



Bhumi's observation

Actor Bhumi Pednekar says democratising filmmaking with use of AI can help build a better future for everyone

LEISURE | P2



Palestinians return

Palestinians return to ravaged Gaza on the 2nd day of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas

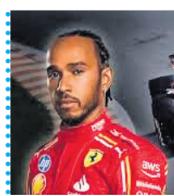
INTERNATIONAL | P10



Asset-quality concern

Stock prices of private lenders that have reported an increase in bad loans bear the brunt of investors' fears of a U-turn

BUSINESS | P11



First day at Ferrari

Lewis Hamilton, the seven-time Formula 1 champion, arrives in Maranello for his 1st day at Ferrari Monday

SPORTS | P12



NEW CHAPTER: Donald Trump takes the oath of office as 47th US President at Rotunda of US Capitol in Washington, Monday. US First Lady Melania Trump, Vice-President JD Vance, and Tesla boss Elon Musk, among others are seen

TRUMP IS BACK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 20: Donald J Trump was Monday sworn in as the 47th President of the United States, marking his remarkable return to power for a second term four years after he left the American capital as a pariah.

The 78-year-old Republican leader storms back to the White House with a strongman persona and a vision of an all-powerful presidency with a promise to aggressively reset US policies in a range of domains, including immigration, tariffs and energy.

Trump registered a spectacular victory over his Democratic rival Kamala Harris in the November 5 presidential election, defying two assassination attempts, two presidential impeachments and his criminal conviction. Four years back, Trump had left Washington as a pariah in the face of his unsuccessful attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election to stay in office.

His victory in the bitterly fought election was widely acknowledged as the most momentous comeback in American political history. JD Vance was sworn in as the vice presi-

dent ahead of Trump. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar attended the inauguration ceremony as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's special envoy.

The inauguration ceremony was held indoors under the Capitol Rotunda against the initially planned outdoor venue in view of frigid temperatures in the US capital city.

The ceremony was attended by Trump's wife Melania, his daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner, and billionaires Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Tim Cook.

On the first day in office, Trump is expected to sign a slew of executive orders, including kicking off a process to end birthright citizenship.

Congratulating Trump on his second non-consecutive term as the US President, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X, "Congratulations my dear friend President Donald Trump on your historic inauguration as the 47th president of the United States!"

"I look forward to working closely together once again, to benefit both our countries, and to shape a better future for the world. Best wishes for a successful term ahead!" he added.

MORE P10

Nat'l Critical Mineral Mission soon: Reddy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: Optimistic of India emerging as a global hub of critical minerals, Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy Monday said the Centre will soon launch the National Critical Mineral Mission (CMM) to enhance domestic production, reduce import dependence and encourage offshore mining auctions.

Reddy made the remark after inaugurating the 3rd National Mining Ministers' Conference in Konark, in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Bihar Deputy CM Vijay Kumar Sinha, Telangana Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, and other dignitaries and industry leaders.

"India will be the global destination for critical minerals. We are pioneering offshore mineral auctions for the first time in 75 years to enhance self-reliance and reduce import dependence," the Union Coal and Mines Minister said while stressing on the need for states to accelerate exploration and the auctioning of critical minerals.

P3

STATE FIXES 6+ AGE FOR CLASS I ENTRY

Bhubaneswar: Enrolment age for Class I students has been revised to 6+ years, as the state is going to implement National Education Policy (NEP)-2020. As per new rules, the kid must attend 6 years by September 1 of the respective academic year to get admitted to Class I.

P3

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He's an IITian, Gurujii! Maybe you should consider an executive MBA!

SC relief for Rahul Roy: Behind bars till death

Nearly two years after the Supreme Court stayed Rahul Gandhi's conviction in the "Modi surname case," the Congress MP received another significant relief from the apex court regarding his alleged caustic remarks on BJP leaders, including Amit Shah, in 2018. Monday's ruling feels like a *déjà vu* for the BJP, whose defenders have once again suffered a setback in the Supreme Court. The top court clearly stated that only the person directly aggrieved by the statement can file a criminal defamation complaint. Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing Gandhi, argued that a third party, such as BJP worker Navin Jha in this instance, cannot file the complaint



Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the interim order while issuing notice on Rahul Gandhi's Special Leave Petition challenging the Jharkhand High Court judgement which dismissed his plea to quash the defamation case filed against him by BJP worker Navin Jha.

Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Gandhi, submitted that there are several judgements which hold that only the aggrieved person can file a criminal defamation complaint. He argued that the complaint cannot be filed by a proxy third party.

Senior Advocate Mahesh Jethmalani appeared for the complainant.

BJP Leader Jha filed the complaint case against Gandhi, alleging that in the AICC Plenary Sessions March 18, 2018, Gand-

hi had made a speech against BJP and labelled Shah (the then BJP national president) as a murder-accused.

Magistrate Court at Ranchi dismissed Jha's complaint, aggrieved by which, he filed a Criminal Revision Petition before the Judicial Commissioner, Ranchi. The Judicial Commissioner, Ranchi set aside the order dismissing the complaint and remanded the matter back to the Magistrate with a direction to re-appreciate the evidence.

The Magistrate, on the basis of the direction given in the Criminal Revision, passed a fresh order November 28, 2018 and came to a finding that a prima facie case was made out against Gandhi under Section 500 IPC and issued process for his appearance.

Gandhi challenged the Judicial Commissioner's order and the subsequent order of the Magistrate, contending that Jha had no locus standi to file the case, and that the provision under section 199 CrPC had not been complied with.

The High Court held, "Opposite party no. 2 being a party worker of Bhartiya Janata Party in my view, has locus standi to file the aforesaid complaint case under Sections 499/500 of the Indian Penal Code."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 20: A Kolkata court sentenced Sanjay Roy, convicted of raping and killing an on-duty doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here in August last year, to imprisonment till death Monday.

Anirban Das, the Additional District and Sessions Judge in Sealadah court, had Saturday held Roy guilty of the crime committed against the post-graduate trainee doctor at the hospital August 9, 2024, which sparked unprecedented and prolonged nationwide protests.

Judge Das said the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category, which justified not imposing the death penalty on the convict.

Roy, a former civic volunteer

RG KAR HORROR



with the Kolkata Police, was found guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (punishment for causing death), and 103(1) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The judge stated that under Section 64, life imprisonment is being awarded, along with a fine of ₹50,000. An additional five months of imprisonment will be imposed upon non-pay-

2 women Maoists killed in encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: At least two women Maoists were killed in a gunfight between security forces and left-wing extremists at Odisha-Chhattisgarh border Monday, DGP YB Khurania said. He said a large quantity of arms and ammunition were also seized.

The DGP said Odisha police's

Special Operations Group, Chhattisgarh's E-30 force and CRPF launched a joint operation Sunday night at the inter-state border after getting intelligence reports regarding the presence of Maoists at the Kularighat reserve forest.

The fierce gun battle began Monday morning in the forest located in Gariaband district of Chhattisgarh, adjacent to Nuapada district in Odisha.

India slips to 3rd place on trust barometer

Amid poor economic outlook, depreciating rupee and eroding investors' confidence in Indian markets, one more trust deficit has come to the fore. And this time, it is people's trust in the government, businesses, media and NGOs. India has slipped one place lower while neighbouring China and Indonesia have fared better, if the annual Edelman Trust Barometer's latest report, released just before the Davos World Economic Forum, is any indication

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Davos, Jan 20: The annual Edelman Trust Barometer, now in its 25th year, showed that India ranks low at 13th place when it comes to trust of people in other countries, in companies with Indian headquarters.

Canada topped this list of foreign-headquartered companies, followed by Japan, Germany, UK, France and US, while those ranked higher than India also included Mexico, South Africa,

Saudi Arabia, China and Brazil.

The overall list for trust of the general population in the government, businesses, media and NGOs was again topped by China, while Indonesia replaced India for the second spot by virtue of an increased score despite the Indian score remaining unchanged. The survey of 28 countries saw Japan replacing UK at the bottom.

In most countries, including India, the low income population was far less trusting than the high income group.



Within the high income group, India was ranked fourth after Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and China, while the low income population made India the third most trusted nation after China and Indonesia.

However, the percentage of low income population reporting faith in Indian institutions stood far less at 65 per cent, as against 80 per cent in case of high income people.

Globally, the survey also thre-

governments in most countries. Global communications firm Edelman, which surveyed more than 33,000 respondents across 28 countries, said the barometer revealed that economic fears have metastasized into grievance, with six in 10 respondents reporting moderate to high sense of grievance.

This is defined by a belief that government and business harm them and serve narrow interests, and ultimately the wealthy benefit while regular people struggle, it said.

Fear of experiencing discrimination has surged 10 points to a record high of 63 per cent, spanning the majority across all genders, ages, and income levels. The largest jump (14 points) was seen among whites in the US, the barometer showed.

The survey has flagged a global unprecedented lack of faith in institutional leaders like government officials, business leaders and journalists

out some disturbing trends with violence and spread of disinformation now being seen as legitimate tools for change.

The survey showed little impact of elections or change of

Bikes, refrigerators no riders for PMAY

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: Guidelines for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)-Rural have been relaxed to include the maximum number of households under the scheme, said Panchayati Raj Minister Rabi Narayan Naik Monday, adding that families owning two-wheelers and refrigerators, and earning up to ₹15,000 per month can avail benefit of the rural housing scheme.

Speaking to reporters, Naik said a survey to identify beneficiaries for housing scheme will start in the state January 24 and is likely to be completed in two months.

"Eligible persons apply in both online and offline mode. A portal would also be launched for this purpose," the minister said. Naik appealed to the poor people living in kutcha houses to apply for a house under the scheme. "About 18 lakh new beneficiaries are expected in the state. However, the number may increase to 20-22 lakh," he said.

"No proper list of eligible families for rural housing schemes was prepared in the past. So, we are conducting the survey to identify all eligible beneficiaries," he added.

"Now, families owning two-wheelers and refrigerators, and earning up to Rs 15,000 per month can avail benefit of the rural housing scheme," he said.

leisure



HUGH GRANT'S HUMOROUS DIG AT ELIZABETH HURLEY

Hollywood star Hugh Grant has taken a humorous dig at his former girlfriend-model Elizabeth Hurley, whom he dated from 1987 to 2000, and called her 'high-maintenance.' Speaking with his *Bridget Jones* co-star Renee Zellweger, Grant revealed that he and Hurley would often have lunch with Versace before his shows in Milan.

'SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD SHUT OFF BETWEEN 6 PM AND 6 AM'

Model Chrissy Teigen, who is married to singer John Legend, has urged for social media services to be suspended between the hours of 6pm and 6am to give everyone a break because "life was awesome" before platforms like Facebook and Instagram.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You realise it's a good thing to share the secrets of your success. Whatever you give, says Ganesha, will come back to you multiplied by nine. Now that you seek to be open and accommodating, more respect will come your way.

TAURUS

In all probability, today you will discover that your family is the foundation of your success, predicts Ganesha. Your dearly loved spouse may try to spice up the relationship in the afternoon and you will be more than willing to reciprocate, expects Ganesha.

GEMINI

You will spend the major part of your day with your spouse and children, if any. You also stand to benefit from your parents. If unmarried, your relationship with your beloved will enter an exciting phase. Inhibitions, if any, will be thrown out of the window and the bonding is likely to be intense. Ganesha, however, warns you against throwing caution to the wind.

CANCER

Today you are likely to receive financial support from your loved ones, says Ganesha. By the time the Sun sets, your family may receive some good news in relation to a wedding. A festive mood is likely to set in your house. After a day full of good news and enjoyment, you will shift your focus on the pending as well as impending work at the end of the day.

LEO

You are destined to play the superhero, at least as far as trade and commerce are concerned. Ganesha feels that today, you shall be more tied up in your daily work than is usual. But the upshot of it all is that all your actions seem to get the desired approval as the day progresses.

VIRGO

Ganesha predicts an imaginative and fruitful day for you at the workplace. You will feel your professional best in the afternoon. With your elegance, you will manage to put your ideas across the table and win the approval of your boss. You may pamper your beloved lavishly later in the evening.

LIBRA

Some things on the personal front may undergo a turning point today, predicts Ganesha. Now is the time for change. Changes are good and maybe even needed, although you may not see it that way at the moment. Expect monetary gains that will help you go a long way in life (a handsome bequest perhaps!).

SCORPIO

For a change, matters of finance will gnaw at your mind today. You may take steps to invest in new business ventures. Social reputation will get a boost late in the day, and people will, in all likelihood, pay due respect for your high values, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

It's a profitable day for the all the businessmen today. You are likely to crack major deals. You will be appreciated for your professionalism at work. It's high time you take risk and launch new products in the market, tips Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You will be chased by people harbouring malicious intents. Like a lone, naive soul among a bunch of brats, you could be bullied by those having political and social clout, says Ganesha. But worry not. Your fate is too powerful to let anyone do any harm to your reputation or health. In fact, much to the disappointment of your foes, novel ideas will guide you through hard times.

AQUARIUS

You will most likely play a peace envoy today, sorting out conflicts with diplomacy, your own as well as others'. Don't ignore any offer on the career front, as it may be the best thing to happen to you! The evening brings romance, says Ganesha, but also a lovers' tiff.

PISCES

Your cauldron of conflicts boils over, says Ganesha. At work, confrontations with your peers are a distinct possibility. Domestically, property related squabbles with your siblings are possible. Your family will be the cause of some monetary loss today. Keep a calm head.

Need to democratise filmmaking: Bhumi

DAVOS: Democratising filmmaking with use of artificial intelligence can help build a better future for everyone, actor and climate activist Bhumi Pednekar said here, Monday.

One of the five young global leaders who were asked one transformative idea each for a better world in 2025, Pednekar said AI has the potential to democratize filmmaking, expand access to educational films, and improve the industry for marginalized groups.

Along with several others named as 'Young Global Leaders' by the World Economic Forum for helping improve the state of the world, Pednekar is here to participate in the WEF Annual Meeting that will continue till January 24.

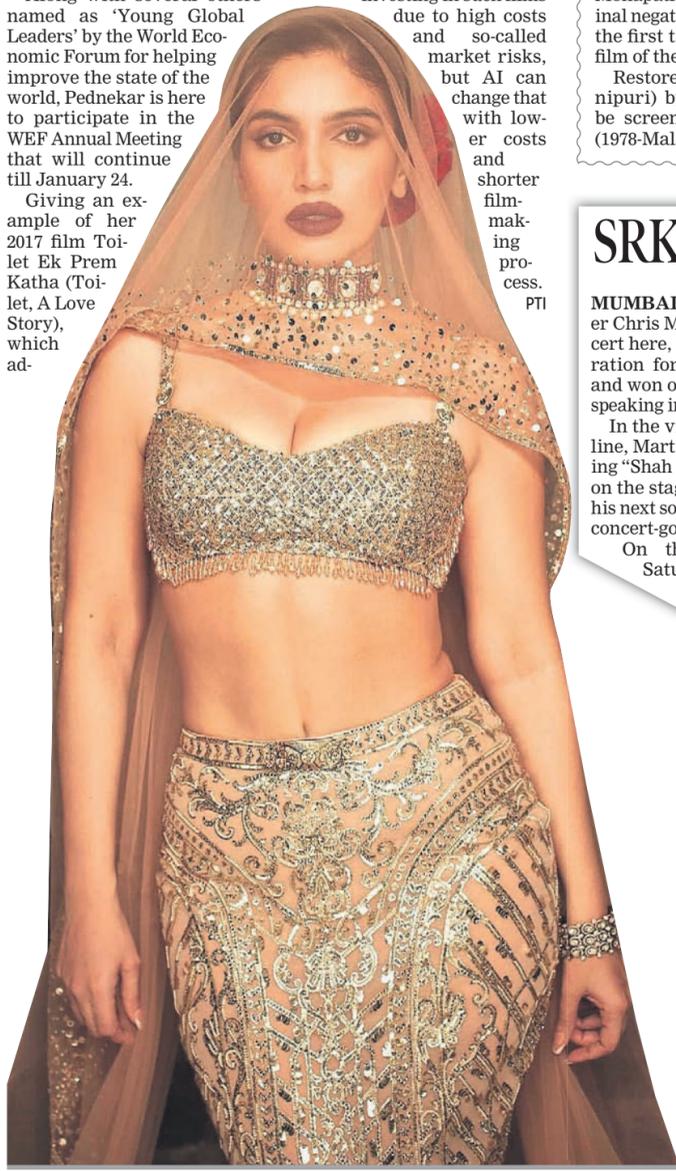
Giving an example of her 2017 film *Toilet Ek Prem Katha* (Toilet, A Love Story), which ad-

ressed the issue of open defecation, she said the film used a comedic and romantic tone to comment on various themes, from how lack of sanitation creates gender disparity and puts women at risk, to the health hazards of a lack of indoor plumbing.

She pitched for advances in technology and visual effects to help such stories become more impactful.

The *Badhaai Do* actress lamented that studios avoid investing in such films due to high costs and so-called market risks, but AI can change that with lower costs and shorter film-making process.

PTI



FSB's 14th IFFB from Jan 22

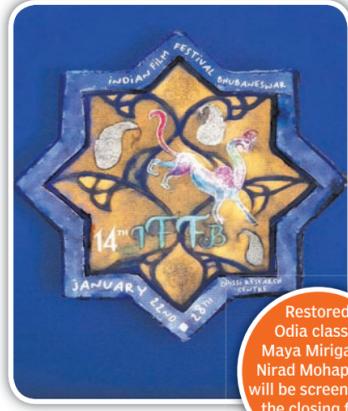
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: The 14th edition of Indian Film Festival of Bhubaneswar (IFFB), organised by the Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB), will kick off from January 22 here at GKCM Odissi Research Centre auditorium.

The 7-day festival will showcase 33 films, including the ones which have won critical acclaim in major film festivals—MAMI, IFFK, KIFF, Dharamsala, Busan, Karlo-Vary, Rotterdam and Berlin.

This year's festival curation features a section on restored classics, in collaboration with the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF), along with retrospectives and interaction with the filmmakers. Landmark Odia film *Maya Miriga* (1984) by Nirad Mohapatra, restored in 4K from the original negatives by FHF will be screened for the first time in the state as the closing film of the festival January 28.

Restored classics *Ishanou* (1990-Manipuri) by Aribam Syam Sharma will be screened January 26 and *Thampu* (1978-Malayalam) by G Aravindan will



Restored Odia classic *Maya Miriga* by Nirad Mohapatra will be screened as the closing film January 28

be screened January 25.

