



## Expanding creativity

Actor Fatima Sana Shaikh says she always wants to have the freedom to paint to express herself

LEISURE | P2



## West Bank violence

Hundreds of Jenin residents flee their homes as military demolishes houses on third day of a major operation in the West Bank city

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Shrinking kitty

Forex reserves drop by \$1.88 billion to \$623.983 billion in the week ended January 17, RBI says

BUSINESS | P11



## Djoko quits

Injured Novak Djokovic leaves the court in Rod Laver Arena after quitting one set into his Australian Open semifinal

SPORTS | P12

## Odisha tops NITI Aayog's fiscal health index

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: Mineral-rich Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa and Jharkhand have emerged as top-performing 'achievers' among the states listed in NITI Aayog's first Fiscal Health Index (FHI) report released Friday.

The report titled 'Fiscal Health Index 2025' covers 18 major states that drive the Indian economy in terms of their contribution to the GDP, demography, total public expenditure, revenues, and overall fiscal stability.

According to the report, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Kerala were worst-performing states in FHI, each facing significant fiscal challenges.

The report which aims to evolve an understanding of the fiscal health of states has listed Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka under 'front-runners' category. As per the report, released by Chairman of 16th Finance Commission Arvind Panagariya, Odisha excels in fiscal health with the highest overall index score of 67.8. It tops the debt index (99.0) and debt sustainability (64.0) rankings with better than average scores under quality of expenditure and revenue mobilisation, the report said, adding that Odisha has maintained low fiscal deficits, a good debt profile, and an above average capital outlay/GSDP ratio.



R-DAY PREP: Full dress rehearsal in progress for the upcoming state-level 76th Republic Day celebration at Mahatma Gandhi Marg in Bhubaneswar, Friday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## State Budget to focus on industry, tourism, jobs: CM

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday said the state Budget will prioritise industry, tourism and fill vacant government posts.

In a pre-Budget consultation meeting attended by former finance ministers, financial experts and association representatives, Majhi emphasised creating a 'people's Budget' with focus on strengthening the rural economy.

He invited public suggestions via email, WhatsApp, and social media by January 31.

Majhi said key sectors under focus include steel, IT, renewable energy, textile, petrochemicals, agro-industries, and port-based industries.

"The industry sector, especially agro-industry, is critical to improving the socio-economic condition of rural Odisha," he said. The state Cabinet recently approved the 'Viksit Gaon, Viksit Odisha' scheme, aimed at creating sustainable income sources in villages to reduce migration to urban areas.

In its 2024 election manifesto, the BJP had promised to fill 1.5 lakh vacant government posts including 65,000 in two years and create employment for 3.5 lakh persons by 2029. "We have already recruited 20,000 people in government posts so far while more than 40,000 posts will be filled in the next financial year," the CM said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



What's this nonsense on spirituality and culture? Where's the news on the IITian Baba and the beautiful Sadhvi?

## Judge blocks Trump's order restricting birthright citizenship

REUTERS

Seattle, Jan 24: A federal judge blocked Donald Trump's administration Thursday from implementing the Republican president's executive order curtailing the right to automatic birthright citizenship in the United States, calling it 'blatantly unconstitutional.'

Seattle-based US District Judge John Coughenour issued a temporary restraining order at the urging of four Democratic-led states - Washington, Arizona, Illinois and Oregon - preventing the administration from enforcing the order. Trump had signed the order Monday, his first day back in office. The judge, an appointee of Republican former President Ronald Reagan, dealt the first legal setback to the hardline policies on immigration that are a centerpiece of Trump's second term as president.

"Obviously we'll appeal," Trump said of Coughenour's ruling. Trump's executive order had directed US agencies to refuse to recognize the citizenship of children born in the United States if neither their mother nor father is a US citizen or lawful permanent resident.

# Biz growth at 14-month low

India's private sector entered the new year with a decelerated growth trend amid a diminished momentum in the services sector and a slow rate of new business intake. The services sector serves as the primary driver of the Indian economy, but recent data has sparked worries about the sustainability of the country's economic performance. According to HSBC's flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global, the overall private sector output expanded at its slowest pace since November 2023. The data indicated a decline in the services sector which offset a strong growth in the manufacturing sector for the month. On top of this, prices for goods and services continued to surge, driven especially by increasing input costs. Meanwhile, government projections indicate a slowdown in the overall growth, forecasting a GDP increase of just 6.4 per cent for this fiscal. All these point to tough times ahead for the economy.

PNN & AGENCIES

Bangalore, Jan 24: India's business activity grew at the slowest pace in 14 months in January, a survey showed, highlighting emerging cracks in its world-beating economic growth at start of 2025 although firms hired new staff at a record pace.

