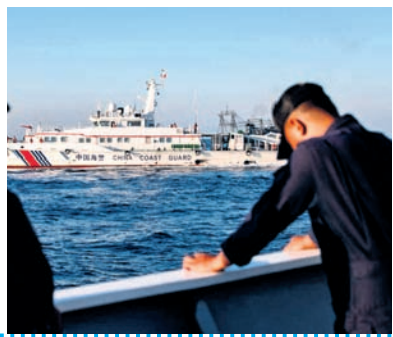


There is much to prepare for. Above all, what we need to anticipate are the potential challenges to ASEAN centrality

**MOHAMAD HASAN**  
 FOREIGN MINISTER, MALAYSIA

## PHILIPPINES, US HOLD JOINT MARITIME EXERCISES

The Philippines and the United States carried out joint maritime exercises for a fifth time in the South China Sea, Manila's armed forces said Sunday, in a move that would likely irk China



### of the day quote

The Kenya-led mission has made tremendous progress in reducing gang violence, earning praise across the globe

**KIPCHUMBA MURKOMEN**  
 CABINET SECRETARY, KENYA

I am open to sending German soldiers to Ukraine to help secure a demilitarised zone there if a ceasefire agreed with Russia

**BORIS PISTORIUS**  
 DEFENCE MINISTER, GERMANY

I have been subjected to significant pressure and threats over plans to reform the department

**JOSIP DABRO**  
 DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, CROATIA

# TikTok restores service

Even if temporary, the unprecedented shutdown of TikTok is set to have a wide-ranging impact on US-China relations, US politics, the social media marketplace and millions of Americans who depend on the app economically and culturally



TikTok stopped working for its 170 million American users late Saturday before a law shutting it down on national security grounds took effect Sunday

US officials had warned that under Chinese parent company ByteDance, there was a risk of Americans' data being misused

REUTERS

**Washington, Jan 19:** TikTok said Sunday it was restoring its service after President-elect Donald Trump said he would revive the app's access in the US when he returns to power Monday.

The statement came after US users reported being able to access the Chinese-owned service's website while the far more widely used TikTok app itself began coming back online for some users with just a few basic services.

"In agreement with our service providers, TikTok is in the process of restoring service," TikTok said in a statement that thanked Trump for "providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties (for) providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans and allowing over 7 million small

businesses to thrive."

TikTok stopped working for US users late Saturday before a law shutting it down on national security grounds took effect Sunday. US officials had warned that under Chinese parent company ByteDance, there was a risk of Americans' data being misused. Trump said he would "extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal to protect our national security."

"I would like the United States to have a 50% ownership position in a joint venture," he wrote on Truth Social.

Trump said the executive order would specify there would be no liability for any company that helped keep TikTok from going dark before his order. Trump had earlier said he

would most likely give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from the ban after he takes office, a promise TikTok cited in a notice posted to users on the app.

"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the US. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now. We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned," a message notified users of TikTok, which disappeared from Apple and Google app stores late Saturday.

Even if temporary, the unprecedented shutdown of TikTok is set to have a wide-ranging impact on US-China relations, US politics, the social media marketplace and millions of

## AHEAD OF INAUGURATION

# Trump holds victory rally in Washington

REUTERS

**Washington, Jan 19:** President-elect Donald Trump will take a victory lap Sunday with a campaign-style rally in Washington, DC, a day before he is sworn in for a second term four years after losing the White House to Joe Biden.

Trump's "Make America Great Again Victory Rally" - scheduled for 3 pm at the Capital One Arena - marks his first major speech in Washington since he urged his supporters to march on the Capitol Jan 6, 2021, in protest against his defeat.

Thousands of people breached the building in an unsuccessful effort to prevent Congress from certifying the results. Trump has vowed to pardon many of the more than 1,500 people charged in connection with the attack.

His rally remarks, along with his inaugural address Monday, could offer a preview of the tone he plans to adopt in the early days of his second term in office. In recent weeks, Trump has disconcerted foreign allies by musing aloud about taking over Greenland and the Panama Canal and turning Canada into a US state.