Additionally, retrospective section will focus on the works of renowned Kannada filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli. Known for his socio-political narratives, Kasaravalli's films will be showcased to highlight his

exploration of Karnataka's social landscape and evolving society. Six of his films will be screened, including his debut film *Ghatashraddha* (1977) which will open the festival January 22. His later works such as *Thaayi Saheba* (1997), *Haseena* (2004), *Koormavata* (2012) and *Illaralaare Alige Hogalaare* (2020) will also be screened.

Dibakar Banerjee, one of country's leading filmmakers, will also be attending the festival to present his new film *Tees*. Banerjee, known for his sharp critiques of power, capitalism, and inequality, has an extensive body of work that includes *Khosla Ka Ghosla!* (2006), *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008), and *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar* (2021). Banerjee has been active in Indian cinema for over two decades.

There will be post screening discussions with filmmakers Abhijit Chowdhury, Chhatrapal Ninawe, Aranya Sahay, Fasil Muhammed and Abhijit Mazumdar.

The festival passes are available on Book My Show for pre-booking and will also be available at the venue during the festival.

SRK forever: Chris Martin

MUMBAI: Coldplay co-founder Chris Martin, during a concert here, expressed his admiration for Shah Rukh Khan and won over the audience by speaking in Hindi and Marathi.

In the video circulating online, Martin can be heard saying "Shah Rukh Khan forever" on the stage before beginning his next song amid cheers from concert-goers.

On their first concert Saturday, Martin won

fans over by connecting with them in their native tongues. His attempts to speak Hindi and Marathi were met with overwhelming warmth.

Martin began by saying in Marathi, "Tum-hee saghre aaj chaan distat (You all look beautiful today)." He then said in Hindi, "Aap



COLDPLAY CONCERT IN MUMBAI

sab ka bahut swagat hai humare show pe. Mumbai mein

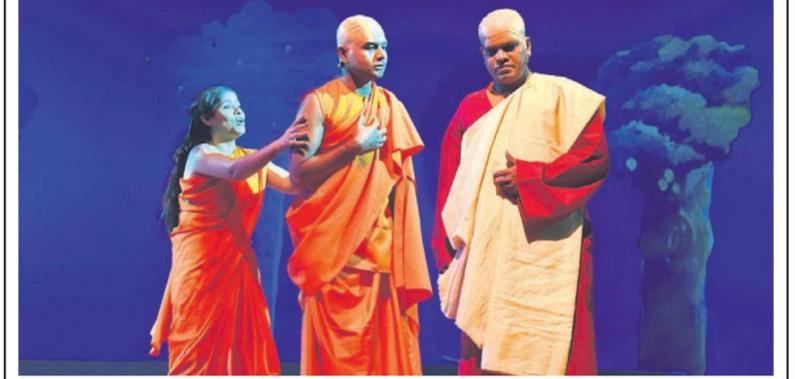
aakar hume bahut khushi ho rahi hai. (You're all very welcome to our show. We feel happy after coming to Mumbai.)"

"Sorry, my Hindi and Marathi are bad but I tried my best," he said, before switching to English.

The British musician thanked Indian fans for giving him the chance to play in one of "our favourite places in the whole world."

"This is our fourth visit to India, the second time playing... We couldn't have asked for a better audience. It's amazing you welcome us," Martin said.

AJIT'S NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL: DAY 1



Artistes of Bhubaneswar-based theatre troupe Abhinaya Jagruti Institute of Theatre (AJIT) performed Odia play *Tata Niranjana* on the first evening of its three-day silver jubilee drama festival Ajit Natya Mahotsav at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar. For the unversed, the troupe was formed by the students of eminent late actor-director Ajit Das, who directed over 100 plays and organised 12 national theatre festivals, to pay tribute to their guru on his birth day.

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.

		1	9		8		6	
	6			5	9			
9				5	1		1	
		5		1	7	2		
	4			3				
2					3			
6				7				
		8	6					
	3		8	2	1			

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

A	Z	P	B	T	V
C	U	P	O	L	A
R	D	R	A	E	L
T	A	X	I	A	N
A	G	D	S	A	L
G	A	C	H	O	S
L	N	D	R		
S	T	U	D	I	E
R	R	S	S	A	
S	P	E	R	I	O
I	A	E	O	O	W
A	S	I	M	O	V
T	S	E	E	R	T

SUDOKU

1	4	2	3	9	8	5	6	7
5	6	8	4	1	7	9	2	3
7	3	9	5	2	6	4	1	8
8	9	5	1	4	2	3	7	6
6	7	1	8	3	9	2	5	4
4	2	3	7	6	5	1	8	9
3	1	6	2	7	4	8	9	5
9	8	4	6	5	1	7	3	2
2	5	7	9	8	3	6	4	1

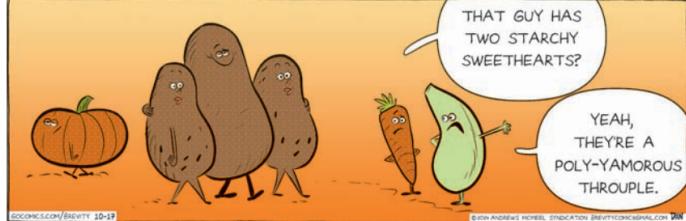
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8				9		
10			11		12	
13					14	
				15		
16						18
19			20		21	
22					23	

- Copyright ©2025 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Witch's brew ingredient
 - 5 Cultural values
 - 8 Detected
 - 9 Cholera
 - 10 Salon supply
 - 11 Destroy completely
 - 13 Pint-sized
 - 14 Roomy vehicle
 - 16 Underscore
 - 17 Doctrine
 - 19 Tartan
 - 21 V-shaped indentations
 - 22 Acclaim
 - 23 Type of luggage (5,2)
 - Down**
 - 1 Sharpened
 - 2 Nacre (6-2-5)
 - 3 Musical group
 - 4 Alaskan brown bear
 - 5 Airport posting (Abbr.)
 - 6 Offensively autocratic (4-3-6)
 - 7 Medical specialist
 - 12 *The Pink Panther's* Clouseau, e.g.
 - 13 Spire
 - 15 Outdoor social gathering
 - 18 Brick worker
 - 20 Part of an email address

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

EAR TO THE GROUND

Cuttack Collector Dattatraya Bhausaheb Shinde hears public grievances, Monday



3RD NATIONAL MINING MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Odisha to play key role in sustainable mining practices: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday said Odisha is poised to play a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable and environmentally-responsible mining practices as part of the 'Purvodaya Mission' which aims to unlock the economic potential of India.

Addressing the 3rd National Mining Ministers' Conference in Konark Majhi said Odisha, known for its vast mineral resources, significantly contributes to India's industrial and economic growth.

"The conference serves as a vital platform for knowledge-sharing, collaboration and policy deliberation to ensure sustainable and environmentally responsible mining practices. Odisha is poised to play a pivotal role in this transformation, particularly as part of the 'Purvodaya Mission,' which aims to unlock the economic potential of India and build a more prosperous and self-reliant nation," he said.

Earlier, addressing the gathering, Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy expressed optimism that India will emerge as a global hub of critical minerals, and said that the Centre will soon launch the National Critical Mineral Mission (CMM) to enhance domestic production, reduce import dependence and encourage offshore mining auctions.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha, Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, and other dignitaries and industry leaders were present at the conference



"India will be the global destination for critical minerals. We are pioneering offshore mineral auctions for the first time in 75 years to enhance self-reliance and reduce import dependence," the Union minister said while stressing the need for states to accelerate exploration and the auctioning of critical minerals.

He told the conference attended by mining ministers of 16 states that the CMM will soon get Union Cabinet approval. He said the Union Finance minister had announced it in her budget speech. Import duty on critical minerals has also been made zero, Reddy said.

Lithium, cobalt, copper, nickel and rare earth elements are known as critical minerals which are essential for manufacturing defence equipment

India will be the global destination for critical minerals, says Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy

and key technologies. Stating that India has already made a place in the global platform on critical minerals, Reddy said his ministry wants the public and private sectors to work in tandem in this regard. He suggested the states to involve private parties in the mining activities with transparency.

Reddy also announced that India launched the auction of 48 critical mineral blocks, with 24 successfully allotted.

"The fifth tranche offering of 15 critical mineral blocks was launched today, and industries have participated with full encouragement. This momentum should continue," he added.

He also recognised the growing potential of offshore mining, marking India's first offshore mineral auction, which will reduce import dependence and contribute significantly to India's self-sufficiency.

The Union minister also urged the states to set up State Mineral Exploration Trust on the line of National Mineral Exploration Trust for increasing exploration of mining resources. He said the Centre will provide some assistance for the trust and the states can utilise some funds from the royalty.

Reddy called upon the states to expedite mine closure activ-

ities in a mission mode and develop the land which has been left abandoned after mining. He suggested that the abandoned mines could be used for generation of solar energy.

Both Reddy and Majhi jointly launched the Mining Tenement System (MTS) at the conference. This cutting-edge digital platform will streamline processes, enhance transparency, and boost efficiency in the allocation and management of mineral resources.

They also handed over sanction letters to 11 startups, selected for funding of ₹15.97 crore under S&T-PRISM component of science and technology programme of the Ministry of Mines. These startups will focus on indigenous technologies, including sustainable solutions like high-grade silica production, lithium battery materials, and AI-enhanced mining operations.

The Union minister and Odisha CM also presented awards for excellence in mineral block auctions.

Rajasthan secured the top position, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, for their outstanding contribution in conducting the highest number of auctions in the 2023-24 fiscal. They also jointly released the booklet on 'Best Practices on Mine Closure' at the conference.

Union Mines Secretary VL Kantha Rao addressing the conference highlighted significant achievements in the mining sector. He said that 75 per cent of mining block auctions have been conducted in the last four years, with Odisha generating ₹1.33 lakh crore in mineral revenue in over a decade.

'Policies of BJP reflect Ambedkar ideologies'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: Senior BJP MP Anurag Thakur Monday claimed that the saffron party's policies were reflections of Dr BR Ambedkar's ideologies and that the Narendra Modi government was busy building the nation based on the principles of the architect of the Indian Constitution.

Lambasting the Opposition Congress, Thakur said that the BJP government has been trying to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) after being influenced by the ideologies of Dr Ambedkar. "UCC ensures equality for all the communities. UCC will end the religion-centric laws on marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance rules and provide uniform laws for all," he said.

Thakur said this while participating in the party's 'Samvidhan Gaurav Abhiyan' to commemorate the 75 years of the Indian Constitution and honour Ambedkar.

The BJP leader alleged that

it was the Congress which amended the Constitution several times for its political gain, while BJP and non-Congress parties hardly corrected the provisions.

While Congress governments have amended the Constitution 75 times, others took similar steps 31 times, he said.

He also accused the Congress, beginning from Pt Nehru to Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, of insulting Dr Ambedkar, who throughout his life fought for the rights of the tribals, Dalits and other backward caste communities.

He also charged Rahul Gandhi with misleading the people in the name of the Constitution.

Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal had earlier said that the party would organise seminars and intellectual meets at 50 places to spread awareness among the people about the Constitution and counter the alleged propaganda launched by the Congress over undermining constitutional values.

THAKUR SAID THAT THE BJP GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TRYING TO IMPLEMENT THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC) AFTER BEING INFLUENCED BY THE IDEOLOGIES OF DR AMBEDKAR

Youth Cong workers try to gherao CM's residence, wrestle with police

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: A large number of Youth Congress activists, led by their national president Uday Bhanu Chib, scuffled with the police while trying to gherao Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's official residence here Monday.

The Youth Congress members took out a protest march from state Congress headquarters here at lower PMG Road over eight points including the alleged deteriorating law and order, price hike, corruption and unemployment in the BJP-ruled state.

They also demanded the resignation of the chief minister. Later, they moved towards the chief minister's residence, which is located on the same road.

A scuffle broke out between the police and Congress workers after they tried to march ahead by breaking barricades. The police detained Chib and some other party supporters following the scuffle.

Speaking to media persons, Chib alleged, "The chief minister has become a puppet of his leaders in New Delhi. He is serving the friends of Modi ji and Amit Shah, who are establishing their industries here, but doing nothing for the youths of Odisha."

The BJP-led state governments in the country are busy making youths addicted to drugs without giving them employment, he alleged.

The Youth Congress chief

also demanded the resignation of the chief minister for failing to provide employment to the youths.

He said the organisation would continue its fight for the rights of the youths of the country until the chief minister and the Prime Minister woke up from their "deep slumber".

Senior Congress leader and MLA Tarapasrad Bahinipati also alleged that the Majhi government is working as per the directive of the friends of Modi and not taking any steps to resolve the issues of youths and women of the state.

"The government was deep in massive corruption during its first eight months. The mines and other natural resources have been sold. The BJP government has betrayed the people of Odisha," Bahinipati claimed.

Ranjit Patra, state Youth Congress president, alleged that the BJP government has failed to provide safety and security to the people as the law and order has completely collapsed.

Reacting to the protest of the Youth Congress, Odisha BJP Yuva Morcha president Abhilash Panda claimed that the Congress has lost its identity in the state as the Central leadership has made the state unit defunct.

"The Congress doesn't have any committee or executive in Odisha. So, to prove its presence in Odisha, the Youth Congress has organised this protest," Panda said.



UP IN ARMS: Street vendors take out a rally from Raj Mahal Square to Unit I Market protesting eviction, Monday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

OREDA inks pact with Tata Power Renewable Energy

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA) has signed an MoU with Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd to accelerate rooftop solar adoption among residential customers under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana. The scheme will be implemented through four power distribution companies (DISCOMs), an official statement said Monday. The collaboration aims to accelerate solar energy adoption through enhanced public awareness, and seamless implementation of accessible and affordable solar energy solutions across Odisha, it said. The company along with OREDA and its financial/banking partners will lead targeted awareness drives at high-footfall locations such as airports, malls and railway stations. The initiative will begin by focusing on key cities like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Paradip, Berhampur, Sambalpur, Balasore and Rourkela and gradually expand state-wide.

Phased rollout of NEP from 2025-26

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: The state government has decided to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in a phased manner, starting from academic year 2025-26.

The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department has already announced the adoption of the NEP and the National Curriculum Frameworks in the first phase of implementation by contextualising those locally as the State Curriculum Frameworks.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE), aims at providing high-quality education for all and introduces landmark reforms in the 21st century education system, a release issued by the S&ME department stated.

In its initial phase, Odisha is focusing on reforms at the



foundational stage and plans to extend the implementation to the preparatory, middle, and secondary stages in subsequent phases, it added.

As part of its initial steps, the state launched the Nipun Odisha programme in September 2024, aligned with the national guidelines. Additionally, PM Shri Schools are being established as model institutions to

embody the vision of the NEP, the release said.

The age of enrolment for Grade 1 has been revised to 6+ years as of September 1 of the respective academic year. The state has also announced the opening of 'Shishu Vatika' in all primary schools to provide pre-school education for children aged 5 and above, as outlined in NEP 2020.

The revision of the State Curriculum Frameworks will commence in a phased manner starting from the academic year 2025-26, with the adoption of the National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF FS) contextualised for Odisha in the first phase.

The NEP 2020 proposes a shift to a 5+3+3+4 structure for the first 15 years of a child's education, covering ages 3-18, and this structure will be implemented in Odisha gradually.

To streamline the rollout of NEP in Odisha, a three-day national workshop on the implementation of NEP 2020 will be held, starting Tuesday. The workshop, which will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, aims to sensitise state teams and develop a roadmap for the phased implementation of the NEP in Odisha.

Jumbo tramples boy to death; mom critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, Jan 20: A differently-abled boy died while his mother sustained grievous injuries after being attacked by an elephant here, Monday.

The deceased was identified as Sayta Ranjan Martha, 18, and the injured Sulochana Martha of Mahatpalla under Sadar police limits.

According to an eyewitness, the incident took place in the morning when the two were out to attend nature's call near their house.

"A tusker trampled the youth to death and attacked the woman, leaving her with critical injuries," he said.

Soon, villagers rushed the mother and son to a nearby hospital, where doctors pronounced the boy 'brought dead' and admitted the woman for treatment. Later in the day, she was shifted to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-Bhubaneswar.



Agri Secy holds review meet

Bhubaneswar: Agriculture Secretary Arabinda Padhee reviewed the millet procurement programme under the Shree Anna Abhiyan Monday. The government has approved a minimum support price of ₹4,500 per quintal for millets this year, including ₹4,290 MSP and a ₹210 state incentive.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit (No.07, dt.16.01.25) sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Loisingha, I Saroj Bag, R/o: Village- Bhaliamunda, P.O.- Agalapati, P.S.- Loisingha, Dist.- Balangir, Odisha, declare that I have changed my son's name from Simran Bag to Deepak Bag. Henceforth, he shall be known as Deepak Bag for all purposes. Saroj Bag

By virtue of an affidavit, I RASMPRABHA SWAIN, D/o- Golekh Bihari Swain, W/o- Siba Prasad Mohanty, resident of M.I.G.-II, Housing Board Colony, Phase-1, Chandrasekharpur, P.O./P.S.- Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, Dist.- Khordha, Orissa, PIN-751016, declare by this affidavit No.-26, dated- 19.01.2025, that now onwards I shall be known as RASHMIPRABHA SWAIN for all future purposes.

LOST

Lost sale deed I Sanjit Lala, S/o- Gopal Chandra Lala and Satyajit Lala, Son of Gopal Chandra Lala, both are of At/P.O.- Mukundaprasad. P.S./ Dist.-Khordha, Odisha do hereby declared by this affidavit No.-73AA706351 dated on 13.01.2025 we lost our Original sale deed bearing I.D. No.-1131810387 dtd 21.12.2018 under Mouza-Nuagaon, Khata No.-276/1157, Plot No.-760/1980, Area sold A0.100 decs. purchased from Dr. Manmohan Mohanty. We could not trace it out. This affidavit are all TRUE to the best our knowledge and belief.

Lost sale deed I Sangita Lala, W/o- Sanjit Lala & Sasmita Lala, W/o- Satyajit Lala both are of At/P.O.- Mukundaprasad, P.S./ Dist.- Khordha, Odisha, do here by declare by this affidavit No.-73AA706352 dated on 13.01.2025 we lost our Original sale deeds bearing I.D. No.-1131810013 dtd.10.12.2018 under Mouza-Nuagaon, Khata No.-276/1466, Plot No.-760/1070, area sold A0.200 decs. we could not trace it out. This affidavit are all TRUE the best of our knowledge and belief.