HSBC's flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global, fell to 57.9 in January, the lowest reading since November 2023, from December's final reading of 59.2. Still, the index has been above the 50-mark separating expansion from contraction for three-and-a-half years, the longest continuous growth streak since mid-2013. While manufacturing remained buoyant with the PMI index at a six-month high of 58.0 from 56.4 in December, it was more-than-offset by the slump in the services index to 56.8 in January - its lowest in 26 months - from 59.3.

"India's manufacturing sector started the year strong, with output and new orders bouncing back from a relatively weak third



fiscal quarter," noted Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC. "The cooling in growth in new domestic business in the services sector, however, highlights a potentially emerging weak spot in the economy."

This divergence was starkly evident in the indicators for demand. Manufacturers witnessed a surge in new orders and output, while services firms recorded the weakest new sales in 14 months.

Despite those headwinds there were some bright spots. International demand improved across the board with overall exports posting the fastest growth in six months.

Composite job creation reached an all-time high since

the survey's inception in December 2005. That's good news for the private sector where millions join the workforce each year in the world's most populous country. Providing quality jobs remains a challenge for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, inflationary pressures intensified. Cost inflation eased in manufacturing, but spiked in the services sector to the highest since August 2023. Services firms increased prices faster, suggesting they passed on rising costs to clients.

High inflation risks especially amid a weaker currency could add to reasons for the Reserve Bank of India's rate-setting panel, headed by new Governor Sanjay Malhotra, not to kickstart monetary policy easing when it meets next during February 5-7. Meanwhile, the business outlook for the coming year was mixed as buoyant forecasts put manufacturing companies at their most optimistic since May 2024, but the sentiment at services firms slipped to a three-month low due to competition concerns.

# Ordnance factory blast leaves 8 dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhandara, Jan 24: Eight workers were killed and five others injured as a blast ripped through a unit of the ordnance factory in eastern Maharashtra's Bhandara district Friday morning, officials said.

At the completion of rescue operations after nearly eight hours, the final death toll stood at eight, said a district official. "Ordnance Factory Bhandara has constituted an inquiry committee to conduct a probe into the incident," the factory said in a statement late in the evening.

The impact of the blast was so powerful that the building where it took place was completely destroyed. Residents of three villages in the vicinity felt the ground shaking, said a local man whose 20-year-old cousin was among the deceased.

Pictures taken immediately after the explosion showed a huge cloud of smoke rising above the site.

Earlier, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari had said that as



per the preliminary information, eight persons had died in the incident. The blast took place around 10.40 am in LTPE (Low Temperature Plastic Explosives) building number 23 in HEX (High Energy Explosives) sub-division at the factory located at Jawahar Nagar, officials said.

District Collector Sanjay Kolte told PTI that 13 people were working in the unit at the time.

The deceased workers were identified as Chandrashekar Goswami (59), Manoj Meshram (65), Ajay Nagdeve (51), Ankit Barai (20), Laxman Kelwade (38), Abhishek Chaurasia (35), Dharma Rangari (35) and Sanjay Karemore (32).

# 250mn kids missed school last year due to extreme weather

Extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change had a huge toll on schoolchildren across the world last year, with at least 250 million kids missing classes, the United Nations Children's Fund said in its latest report. At least one in seven school-going children across the world was kept out of classroom at some point in 2024 because of climate hazards such as heatwaves and flooding. In India, over 5 crore school students were affected by grueling and unprecedented heatwave in 2024. The UN body says that the world's school education system is largely ill-equipped to deal with the effects of extreme weather.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Town, Jan 24: At least 242 million children in 85 countries had their schooling interrupted last year because of heatwaves, cyclones, flooding and other extreme weather, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in a new report Friday.

The report also outlined how some countries saw hundreds of their schools destroyed by weather, with low-income nations in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa hit especially hard.

But other regions weren't spared the extreme weather, as torrential rains and floods in Italy near the end of the year disrupted school for more than



900,000 children. Thousands had their classes halted after catastrophic flooding in Spain.

While southern Europe dealt with deadly floods and Asia and Africa had flooding and cyclones, heatwaves were "the

predominant climate hazard shuttering schools last year," UNICEF said, as the earth recorded its hottest year ever.

More than 118 million children had their schooling interrupted in April alone, UNICEF

said, as large parts of the Middle East and Asia, from Gaza in the west to the Philippines in the southeast, experienced a sizzling weeks-long heatwave with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

"Children are more vulnerable to the impacts of weather-related crises, including stronger and more frequent heatwaves, storms, droughts and flooding," UNICEF executive director Catherine Russell said in a statement.

"Children's bodies are uniquely vulnerable. They heat up faster, they sweat less efficiently, and cool down more slowly than adults. Children cannot concentrate in class-

rooms that offer no respite from sweltering heat, and they cannot get to school if the path is flooded, or if schools are washed away."