The rally is likely to resemble the free-wheeling arena speeches that have been a Trump staple since his first White House campaign in 2016.

The world's richest man, Elon Musk, who has become



Remarks could offer preview of his second term in office

JD Vance and Elon Musk among speakers due to address crowd

Biden makes last official trip as president to South Carolina

a close Trump confidant since spending more than \$250 million to boost his campaign, is scheduled to speak at the event, along with Vice President-elect JD Vance, Ultimate Fighting Championship CEO Dana White, conservative activist Charlie Kirk and conservative commentator Megyn Kelly.

Singer and rapper Kid Rock, disco group The Village People, singer Billy Ray Cyrus and singer Lee Greenwood are all scheduled to perform at the rally.

President Joe Biden will meanwhile make his last official trip as president Sunday to Charleston, South Carolina, to mark Martin Luther King Jr Day, which is Monday, the White House said. He will attend services and speak about King's legacy at Royal Missionary Baptist Church.

## SHORT TAKES

### Biden posthumously pardons Garvey

**Washington:** President Joe Biden Sunday posthumously pardoned Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey, who influenced Malcolm X and other Black civil rights leaders and was convicted of mail fraud in the 1920s. Also receiving pardons were a top Virginia lawmaker and advocates for immigrant rights, criminal justice reform and gun violence prevention. Congressional leaders had pushed for Biden to pardon Garvey, with supporters arguing that Garvey's conviction was politically motivated and an effort to silence the increasingly popular leader who spoke of racial pride. After Garvey was convicted, he was deported to Jamaica, where he was born. He died in 1940.

### Nearly 80 people killed in Colombia

**San Juan:** Officials in Colombia say about 80 people have been killed in the country's northeast region following failed attempts to hold peace talks with the National Liberation Army. Among those killed are seven people who sought to sign a peace deal, as well as community leader Carmelo Guerrero, according to a report that a government ombudsman agency released late Saturday. Officials said the attacks occurred in several towns located in the Catatumbo region, with at least three people who were part of the peace talks being kidnapped. Hundreds of people are fleeing the area, with some hiding in the nearby lush mountains.

## Protesters storm SK court

REUTERS

**Seoul, Jan 19:** Hundreds of supporters of South Korea's arrested president, Yoon Suk Yeol, stormed a court building early Sunday after his detention was extended, smashing windows and breaking inside, an attack the country's acting leader called "unimaginable".

Yoon Wednesday became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested as he faces allegations of insurrection related to his stunning, short-lived Dec 3 declaration of martial law that has plunged the country into political turmoil.

Shortly after the court announced its decision around 3 am Sunday, Yoon's supporters swarmed the building, overwhelming riot police trying to keep them at bay.

Protesters blasted fire extinguishers at lines of police guarding the front entrance, then flooded inside, destroying office equipment, fittings and furniture, footage showed.

Police restored order a few hours later, saying they had arrested 46 protesters and vowing to track down others involved. "The government expresses

strong regret over the illegal violence, which is unimaginable in a democratic society," acting President Choi Sang-mok said in a statement, adding that the authorities would step up safety measures around gatherings.

Nine police officers were injured in the chaos, Yonhap news agency reported. Police were not immediately available for comment on the injured officers.

About 40 people suffered minor injuries, said an emergency responder near the Seoul Western District Court.

Several of those involved live-streamed the intrusion on YouTube, showing protesters trashing the court and chanting Yoon's name. Some streamers were caught by police during their broadcasts.



A man rides a horse through flames during the annual "Luminarias" celebration on the eve of Saint Anthony's day, Spain's patron saint of animals, in the village of San Bartolome de Pinares, Spain

# Hindenburg's Nate Anderson under cloud

Court documents suggest collaboration with Canada's Anson hedge fund, raising potential securities fraud issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Toronto, Jan 19:** Nate Anderson, 'activist' short-seller who has announced shutting down of his almost eight years old research firm Hindenburg, is under cloud for alleged links with hedge funds in preparing reports targeting companies, a Canadian portal said citing documents filed before a court in Ontario.