Water bodies in Capital city reduced to cesspools: Study

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: The heritage temple tanks, ponds, and wells of Bhubaneswar's Old Town have significantly deteriorated due to urbanisation and neglect, according to a study by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

The report, Sacred Waters: Preservation Strategy for Temple Tanks was released Sunday by INTACH's state convener AB Tripathy and the director general of KIIT School of Architecture & Planning, SS Ray.

Preservation Architect Anisha Swain, who led the study, revealed that many of these water bodies have been reduced to cesspools.

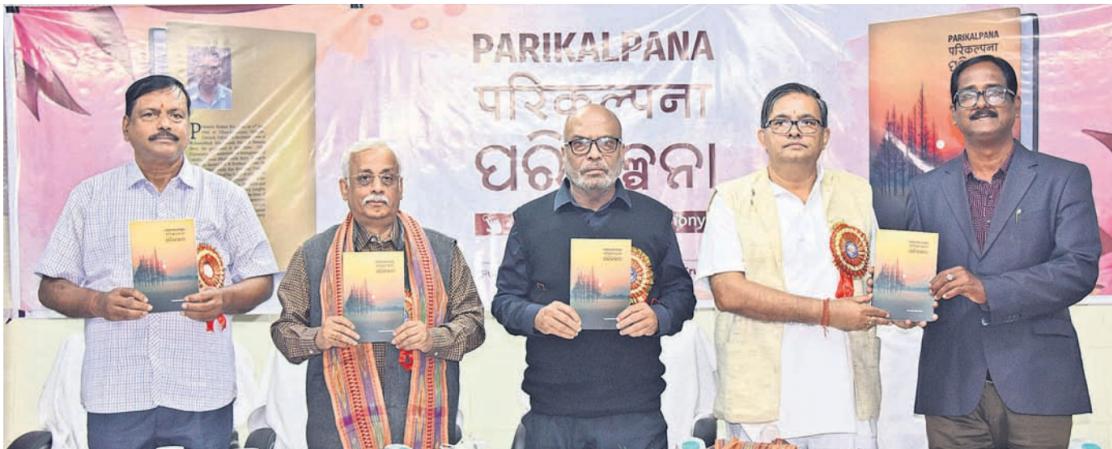
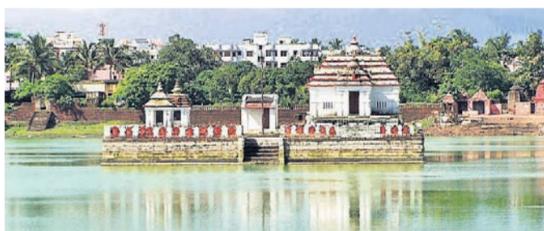
Tripathy stated that Odisha likely has the largest number of temple tanks in the country, with cities like Bhubaneswar, Puri, and Cuttack hosting numerous heritage tanks. However, nearly 150,000 village ponds across the state are also in severe neglect.

INTACH's Bhubaneswar convener Anil Dhir highlight-

ed that groundwater depletion caused by deep bore wells has dried up natural aquifers in the heritage zone. Of the 30 temple tanks surveyed, 18 were found to be dangerously contaminated, with E coli bacteria, fecal matter, low pH levels, and diminished dissolved oxygen levels rendering them unfit for use.

The study also detected high levels of pesticides, metals, algae, arsenic, and fluoride in the tanks, making the water hazardous. It recommended placing warning signage and implementing stricter measures to prevent pollution. Regular cleaning and maintenance of inlets and outlets were also suggested, with local stakeholder committees proposed to oversee the upkeep.

Dhir expressed hope that the findings would guide conservation efforts by agencies like the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the State Archaeology department. He emphasised the urgent need to revive these historic water bodies to preserve their cultural and ecological significance.



BOOK RELEASE: Dignitaries release a book titled Parikalpana, authored by Prasanta Kumar Kar and published by Bikalananda Kar Memorial Trust at Buddha Temple in Bhubaneswar, Monday

NHRC seeks report on Dehury's pension issue

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 20: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), New Delhi, has directed the district Collector of Keonjhar to submit a detailed report on the case of Pathuri Dehury, an elderly woman seen crawling for two kilometers to collect her pension. The video of the 74-year-old tribal woman went viral, sparking concerns over her treatment and the lack of accessibility to basic services.

The NHRC issued the directive January 17, asking for the report to be submitted by February 24 for further consideration. The action follows



a complaint from Radhakanta Tripathy, a human rights defender and senior advocate, who brought the issue to the Commission's attention.

The disturbing video showed Pathuri Dehury crawling to-

wards Raisuan Panchayat in Telkoi Block, Keonjhar, as there was no accessible road. The Commission had previously ordered the district Collector to take necessary actions and submit an action report within

four weeks.

The complaint also highlighted similar issues faced by Madhav Jamuda, a disabled man from Kuladera village, who experiences similar challenges due to a lack of roads and government assistance. The complainant urged the Commission to ensure that pensions are delivered to the beneficiaries' doorsteps, wheelchairs are provided to the differently-abled, and areas are connected with all-weather roads.

The NHRC had initially directed the district Collector to submit an action report by October 30, 2024, but no report had been received at the time of the latest directive.

City planetarium prepares for rare 'planetary parade'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: Astronomy enthusiasts and sky gazers in Bhubaneswar are in for a rare and breathtaking celestial event this month, as the Pathani Samanta Planetarium prepares for the much-anticipated "parade of planets."

From January 21 to January 31, six planets—Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, and Uranus—will align in a spectacular display across the night sky. This rare astronomical phenomenon promises to offer an extraordinary sight as these planets will appear in a near-perfect line, creating a "planetary parade" visible to stargazers across the region.

The alignment of Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn will be visible to the naked eye, offering an awe-inspiring spectacle to those looking up at the sky. However, the distant planets Neptune and Uranus, which are farther



from Earth, will require binoculars or telescopes for a clear view.

To make this cosmic event even more accessible to the public, the Pathani Samanta Planetarium, in collaboration with the department of Science and Technology, has made special arrangements for visitors.

Stargazers can visit the

planetarium to observe the alignment every evening, except Mondays, from 5:30pm to 7:30pm.

Visitors will not only witness the planets in alignment but also engage in educational experiences, as the event serves as a perfect chance for individuals to learn about the dynamics of the solar system and the celestial bodies.

Two arrested for December robbery

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: Nayapalli police Monday arrested Kanha Sahoo (23) and Nabin Satapathy (23) for their involvement in a robbery December 1. One associate is still on the run.

The incident occurred near IRC Village early in the morning when the victim, Sunil Kumar Sahoo, was returning home on his scooter. The accused, along with their accomplice, attacked him with sharp weapons and stole his wallet, bag, and scooter. Sunil's attempt to raise an alarm forced the assailants to flee the scene.

Based on Sunil's complaint, police launched an investigation and arrested Kanha and Nabin. Recovered items included two mobile phones, a sharp weapon, an iron rod, and the stolen scooter.

The arrested duo were charged under Section 309(6) of the BNS Act and presented before a local court Monday. Police are continuing efforts to apprehend their associate and recover all stolen items.

Samanta applauds KISS players after Kho Kho world cup victory

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta personally congratulated three KISS University players—Pabani Sabar, Subhashree Singh, and Magai Majhi—after India's victory in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi.

Pabani Sabar represented KISS in the men's team, while Subhashree Singh and Magai Majhi were part of the women's team. Their triumph has added a new chapter to the legacy of Indian and Odisha sports.

India triumphed in both the men's and women's categories, with Sabar representing KISS in the men's team and Singh and Majhi being part of the women's team. This remark-

able achievement has marked a significant milestone for Indian and Odisha sports.

Samanta, who traveled to Delhi to personally congratulate the players, expressed immense pride in the players' victory, emphasising that their success is not just a triumph for KISS, but also for Odisha, India, and the tribal community.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated the Indian team for their historic achievement on his social media platform 'X'. Samanta thanked the Prime Minister for the acknowledgment, while the players credited their success to the support and encouragement they received at KISS, attributing their accomplishment to the institution's nurturing environment.



Sanapadar PH inaugurated to enhance local rail connectivity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: The Indian Railways has inaugurated a new Passenger Halt (PH) at Sanapadar on the Khurda Road-Bolangir Rail Line, addressing the growing demand for improved connectivity in the region, East Coast Railway (ECoR) said in a press release Monday.

The new facility, which aims to enhance local transportation and accessibility, was announced following public requests during Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav's visit to Daspalla last year.

Responding to the concerns of residents, Vaishnav had assured the establishment of the halt, which is now operational, reflecting the government's commitment to strengthening rail infrastructure in underserved areas.



Four trains to make stoppages at newly-opened passenger halt

Bhubaneswar-Daspalla-Bhubaneswar Express will stop at Bolagarh Town PH

Built at a cost of ₹55 lakh, the Sanapadar Passenger Halt features a 450-meter-long platform equipped with essential amenities to ensure passenger convenience.

Six passenger shelters and seating arrangements for 30 people on the platform and 13

in the waiting room have been installed. Additionally, the halt is fitted with 22 light posts to provide visibility at night, a hand tube well for drinking water, and a booking counter.

A waiting room with separate toilets for men and women has also been constructed to

accommodate travelers.

Starting January 20, four pairs of trains will begin making scheduled stops at Sanapadar. Among these is the Bhubaneswar-Daspalla Express (18423/18424), which will arrive at Sanapadar at 19:48 hrs and depart at 19:50 hrs on its way to Daspalla.

In the return direction, it will arrive at 07:22 hrs and leave at 07:23 hrs for Bhubaneswar. Three local MEMU services will also enhance connectivity.

The Bhubaneswar-Daspalla MEMU will stop at 10:52 hrs and depart at 10:53 hrs, with a return stop at 17:04 hrs. The Bhadrak-Daspalla MEMU will arrive at 09:53 hrs and depart at 09:54 hrs, returning at 17:44 hrs.

Lastly, the Puri-Daspalla MEMU will stop at 20:15 hrs and leave at 20:16 hrs, with a

return stop at 07:43 hrs.

In addition to these services, the Bhubaneswar-Daspalla Express will begin halting at Bolagarh Town PH on the same day. It will arrive there at 20:03 hrs and depart at 20:04 hrs, with a return stop scheduled for 07:08 hrs.

The opening of the Sanapadar Passenger Halt marks a significant step in addressing the transportation needs of the local community. The new stoppages are expected to make travel easier and more convenient for commuters, promoting regional connectivity and development.

Local representatives and railway authorities have expressed optimism about the benefits this initiative will bring to residents in the surrounding areas, fulfilling a long-pending demand and boosting overall accessibility.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	30.7°	27.8°
Min Temp	13.2°	13.5°
Humidity	72%	81%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Mainly clear sky.		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	77073.44	▲ 454.11
NIFTY	23344.75	▲ 141.55
DOLLAR	86.63	▼ 0.02
EURO	89.41	▲ 0.06
GOLD	₹78,593	▼ ₹430
SILVER	₹91,321	▼ ₹281

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Cash, jewellery worth ₹1cr looted in armed robbery

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 20: In an armed robbery, looters de-camped with valuables worth over ₹1 crore at Barpali under Hemgiri police station in Sundargarh district, sources said Monday.

According to information, a group of six-seven armed robbers entered the house of one businessman identified as Nikhil Agarwal at around 1pm, Sunday night. They had their faces covered. They entered from the backyard of the house of the businessman, after reportedly jumping over the wall. Apparently, they used a rope to scale the wall, sources said.

They soon overpowered all the family members and threatened them at gun point. Later they tied up all the family members. According to the complaint filed by Nikhil, they were talking in Hindi and took away cash and jewellery worth over ₹1 crore. In his complaint he mentioned the looted cash was worth over ₹1 lakh and gold weighing over 1.5kg and silver over 1kg.

Police, who are investigating the case, are tight lipped about it. However, it is presumed that the looters could be from the other side of the state border as their dialect suggested.

Fake ration card holders queue up for delisting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kalipada, Jan 20: A statement issued Sunday by Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra that approximately 4 lakh income taxpayers had availed the ration cards during the previous government has unnerved many ineligible beneficiaries in villages under Baliapal block of Balasore district.

Moreover, the minister's appeal to the ineligible beneficiaries to surrender their ration cards immediately before facing action has had its effect as many government employees here were seen making a beeline at the Baliapal block to delist their names from the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

In a significant case of misuse of the NFSA, it has been revealed that several government employees in Baliapal block are fraudulently holding ration cards, depriving deserving families of food supplies.

These employees, including teachers, nurses, police offi-



cers, engineers, and clerks, have been found to be collecting rations intended to reach the poor.

According to the state Food Supply Secretary's report, 165 families from 28 panchayats under the block holding ration cards were found to be ineligible.

This has resulted in vulnerable, differently-abled, and financially disadvantaged households being excluded from the benefits of the scheme.

The state government is taking action to address the is-

sue, with efforts underway to remove the names of ineligible individuals from the food supply lists. The Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department has warned that those who fail to return their ration cards by 30 January will face criminal charges and any food grains they have received will be sold in the open market with an additional 10 per cent surcharge.

Disciplinary action will also be taken against the relevant government departments, according to Baliapal Supply Officer Ambika Prasad Rath.

Dolphin census begins at Chilika

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Jan 20: A dolphin census began at Chilika lake Monday, officials said, adding that over 100 people, including retired government officers, researchers, students and experts, have taken part in counting the dolphins in the lake.

The annual census is being carried out by the Chilika Wildlife Division in collaboration with the Chilika Development Authority (CDA).

A total of 18 groups, with five to six persons in each, have been involved in the enumeration exercise, said Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Amlan Nayak.

They have been equipped with maps, binoculars, spotting scopes, GPS devices and notebooks, he said.

Boats will not operate in the lake during the three-day exercise, he added.

Last year's census was marked by adverse weather conditions and data was not released by the government. In 2023, 173 dolphins of two species were found in the lake.

The dolphins are categorised as endangered species on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.



Girl attempts suicide after 'sexual assault' by lecturer

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 20: A girl student tried to immolate herself after a lecturer of the college under Bari police limits in this district allegedly sexually tortured the girl and tried to rape her inside the classroom, police said Monday.

After reports surfaced, irate students locked up the gate and ransacked the college premises Monday. They demanded the arrest of the accused lecturer Bidyadhar Dhal and the college principal absconding after the incident. Demanding immediate justice, the survivor reportedly poured petrol on her and tried to immolate herself but police personnel present on the spot immediately intervened and foiled her attempt. She also tried to jump from the terrace of the college building to end her life but returned after she found the door of the staircase connecting the terrace closed.

Students have also called for action against others who allegedly assisted the lecturer in covering up the incident. The protest continued throughout the day until around 7pm, when Jajpur SDPO Kailash Sethi, Bari tahsildar Manas Ranjan Swain and BDO Maheswar Sethi reached the spot and tried to placate the agitating students.

The protesters relented after the ASP reached the spot and assured to nab the absconding accused within a period of seven days. Bari police registered a case (16/2025) and launched an investigation. Police said that

the accused lecturer Dhal and the principal are absconding and a manhunt is on launched to nab them.

According to the complaint, the incident occurred when the victim went to college January 6 to take a practical examination. During the examination, Dhal allegedly demanded the student's phone under the pretext of using it, and then attempted to sexually assault her in the classroom. He reportedly shoved the girl to the ground when she tried to resist his advances. When she screamed, a college peon arrived, but left without intervening after witnessing the situation.

Later, when the student screamed again, a few first-year students arrived and the lecturer fled the scene. The student narrated her ordeal to her mother and the college principal. Following this, Dhal allegedly threatened the girl, claiming that he would not let her pass the examination using his contacts in the examination control room. He reportedly said that he would help her get more marks in the examination if she obliged. The college principal reportedly promised the student higher marks if she complies. It is alleged that the lecturer also offered her money to suppress the incident.

However, when she refused, she was allegedly subjected to mental torture and threats. In response, students organised a protest at the college and questioned the role of the police in the matter.

In a first, elusive Great Bittern sighted in Gahirmatha

PNN & AGENCIES



nature lovers, a Bhitarkanika park official stated.

Its presence in the park underscores the significance of wetland conservation in sustaining diverse bird populations, said Manas Kumar Das, Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) and in-charge of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.

"The sighting of the Great Bittern is a testament to the ecological health of our wetland," Das remarked, adding that the visit of this rare bird encourages continued conservation efforts and raises awareness about the importance of protecting these vital ecosystems.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has assessed the conservation

status of the Great Bittern as being of "least concern".

According to official sources, the bird census recorded 238 Grebes and Cormorants, 11,401 Herons and Egrets across 10 species, 2,781 Storks from three species, 1,972 Ibises and Spoonbills across two species, 89,614 Geese and Ducks from 15 varieties, Gallinules, and Coots of four varieties and 766 Pin-foot and Jacana species from two types

In addition, 30 types of shorebirds (waders) with a population of 15,035, 10 types of gulls, terns, and skimmers with a population of 16,224, and 35 other waterbird species totalling 2,256 were spotted by enumerators during the survey.

BARGARH WOMAN MISSING CASE

3 held, main accused at large

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Jan 20: Town police here Monday arrested and forwarded to court three accused in the missing case of a 24-year-old woman who was found 48 hours later in a severely injured state during the recently concluded Dhanu Yatra here.

The accused were identified as Sarjan Dansana, 36, and Prahalad Dash, 33, both residents of Putka village under Bijepur police station limits, and Jayakrushna Dansana, 40, a resident of Dhumabhata village under Jagdalpur police station limits. However, the main accused remains at large, and the arrested individuals allegedly aided in his escape.

According to reports, the woman had gone missing January 12 while attending the Dhanu Yatra. About 48 hours after her disappearance, she was rescued from the Kurlajung forest area on the outskirts of Bargarh city in a severely injured condition January 14. The victim's mother filed a complaint with the Bargarh Town police, alleging that her daughter had been abducted, raped, and subjected to an attempted murder.

Efforts are on to apprehend the main accused and other individuals involved in the case, Bargarh Town PS IIC Satyajit Kandankel said. The victim is still undergoing treatment at VIMSAR, Burla. While the victim's family alleged rape, the Superintendent of VIMSAR confirmed that medical reports indicate no evidence of rape. On the other hand, the Bargarh Conscious Citizens Forum has called for a 12-hour shutdown in Bargarh from 6am to 6pm Tuesday.