Around 74% of the children affected in 2024 were in middle- and low-income countries, showing how climatic extremes continue to have a devastating impact in the poorest countries. Flooding ruined more than 400 schools in Pakistan in April. Afghanistan had heatwaves followed by severe flooding that destroyed over 110 schools in May, UNICEF said.

Months of drought in southern Africa exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon threatened the schooling and futures of millions of children.



# leisure



## INDIANS' ENERGY, PASSION ARE UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE: TIESTO

Dutch DJ Tiesto is set to return to India after more than a decade, headlining the *Tiesto India Tour 2025*. Speaking about it the DJ said, "I'm beyond thrilled to return to India after 10 years! The incredible energy and passion of the people here are unlike anything else."

## BARRYMORE 'NOT READY' FOR ANOTHER RELATIONSHIP

Actress-turned-TV host Drew Barrymore has admitted she's 'not ready' for another relationship and only goes on dates 'occasionally'. The 49-year-old has been married three times - to Jeremy Thomas, Tom Green and Will Kopelman - and is mother to two daughters with her third husband.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You will remain undecided today, which is quite unlike you, says Ganesha. This will lead to speculation, which is not a bad thing by itself, unless you put all your money into the bargain. Also, be careful not to take wild guesses in love and relationships.

**TAURUS**  
People around you will be surprised to witness the considerate and compassionate side of you today, says Ganesha. Problems may come knocking but you, along with support from your loved ones, will handle them with brilliant tact. Enjoy the company of near and dear ones and let your presence be felt in social outings, suggests Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
Your sensitive and emotional nature will prove to be a problem for you. Hence you need to control your emotions. Tread carefully when it comes to personal relationships. You need to wait for a better time before you think of proposing to that special someone, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
New positive turn in life of lovers. It may lead to marriage. You will play role in bonding all members of the joint family and will meet with success. You will respect tradition and custom. Adopt a careful approach, counsels Ganesha.

**LEO**  
Talk of being busy! It seems like today, you shall take the cake, and perhaps, be the icing on it as well, says Ganesha. It is likely that the day is going to be very hectic for you in terms of work and business. You may be engaged in official conversations and dealings. Also, don't be surprised to find yourself in meetings as you attempt to take stock of your business situation.

**VIRGO**  
You will spend most of today in the company of family and friends, says Ganesha. Students may focus on upcoming examinations and will learn to balance study and leisure time, in equal measure. It is a good day to buy real estate. Overall, a day to lie low and let your mind run free in its pursuit of pleasure.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says today you will get the opportunity to lay bare your thoughts and feelings and exchange ideas with others. Your mind will be at ease and more relieved when you have opened up. Your business acumen will be praiseworthy today.

**SCORPIO**  
It may have been on the cards for long and finally, you may end up buying a state-of-the-art motor vehicle or a palatial house of your dreams today. In addition, your generous mood may also egg you on to buy an expensive gift for your life partner. If you do not let the generosity burn a hole through your pocket, you may have an overall satisfying day, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You feel highly balanced today, says Ganesha. Being a family person, you dedicate your time equally at home and carry out responsibilities towards family. When it comes to work, you are at ease today. Enjoy the serenity of nature in the evening.

**CAPRICORN**  
The day calls for making amends and undoing the damage done to relationships, so you will most likely focus on improving rapport with relatives and peers, says Ganesha. But despite your affable approach, family feud may occur. Keeping obnoxious neighbours at bay will save you some trouble.

**AQUARIUS**  
You may fall in love today! If single, romance colours your day with a rainbow. If married, you may enjoy a quiet but romantic evening with your spouse. Ganesha says that if nothing else, it's a good time to pour over your photo albums and float in nostalgia.

**PISCES**  
You will be trading new ground at work. Exciting as that sounds, it merely means you will have to do a lot of travelling today. You will also find yourself swamped with drafting new business proposals, holding meetings, or otherwise networking over the phone. On the brighter side, your travels are unlikely to involve the cramps of flying economy class, says Ganesha.



## Fatima's creativity beyond movies

**MUMBAI:** Actress Fatima Sana Shaikh, known for her roles in films like *Dangal*, *Dhak Dhak*, *Ajeeb Dastans*, and *Ludo*, has recently shared her interest in painting on Instagram. She posted her latest artwork on the platform.

She revealed that her interest in painting began during her college days when she first discovered it. However, she was unable to pursue a fine arts degree due to certain constraints, as acting, which she started as a child, took precedence.