In a cache of documents filed at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in a complex defamation lawsuit, the head of Canada's Anson hedge fund, Moez Kassam said his firm has shared research "with a wide variety of sources" including



Hindenburg's Nate Anderson. The Market Frauds portal said that court documents allegedly revealed that Hindenburg colluded with Anson while preparing a report. The preparation of bearish reports without disclosure of participation can be charged as securities fraud by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

While short sellers borrow a security, sell it on the open market, and expect to repurchase it

for less money after their damning report against the company brings stock down, involvement of hedge funds raises eyebrows as they could also place parallel bets, putting more downward pressure on stock prices.

While Anson and Kassam couldn't be immediately reached, an email sent to Anderson remained unanswered. "We know for a fact, from the email conversations between

Anderson and Anson Funds, that he was indeed working for Anson and published whatever they told him to, from the price target to

Anderson announced the firm's closure, garnering attention for its high-profile reports, including those on billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate

what should be in the report. He asked them multiple times if they needed 'more'. From what we can see in the dozens of exchanges, at no time did he have editorial control. He was being told what to publish," the website

claimed. Market Frauds also shared screenshots of some email interactions - which it claims to have accessed through the documents available with the Ontario court - between Hindenburg and Anson to support its charge.

"There are multiple counts of securities fraud for both Anson Funds and Nate Anderson, and we have only gone through 5 per cent of what's in there as of the time of writing," it said. "From what we have read so far, it is almost a certainty that when the whole exchange between Hindenburg and Anson reaches the SEC, Nate Anderson will be charged with securities fraud in 2025."

When the association first emerged, Hindenburg had said it received "hundreds of leads each year from diverse sources," such as industry experts, whistleblowers and other investors. "We rigorously vet each lead and have always maintained full editorial independence over our work."

## 'NO EXCUSE FOR EDUCATION BAN'

# Taliban deputy asks leaders to lift restrictions on women

The government has barred females from education after sixth grade

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kabul, Jan 19:** A senior Taliban figure has urged the group's leader to scrap education bans on Afghan women and girls, saying there is no excuse for them, in a rare public rebuke of government policy.

Sher Abbas Stanikzai, political deputy at the Foreign Ministry, made the remarks in a speech Saturday in south-eastern Khost province. He told an audience at a religious school ceremony there was no reason to deny education to women and girls, "just as there was no justification

for it in the past and there shouldn't be one at all."

The government has barred females from education after sixth grade. Last September, there were reports authorities had also stopped medical training and courses for women.

In Afghanistan, women and girls can only be treated by female doctors and health professionals. Authorities have yet to confirm the medical training ban.

"We call on the leadership again to open the doors of education," said Stanikzai in a video shared by his official account on the social platform X. "We are committing an injustice against 20 million people out of a population of 40 million, depriving them of all their rights. This is not in Islamic law, but our personal choice or nature."



KHO KHO  
WORLD CUP

# Double delight for India

CLASH OF THE TITANS

## Alcaraz, Djoko to fight in AO quarterfinals

The historic victory of men's, women's teams not only crowns India as the inaugural world champions but also marks a watershed moment for the indigenous sport on the global stage



**Congratulations to the Indian women's team on winning the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup! This historic victory is a result of their unparalleled skill, determination and teamwork. This triumph has brought more spotlight to one of India's oldest traditional sports, inspiring countless young athletes across the nation. May this achievement also pave the way for more youngsters to pursue this sport in the times to come**

NARENDRA MODI | PM

2025 to December 2027, committing ₹5 crore annually, totaling ₹15 crore over three years. The sponsorship aims to promote the development of Kho Kho and nurture the players for greater achievements on the global stage.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Jan 19:** It's time for the eighth installment of the riveting, intergenerational rivalry between Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz. This one, though, will be the first at the Australian Open — and the first in the quarterfinals of a tournament; each of the others came in either a semifinal or final. "Well, this is not the right player to play in a quarterfinal, I guess," a grinning Alcaraz said, looking ahead to Tuesday's encounter. "But facing Novak, for me, it's not going to change anything if I'm playing him (in a) quarterfinal or semifinal. Probably change a little bit if it is a final, obviously. Being in a quarterfinal, I'm going to approach the match the same as I did in the previous matches against him, and let's see." Alcaraz reached his 10th career Grand Slam quarterfinal, tied for the most by a man before his 22nd birthday, by advancing when 15th-seeded Jack Draper stopped playing because of a hip injury after dropping the first two sets Sunday afternoon.