Mini stadium constructed by AM/NS India inaugurated

Paradip: Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain recently inaugurated a mini stadium constructed by ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) at Paradeepgarh village under its CSR initiative Project 'Nirman'. The facility includes a gallery for the audience, multipurpose stage, and a fully developed field and pitch area. "I commend AM/NS India for developing this playground and mini stadium, which will boost local sports. I urge the youth to utilise this opportunity to hone their sporting skills and bring pride to the region," Swain said while speaking at the event. The inauguration followed the Udaan inter-village cricket premier league's second edition final, where Paradeepgarh beat Bhatumundai by five wickets. The winning team received ₹25,000 and a trophy, while Bhatumundai secured ₹15,000 and a trophy as the runner-up. Suresh G, Executive Director, Odisha Operations, AM/NS India, remarked, "Sports initiatives help engage youth, boosting their confidence and character. We are committed to the development of the local community through such interventions." Nuagarh sarpanch Debendra Rout, Bhatumundai sarpanch Rohit Kumar Jena, AM/NS India Head (CSR) Vikas Yadavendu and senior advocate Sanjay Behera along with members of the community were also present on the occasion.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, GANJAM. Invitation of Tender Call Notice - No.01/2024-25. Letter No : 171 Dated : 17.01.2025. No.1-424 : Sealed tenders (Percentage rate) in conformity with DTCN are invited from the "B" / "C" class contractors registered with the State Govt. for execution of Civil works under Panchayat Samiti, Ganjam.

CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA REGIONAL OFFICE: 108-B, 1ST FLOOR, UNIT-7, SURYA NAGAR, NEAR GOPABANDHU CHHAK, BHUBANESWAR-751003. POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property). Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Central Bank of India under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notices as under calling upon the following borrower(s)/guarantor(s) to repay the following amount mentioned in the notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notices.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI PURI SADAR, PURI. NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement. Bid Identification No.: 03/2024-25/PURI SADAR BLOCK. No.1-428: THE OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI PURI SADAR, Puri, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids through e-Procurement in Single Cover System from eligible Class of Contractors for execution of Civil Works as per NIT and DTCN on Percentage Rate Bids.

NTPC Limited (A Govt. of India Enterprise). NOTICE. Registered Office Address: NTPC Bhawan, Core-7, SCOPE Complex, 7-Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003. Corporate Identification Number: L40101DL1975GOI07966. The Petitioner above named has made an application before the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), New Delhi for determination of tariff of Barh Super Thermal Power Station, Stage-I (1980 MW) from 01.04.2024 to 31.03.2029.



What you are not able to do today, you will achieve tomorrow. Persevere and you shall conquer.

THE MOTHER

Here Comes Trump Again

Even before his inauguration as US President for the second term 20 January, Donald Trump had scored two big wins – having a hand in the release of hostages to Israel by Hamas as part of a Gaza ceasefire deal and saving TikTok, at least for now, which briefly, for 24 hours, shut down in the US to comply with a federal ban imposed over fears the social media site could be manipulated by China. Each breakthrough bears the true Trump stamp – showmanship and use of presidential power. But these initial “wins” are hardly any indication of the tectonic changes that are on the cards as per Trump’s election campaign. The new challenges will require far-sighted strategic vision that he did not always show in his first term. Experts, however, believe Trump has now matured enough from what he was during his first presidency. He appears to have learnt lessons from his past mistakes and chosen his team more carefully and with far greater degree of confidence than what he did last time.

A day before he assumed office, Trump had clearly indicated how thunderous his new term would be. His statement that “by the time the sun sets tomorrow evening, the invasion of our borders will have come to a halt, and all the illegal border trespassers will be on their way back home” reflects his determination to implement what he promised to his voters. The whole world will be watching how he is going to deliver on his other pledges to defeat inflation, provide the lowest-cost energy on Earth, cut taxes, slash prices, raise wages and return thousands of factories to the US with the use of tariffs. He has also declared he would end the war in Ukraine, stop “chaos” in the Middle East, prevent World War III, crush violent crimes in cities and rebuild the police and the military. As Los Angeles had been burning due to wildfires, Trump said he would rebuild it and make it more “beautiful than before.” He plans to visit Los Angeles later this week.

As can be seen, Trump will be in a signing spree from his first day in the White House and is expected to issue over 100 executive orders which are intended to be a shock and awe campaign. As his incoming Press secretary, Karoline Leavitt has put it: “He will use the power of his pen to deliver on many of the promises he made to the American people on the campaign trail.”

Changes to America’s immigration policies are likely to be profound and controversial. “Mass deportations” have been promised repeatedly and Trump has filled his inner circle with advisors who are staunch supporters of anti-immigration. Undocumented migrants are likely to be the focus. There are an estimated 11 million people who belong to this category in the US at the moment. It has been suggested that the military could be used to help round up undocumented migrants in cities across the country. This will include immigrants who have been in the country for many years waiting for the chance to change their immigration status. Many of the undocumented migrants will have family members born here who are therefore US citizens. To deal with this problem Trump has proposed banning birthright citizenship – an American right enshrined in the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution.

However, it is not clear yet to what extent these policies are enforceable. Present conditions indicate his immigration plans are likely to face significant legal challenges. Trump however is expected to send the message across that he means business and will take visually impactful actions.

On the energy front Trump is likely to turn Biden’s limits on drilling offshore upside down as he is an advocate of fossil fuel. For this reason there is hardly any doubt that he will once again withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement. President Biden rejoined the agreement after Trump pulled out during his first term. There is also the issue of export of natural gas that was banned by the previous administration.

On many occasions during the election campaign, Trump said he would pardon people convicted for their role in the 6 January, 2021 attack on the US Capitol made to prevent the 2020 election from being ratified. His statement last month in this regard is significant: “I’ll be looking at J6 early on, maybe the first nine minutes.”

Trade and tariffs will be an issue that will have international repercussions. Weeks after his election, Trump promised he would sign an executive order to implement a 25 per cent tariff on products imported from Mexico and Canada, two of America’s biggest trading partners. Now, the question is whether there will be any difference between election rhetoric and reality. The world will wait and watch to what extent Trump’s electoral pledges are going to be matched by actual actions.

India has already had an early taste of Trump’s second beginning. PM Modi not getting invited to the Inauguration has been a major setback for his supporters within the country. It has also shown that the influential group of Indian origin people in the US no more believes in the bravado that was being demonstrated earlier. To top this, the invite extended to Nita and Mukesh Ambani was a clear sign that Trump too has taken sides.

WISDOM CORNER

“Don’t be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs. Every time you conquer one it makes you that much stronger. If you do the little jobs well, the big ones will tend to take care of themselves.”
DALE CARNEGIE

“Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself, but talent instantly recognizes genius.”
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

“We’re born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we’re not alone.”
ORSON WELLES

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1793: Louis XVI, the last Bourbon king of France, was executed by guillotine in Paris during the French Revolution.
- 1905: Fashion designer Christian Dior, whose label became an enduring worldwide success, was born in Granville, France.
- 1924: Vladimir Lenin, who led the Russian Revolution (1917) and later served as the first head (1917–24) of the Soviet state, died.
- 1968: The Battle of Khe Sanh begins. It is one of the most publicized battles of the Vietnam War.
- 1976: First commercial Concorde flight. Generating a sonic boom as it traveled through the atmosphere at supersonic speed, the Concorde, a commercial aircraft built with funding from the British and French governments, began regular service on this day in 1976.

FOCUS ECONOMY

DIM OUTLOOK



We are also facing fiscal limits, so that pumping up growth just by government spending will not work. Private investment spending also has to pick up



Ajit Ranade

THE WORLD IS WATCHING AS THE UNCERTAINTY UNFOLDS ABOUT HOW DISRUPTIVE TRUMP WILL BE FOR THE WORLD ECONOMY

Donald Trump takes charge as the forty-seventh President of the United States, a second time for him. He won a big electoral victory in his second attempt. But he is now the only former and incoming American President who has been convicted as a felon, which normally would have carried a sentence of a stiff fine or jail. But the judge who pronounced the sentencing declined to punish the incoming president and gave him an unconditional discharge. Trump also has three other criminal and felony cases which now may or may not go to trial anytime soon. Being convicted as a felon, President Trump now faces denial of entry to several countries. Even India does not give visas to convicted felons. This will pose a sensitive diplomatic challenge to many countries, where Trump might want to visit.

This is the beginning of an unprecedented presidency. The people have voted him in to office very decisively despite their knowledge of his pending criminal cases. The policies that Trump has announced which he plans to implement are even more popular. The policies enjoy an approval rating ten per cent more than his electoral support. Lets look at what those policies might mean. They include stiff measures against illegal aliens, restricting entry of legal aliens such as those who come on H1B visas, imposing high import duties especially on goods coming in from Mexico, Canada and China. His supporters and others too have come to believe the rhetoric that foreign producers “harvest” the American consumer market and steal American jobs. Hence free access to the American consumer is no longer going to be available to foreign suppliers in this Trump administration. As such during his previous term from 2016 till 2020, he had imposed high tariffs on nearly one trillion dollars’ worth of goods being imported

into America. That tariff will be even bigger now. He promises to set up an “External Revenue Services,” a play on “Internal Revenue Service” which is the name of the American income tax department. “Instead of pinching your pockets, I am going to pinch the pockets of those grubby foreigners who take unfair advantage of free market access,” he told his voters.

The impact of policies of Trump 2.0 is expected to be adverse for India. Firstly, higher tariffs on Chinese goods coming into America will divert those to third countries. China is suffering from a slowdown and excess capacity. Which means that the Chinese will try to dump goods on other countries at very low cost, especially items like steel, non-ferrous metals, consumer electronics and chemicals. India already has a huge 100-billion-dollar bilateral trade deficit with China which is proving tough to reduce.

The other impact is via sanctions against buying cheaper Russian crude oil. India benefited from the cheap crude and exporting refined petrol and diesel to US and Europe. That will be under closer scrutiny and become more difficult. A third impact is via the strong dollar which means a weakening rupee. This makes foreign investors nervous, and that has been reflected in massive

outflows. During this month alone, till 17 January, foreign institutional investors (FII) have pulled out Rs 47,000 crore, and the stock market has taken a big beating. This January the outflow is the highest since 2008. As dollars are pulled out, the rupee has fallen to 87 and might fall further. In trying to defend the rupee strength, the Reserve Bank of India sells dollars. As FII’s try to get out, there emerges a shortage of dollars, which would have made the rupee weak and dollar strong. To prevent drastic weakening of the rupee, the RBI sells dollars out of its precious foreign exchange reserves. By one estimate, since the end of September 2024, the RBI might have sold close 40 billion dollars to stem the tide. This depletes India’s stock of forex and also reduces the liquidity in the banking system. And the net result is that the rupee is still falling while banks are facing a liquidity crunch. As of end December, the RBI is reporting a net liquidity deficit of 2.5 trillion rupees in the banking system. This liquidity crunch makes short term interest rates shoot up. That is not good news, since on the other hand there has been a demand for the RBI policy rate (the short-term repo rate) to be brought down. The demand for lower interest rates is coming from the government

of India as well as from interest sensitive sectors like housing, real estate and personal finance. As such the real disposable income of households is moving very sluggishly, thanks to inflation eating into the household budget, and wages not rising fast enough. Hence consumer spending growth also has been muted, causing worries about GDP growth. As such GDP growth this year is lower at 6.4 per cent compared to 8.2 last year. Next year also the growth rate might be moderate at around 6.5 per cent.

Thus, Trump policies directly are bound to affect us via the Chinese dumping threat, the flight of foreign investors from stock markets, weakening rupee and consequent liquidity crunch, continuing high interest rates and inflationary tendency. Of course, it is incorrect to blame all our economic woes on Trump’s policies. We are also facing fiscal limits, so that pumping up growth just by government spending will not work. Private investment spending also has to pick up. That depends on consumer confidence and demand revival, which in turn depends on employment and wage growth. It is all interconnected. And there is a big role for psychology and sentiment. The world is watching as the uncertainty unfolds about how disruptive Trump will be for the world economy. If he pushes for a ceasefire in Ukraine that would be a plus point. But if America hunkers down and becomes more protectionist, isolationist and mercantilist that is not good news for free trade. His curtailment of H1B visas can hurt India’s software exports, the current bright spot, quite adversely. We are in for a bumpy ride this year tackling the Trump impact and domestic economic challenges.

The writer is a noted economist. ©THE BILLION PRESS

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Heeding lessons from past wars

Failing to heed the lessons of past wars is a surefire recipe for future conflicts. While it is too early to draw all the relevant lessons from the ongoing war in Ukraine, some are readily apparent. Ignoring them will leave Europe vulnerable for years to come. The first and most important lesson is that European countries must respond much faster to emerging military crises. Just as police cars, firefighters, and ambulances use sirens to signal urgency – knowing that the speed with which they reach the scene can determine whether lives are saved or lost – governments and institutions need their own administrative “sirens” to ensure timely and effective responses.

The war in Ukraine has underscored the urgent need for the EU, its member states, and institutions like the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Council of Europe Development Bank to establish processes for fast-tracking infrastructure and, when relevant, defense spending. When Russia bombs Ukraine’s electricity infrastructure, for example, or when the bulk of Ukrainian trade is redirected from sea lanes to land routes, the EU and

other international partners must be able to respond quickly by building cross-border electricity lines and reinforcing other critical infrastructure, such as bridges or border crossings across Central Europe. It must also accelerate the construction of EU-compatible rail systems across the Baltic states, which still use Soviet track gauge.

The EU could take a page from the playbooks of other countries that have dealt with similar challenges. In 1950, the US adopted the Defense Production Act, which has since been used to fast-track spending on both military and non-military priorities, from developing hypersonic missiles to advancing the green transition through solar-panel production.

More recently, Germany responded to the energy crisis triggered by Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine with its LNG Acceleration Act, expediting the construction of terminals for liquefied natural gas imports. The Netherlands is poised to follow suit with similar legislation, while the UK has experimented with a “spiral development” approach to military acquisitions, prioritizing speed over perfection by fast-tracking the production of

“good enough” equipment to meet urgent security needs.

To overcome its chronic sluggishness and cumbersome bureaucratic processes, the EU needs its own Defense Production Act. This would enable the bloc to address threats from hostile powers more promptly and improve preparedness for security crises. The second lesson of the Ukraine war is that rearming, building infrastructure, and deterring hostile forces require substantial investment. To meet these demands, the EU must make it much easier to reallocate existing resources, such as the cohesion funds that support poorer member states, the Next Generation EU recovery program, and EIB loans.

Winning wars requires sustained, long-term financial commitments. During World War II, US Lend-Lease program provided allies like UK and Soviet Union with military equipment, food, and other resources. The Soviets settled their debt in 1972, while the UK paid its final loan installment in December 2006.

European countries must recognise that they are no longer in peacetime and secure the necessary funds to protect themselves. Even if a ceasefire in Ukraine were reached soon – a big if – the

risk of another Russian attack would remain alarmingly high. Given this reality, European leaders have a responsibility to prevent Russia from getting even closer to EU and NATO borders. To this end, they must ensure that Ukraine has the capacity to withstand Russian aggression for decades, if necessary. Moreover, for Ukraine to achieve lasting peace – not just a ceasefire that collapses after a few years – it must either join NATO or bolster its defenses to the point that any Russian offensive becomes too difficult and costly to pursue. Maintaining a robust international military presence will also be essential for deterring aggression.

The last obvious lesson of the war in Ukraine is not new: the best way to restore peace is to support allies in defending it. The US helped its European allies win two world wars not because it faced an immediate threat, but because it understood that letting its allies fall would ultimately bring the danger to its doorstep. Now, the danger is at Europe’s doorstep, and it is EU’s turn to step up.

The writer is a member of the European Council on Foreign Relations. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Nicu Popescu

THE LAST OBVIOUS LESSON OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE IS NOT NEW: THE BEST WAY TO RESTORE PEACE IS TO SUPPORT ALLIES IN DEFENDING IT

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



Moment of relief

Sir, This refers to “Peace at last,” OrissaPOST, Jan 20. The recent announcement of a potential truce between Israel and Hamas has brought a mix of cautious hope and lingering fear to those on both sides of the conflict. After months of violence and suffering following the devastating events of October 2023, which saw Hamas’ deadly incursion into Israel and the subsequent retaliatory offensive, the prospect of a ceasefire offers a moment of relief. However, the road ahead remains fraught with uncertainty. The conflict has left deep scars on both Israeli and Palestinian communities. A crucial component of the ceasefire includes a surge in humanitarian aid to Gaza. This would enable displaced Palestinians to return to their homes and help rebuild critical infrastructure. Yet, the long-term success of this agreement hinges on both sides’ willingness to engage in meaningful negotiations during the second phase. The fragile nature of previous ceasefires—such as the one in November 2023 that lasted only a week—underscores the difficulty of achieving lasting peace. Meanwhile, Palestinians fear that a breakdown in talks could trigger renewed violence, exacerbating an already catastrophic situation. If the ceasefire holds, it could mark the beginning of a much-needed reprieve for Gaza’s beleaguered population.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Daily danger

Sir, “If celebrities are unsafe, what about the hoi polloi?” This is the general refrain post the attack on actor Saif Ali Khan. The common Indian faces threats to his life on a routine basis -- fast moving vehicles of the super-rich, sewers with open man-holes, live wires lying about or dangling over you, foot overbridges that may collapse anytime, dangerous billboards, narrow and unsafe footpaths, gropers and touts who are everywhere and a lurking feeling of being unsafe among the crowd, particularly if you are woman. Life in a city is like life in a conflict zone, the danger of death or a serious accident is always there with you like your own shadow. City people have got used to living a life that hangs by a fine thread.

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)



AI-generated meme war ahead of election

MANDALA-MAKARAVILAKKU MAHOTSAVAM CONCLUDES Sabarimala temple closed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DELHI POLLS



New Delhi, Jan 20: The Delhi Assembly election has become a memefest in the digital arena with the BJP, AAP, and Congress trying to captivate voters and take jibes at one another through humorous and satirical posters and AI-generated videos.

“Aao IDA ko ukhad phenkengay”, directly targeting the incumbent’s infrastructure development promises.

The Congress too is not far behind. Looking to reclaim its lost ground after drawing a blank in the 2015 and 2020 Assembly polls, it has come up with sharp satires in the form of memes and AI-generated video campaigns using the storytelling format.

A post shared by the Congress, shows a razor blade with the tagline “GST”, calling the BJP-led Union government a “pocket maar sarkar”.

The grand old party has also come up with an AI-generated video titled “Fekne Mein Vishwa Vijeta”, in which the narrator explains a game, similar to an Olympic-style competition that involves contestants delivering the most exaggerated claims, with one participant ultimately winning the title.

The video concludes with the winner declaring, “Mitron, fekne se mera poora natak hai”, taking a jab at BJP’s poll promises that its political rivals have termed rhetoric.

On the other hand, AAP has launched sharp retorts, taking on both the BJP and Congress, alleging that the grand old party’s Delhi unit has been turned chess by the BJP and its senior leader Amit Shah.