Reflecting on her artistic journey, Fatima was also quoted saying, "I've always wanted to have the freedom to paint whatever I wanted to, so, in that sense I was sure that I wanted to improve my skills and that only comes with practice. So, whenever I had the chance and time, I would take up the brush and work on my skills..." This passion for painting has allowed her to explore her creativity beyond the screen, and she finds the process not only personally inspiring but also helpful in listening better and staying focused.

Fatima is a versatile actor, photographer, and now a budding painter. Looking ahead, she has an upcoming slate of projects for 2025, including *Aap Jaisa Koi*, *Metro In Dino*, *Ul Jalool Ishq*, and a web series tentatively titled *Nyaya*.

With both her acting career and artistic pursuits expanding, Fatima is embracing a year of new creative milestones.

## Randeep to share screen with John Cena

**MUMBAI:** Actor Randeep Hooda is reuniting with filmmaker Sam Hargrave for the upcoming action movie *Matchbox*, headlined by Hollywood star John Cena. Hooda had earlier played a major role in the filmmaker's 2020 hit *Extraction*, starring Chris Hemsworth.

In *Matchbox*, Hooda will share screen space with Cena as well as Teyonah Parris of *The Marvels* fame. "Excited to be working with Sam again. We had a great time on our first collaboration with *Extraction*. Sam is a master of high-octane storytelling and action. Glad to be joining the team in Budapest," the 48-year-old actor said in a statement.

The Netflix movie *Extraction* was Hargrave's directorial debut. It also starred Golshifteh Farahani and Priyanshu Painyuli as the antagonist, along with Pankaj Tripathi in a cameo.

Also starring Jessica Biel and Sam Richardson, the movie is described as an action-packed and globetrotting adventure. The story will follow a group of childhood friends who must work together to stop an impending worldwide disaster and rediscover their friendship along the way.

Randeep has several other exciting projects lined up. He recently directed and starred in *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar*, and is currently filming *Jaat*, directed by Gopichand Malineni, with Sunny Deol. The movie is being produced by the banners behind *Pushpa 2: The Rule*.



### INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL OF BHUBANESWAR : DAY III

## 'Human-AI relationship is like a child and a parent'

**BHUBANESWAR:** The third day of the Indian Film Festival of Bhubaneswar (IFFB), organised by the Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB), unfolded with a day of thought-provoking films and engaging discussions here at the Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra (GKCM) Odissi Research Centre Friday.

The day began with a collection of short films, followed by the screening of *Gagan Gaman* and *Dharam Sankat*. The retrospective segment featured National Award winning director Girish Kasaravalli's *Hasina*, which explored the struggles of women grappling with societal norms and identity.

A major highlight of the day was the post-lunch screening of Aranya Sahay's *Humans in the Loop*, which had its premiere at the MAMI Film Festival 2024. The film, set in Jharkhand, follows Nehma, an Ohran tribe woman working as a 'data labeller' for AI models after her relationship ends. The film raises vital questions on the intersection



Film critic Aditya Srikrishna (R) in conversation with *Humans in the Loop* director Aranya Sahay

of human judgment and artificial intelligence, exploring the blurred lines between both. The screening was followed by a detailed discussion with the director Aranya Sahay, who shared insights into the film, stating, "The relationship between a human and algorithm is like a child and a parent. I wanted to explore humanity's role in a future shared with AI, and whether AI is truly neutral or shaped by the prejudices of its creators."

The evening session featured the Malayalam experimental film *Kiss Wagon*, directed by Midhun Murali which won a Special Jury

Mention at the 2024 International Film Festival of Kerala. The film explores themes of love and desire through a mobile cinema that brings entertainment to rural areas. The day concluded with *Baghjaan*, a poignant Assamese-Moran bilingual film about the devastating Baghjaan gas well disaster in Assam, directed by Jai-cheng Zxai Dohutia. The fourth day will be a highlight as eminent director Dibakar Banerjee is coming up with latest work, *Tees*. **Orissa POST** and *Dharitri* are the print media partners of the event.

## Mamta officially takes 'sanyas'

**Mumbai:** Yesteryear actress Mamta Kulkarni, who once sparked controversy posing topless on a film magazine cover, has now become a Sadhvi.

According to media reports, the actress officially took 'sanyas' Friday after arriving at Kinnar Akhara during the Maha Kumbh. There, she met Acharya Mahamandaleswar Dr. Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi and received his blessings. Mamta reportedly performed the ritual of 'Pind Daan' at the Sangam, and her coronation ceremony took place at the Kinnar Akhara. She was also given a new name, 'Shri Yamai Mamta Nand Giri'.