Djokovic, who is being coached in Melbourne by old rival Andy Murray, did his part at night in Rod Laver Arena, needing to work a little longer but getting through just the same with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) victory over No.24 Jiri Lehecka.

Djokovic smacked a ball off a wall in the third set, drawing boos and whistles from some spectators. When they made more noise moments later, chair umpire Mohamed Lahyani admonished the folks in the stands to be more polite toward the players.

Otherwise, though, Djokovic had plenty of support, from the Serbian flags in the stands to the chants of his nickname, "Nole," that reverberated around the main stadium.

Afterward, Djokovic dispensed with the customary on-court interview, instead holding the microphone himself and telling the crowd: "Thank you very much for being here tonight. I appreciate your presence and the support. I'll see you next round. Thank you very much." Then he walked off.

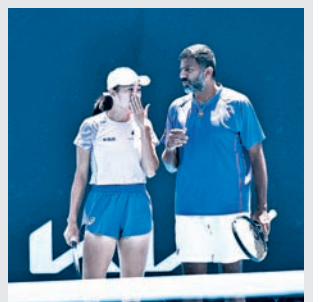
**LOTS AT STAKE**

There is plenty at stake at this tournament for both No. 3 seed Alcaraz, who is 21, and No. 7 Djokovic, who is 37.

Alcaraz seeks to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam with at least

### Bopanna-Shuai enter mixed doubles quarters

Veteran Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna and his Chinese partner Zhang Shuai entered the quarterfinals of the mixed doubles event at the Australian Open after they got a walkover in a second-round match here Sunday. Bopanna and Shuai were up against fourth seeds Taylor Townsend of the United States and Hugo Nys of Monaco but the Indian-Chinese pair moved to the last eight round without taking the court. Bopanna and Shuai will next play the winner of the match between Hungary's Tímea Babos and El Salvador's Marcelo Arevalo, and, the Australian combination of Olivia Gadecki and John Peers. The Indo-Chinese pair had earlier defeated Kristina Mladenovic of France and Ivan Dodic of Croatia 6-4 6-4 in its opening match. Earlier, Bopanna and his new Colombian partner Nicolas Barrientos bowed out of the men's doubles event with an opening-round loss to the Spanish team of Pedro Martínez and Jaume Munar. The 44-year-old Indian won the 2024 edition with his Australian partner Matthew Ebden. That historic victory made Bopanna, who was 43 at that time, the oldest man in the Open Era to win a Grand Slam title.



one trophy from all four of the most prestigious events in tennis. His four so far came elsewhere: Two at Wimbledon by virtue of wins over Djokovic in the 2023 and 2024 finals, and one apiece at the US Open in 2022 and the French Open last year.

Djokovic, meanwhile, is trying to claim an 11th title in Melbourne to become the first player in tennis history with 25 major singles championships. He leads the overall head-to-head against Alcaraz 4-3, including a victory in the final at the Paris Olympics last August to claim a gold medal for Serbia.

At the majors, though, Alcaraz leads 2-1.

ing victories over Brazil, Peru and Bhutan in the group stages.

Speaking on the occasion, Odisha's Sports Minister, Suryabanshi Suraj congratulated the players and said, "Kho Kho is our indigenous sport. This historic victory in the inaugural world cup fills us with pride and glory. As a proud sponsor of the Indian National Kho Kho teams, Odisha is committed to support their growth. This golden victory marks a new chapter in Kho Kho's legacy and will inspire millions of young athletes across the nation to pursue excellence in sports."

Notably, Odisha players Magai Majhi and Subhashree Singh represented India in the women's team, while Pabani Sabar was part of the men's team.