The BJP also took a swipe at AAP over its Mohalla clinic, with a parody of a Bollywood movie song, claiming that all such health facilities that have been much touted by the AAP government are under lock and keys while the liquor shops are open and the Yamuna has turned into a drain.

In response, AAP came with a parody of another Bollywood movie song, taking a swipe at the BJP’s 15-year

SURGE IN HOTEL BOOKINGS

New Delhi: Hotel bookings in Delhi have picked up pace ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections to be held February 5, an industry chamber said Monday.

In a statement, Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) chairperson Brijesh Goyal said that political parties have already booked around 3,000 rooms in the city, with reservations extending until February 10.

“Bookings in budget hotels and guest houses across the national capital have reached nearly 50 per cent,” Goyal stated. He added that political campaigns are in full swing, with leaders and workers from political parties such as BJP, Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, BSP, NCP, JDU, and AIMIM arriving in Delhi.

Many of them are staying in budget accommodations

spread across the city. In addition to political visitors, regular customers are also contributing to the rise in bookings, said the statement. Events such as the Auto Expo at Bharat Mandapam and various cultural programmes being held at different venues are attracting more people to Delhi.

Currently, 50 to 60 per cent of rooms in budget hotels and guest houses are occupied, said Goyal. “If bookings exceed 75 per cent, room rates are expected to increase by 20 to 50 per cent,” Goyal said, noting that elections often lead to increased business activity.

At present, the average room rent in areas like Paharganj and Karol Bagh is around ₹1,000. However, in the coming days, prices may rise to ₹1,200-1,500, he added.

stint in the MCD and claiming that the people of Delhi don’t like lies and has kept the BJP out of power. The surge in the use of AI-generated content for election campaigns forced the Election Commission of India to write to the heads of

all recognised political parties January 12, urging them to label all such campaign material as “AI-generated, digitally enhanced and synthetic content.” Delhi will go to polls February 5, and the results will be announced February 8.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sabarimala, Jan 20: The Mandala-Makaravilakku Mahotsavam at the Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple came to an end, and the temple was ceremoniously closed Monday morning, according to officials of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB).

The 2024-25 pilgrimage season witnessed an extraordinary influx of devotees, an official release issued Monday said.

According to preliminary estimates by the TDB, approximately 53 lakh devotees visited Sabarimala during this season, it added.

The temple was closed at 6.30am after the darshan of Thrikettanarajaram Varma, a representative of the Pandalam Royal family, the release said.

Earlier, the temple reopened at 5am, and the day began with Ganapathi Homam at the East Mandapam.

Melshanthi Arun Kumar Namboothiri later performed the Vibhutiabhishekam ritual on the Ayyappa idol, adorning it with a Rudraksha chain and placing a yoga stick in its hand, according to the release.

Following the recitation of ‘Harivarasanam’, the Melshanthi put out the temple lamps and officially closed the sanctum. The temple keys were handed over to the royal family member, the release said.

After descending the 18 holy steps, traditional ceremonies were completed, and the royal family member transferred the key group to Sabarimala Administrative Officer Biju V Nath, in the presence of Devaswom representatives and the Melshanthi, it added.

The royal representative and his entourage then departed for the Pandalam Palace. The Thiruvabharanam procession is scheduled to reach Pandalam January 23, the release said.

Welfare pensions: Kerala govt sanctions ₹1,604cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 20: The Left government in Kerala Monday sanctioned two instalments of welfare pensions to be distributed to the underprivileged sections of society.

Finance Minister KN Balagopal announced that ₹1,604 crore has been allocated for this purpose. Around 62 lakh beneficiaries will receive ₹3,200 each.

Beneficiaries will begin receiving their pensions starting Friday. Hailing the decision, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in a Facebook post, said that despite the Central government’s relentless implementation of policies that strain Kerala’s economy, the LDF government is resolutely continuing welfare activities without interruption. “This decision reflects that strong determination,” he said.

In a statement, Balagopal said the amount will be credited to the bank accounts of 26.62 lakh people, while others will have the pension delivered to their homes via cooperative banks.

This instalment includes the pension for January as well as one of the pending instalments.

“Due to financial constraints, the pending welfare pensions will be disbursed during this financial year and the next, as stated by the chief minister in the Assembly. The first instalment was distributed during Onam, and the second instalment is being released now,” Balagopal said.

In the statement, the finance minister also highlighted “the severe financial crunch caused by Central government policies” and said the action of the state government shows its “determination to ensure the distribution of welfare pensions without delays”. “Prioritising pension distribution remains a key focus,” Balagopal said.

“Since March last year, monthly pensions have been provided without interruption. Since this government assumed office, approximately ₹35,400 crore has been allocated for welfare pensions,” he said.

Noting that Kerala has implemented the most comprehensive social security pension scheme in India, the minister said that the state contributes 98 per cent of the required funds, with less than 2 per cent coming from the union government.



Visitors at the Lighthouse Beach, at Kovalam, in Thiruvananthapuram, Monday

Kerala Assembly pays homage to Manmohan Singh

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala Assembly Monday paid homage to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who died last month, and described him as a unique personality, able administrator, brilliant economist, and a determined patriot. Cutting across politics, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Leader of Opposition VD Saheesha, Assembly Speaker A N Shamsar and other leaders hailed the contribution of Singh in various fields. The 13th session of the 15th Kerala Assembly, which began Friday, was adjourned Monday after paying tribute to the former Prime Minister. During his speech, Chief Minister Vijayan recalled that apart from being the Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh was known in many capacities as an internationally renowned economist, exemplary teacher, and eminent bureaucrat, and as the country’s finance minister. There may not be another person who has held all the pivotal positions that shape India’s economic policy, he said. The CM especially mentioned about the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Right to Information Act launched by Singh’s government. Though the CPI(M) had some differences of opinion about certain policies of the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, his stand for protecting constitutional values and the democratic system of the country was commendable, Vijayan further said.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 55/ET/SBP/ENGG/2024-25, Dated: 10.01.2025

(1) e-Tender No.49-eT-DENS-SBP-24
NAME OF WORK : EXTERIOR PAINT, DISTEMPERING, ENAMEL PAINTING, SNOWMEX, ALUMINIUM PAINTING AT TITLAGARH STATION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/TITLAGARH JURISDICTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 85,28,774.23, Bid Security: ₹ 1,70,600.00

(2) e-Tender No.50-eT-DENS-SBP-24
NAME OF WORK : CONSTRUCTION OF RCC CAST IN SITU CENTRAL DRAIN (APPROX. 1 KM) & SIDE DRAIN OF UP & DN & DN & 3RD LINE BETWEEN MUNIGUDA - THERUBALI AT KM: 29/02-08, 29/05-29/41, 29/41-29/52, 29/62-42, 29/81-18, 29/82-29/91, 30/01-24, 30/03-09, 30/03-30/04 (BETWEEN MUNIGUDA - BISSAM CUTTACK), 30/07-30/28, 30/28-30/71, 30/82-32/12 (BETWEEN BISSAM CUTTACK - THERUBALI) UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / MUNIGUDA OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 1,20,80,314.95, Bid Security: ₹ 2,10,500.00

(3) e-Tender No.52-eT-DENS-SBP-24
NAME OF WORK : REPAIRS TO ROOF OF STAFF QUARTERS BY PROVIDING APP SHEET FOR ARRESTING ROOF LEAKAGES IN SAINITALA - RUPRA ROAD SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 85,86,307.10, Bid Security: ₹ 1,71,800.00

(4) e-Tender No.37-eT-SDENW-SBP-24
NAME OF WORK : MISCELLANEOUS REPAIRS TO BRIDGES SUCH AS FLOORING, BALLAST WALL, STEPS, PITCHING, DESILTING, JUNGLE CLEANING AND COLOUR WASHING ETC UNDER JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / KANTABANJI.
Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 80,55,473.55, Bid Security: ₹ 1,61,200.00

Completion Period for the Work : 08 (Eight) Months (for Sl. No. 1), 12 (Twelve) Months (for Sl. No. 2 & 3) and 03 (Three) Months (For Sl. No. 4).

Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 07.02.2025 (for all the Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post/ Courier/ Fax or in person 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. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tenders to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg./S) Sambalpur PR-896/P/24-25

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES WELFARE HOUSING ORGANISATION

(An autonomous body of GOI under the aegis of M/o Housing & Urban Affairs)
9th Floor, 'B' Wing, Janpath Bhawan, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001.
Ph - 23717249/23355408/23322192, E-mail : cgewho@nic.in, Website : www.cgewho.in

REQUEST FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION CUM EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR TURKEY HOUSING PROJECT AT BHUBANESWAR

CGEWHO invites offers from construction agencies, for development of a composite housing project, on Turkey / PPP model, complete with all infrastructure and amenities, on 5 to 6 Acres of land at Bhubaneswar for approximately 250 DUs. The agency shall be responsible for transfer, registration of land in favour of CGEWHO, approval of plans and construction of the said housing project with all the essential services and amenities. The land should be within a radius of 10 km from CV Raman College, Bhubaneswar. The housing project proposed to be built, shall have preferably (3 BHK & 4 BHK types of Dwelling Units with lift, having carpet areas of approx. 100-120 sqm (or as defined in RERA). Amenities would include a Community Centre, swimming pool, badminton courts as per norms of the statutory authorities. While giving the proposal, it must be ensured by the agency that all the statutory requirements as per the local bye-laws and RERA guidelines of the State should strictly be followed. The construction agency may identify one or more places of suitable land.

2. The land details are to be given as per the “Land Proforma” uploaded on the CGEWHO’s Website or as uploaded along with tender document. CGEWHO shall assess the suitability of land with regard to its vicinity towards schools, colleges, markets, hospitals, Railway Station etc as per the pre-defined “Weightage Chart” on a scale of 200 points. Only those lands scoring 80% marks and above in the “Weightage Chart” shall be prequalified. CGEWHO, after assessing the suitability of land and the construction capability of agencies as per the standard prequalification criteria of CGEWHO, shall forward the Design Parameters and draft Contract Agreement to the prequalified agencies, for the submission of price bid along with the Detailed Project Report / Technical Presentation. The price bid should be prepared on the basis of the pre-defined specifications, payment terms and other details provided in the draft contract agreement and design parameter. The cost quoted shall be lump sum price on the per square feet of the carpet area (as defined in RERA and excluding balcony area) inclusive of one covered car parking for each Dwelling Unit. Interested agency may forward the proposals giving the following details:

3. Application Form along with detailed minimum prequalification criteria, for this EOI can be downloaded from www.tenderwizard.com/CGEWHO or www.cgewho.in or CPP Portal (eprocure.gov.in) from 20-01-2025 onwards. Last date for submission of EOI is within the 30 days of release of advertisement. A non-refundable fee of Rs 10000+GST @ 18% towards cost of EOI documents through Demand Draft in favour of CEO, CGEWHO payable at New Delhi should be submitted physically to H.O. as mentioned in the prequalification documents. **No off line submission of tender will be accepted and summarily rejected.**

4. Any proposal received not conforming to EOI guidelines will be considered as technically non-compliant and is liable to be rejected. The procedure for selection of contractor will be made available with the application Forms.

5. CGEWHO reserves its right to pre-qualify or disqualify any or all applications without assigning any reason thereof. No correspondence in this regard shall be entertained.

Chief Executive Officer
CGEWHO

CBC-20105/12/0015/2425

Warm day in Delhi; temp rises five notches above normal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: Delhi experienced another warm day, with the maximum temperature settling five notches above normal at 24.5 degrees Celsius Monday.

Data showed that the last time Delhi recorded a higher January maximum temperature was January 21, 2019, at 28.7 degrees Celsius.

For Tuesday, the weather office has predicted partly cloudy skies.

The predominant surface wind is expected to blow from the northwest, with speeds lower than 6 kilometres per hour during the morning.

Smog and shallow fog is likely to form in most areas during the early morning, with moderate fog in isolated places.

The wind speed will gradually increase, reaching 10-12 kilometres per hour during the afternoon. It will fall to less than 6 kilometres per hour during the evening and the night.

Smog and shallow fog are also likely to persist in the evening and the night, the Met office said.

The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to settle around 25 and 11 degrees Celsius, respectively.

DESIGNATED OFFICER MINISTRY OF MINES GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Room No.: 310- 'D'wing, 3rd Floor, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi, 110001, 011-23384334

“Invitation of Bids for Fifth Tranche for Grant of Mineral Concession of Critical and Strategic Minerals”

In exercise of the power of auction conferred by Section 11(D) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 to the Central Government to grant mineral concession for minerals specified in the Part D of the First Schedule and in accordance with the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 as amended from time to time notified thereunder, the Government of India has directed the Designated Officer, Ministry of Mines to undertake the auction of 15 blocks in Fifth Tranche of Auction of Critical and Strategic Minerals. The notice inviting tender (NIT) has been published on MSTC e-auction portal and on the Ministry of Mines website. The commencement of sale of tender document will begin on Monday, January 27, 2025. Tender document and other details can be accessed on (<https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/mlc/n/>). CBC 26101/11/0010/2425

NTPC Limited

(A Govt. of India Enterprise)

Registered Office Address: NTPC Bhawan, Core-7, SCOPE Complex, 7-Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003
Corporate Identification Number: L40101DL1975G01007966

NOTICE

The petitioner above named has made an application before the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, New Delhi for determination of tariff of North Karanpura Super Thermal Power Project (3 X 660 MW) from 01.04.2024 to 31.03.2029.

- The beneficiaries of the generating station are:
 - North Bihar Power Distribution Company Limited, 1st Floor, Vidyt Bhawan, Bailey Road, Patna - 800 001.
 - South Bihar Power Distribution Company Limited, 1st Floor, Vidyt Bhawan, Bailey Road, Patna - 800 001.
 - Jharkhand Bileas Vitran Nigam Limited, Engineering Building, HEC Township, Dhuwa, Ranchi-834004.
 - GRIDCO Ltd. 24, Janpath, Bhubaneswar - 751007.
 - West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Co. Ltd. Vidyt Bhawan, Block-DJ, Sector-II, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700 091
- Capacity of the generating station : 1320 MW
- Approved capital cost of the Project : Rs. 12223.41 Crore
- Authority which has approved the Capital Cost : Submitted to CERC for approval
- Scheduled date of commercial operation : Not Applicable
- Actual date of commercial operation of Station : 20.03.2024 (U#2)
- Capital cost on date of commercial operation of Station : Not Applicable
- Details of tariff :

Particulars	Tariff for the previous year*	Year-wise tariff sought to be determined					
		2024-25	2025-26 (01.04.25-30.04.25)	2025-26 (01.05.25-31.03.26)	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
1.Capacity Charges (Rs./Lakh/year)	224799.17	234957.34	243909.49	317498.74	337164.41	348604.95	344326.66
2.Energy Charges (Rs./KWh)	1.621	1.554	1.554	1.608	1.608	1.608	1.608

* As per the Petition for triung-up of tariff for 2019-24 period for North Karanpura Super Thermal Power Project (3 X 660 MW) filed before Hon'ble CERC.

9. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of NTPC, namely www.ntpc.co.in under the Tab "Notices".

10. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application may be filed by any person, including the beneficiaries through e-filing portal of the Commission, with a copy to the Petitioner within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place : Noida (U.P.) Date : 05.12.2024

(Prashant Chaturvedi)
Add. General Manager (Comm.)

Leading the Power Sector



There is a battle of supremacy between the Delhi government and the central government and the people (of the city) are suffering in this

SACHIN PILOT | CONGRESS LEADER

EAM JAISHANKAR CARRYING MODI'S LETTER FOR TRUMP

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is carrying a letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for US President Donald Trump, sources said Monday. Jaishankar is representing PM Modi as his special envoy at President Trump's inaugural function Monday, the sources said



of the day note

Uttar Pradesh ranks first in providing 100 days of employment under this scheme. This ensures that unskilled labourers in rural areas do not have to leave their villages in search of work

KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA | DEPUTY CM, UTTAR PRADESH

It is being said that the Congress will cut into AAP votes, potentially helping the BJP win. However, people know that voting for the Congress will only lead to division of votes and since Delhiites do not want the BJP, they won't vote for the Congress either

GOPAL RAI | SENIOR LEADER, AAP

For five years, Jagan was your foster son and a mere rubber stamp, endorsing every bill in Parliament. You used the YSRCP to your advantage for five years, plundering the state, only to now shed crocodile tears over the devastation caused under its regime

YS SHARMILA | CONG COMMITTEE PRESIDENT, ANDHRA PRADESH

'Should be barred from contesting'

Violence broke out in northeast Delhi February 24, 2020, leaving 53 dead and several injured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: All such persons should be barred from contesting elections, the Supreme Court Monday remarked as it deferred to January 21 the hearing on a plea filed by former councillor and Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain who has sought interim bail to campaign for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls.

A bench of Justices Pankaj Mishra and Ahsanuddin Amanullah adjourned the hearing due to paucity of time but just as it was rising for the day, Hussain's lawyer mentioned the matter and requested for a hearing January 21.

"It is easy to win elections sitting in jail. All such persons should be barred from contesting the elections," the bench remarked in response.

His lawyer submitted Hussain's nomination was accepted.

The Delhi High Court January 14 granted custody parole to Hussain to file nomination papers from the Mustafabad constituency on an AIMIM ticket.

It, however, refused his plea for interim bail from January 14 to February 9 to fight the polls, saying the gravity of allegations against Hussain, being the main perpetrator in the violence, resulting in the death of several persons, could not be overlooked.

The high court said about 11

SC ON TAHIR HUSSAIN'S PLEA



The high court said about 11 FIRs were registered against Tahir Hussain in connection with the riots and he was admittedly in custody in a related money laundering case and UAPA case

standing committees are mini-Parliaments and there is a need to strengthen their functioning. More effective standing committees will lead to greater accountability in governance and transparency in administration

parties to formulate a code of conduct for its lawmakers to uphold the dignity of the legislative Assemblies.

"We have to make efforts by reaching out to political parties to minimise disruptions during House proceedings. All political parties should co-operate to uphold the dignity of the House," Birla said.

He said agreement and disagreement were the strength of any democracy and encouraged presiding officers to nurture such traditions to empower their respective Assemblies and councils.

The 85th AIPOC was attended by Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Bihar Assembly Speaker Nand Kishore Yadav, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and presiding officers of state legislative bodies from across the country.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Birla at the Raj Bhavan Monday morning but was conspicuous by his absence at the two-day conference - 75th Anniversary

FIRs were registered against him in connection with the riots and he was admittedly in custody in a related money laundering case and UAPA case.