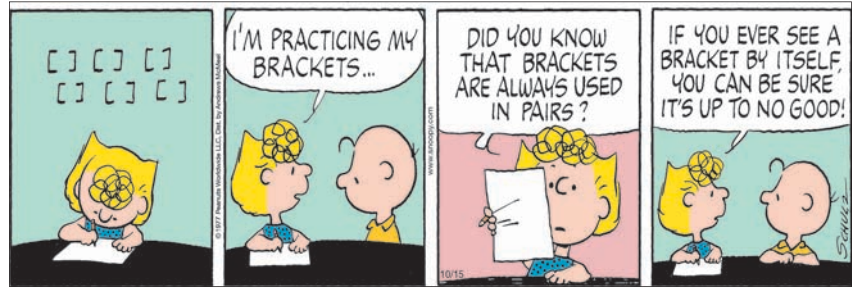
The *Karan Arjun* actress has also been declared Mahamandaleswar of Kinnar Akhara during a grand traditional ceremony. Meanwhile, in a recent interview with this agency, Mamta explained the reasons behind her absence from both India and the showbiz industry. "The reason for me leaving India

was spirituality. In 1996, I became inclined towards spirituality, and during that time, I met Guru Gagan Giri Maharaj. After his arrival, my interest in spirituality grew, and my penance began. However, I believe Bollywood gave me both name and fame. After that, I quit Bollywood. From the year 2000 to 2012, I continued my penance. I spent many years in Dubai, where I lived in a two-bedroom flat and remained celibate for 12 years," she shared.

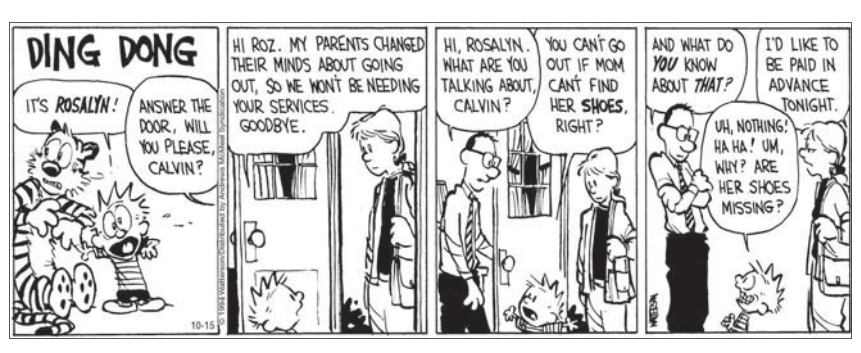


MAMTA AT MAHA KUMBH AS SADHVI

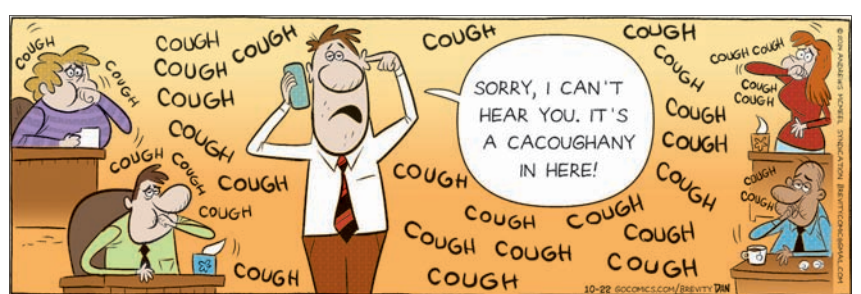
### PEANUTS



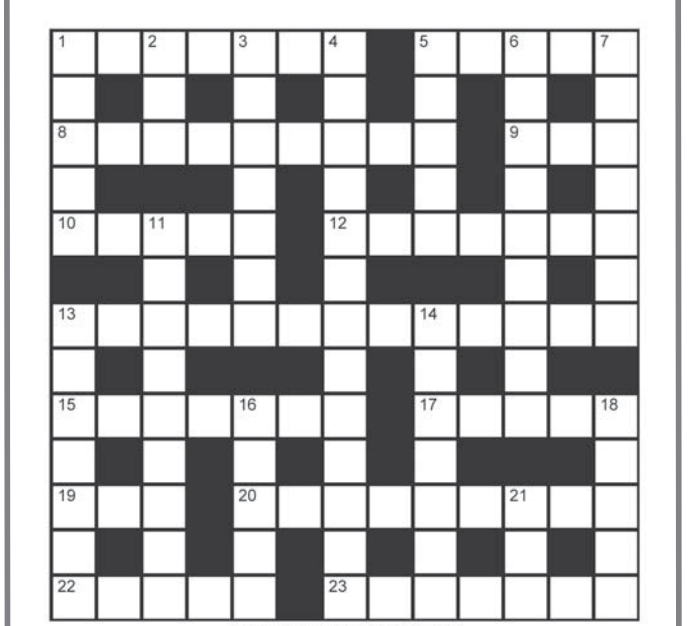
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