The Odisha government has sponsored the Indian National Kho Kho Teams from January



SHORT TAKES

### Warrant against Shakib

**Dhaka:** A Dhaka court, Sunday, issued an arrest warrant against Bangladesh all-rounder and former Awami League MP Shakib Al Hasan over two bounced bank cheques. Shakib hasn't returned to Bangladesh fearing threat to his life after deposed PM Sheikh Hasina was forced to flee the country due to civil unrest last year. "Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ziadur Rahman issued the arrest warrant asking police submit a report on the execution of the order on March 24," a court official told reporters. Shakib, Bangladesh's greatest ever cricketer played his last Test match against India in Kanpur late last year. Champions Trophy in Dubai is supposed to be his last appearance in Bangladesh colours. Currently he is banned from bowling in all forms of cricket due to suspect action. The cricketer, who now lives in the United States, was elected as an MP on Awami League ticket during the January 7, 2024 elections.

### Jadeja to play Ranji

**New Delhi:** India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is set to play in Saurashtra's Ranji Trophy tie against Delhi from January 23 after turning up for the team's practice session in Rajkot Sunday. Jadeja last played for Saurashtra in January 2023. Following the tour of Australia, the BCCI had made participation in domestic cricket mandatory unless the player is unavailable due to an injury. "Jadeja has turned up for training today. He will play the next match," Saurashtra Cricket Association president Jaydev Shah told PTI Sunday. India captain Rohit Sharma, who battles poor form in Australia, confirmed his availability for Mumbai's next Ranji Trophy against Jammu and Kashmir. The likes of Rishabh Pant, Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal will also turn up for their respective sides.

### Medvedev fined \$76K

**Melbourne:** Daniil Medvedev has been fined a total of \$76,000 for his camera and racket smashing outbursts during the first two rounds of the Australian Open. The fines were published Sunday by Australian Open organisers, two days after Medvedev's unexpected second-round exit. The 2021 US Open champion destroyed a tiny camera hanging in the net by repeatedly smacking it with his racket during a surprisingly difficult, five-set, first-round win over Kasidit Samrej, who was ranked 418th. He was fined \$10,000 for the first-round infringement.

## INDIA OPEN

# Axelsen, Young clinch titles

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 19:** Paris Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen of Denmark and South Korea's An Se Young registered thumping victories to clinch the men's and women's singles titles, respectively in the India Open 2025 at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall here Sunday.

Axelsen, playing in his sixth India Open final in 10 years, defeated Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu 21-16, 21-8 to clinch his third India Open men's singles crown while An Se Young had little trouble in packing off Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-9 in the women's singles final.

In the paired events, the unseeded Japanese combination of Arisa Igarashi and Ayaka Sakuramoto capped off their giant-killing run with a clinical 21-15, 21-13 victory over South Korea's Kim Hye Jang and Kong Hee Young in the women's doubles summit clash. This is only the third tournament together for the Japanese combination with Igarashi, formerly known as Arisa Higashino, making a successful shift to women's doubles from mixed doubles.

However, Chinese second



seeds Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin ended the run of the unseeded French combination of Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue with a 21-18, 21-17 win in the mixed doubles final.

Malaysian men's doubles combination of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin found a way past South Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae 21-15, 13-21, 21-16 to clinch the title in the only match that went to the decider.

While An Se Young has been dominating the women's singles circuit, the men's singles final was expected to be a close affair as Axelsen had lost to Lee in the opening round of the Malaysian Open last week and had struggled to close out his quarterfinal and semi-final matches.



Once Axelsen pocketed the opening game, he simply ran away with the second to take home a prize purse of \$66,500 and 11,000 ranking points.

"After this week, I feel my motivation is coming back. Since the Olympics, I had been struggling with injuries. This week has been very inconsistent for me mentally and game wise but I am happy that I fought hard and won the title," said Axelsen, who thanked the fans for the vociferous support he got throughout the tournament.

The women's singles final was also a one-sided affair with Paris Olympic champion An Se Young of South Korea extending her dominance over Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong with a 21-12, 21-9 in just

RESULTS	
<b>Men's singles:</b>	Viktor Axelsen (Denmark) beat Lee Cheuk Yiu (Hong Kong) 21-16, 21-8
<b>Women's singles:</b>	An Se Young (South Korea) beat Pornpawee Chochuwong (Thailand) 21-12, 21-9
<b>Men's doubles:</b>	Goh Sze Fei/Nur Izzuddin (Malaysia) beat Kim Won Ho/Seo Seung Jae (South Korea) 21-15, 13-21, 21-16
<b>Women's doubles:</b>	Arisa Igarashi/Ayako Sakuramoto (Japan) beat Kim Hye Jang/Kong Hee Young (South Korea) 21-15, 21-13
<b>Mixed doubles:</b>	Jiang Zhen Bang/Wei Ya Xin (China) beat Thom Gicquel/Delphine Delrue (France) 21-18, 21-17

39 minutes.