The senior counsel counsel appearing for Hussain argued fighting elections was a complicated process, which required him to not only file

LS Speaker Birla expresses concern over fewer sittings of legislative bodies

Birla's remarks at the inaugural function of the 85th All India Presiding Officers Conference came amid reports that the Delhi Assembly held a mere 74 sittings in its entire five-year tenure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 20: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Monday voiced concern over the declining number of sittings of legislative bodies and urged presiding officers to make efforts to address the issue to strengthen democratic institutions.

Birla's remarks at the inaugural function of the 85th All India Presiding Officers Conference (AIPOC) here came amid reports that the Delhi Assembly held a mere 74 sittings in its entire five-year tenure.

According to a study by PRS Legislative, the outgoing Delhi Assembly held 74 sittings during its five-year term, an average of 15 days a year. On the days it met, the Assembly sat for an average of three hours. The House passed only 14 bills during its term, the lowest number for any previous full-term Assembly.

The Lok Sabha speaker also flagged concerns over disruption of House proceedings in a planned manner and urged presiding officers to talk to leaders of political parties to ensure smooth functioning of the state legislative Assemblies and councils.

Birla also urged the political



Standing committees are mini-Parliaments and there is a need to strengthen their functioning. More effective standing committees will lead to greater accountability in governance and transparency in administration

OM BIRLA | LOK SABHA SPEAKER

parties to formulate a code of conduct for its lawmakers to uphold the dignity of the legislative Assemblies.

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Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Birla at the Raj Bhavan Monday morning but was conspicuous by his absence at the two-day conference - 75th Anniversary

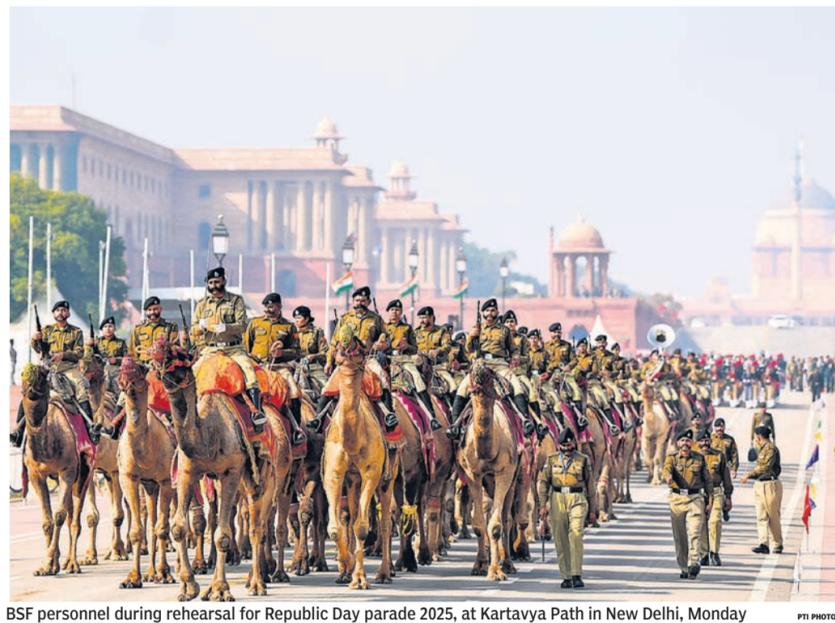
of Constitution: Contribution of Parliament and State Legislative Bodies in Strengthening Constitutional Values".

Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, who was scheduled to speak at the conference, also skipped the event.

"The dignity of any House is directly linked to its member. The more the members are responsible in their conduct, the more it will enhance the dignity of the House. This will also strengthen democracy as we will be able to hold elected governments accountable in an effective manner," Birla said.

He also favoured increasing the role of parliamentary standing committees to ensure accountability of elected governments.

"Standing committees are mini-Parliaments and there is a need to strengthen their functioning. More effective standing committees will lead to greater accountability in governance and transparency in administration," he said.



BSF personnel during rehearsal for Republic Day parade 2025, at Kartavya Path in New Delhi, Monday

Waqf panel finishes consultation exercise

After the chairperson approves the amended Bill, it will be circulated among the members and then considered by the committee for adoption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: The parliamentary committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will hold clause-by-clause consideration of the proposed law January 24 and 25, setting in the process for finalising its report that is expected to be tabled during Parliament's Budget Session.

This means that the Joint Committee of Parliament headed by seasoned BJP MP

Jagdambika Pal has finished its consultation process involving stakeholders from across the country and is now moving to seek views of the panel's members before finalising the report.

The committee was given an extension by Speaker Om Birla till the last day of the incoming Budget Session, which will run from January 31 to April 4, with a recess in between.

Members can now propose their amendments in the draft

law, and those will be put to vote. Opposition MPs, who have been vehemently opposed to the Bill, are likely to propose amendments.

However, those are unlikely to be accepted as the BJP and its allies are in a majority in the panel.

Based on the clause-by-clause consideration, official sources said, the draft report would be prepared and shared with the Legislative Department.

After the chairperson approves the amended Bill, it will be circulated among the members and then considered by the committee for adoption, they said.

A date to adopt the finalised report will be announced later.

A DAY INSIDE 'AKHADAS' AT MAHA KUMBH

Dip at Sangam, 'yagya', attending to pilgrims

Akhadas are monastic institutions or sects that unite seers (ascetics) under specific spiritual traditions and practices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mahakumbh Nagar (UP), Jan 20: Their barely-clad bodies smeared in ash and long hair in deadlocks, seers at the Maha Kumbh begin each day at 4 am with a dip at the holy Sangam and a litany of rituals before proceeding to receive the pilgrims visiting them.

Life in the 'akhadas' for these seers involves a bevy of customs -- worship of their gurus, performing rituals such as

'yagya', meditation and evening prayers.

Depending on their following, most of their day is occupied by 'satsang', Bhagavad Gita 'path (recital)', singing 'kirtan (hymns)' and chanting mantras.

The rest of the time is spent attending to the pilgrims, who visit them either out of curiosity or faith.

"The idea behind our lives is not having greed. We lead simple lives. Here also, we wake up at 4 am and go for a 'snan (dip)' at the Sangam," Sawan Bharti, a seer from the Juna Akhada told PTI.

"Once we come back, we have our rituals, we worship our gurus and gods, there are the yagya. There is a sea of



pilgrims who visit us to take 'dhuni (ash)'. In the evenings, we have prayers and then we sleep by midnight," he said.

He added their routine was more or less the same even in other places as well.

"We are in a sacred place and can take a bath at the Sangam.

We also attend rituals when new seers are taking 'diksha'," Bharti said.

He explained that each seer had a job (assigned task) related to the akhadas -- from arranging meals, procuring items, cleaning the premises and preparing for the rituals.

During the Amrit Snan, the akhadas hold the privilege of taking the first holy dip, and their bathing sequence is determined by the Akhada Parishad, which allocates time slots based on hierarchy

Mounted on horses, with drums and cymbals, ash-smeared Naga sadhus carrying tridents and swords were the first to arrive at the Triveni Sangam and take a holy dip during the sacred 'Brahma Muhurta'

As they plunged into the water, their cries reverberated across the area, marking the beginning of Amrit Snan, believed to cleanse a lifetime of sin

Akhadas are monastic institutions or sects that unite seers (ascetics) under specific spiritual traditions and practices.

The Juna Akhada is one of the oldest and largest among the 13 that are a part of the Maha Kumbh.

The 13 akhadas are divided into three groups -- Sanyasi (Shaivite), Bairagi (Vaishnav

and Udaseen. Each akhada is allocated specific time slots for certain rituals, creating a vibrant atmosphere filled with processions featuring decorated elephants, horses and bands.

Mahant Vashisht from the Panchayati Akhada said each of their prayers were performed in a ritualistic manner.

national



The first draft of the country's history came through colonisers' distorted perspective. We have to unshackle ourselves from colonial legacy and mindset
JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

'PRALAY' MISSILE TO BE DISPLAYED AT R-DAY PARADE

Newly-developed tactical missile 'Pralay', capable of carrying conventional warhead, will be among the indigenous weapon systems to be displayed at the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said Monday



of the day quote

Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, himself an ex-cadet of the NCC, has given the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. So, its current cadets have a responsibility to contribute to his 'Viksit Bharat' dream
RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Advantage business ties! I began the day in Seoul by speaking to over 140 business leaders at the Advantage Assam roadshow, organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in South Korea
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CHIEF MINISTER, ASSAM

We must ensure that AI adoption prioritises transparency, fairness and public engagement while fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration
UTPAL KUMAR SINGH | LS SECRETARY GENERAL

POST OF THE DAY

First we need writers/authors who understand the difference between Country - State - Government - Nation - Civilization.
1. Country = Land defined on a Map
2. State = Formal administrative and governance system
3. Government = Entity that runs the State & Country
4. Nation = Emotions + Identity + Country + State
5. Civilization = Collective cultural and historical existence and experience
All are distinct. All co-exist.
@sandeep_PT

SHORT TAKES
Soldiers killed in terrorist attack
Srinagar: An Indian Army soldier was killed following an overnight encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Sopore area, officials said Monday. Sepoy Pangala Kartheek was injured in the exchange of fire with terrorists in a hideout at Zalooru Gujjarpatni in Sopore police district and died as he was being evacuated from the scene of the gunbattle, they said. Security forces laid out a cordon Sunday when they noticed fire while busting a militant hideout.

Woman sentenced to death for killing partner
Thiruvananthapuram: A court in Kerala Monday sentenced a woman to death for the sensational murder of her boyfriend in 2022. The Neyyattinkara Additional District Sessions Court also sentenced her uncle, Nirmalakumaran Nair, the third accused in the case, to three years of imprisonment. The 24-year-old convict, Greeshma, had sought leniency in sentencing by citing her academic achievements, lack of prior criminal history, and the fact that she is her parents' only daughter.

NIA to probe twin blasts in Gurugram
New Delhi: Anti-terror agency NIA has registered a case to probe two crude bomb explosions outside two nightclubs in Gurugram, official sources said. They said the case was registered based on the directive of the Union Home Ministry. The NIA has taken over the case registered by Haryana Police and an FIR has been filed to investigate explosions that took place near the nightclubs December 10, 2024.

'HUMANITARIAN CRISIS' AT DELHI AIIMS

Rahul writes to Atishi, Nadda

Rahul Gandhi wrote to Delhi's chief minister and Union health minister urging immediate action to aid patients suffering in poor conditions outside AIIMS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has written to Union Health Minister JP Nadda and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, flagging the plight of hundreds of patients and their family members huddled on the footpath and subway outside AIIMS here and sought concrete steps to resolve this "humanitarian crisis".
The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha also urged the central government to take concrete steps to strengthen the public healthcare system in the upcoming budget and increase the necessary resources for it.
In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "I have written letters to the Chief Minister of Delhi and the Union Health Minister to provide better facilities to the patients and their families coming to Delhi AIIMS from all over the country."
"Recently I saw that in freez-



ing cold these people are forced to sleep in the subway under the metro station, where there is no provision of drinking water or a toilet. There are heaps of garbage lying around. The arrival of such a large number of patients to Delhi AIIMS also shows that people are not getting affordable and good quality health facilities where they live," Gandhi said.
"I hope that taking cognizance of my letter, the Chief Minister of Delhi and the Union Health Minister will take immediate steps to resolve this humanitarian crisis," he said.
In his letter to Nadda, Gandhi said he wants to bring to his attention "the distressing situation" outside AIIMS, Delhi and went on to add that during

sure you will agree that no one should face such hardship, especially while already battling serious medical conditions," he said.
While AIIMS Delhi delivers excellent and affordable care, the condition of patients and their families shows that health-care is still out of reach for crores of Indians
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

RG KAR DOCTOR CASE VERDICT

Victim's parents and political parties express dissatisfaction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 20: A Kolkata court Monday sentenced Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment until death after he was convicted of raping and murdering an on-duty doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, rejecting demands for the death penalty saying it was not a "rarest of the rare" crime.
Additional District and Sessions Judge in Sealdah, Anirban Das, had Saturday found Roy guilty of committing the crime against the postgraduate trainee doctor August 9 last year. The heinous crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal.
The court also ordered Roy to pay a Rs 50,000 fine and directed the state government to pay compensation of Rs 17 lakh to the family of the deceased doctor.
The victim's parents said



they were not at all satisfied with the verdict of the court pronouncing life-term imprisonment until death as well as the financial assistance and would move to a higher court seeking justice.
They claimed that the investigation was done "half-heartedly and several other culprits involved in the crime were shielded". "We are shocked. How can this not be the rarest of the rare cases? An on-duty doctor was raped and murdered while being on duty. We are

dismayed. There was a larger conspiracy behind this crime," the mother said.
The father of the deceased doctor said they did not want any compensation, adding that they would continue their fight until all the other culprits were brought to book.
Roy's mother kept herself confined to her home and refused to meet reporters to comment on the verdict.
"I don't wish to say anything. I am ashamed of everything. You please go away," she said before bolting the main door from inside.
One of the convict's elder sisters, however, said, "There are reports in the media that Sanjay was not alone at the site of the crime. If others were directly or indirectly involved then that should also be investigated and the culprits should be brought to book."



Devotees celebrate 'Komuravelli Mallanna Jathara' festival, at Komuravelli in Siddipet district, Telangana, Monday

POLITICAL GRAMMAR GOES FOR A TOSS

Tongues tattle and tails wag. Come elections in India and political grammar goes for a toss. Tails start tattling while tongues go wag-a-wag and each anatomical accordian plays its own tune.
If the ruling BJP oscillates between narcissism and idol-worship within, the Congress is a welter of confusion without. The first one represents the Right and if it is wrong, it is still right. The second one may be left of Centre, but still aspires to be right of the majority while holding onto the minority. The regional rulers in the states on the other hand, want their cake and eat it too. 'I keep my state, we rule the Centre'. Thus you have a political cart in perennial push-pull mode.
Every election in India has its own idioms and idiots where parties are all shimmer and glitter but actually wear opaque eye-bands which inhibits them from watching their own see-through gowns as they go about cranking up sound decibels.
For now, national attention is riveted to Delhi where the elections to the 70 seat State Assembly is slated to take place February 5 with the results to be declared February 8. The Aam Admi Party (AAP) led by Arvind Kejriwal has been in the driver's seat with a steamroller majority that wiped out the Congress and made mincemeat of the BJP in the last two polls-2015, 2020. Both the 'also-rans' are making a renewed effort hoping to be third time lucky.
Also making a renewed effort, hoping to be 'N'th time lucky in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah's Gujarat is their Bete noire, Shankersinh Vaghela. While the two work overtime to bring down Kejriwal's castle, the former chief minister cherishes to chip away at their citadel. Last month he activated the Praja Shakti Democratic Party, by announcing the erstwhile royalty Riddhirajsinh Parmar as the party president well in time for the elections to local self-government bodies in Gu-

Delhi January 5, Modi termed the decade long rule of AAP in Delhi as 'AAPda sarkar' (a disaster of a government) and yet promised to continue all its welfare schemes. "Ongoing welfare schemes such as free electricity, free travel



for women in public buses and healthcare schemes, among others, will continue if the BJP forms the government in Delhi", he stated categorically. Apparently the definition of freebies had changed to welfare schemes in the interregnum!
If the ruling AAP has added to its existing programmes announcing revamped mohalla clinics and government schools, free electricity, free medical treatment for senior citizens in government and

private hospitals, the BJP has unfolded an equally long list for various sections of citizenry, keeping women at the centre of their poll pitch.
Notwithstanding the INDIA bloc parties extending support to AAP, there is a strong section within the Congress which has been pitching for going it alone in Delhi, whatever the consequences. Senior party leader Ajay Maken has made no bones on this count, opposing any alliance with AAP though he clothes it as his personal view. "No one can fight the BJP by weakening the Congress and we have to build our own intrinsic strength", he is on record saying. There are many in the senior hierarchy of the party increasingly veering towards a strategic shift on this count. The increasing aggression in the Congress approach is largely to counter the BJP battle tactic of all is fair in war and elections.
The Election Commission announced the date for the Delhi polls January 7. The Modi government's poll 'sweetener' announcement on

the setting up of the 8th Pay Commission followed January 16. An obliging media even underlined the amount employees will stand to gain when it submits the same. Fifty lakh central government employees, 65 lakh pensioners and even 4 lakh Delhi government staff stand to benefit from the revision, union minister Ashwini Vaishnav said. Why the hurry to announce except for electoral gains?
The crowning irony is that the Modi-headed Centre strained every nerve in its ample frame to clip the wings of the Kejriwal-ruled Delhi government. It even reversed the Supreme Court judgment of May 11, 2023 that gave AAP government the power to make laws and wield control over bureaucrats, through an ordinance that vested control from an elected government to a Lt. Governor nominated by it. And now desperately pines for the same truncated Delhi government. It is tantamount to cutting trees to make paper and then writing 'save trees' on it!

international



'Golden age of America begins'

Donald Trump, the oldest person in US history to be elected president, returns to power for a second term, four years after he left the American capital as a pariah

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 20: Donald Trump pledged to rescue America from what he described as years of betrayal and decline in his inaugural address Monday, prioritizing a crackdown on illegal immigration and portraying himself as a national savior chosen by God.

"First, I will declare a national emergency at our southern border," he said. "All illegal entry will be immediately halted and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came."

The speech echoed many of the themes he sounded at his first inauguration in 2017 when he spoke darkly of the "American carnage" of crime and job loss that he said had ravaged the country.

Trump, 78, took the oath of office to "preserve, protect and defend" the US Constitution at 12:01 pm ET (17:01 GMT) inside the US Capitol, administered by Chief Justice John Roberts. His vice president, JD Vance,

was sworn in just before him. Trump will be the first felon to occupy the White House after a New York jury found him guilty of falsifying business records to cover up hush money paid to a porn star.

Trump intends to sign a raft of executive actions in his first hours as president, incoming White House officials said Monday, including 10 focused on border security and immigration, his top priority.

In addition to declaring an emergency, the president will send armed troops there and resume a policy forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their US court dates, officials told reporters.

He will also seek to end so-called birthright citizenship for US-born children whose parents lack legal status, a move some legal scholars have said would be unconstitutional.

The inauguration completes a triumphant comeback for a political disruptor who survived two impeachment trials, a felony conviction, two assassination attempts and an indictment for attempting to

overturn his 2020 election loss. The ceremony was moved inside the Capitol due to the cold, four years after a mob of Trump supporters breached the building, a symbol of American democracy, in an unsuccessful effort to forestall Trump's loss to Democrat Joe Biden, 82.