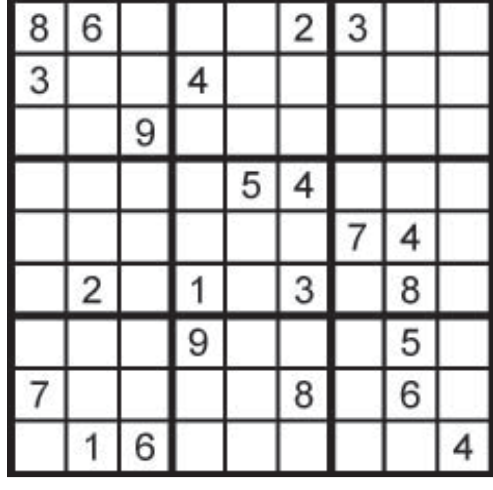
### FUN POST CROSSWORD



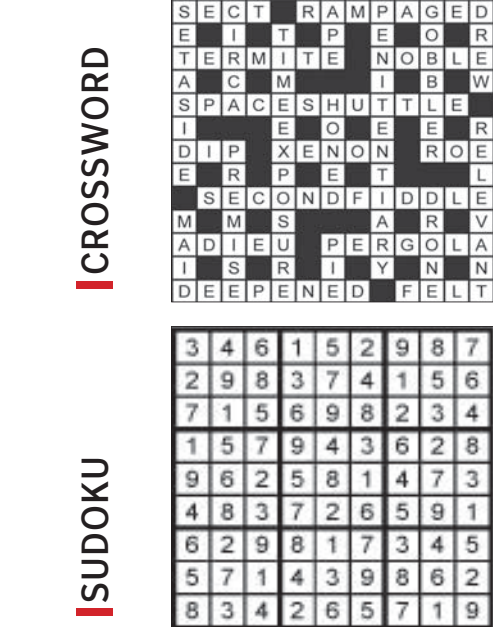
- Across**
- 1 Skilled artist
  - 5 Common refrigerant
  - 8 Defiled
  - 9 Doctrine
  - 10 Tippler's canteen
  - 12 A place to lie low
  - 13 Good and bad result (5,8)
  - 15 Sea nymph of Greek mythology
  - 17 Man-made fibre
  - 19 Period in history
  - 20 Just say you're sorry
  - 22 Up and down toys (2-3)
  - 23 Chinese river
  - 4 Branch of medicine
  - 5 Washed-out newspaper feature
  - 7 Salesperson identifier (4,3)
  - 11 Back-up
  - 13 Travesty
  - 14 Eventide
  - 16 Perambulators
  - 18 Flower girl, sometimes
  - 21 Follower's suffix
- Down**
- 1 Recurring theme
  - 2 Slip up
  - 3 Deceived

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## CM greets IMD chief for winning US award **NOD FOR 8 PROJECTS WORTH ₹32,736CR**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday congratulated Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General (DG) of India Meteorological Department (IMD) for bagging the Scientific and Technological Activities Commission (STAC) Outstanding Service Award, 2025 conferred by American Meteorological Society.

In a post on 'X', the Chief Minister said, "Heartiest congratulations to Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, fondly known as the 'Cyclone Man of India', on being honoured with the prestigious Scientific and Technological Activities Commission Outstanding Service Award, 2025 by the American Meteorological



Society. Your exceptional leadership and groundbreaking contributions in enhancing tropical cyclone prediction and warning systems in the Indian Ocean region have brought immense pride to India and Odisha."

The prestigious award has been conferred on the IMD DG for his contributions to tropical cyclone prediction and warning systems in Indian Ocean region through exceptional leadership

and services that reduced loss of life and minimised damage.

Mohapatra is widely known as the cyclone man due to his prediction of trajectories for cyclones Phailin (2013), Hudhud (2014), Sagar and Mekunu (2018), Titli and Luban (2018), Fani (2019), Amphan (2020), Biparjoy (2023), Remal and Dana (2024).

Earlier, Mohapatra was conferred the STAC award as the IMD celebrated its 150th anniversary January 15. The IMD is launching Mission Mausam to help the country deal with extreme weather events often as a result of the climate crisis.

He was also elected the World Meteorological Organisation vice president in 2023 in recognition of his contributions to weather analysis and predictions.

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** The High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA), led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Friday approved eight industrial projects worth ₹32,736 crore which will generate employment opportunities for about 18,688 people, an official said.

These projects span across sectors such as chemicals, green energy equipment, shipbuilding and repair and steel. The approved projects are spread across districts like Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Ganjam, Sambalpur and Bhadrak, helping to strengthen Odisha's industrial base.

This was the second HLCA meeting this month ahead

**The projects are expected to generate about 18,688 employment opportunities**

of the much-anticipated Utkarsh Odisha: Make in Odisha Conclave 2025.