The 2023 Indian Open champion came into the final with a 9-0 head-to-head record against Chochuwong and took control of the match in the initial few exchanges. She raced to an 11-4 lead and then held 11 game points. The Thai saved three of them but the gap was too big for her to recover.

## Neeraj ties knot with tennis player Himani

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 19:** Javelin superstar Neeraj Chopra, one of India's most eligible bachelors, tied the knot with tennis player Himani Mor couple of days back in an intimate ceremony that has taken everyone by surprise.

The 27-year-old Chopra announced the marriage with the 25-year-old Himani, who hails from Haryana's Sonapat, on his social media handles.

"I began a new chapter of my life with my family. Grateful for every blessing that brought us to this moment together. Bound by love, happily ever after," Chopra wrote in a post with the pictures of the marriage ceremony.

Chopra's uncle Bhim told PTI that the marriage took place in the country and the couple has left for honeymoon.

Mor is currently pursuing Sports Management (Major) at



the Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire. She is an alumni of Delhi's Miranda House where she completed her bachelors' degree in Political Science and Physical Education.

"Yes, the marriage took place in India two days back. I can't tell the place where it took place," Bhim told from his village at Khandra near Panipat in Haryana.

According to the All India Tennis Association (AITA) website, Himani's career best national ranking was 42 in singles and 27 in doubles in 2018. She started playing in 2018 only in AITA events.

## Kalinga Lancers stage stunning comeback win



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, Jan 19:** Vedanta Kalinga Lancers made a thrilling comeback to beat Delhi SG Pipers in a shootout at the Hero Hockey India League Sunday.

Trailing 1-4 at halftime, the Lancers fought back with goals from Alexander Hendrickx (13', 52'), Thierry Brinkman (35', 47'), and Angad Bir Singh (49') to level 5-5 in regulation. They sealed the victory 3-2 in

the shootout, extending the SG Pipers' winless streak.

The Pipers dominated early, with Tomas Domene (18', 20'), Corey Weyer (21'), Koji Yamasaki (23'), and Dilraj Singh (37') scoring in a stunning second-quarter blitz.

Domene's ferocious drag-flicks and Yamasaki's historic strike, the first by a Japanese player in the league, gave the Pipers a commanding lead.

The Lancers began their fightback in the third quarter

when Brinkman slotted into an unguarded net. Angad and Brinkman further narrowed the deficit before Hendrickx's 52nd-minute dragflick leveled the game.

A tense final eight minutes saw no winner, forcing a shootout.

In the shootout, Hendrickx's penalty stroke put the Lancers ahead 3-2, and Toby Reynolds-Cotterill's crucial save secured the victory, delighting the roaring home crowd.

### Odisha Warriors hammer Shracchi Rarh Bengal Tigers

Earlier in the Women's HIL, Yibbi Jansen scored a brace as Odisha Warriors beat Shracchi Rarh Bengal Tigers 4-1. Jansen struck in the 18th and 47th minutes while Michelle Fillet (16th) and Neha Goyal (58th) scored the other two goals for the Odisha side. Udit (30th) scored the lone goal for Shracchi Rarh Bengal Tigers. The two sides had played out a 1-1 draw three days ago in Ranchi with the Odisha Warriors then winning the penalty shootout thanks to goalkeeper Jocelyn Bartram's heroics. Penalty shootouts were not required Sunday night as the Warriors secured the win in style to move to the top of the points table with eight points. The Tigers were the better side at the start of the first quarter as they made multiple circle penetrations. However, they were unable to test Bartram in the Odisha Warriors goal. The first penalty corner of the match was awarded to the Tigers in the 14th minute.