Numerous tech executives who have sought to curry favor with the incoming administration - including the three richest men in the world, Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg - had prominent seats on stage, next to cabinet nominees and members of Trump's family.

Trump, the first US president since the 19th century to win a second term after losing the White House, has said he would pardon "on Day One" many of the more than 1,500 people charged in connection with the January 6, 2021, attack. He skipped Biden's inauguration and has continued to claim falsely that the 2020 election he lost to Biden was rigged.

Biden, in one of his last official acts, pardoned several people whom Trump has tar-

geted for retaliation, including former White House chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci, former Republican US Representative Liz Cheney and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley.



The journey to reclaim our republic has not been an easy one, that I can tell you. I was saved by God to make America great again

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

Global reaction

President Trump is always decisive, and the peace through strength policy he announced provides an opportunity to strengthen American leadership and achieve a long-term and just peace, which is the top priority

VOLODYMYR ZELENKIY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

Congratulations, President Trump. Canada and the US have the world's most successful economic partnership. We have the chance to work together again - to create more jobs and prosperity for both our nations

JUSTIN TRUDEAU | PM, CANADA

For centuries, the relationship between our two nations has been one of collaboration, cooperation and enduring partnership ... Together, we have defended the world from tyranny and worked towards our mutual security and prosperity

KEIR STARMER | PM, UK

Best wishes President @realDonaldTrump, for your tenure as 47th President of the United States. The EU looks forward to working closely with you to tackle global challenges

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EU

RIPPLE EFFECTS

Putin open to talks on Ukraine, N-arms

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated US President-elect Donald Trump on taking office hours before Trump's inauguration in Washington and said he was open to dialogue with the new US administration on Ukraine and nuclear arms. Putin, who said he wanted to secure a long-lasting peace in Ukraine rather than a short ceasefire, made the comments during a meeting of Russia's Security Council that was shown on state TV. "We see the statements by the newly elected president of the United States and members of his team about the desire to restore direct contacts with Russia," said Putin. "We also hear his statement about the need to do everything possible to prevent World War Three. We of course welcome this attitude and congratulate the elected president of the United States of America on taking office."



Europe must stand up to Trump or be crushed, says French PM

PARIS: French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou warned Monday that France and Europe as a whole would have to stand up to US President-elect Donald Trump and his policies, or face being "crushed". "The United States has decided to embark upon an extremely domineering form of politics, via the dollar, via its industrial policy, via the fact that it can capture the world's investments and the world's research," Bayrou told reporters. "And if we don't do anything, our fate is very simple - we will be dominated. We will be crushed. We will be marginalised," he said. "And how we react, that is a decision that lies solely with the French people and with Europe, because clearly, without Europe, we cannot do anything," Bayrou added.



China both hopeful, on edge

BEIJING: Chinese officials and ordinary people are hopeful but on edge as Donald Trump returns to the White House, eager to avoid a repeat of the bruising trade war that drove a wedge between the economic superpowers during his first term. Chinese Vice President Han Zheng, in meetings with Tesla CEO Elon Musk and other members of the US business community in Washington ahead of Trump's inauguration, said he hoped US companies would "take root" in China and help to stabilise bilateral relations, the official Xinhua news agency reported. When Trump was last president, he heaped tariffs on more than \$300 billion of Chinese imports. In recent months, he has said he would add tariffs of at least 10% on top of what is already imposed on Chinese goods, a move that would hurt China at a time when its economy is struggling to find a firm footing.



Trump ends CBP One, Biden-era border app that gave legal entry to 1 million migrants

The Trump administration Monday ended use of a border app called CBP One that has allowed nearly 1 million people to legally enter the United States with eligibility to work. A notice on the website of Customs and Border Protection Monday just after Trump was sworn in let users know that the app that had been used to allow migrants to schedule appointments at eight southwest border ports of entry is no longer available. The notice said that existing appointments have been cancelled. The move adheres to a promise Trump made during his campaign and will please critics who say it was an overly generous magnet for more people to come to Mexico's border with the United States. The CBP One app has been wildly popular. It is an online lottery system to give appointments to 1,450 people a day at eight border crossings. They enter on immigration "parole," a presidential authority that Joe Biden used more than any other president since it was introduced in 1952.

Trump to withdraw from Paris climate agreement once again

President Donald Trump will once again withdraw the United States from the Paris climate deal, the White House said Monday, removing the world's biggest historic emitter from global efforts to fight climate change for the second time in a decade. The decision would place the United States alongside Iran, Libya and Yemen as the only countries in the world outside the 2015 pact, in which governments agreed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The announcement, in a document from the White House, reflects Trump's skepticism about global warming, which he has called a hoax, and fits in with his broader agenda to unfetter U.S. oil and gas drillers from regulation so they can maximize output. The United States is already the world's top producer of oil and natural gas thanks to a years-long drilling boom in Texas, New Mexico and elsewhere fueled by fracking technology and strong global prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Trump also withdrew the U.S. from the Paris deal during his first term in office, though the process took years and was immediately reversed by the Biden presidency in 2021. The withdrawal this time around is likely to take less time - as little as a year - because Trump will not be bound by the deal's initial three-year commitment.



Trump proclaims there are only two sexes

President-elect Donald Trump will issue executive orders upon taking office slashing diversity, equity and inclusion programs and proclaiming that the US federal government will only recognize two sexes, male and female, an incoming White House official said. The official added that more actions on DEI - as diversity and inclusion programs are often referred to - were expected "very soon." The incoming administration plans to review and potentially end what the official described as "discriminatory programs," including environmental justice grants and diversity training initiatives.

SHORT TAKES

Yoon shuns questions

Seoul: South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol refused Monday to be questioned by investigators under a probe into whether he committed insurrection, as dozens of his supporters faced being charged over a violent rampage on a court building. Authorities said security was being beefed up at the Seoul Detention Centre where Yoon is being held as a pre-trial inmate and at the Constitutional Court which is holding an impeachment trial to decide whether to permanently remove him from office.

B'desh to mirror India

Dhaka: Bangladesh's interim government Monday said it will equip the country's paramilitary border guards with non-lethal sound grenades and tear gas canisters, mirroring practices adopted by its Indian counterpart. Home Affairs Adviser retired Lieutenant General M Jahangir Alam Chowdhury confirmed the decision during a press briefing at the Secretariat here. "We have already approved the procurement of sound grenades and tear gas shells for Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)," he told reporters.

GAZANS RETURN TO RUINS

Palestinians begin searching for people under rubble on day two of ceasefire

REUTERS

Rafah, Jan 20: Palestinians began searching Monday for thousands of Gazans believed still buried under rubble, as residents expressed shock at the devastation wrought by 15 months of war on the enclave on the second day of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The truce in the 15-month-old conflict, which has laid waste to the Gaza Strip and inflamed the Middle East, took effect Sunday with the release of the first three hostages held by Hamas and 90 Palestinians freed from Israeli jails.

Now attention is starting to shift to the rebuilding of the coastal enclave which the Israeli military has demolished in retaliation for a Hamas attack on Israel October 7, 2023. That assault killed 1,200 people with around 250 hostages taken into Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. In the subsequent conflict, more



than 47,000 Palestinians have been killed, Gaza's health ministry says.

"We are searching for 10,000 martyrs whose bodies remain under the rubble," said Mahmoud Basal, spokesman of the Palestinian Civil Emergency Services. At least 2,840 bodies were melted and there were no traces of them, he said. Displaced Gazan Mohamed

Ceasefire follows 15-month conflict with heavy casualties

Rebuilding Gaza could take decades, cost billions

- it's destruction, total destruction. It's not like an earthquake or a flood, no no, what happened is a war of extermination," he said.

With a growing flow of aid into the Palestinian enclave, residents flocked to markets, with some expressing happiness at the lower prices and the presence of new food items like imported chocolates.

Gomaa lost his brother and nephew in the war. "It was a big shock, and the amount (of people) feeling shocked is countless because of what happened to their homes

Iran sentences pop singer to death for 'insulting' Prophet Muhammed

Tehran: An Iranian court has sentenced popular singer Amir Hossein Magsoudloo, known as Tataloo, to death on appeal after he was convicted of blasphemy, local media reported Sunday. "The Supreme Court accepted the prosecutor's objection" to a previous five-year jail term on offences including blasphemy, reformist newspaper Etemad reported online. It said "the case was reopened, and this time the defendant was sentenced to death for insulting the prophet", referring to Islam's Prophet Mohammed. The report added that the verdict was not final and can still be appealed. The 37-year-old underground musician had been living in Istanbul since 2018 before Turkish police handed him over to Iran in December 2023. He has been in detention in Iran since then.



China executes two men involved in deadly social revenge killings

Beijing: Chinese authorities Monday executed two men who were involved in carrying out deadly social revenge killings with a car and knife last year, according to a media report. The authorities Monday executed a 62-year-old man who drove his car into people exercising outside a stadium last year, killing 35 people and injuring over 40, the report said. Fan Weiqu, who was stated to be angry over the division of the property after his divorce, carried out the attack a day before the Chinese military held its prestigious air show in Zhuhai City. He was executed less than a month after a court sentenced him to death. Also, officials Monday executed Xu Jiajin, a man convicted of killing eight people and injuring 17 in a knife attack at a vocational school in east China's Jiangsu Province.



Rising vehicle sales is good news for the economy... And if we work together, we can ensure this is not bad news for the environment either
BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

RUPEE RISES 15 PAISE
The rupee appreciated 15 paise to close at 86.45 against the US dollar Monday, as a decline in crude oil prices and the US dollar index supported investor sentiments. Besides, a positive trend in domestic equities also helped the local currency.



of the day note

Inflation is a major worry for everyone. We suggest raising tax exemptions to match inflation, reclassifying F&O as speculative activity, and equalising tax treatment for bank deposits and equities. These reforms will create a fairer tax system, encourage savings, and support economic growth
AJAY SRIVASTAVA | GTRI FOUNDE



In 2024, the budget has been pegged at ₹11.5 lakh crore. We have to take it to ₹15 lakh crore. When the government will invest ₹15 lakh crore on infrastructure for the next 25 years, only then India will become a developed country (by 2047)
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION MINISTER



Bold transformation is happening on the basis of sustainability, safety, and digital and Artificial Intelligence
GIRISH WAGH | TATA MOTORS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Signs of rising asset quality stress spook bank stocks

REUTERS

Mumbai, Jan 20: The stock prices of Indian private lenders that have reported an increase in bad loans in their personal loans and micro-credit businesses are bearing the brunt of investors' fears of a U-turn in the asset-quality cycle for the country's banks.

RBL Bank's shares fell as much as 5.8% Monday after the lender reported a near 28% sequential jump in quarterly slippages, or loans that were classified as non-performing for the first time.

Axis Bank, India's third-largest private bank, forecast retail asset quality would take a few more quarters to normalise. Its stock sank 4.5% Friday and dropped a further 1.1% Monday. Kotak Mahindra Bank, however, gained 9% after reporting lower slippages than the previous quarter, although it also warned that the stress in parts of its loan book would persist.

Indian banks are grappling with rising bad loans, particularly in sectors such as micro-finance, credit cards and personal loans. Analysts have attributed this to over-leveraging and an increase in loans outstanding per borrower.

The rise in delinquencies has



forced lenders to allocate more funds for potential losses and pare back loan growth in these segments, which, in turn, hurts profitability.

"The sign of stress that is visible across microfinance and unsecured loans is a mild symptom of a tougher macro environment," said Kranthi Bathini, director of equity strategy at Wealthmills Securities.

"That is largely because banks are conservative towards loan growth, which coupled with tighter liquidity conditions, could mean that an economic recovery could be prolonged."

RBL Bank -- over 50% of whose slippages came from credit cards and microfinance loans -- should start seeing a

normalisation in asset quality in the unsecured segment latest by July-September, CEO R Subramaniakumar said on a post-earnings call.

Kotak's gross non-performing assets ratio worsened slightly at the end of December and the lender said it would be cautious about unsecured loans going forward.

The stress "will take a couple of quarters to normalise," starting only from April-June, CEO Ashok Vaswani said at a media conference Saturday.

Banks' gross NPA (non-performing asset) ratio could rise to 3% by the end of March 2026, from a 12-year low of 2.6% last September, the central bank said in its Financial Stability Report in December.

NCLT orders liquidation of Go First

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Monday ordered the liquidation of Go First, the budget carrier that stopped flying nearly two years ago amid financial woes.

In May 2023, the airline filed for a voluntary insolvency resolution process.

The tribunal, in a 15-page order, said it is ordering the liquidation of the corporate debtor Go Airlines (India) Ltd.

On Monday, the NCLT said the Committee of Creditors (CoC) in the legislative scheme is empowered to take the decision to liquidate the corporate debtor, at any time after its constitution and before confirmation of the resolution plan.

"It is well settled that the decision taken by the CoC for liquidation in commercial wisdom of the CoC should not be interfered with by the Adjudicating Authority. Further, the resolution for liquidation of the corporate debtor was approved by the CoC with 100 per cent voting. Therefore, this Adjudicating Authority sees no merit in interfering with the commercial wisdom of the CoC," it noted.

The order comes a little over two months after the Supreme Court, on November 7, 2024, ordered the liquidation of the once-storied airline Jet Airways, which had stopped flying in April 2019.

Go Air, which was rebranded as Go First, flew for more than



17 years before suspending operations on May 3, 2023.

Dinkar Tiruvannadapuram Venkatasubramanian has been appointed as the liquidator.

The liquidator has been asked to follow up and continue to investigate the financial affairs of the corporate debtor. "The liquidator shall also follow up the pending applications for their disposal during the process of liquidation, including the initiation of steps for recovery of dues of the corporate debtor as per law," according to the order.

Further, the liquidator should submit a preliminary report to the tribunal within 75 days from the date of commencement of the liquidation.

During the insolvency resolution process, there were at least two bidders in the fray -- Busy Bee Airways, along with SpiceJet chief Ajay Singh, and Sharjah-based aviation entity Sky One. Travel portal EaseMyTrip's Co-Founder Nishant Pitti was the majority shareholder

in Busy Bee Airways.

In between, aviation regulator DGCA deregistered the 54 aircraft of Go First. The resolution process did not take off, and now, the tribunal has ordered the liquidation of the airline. The cash-starved airline reported a loss in the range of ₹1,800 crore, including an ₹800 crore notional loss due to accounting standards in the financial year ended March 2023.

It started domestic operations in 2005-06 with the first flight from Mumbai to Ahmedabad, and then in 2018-19, launched international operations. Since commencing operations, Go First had placed two orders for 72 A320 neo planes each with Airbus, one in 2011-12 and another in 2016-17.

On May 13, 2021, when the coronavirus pandemic headwinds were blowing strong, the airline announced rebranding itself as 'Go First' with a focus on an ultra-low-cost business model.

SHORT TAKES

IDBI Bank reports 31% rise in profit

New Delhi: IDBI Bank Monday reported a 31 per cent growth in net profit to ₹1,908 crore in the December quarter on lower provisioning and better interest income. The LIC-controlled bank reported a net profit of ₹1,458 crore in the year-ago period. The bank's total income increased to ₹8,565 crore during the quarter under review from ₹7,514 crore in the same period last year, IDBI Bank said in a regulatory filing. The bank's interest income improved during the third quarter of the current fiscal year to ₹7,816 crore, as against ₹6,541 crore a year ago. The net interest income improved to ₹4,228 crore as against ₹3,435 crore in Q3 of FY24. The gross NPA ratio improved to 3.57 per cent as on December 31, 2024, as against 4.69 per cent as on December 31, 2023.

IOB profit up 21% as NPAs decline

New Delhi: State-owned Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) Monday reported a 21 per cent rise in net profit at ₹874 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024 on the back of a reduction in bad loans. The Chennai-based lender had earned a net profit of ₹723 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to ₹8,409 crore during the quarter under review from ₹7,437 crore in the same period last year, IOB said in a regulatory filing. Operating profit of the bank improved to ₹2,266 crore as against ₹1,780 crore in December 2023. Interest income also rose to ₹7,112 crore over ₹6,176 crore for the quarter ended December 2023. On the asset quality front, the bank's gross NPAs declined to 2.55 per cent of gross loans by the end of December 2024 from 3.90 per cent a year ago.

IRFC profit rises to ₹1,631cr

New Delhi: Indian Railway Finance Corporation Ltd (IRFC) Monday reported a 2 per cent increase in net profit to ₹1,631 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024. The NBFC, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, had earned a net profit of ₹1,599 crore in the year-ago period. The total income of the company rose to ₹6,766 crore in the October-December period from ₹6,740 crore in the year-ago period, IRFC said in a regulatory filing.

BIZ BUZZ

Vedanta Aluminium's advanced operational dashboard



Bhubaneswar: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, has launched an innovative operational dashboard at its Jamkhani Coal Mine, Odisha. This state-of-the-art digital platform integrates real-time data, optimises performance metrics and automates routine processes. Developed in-house by a dedicated team, this dashboard leverages the First Principles approach to track mining operations at their most fundamental levels. It delivers actionable insights for achieving operational excellence through the Time-in-Use Model, which measures planned and actual cut rates, real-time coal exposure, comprehensive machinery utilization, dispatch and stock quality analysis. Jamkhani Coal Mine is Vedanta's first-ever greenfield coal mine and the first private greenfield mine in Odisha. The mine is fully operational and caters to the coal requirements of Vedanta's Jharsuguda plant, the world's largest aluminium smelter. Emphasizing on the role of innovation in Vedanta Aluminium's growth, Sunil Gupta, COO - Vedanta Aluminium, said, "The Operational Dashboard at our Jamkhani Coal Mine represents a significant leap forward in our journey towards digitalization. It empowers our team to optimize processes and fosters a culture of continuous improvement, thereby enhancing operational efficiency." David Stone, CEO - Coal Mines, Vedanta Aluminium, added, "The operational dashboard at Jamkhani Coal Mine was developed in-house and aligns with Vedanta's broader vision of integrating digital tools across our value chain. Future advancements, such as SAP integration and fleet management will further elevate operational precision and sustainability."

GDP to grow 7% in FY25: Moody's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: Moody's Ratings Monday projected the Indian economy to grow by 7 per cent in the current fiscal and said robust economic expansion will drive growth in insurance premiums.

Moody's expects Indian insurers to benefit from sustained premium growth, helped by India's robust economic expansion and rising demand for health insurance.

Higher premium income, driven also by an anticipated rise in prices as the government reforms the country's dominant state-owned insurance sector, will improve the industry's currently weak profitability.