The success of numerous roadshows organised by the state government in Delhi, Mumbai, and Singapore has resulted in significant investor interest, with several companies now looking to invest in Odisha. As a direct outcome of these efforts, the state has approved these major projects, reflecting the growing confi-

dence of businesses in Odisha's industrial landscape, the official pointed out.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said, "The approval of these big projects before Utkarsh Odisha 2025 is a clear sign of our state's growing industrial strength. These investments will create thousands of jobs and will directly benefit the people of Odisha. Our focus is to ensure that Odisha remains a top investment destination, driving progress and prosperity for our people."

The HLCA approved the proposal of Kshoma Green Energy Technologies Limited to set up a manufacturing facility of solar modules of 6.9GW and solar photovoltaic cells of 6.9GW in

Khurda. With an investment of ₹6,948 crore, the facility is expected to provide jobs to 2,898 individuals.

Dhunseri Ventures Limited's proposal to set up a polycarbonate manufacturing unit in Jagatsinghpur also got the state government's nod. With an investment of ₹6,250 crore, the unit would provide employment to over 1,900 people.

Among others, the state government approved the proposal of United Petro Shipping Pte Limited for setting up of shipbuilding, ship repair and integrated offshore facilities in Jagatsinghpur with an investment of ₹5,637 crore. The project is expected to provide jobs to over 1,600 individuals.

## PMAY-G SURVEY KICKS OFF IN STATE

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** Setting a target to provide 'pucca' houses to all, the state government Friday launched a survey for selecting beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

Accompanied by Puri MP Sambit Patra, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik launched the survey work from Arjunsinghpur village in Puri district's Pipili block.

The survey will continue for about two months. It will include all the eligible families as per the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide 'pucca' houses to all, the Minister said. "The Odisha government today began a survey under the PMAY-G from the land of Lord Jagannath. All the eligible persons will get their desired houses," Naik said.



"It is painful to see that the poorest of the poor families were denied a PMAY house unit during the previous BJD government," the Minister said.

The Minister said the eligibility criteria for availing the benefits under the scheme have been relaxed.

The family income limit has been increased to ₹15,000 per month, Naik said, adding that individuals who are separated from their families, like father and son or husband and wife, can also be accommodated in the survey.

Families with two-wheelers, refrigerators and landline telephones can also be included in the survey.

People can apply for a housing unit under the scheme through online and offline modes, the Minister said. "People can forward their application through their panchayat or a mobile application," Naik said.

The government has also removed the application fees in a bid to ensure maximum registration of beneficiaries, he said.

People who had earlier applied and are still waiting for allot-

ment of houses can also apply again, he said.

Earlier, the Minister had informed the Assembly that about 50,963 applications will be considered in a new survey.

He had said that 28.25 lakh houses have been approved under the scheme, while around 23 lakh homes have been constructed. Naik said families whose houses were damaged in fire mishaps, elephant attacks or other natural disasters will be covered under the Antyodaya Gruha Yojana. "If any eligible household is left out during the survey for PMAY-G, it will be included in the Antyodaya Gruha Yojana," he said.

The Union Cabinet, in August 2024, approved the construction of 2 crore houses under PMAY-G over five years, till 2029. Under the scheme, the assistance is shared between the Centre and the state.



**SKYGAZING:**

Visitors to Pathani Samanta Planetarium in Bhubaneswar witness the 'parade of six planets', Friday  
PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## Odisha man arrested in Delhi over ₹15cr scam

AGENCIES

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Jan 24:** A 48-year-old man from Odisha, accused of duping people of ₹15 crore by promising them to provide work orders for transportation of Covid vaccines across different states during 2021 Covid pandemic, has been arrested by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police, an official said Friday.

The arrested accused - Prafulla Kumar Nayak - resided in Pandav Nagar area of Delhi and hailed from Odisha.