India's private sector insurers continue to reinforce their solvency, but we expect some pressure on their capital adequacy because of increased underwriting exposure and regulatory changes, Moody's said.

"We expect India's economy to grow by 7 per cent in FY 2024 (year to March 2025), down slightly from 8.2 per cent the previous year. India's GDP per capita at purchasing power parity is also growing, up 11 per cent year on year to USD 10,233 in FY2023," Moody's said.

As per National Statistics Office's (NSO) first Advance



Estimates, the Indian economy is estimated to grow 6.4 per cent in the current fiscal ending March 2025.

Higher average incomes coupled with consumers' increased risk awareness will support demand for insurance, particularly health cover.

Total premiums grew by 16 per cent in the first eight months of 2024, outpacing the 8 per cent expansion achieved in FY 2023. We expect continued premium increases to bolster Indian insurers' revenue.

Moody's expects India's GDP

Moody's expects Indian insurers to benefit from sustained premium growth, helped by India's robust economic expansion and rising demand for health insurance

to grow by 6.6 per cent in FY 2025 (2025-26).

India's insurance density (in-

surance premiums per capita) rose to USD 95 in FY 2023 from USD 92 in FY 2022, up from a historical average of below USD 80.

However, the country's overall insurance penetration rate (insurance premiums as a share of GDP) was just 3.7 per cent in FY 2023, still far below developed markets such as the UK (9.7 per cent) and the US (11.9 per cent).

This indicates that the Indian insurance industry still has ample growth potential, Moody's said.

Billionaire wealth soars three times faster in 2024: Oxfam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Davos, Jan 20: Billionaire wealth across the globe surged by USD 2 trillion in 2024 to USD 15 trillion at a rate three times faster than the previous year, a study showed Monday here as the richest of the world began to assemble for their annual jamboree in this ski resort town.

In its flagship inequity report released every year on the first day of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Oxfam International contrasted the huge jump in the billionaire wealth with the number of people living in poverty barely having changed since 1990.

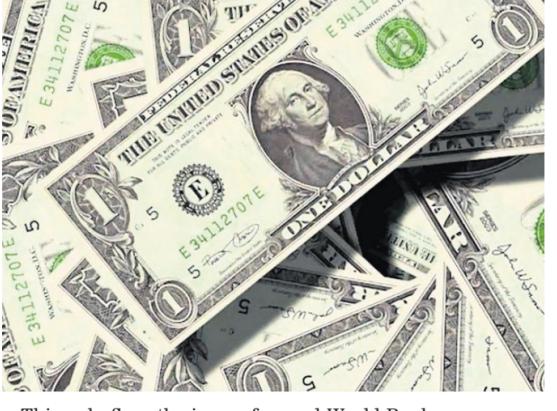
Wealth of billionaires in Asia increased by USD 299 billion in 2024, Oxfam said while predicting that there will be at least five trillionaires within a decade from now.

The year 2024 saw 204 new billionaires getting minted -- an average of nearly four every week. Asia itself got 41 new billionaires in the year.

In its report titled 'Takers, not Makers', Oxfam said the richest 1 per cent in the Global North extracted USD 30 million an hour from the Global South through the financial systems in 2023. It further said that 60 per cent of billionaire wealth is now derived from inheritance, monopoly power or crony connections, showing that "extreme billionaire wealth is largely unmerited."

The rights group urged governments across the world to tax the richest to reduce inequality, end extreme wealth, and dismantle the new aristocracy. It also sought that the former colonial powers must address past harms with reparations.

Oxfam International's Executive Director Amitabh Behar told PTI here that the new inequality report shows there is an enormous explosion in the billionaire wealth and this is more worrisome due to the growing number of people living with hunger.



This only flags the issue of modern day colonialism in the form of multinational corporates grabbing a huge portion of wealth being created, he said.

Behar said Oxfam is strongly pitching for taxing super-rich more and welcomed the growing traction across the world for taxing the wealthiest more. Even bodies like IMF

A lot of people believed that colonialism ended long back but the fact is it is thriving even today in the form of wealth going out from Global South to the richest of the Global North.

The billionaire's wealth grew in 2024 at an average of USD 5.7 billion a day, while the number of billionaires rose to 2,769, from 2,565 in 2023.

The wealth of the world's ten richest men grew on average by almost USD 100 million a day -- even if they lost 99 per cent of their wealth overnight, they would remain billionaires, Oxfam said. Oxfam, whose annual inequity report is debated extensively at WEF Annual Meeting, said that contrary to the popular perception, billionaire wealth is largely unearned -- 60 per cent of billionaire wealth now comes from inheritance, monopoly power or crony connections. Citing Forbes data, it said the largest annual increase in billionaire wealth occurred in 2021 at USD 5.8 trillion, during the COVID-19 pandem-

ic, and termed the USD 2 trillion surge in 2024 as the second highest.

It said that 60 per cent of billionaire wealth is either from crony or monopolistic sources or inherited -- 36 per cent inherited, 18 per cent from monopoly power, and 6 per cent from crony connections.

Oxfam further cited ILO to say that women in the informal economy are more often found in the most vulnerable situations, for instance as domestic workers, home-based workers or contributing family workers, than their male counterparts.

ILO data also shows that migrant workers in high-income countries earn about 12.6 per cent less than nationals, on average, Oxfam said.

The pay gap between men and women in high-income countries is estimated at 20.9 per cent, which is much wider than the aggregate gender pay gap in high-income countries (16.2 per cent), it added.

Exodus of badminton coaches

BAI working on proposal to raise salary of Indian badminton coaches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: The number of homegrown coaches might have been on the rise but their exit rate eyeing better-paying opportunities too is quite high, and the Badminton Association of India (BAI) is now preparing a roadmap in association with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to stop the exodus.

The crux of that proposal is a hike in remuneration for the coaches.

Over the past three years, top names such as Parupalli Kashyap and RMV Gurusaidutt have transitioned into full-time coaching, training the cream of men's singles players such as HS Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth, and Priyanshu Rajawat.

Under the guidance of chief national coach Pullela Gopichand, they are also working with young talents like Tharun Manneppalli, Anmol Kharb, Anuradha Upadhyaya, and Rakshitha Ramraj. The former men's doubles pair of Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy, who represented India at Asian Games and Olympics, have shifted focus to coaching young doubles players.

The duo was seen along with foreign coach Tan Kim Her during the doubles matches at the India Open.

But on the flip side, many renowned coaches have exited the Indian setup after years of hard work because of lack of financial rewards. Mohammed Sijadatullah Siddiqui, who mentored stars like Saina Nehwal and Srikanth, moved to the Oregon Badminton Academy in the U.S. last year.

B Sai Praneeth, a World Championships bronze medalist and Tokyo Olympian, retired from international badminton to take up a coaching role at a US club in March 2024.



I think we need to improve the pay for Indian coaches, or they won't stick around for long. It is fine if we are hiring foreign coaches for \$8,000-10,000, but the problem is the Indian coaches are not paid even one-fourth, maybe. So that's the issue

ARUN VISHNU | COACH

Arun Vishnu, who developed stars like Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly, is the latest to leave as he returned to Nagpur to take care of his aging father-in-law.

"I think we need to improve the pay for Indian coaches, or they won't stick around for long," Arun told P.T.I. "It is fine if we are hiring foreign coaches for 8,000-10,000 USD, but the problem is the Indian coaches are not paid even one-fourth, maybe. So that's the issue."

The BAI Secretary Sanjay Mishra acknowledged the issue, and said plans have been chalked out to address it.

"The salary of support staff, including physiotherapists and trainers, has been increased by 50-75% on their existing slab and they've been receiving

the revised salary for the last four months. Now, BAI plans to propose increasing the salaries of the coaches in the national camp," he said.

Arun said while coaches in the U.S. earn between USD 8,000-10,000 a month, Indian coaches employed by PSUs receive about Rs 50,000 a month for their services to badminton, and that too has started about a year and a half ahead of the Paris Olympics.

"None of the Indian coaches will be ready to help the national team. Why would they? Players want to give back to the sport; there is a lot of pride in that. But if they go to the U.S. or some other country, they are definitely going to get paid a good salary, or if you open an academy, you'll have better

prospects," he said. Mishra said: "Currently, the coaches receive an allowance, but according to a new proposal that we are working on, eight coaches from the national camp will be placed under the foreign coaches brought in at various centers, with a substantial salary increase. This will also include the former players and we will be looking to integrate them in the camp."

The BAI had also conducted the first-ever development programme for coaches across the country in March last year to bring uniformity to grassroots coaching.

But the question still remains as to why the current coaches, who have played at the highest level and are training budding talents in their respective academies, are not integrated into the national setup.

India has a pool of experienced former players like Anup Sridhar, Arvind Bhat, Chetan Anand, and Jwala Gutta, but none are part of the coaching system, with most setting up

FRESH CHALLENGE: Star Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be eyeing its maiden title of the year while Lakshya Sen will look to put behind a disappointing start to the season when the Indonesia Masters Super 500 tournament gets underway Tuesday

their own academies.

Sridhar, who briefly coached Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu, is set to take over as men's singles head coach of the Singapore Badminton Association.

"We have many experienced players who probably don't need further guidance to coach elite players. Take for example Anup, he is joining Singapore, there is (Hans-Kristian Solberg) Vittinghus taking over as men's singles coach in Denmark," said Kashyap.

"A coach's job is not just teaching technique but charting the whole calendar for players, guiding them to manage injuries etc and who better than someone who has been there and done that. There are very few names who have made it to the top of the world rankings from India. It's about time we trust our own."

"If our retired players were given proper designation, compensation, and opportunities, it would have brought change to Indian badminton. How long will we keep hiring foreign coaches?" he said.

Odisha FC Women's ready to host Sethu FC



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 20: After securing their first win of the IWL 2024-25 season, Odisha FC Women (OFCW) are set to host their first home game of the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2024-25 at the Kalinga Stadium here Tuesday, set to kick-off at 3:00 PM.

In their last outing, Odisha FC Women secured an impressive 2-0 win against HOPS FC at the Ambedkar Stadium, Delhi. After a tightly contested first half, Lynda Kom broke the deadlock in the 66th minute with a stunning strike. Jennifer Kankam doubled the lead in the 83rd minute to seal the victory. The team showcased their resilience and attacking flair, with Kashmina making a strong impact off the bench and Kajol D'Souza delivering a brilliant assist for Jennifer's goal. Shreya Hooda led a round of solid saves, ensuring a well-earned clean sheet.

Sethu FC enter this fixture on the back of a 2-2 draw against Nita FA and a 1-0 victory over Sreebhumi FC. Having played their opening two matches at home, this will be their first away game of the season. Known for their attacking flair and a young, cohesive squad that has been together for several years, Sethu FC will

undoubtedly pose a challenge. The team also announced that they have strengthened their squad by signing Raziya Khan on a two-year contract, with an option for an additional year.

Head Coach Crispin Chettri shared his thoughts on the January transfer window additions, "Kashmina and Raziya are excellent players. Kashmina is still building her match fitness, but her impact in the last game was immense. Her presence made a noticeable difference in the last match. Raziya, on the other hand, is a long-term signing, and we believe she will integrate well and strengthen the squad further."

Crispin acknowledged Sethu FC's quality, "They are a very interesting team with young players who have been together for two or three years. They are cohesive and strong, but we train well and I'll make some tactical adjustments, as we do for every game."

Looking forward to the support of the Juggernauts, Crispin said, "Playing at home has its advantages and challenges. The pressure to win in front of the home crowd is real, but the energy the fans bring is unparalleled. I urge the Juggernauts to be our 12th man, just as you were last season. Your support makes all the difference."

SHORT TAKES

Sinner, Swiatek 2024's world champions

London: The International Tennis Federation (ITF) Monday named Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek as men's and women's singles World Champions of 2024 respectively in recognition of their performances at the Grand Slams and other top events last season.

Rohit, Kohli to play Ranji after a decade

Mumbai: India captain Rohit Sharma will show up in a Ranji Trophy match for the first time in almost a decade after he and rising star Yashasvi Jaiswal were named in Mumbai's squad for their fixture against Jammu and Kashmir, starting January 23 at MCA-BKC Ground here. Meanwhile, Virat Kohli is set to play his first Ranji Trophy game since 2012 after making himself available for Delhi's tie against Railways scheduled here from January 30. Kohli could not make it for Delhi's upcoming away clash against Saurashtra, beginning in Rajkot on January 23, due to a neck sprain but he has communicated to DDCA that he is available for the team's last league match of the Ranji Trophy.

Pant to lead LSG

Kolkata: Dynamic keeper-batter Rishabh Pant was Monday named the captain of Lucknow Super Giants for the upcoming IPL and he vowed to give his "200 percent" to win the team's maiden title. Pant was picked at the mega auction for an IPL record Rs 27 crore by the franchise owner Sanjiv Goenka. This is Pant's second stint as a leader in the IPL. At his former franchise Delhi Capitals, the captaincy became a point of contention, leading the 27-year-old Pant to opt out of DC's retention plans after unsuccessful negotiations. Pant beat Nicholas Pooran to secure the top job after Rahul didn't feature in the list of LSG's retained players. LSG had retained Pooran, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi, and Ayush Badoni before the auctions.

Man Utd team the worst in club's history, labels Amorim



AGENCIES

Manchester, Jan 20: Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim labeled his side possibly the worst in the club's history after a 10th Premier League defeat of the season at home by Brighton & Hove Albion Sunday.

United's 3-1 defeat leaves them in 13th place in the standings and on course for their lowest finish in the Premier League. Brighton cruised to victory and United have now managed 11 points from a possible 33 since Amorim joined from Sporting in November. It is the first time since 1989-90 that they have lost 10 of their first 22 games of the league season.

"Imagine what this is (like) for a fan of Manchester United. Imagine what this is (like) for me," Amorim told Sky Sports.

"We are getting a new coach that is losing more than the last coach (Erik ten Hag). I have full knowledge of that.

"(But) I am not going to change, no matter what. I know we can succeed, but we need to survive this moment. Because I'm not naive and I know that we need to survive now.

"We are being the worst team, maybe, in the history of Manchester United. I know that you want headlines, but I'm saying that because we have to acknowledge that and to change that. Here you go, your headlines."

The 20-times English champions are as close to the relegation zone as the top eight with 26 points from 22 games. Their worst finish in the Premier League era was last season when they ended in eighth.

Hamilton 'realises dream' on first day at Ferrari

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Maranello, Jan 20: Seven-time World Champion Lewis Hamilton shared his excitement on social media after visiting Ferrari's headquarters in Maranello for the first time Monday. Hamilton is gearing up for his inaugural season with the legendary team, Ferrari, having made the switch from Mercedes to replace Carlos Sainz and partner Charles Leclerc.

Hamilton posted another update, featuring a photo of him standing outside the factory in a sharp all-black suit, alongside a Ferrari F40 sports car. The British driver expressed gratitude for achieving his dream of racing for Ferrari.

"There are some days that you know you'll remember forever and today, my first as a Ferrari driver, is one of those days. I've been lucky enough to have achieved things in my career that I never thought possible, but part of me has always held on to that dream of racing in red. I couldn't be happier to realise that dream today," Hamilton wrote in a post on Instagram.

"Today we start a new era in the history of this iconic team,



Today we start a new era in the history of this iconic team, and I can't wait to see what story we will write together

LEWIS HAMILTON | F1 DRIVER

and I can't wait to see what story we will write together," he added.

This week, Hamilton is expected to complete various pre-season tasks at Maranello, including meeting team members and conducting simulator work, ahead of his first, yet-to-be-confirmed, run in a Ferrari

F1 car. Hamilton finished the last Formula 1 season behind Mercedes teammate George Russell at seventh place with 223 points including two race wins in British GP and Belgian GP. Hamilton drove his final race with Mercedes at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix last month and finished fourth ahead of Russell to end his 11-year-long association with the Silver Arrows.

The 18-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli will fill Hamilton's shoes at Mercedes for the upcoming season with Valtteri Bottas in reserve.

WOMEN'S U19 T20 WC

Debutants Nigeria see historic win over Kiwis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Jan 20: Debutants Nigeria scripted the unimaginable as they stunned a formidable New Zealand by two runs for a historic win in a rain-interrupted low-scoring thriller of the ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup in which both sides were restricted for under-70 totals here Monday.

Nigeria scored 65-6 batting first, before producing an energetic display on the field de-railed New Zealand's run chase.

The Kiwis were 57-5, needing nine runs with one over to go in the 13-over contest. However, tight bowling from pacer Lillian Udeh got them over the line with the Kiwis falling short by just two runs. Udeh (19) and skipper Lucky Piety (18) were the only ones to hit double figures in the game for Nigeria, while Anika Todd top-scored for New Zealand with a 19-run effort.



Football and athletics are popular sports in Nigeria, unlike in the south of the continent (South Africa, Zimbabwe) where cricket has a big fan following. But the Nigerian girls placed the spotlight on their country's cricketing growth by becoming the first West African country to qualify for a global tournament and then producing the biggest shock by upsetting an ICC full member nation in a Group C match.

The Nigerians were left to wait for an opportunity after their contest with Samoa Saturday was abandoned due to rain.

Wet weather again threatened the proceedings in Sarawak, but the Africans nation made the most of their chances once it was confirmed there would be play, albeit a reduced contest of 13 overs each.

First professional woman speed skater eyes Winter Olympics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 20: Indian skater Shruti Kotwal has set her sights on the Asian Winter Games (AWG) in Harbin, China, next month as a platform to qualify for the 2026 Winter Olympics to be held in Italy.

Kotwal, who is training in the United States, will be leading the country's 41-member athlete contingent in the AWG to be held from February 7 to 14.

Kotwal said the AWG will be a big opportunity for her to test herself against the best



skaters in the world. I'm focusing on the 500m and 1000m events for Olympic

qualification. The timing requirements are incredibly challenging - sub-40 seconds

for the 500m and under 120 for the 1000m. My Indian national record is 41.97 seconds and I need to skate under 40 seconds to qualify, Kotwal told SAI Media.

This will be Kotwal's second appearance in the AWG after 2017, when the Asian meet was held in Japan.

Countries like South Korea, Japan, and China consistently produce strong skaters who are technically and physically exceptional. I've faced some of these competitors in previous events and understand their strengths. It's a tough field,

said the 33-year-old from Pune.

Several Indian speed skaters are training in Korea for AWG and contestants from at least 24 nations are expected to take part in the continental event.

Kotwal said the Khelo India Winter Games have been an ideal platform for skaters aspiring to make a mark at the international level.

Khelo India Winter Games brings everybody together. It really helps to promote the sport. We didn't have that when we started and I think the skaters now are very lucky, said Kotal.