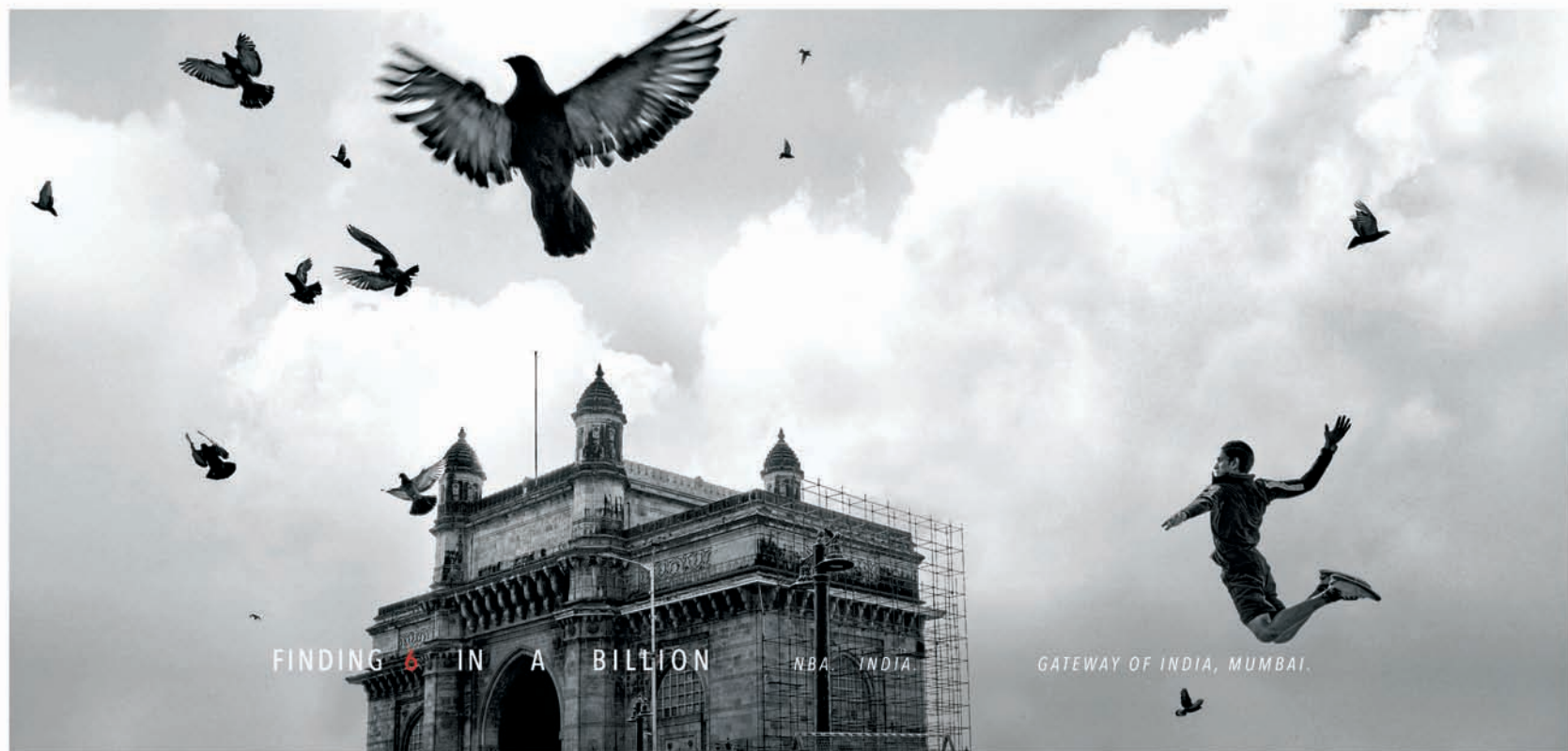
According to Additional Commissioner of Police (EOW) Amrutha Guguloth, the crackdown came while investigating a case registered in 2022 following a complaint by Sunil Kaushik.

"The complainant alleged that he was defrauded of ₹4 crore under the pretext of securing government contracts for vaccine transportation," Guguloth said, adding that four more complaints revealed a similar modus operandi, with the accused collectively duping victims of over ₹15 crore.

Investigations revealed that Nayak, who impersonated an officer from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, played a key role in duping victims by promising work orders related to Covid-19 vaccine transportation during the pandemic, Guguloth said.

"In May 2021, the accused lured victims by arranging meetings within the premises of Nirman Bhawan, the Ministry's headquarters. Forged work orders were issued and trust was gained by leveraging illicit access to the government complex through a bribed Ministry employee," the officer said. "Eight other accused, including the kingpin, Hermenn Sabherwal, were arrested in 2022. Ministry employees, including a reception officer and two multi-tasking staff, had already been apprehended for their involvement," the officer said in the statement.

Nayak had been absconding since then. "Due to the strenuous efforts of the EOW, he was finally arrested January 21," Guguloth pointed out.



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FPGs led by Dy CM visit farms in Maha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: A 57-member delegation of farmer producer groups (FPGs) representing the state government and led by Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo attended a five-day training programme at Sahyadri Farms, Nashik in Maharashtra to gain first-hand knowledge of agricultural production, processing and storage.



ducer groups and farmers from Odisha. Agriculture entrepreneurs from other states should also visit Odisha and invest in the state." During the field visit of the representatives, CMD of Sahyadri Farms and programme coordinator Vilas Shinde provided details of agri voltaic project, spray drying unit, farmer facilitation centre, testing lab, DISQ, grape farm, solar dryer, algae

production unit (from wastewater), grape pack house and cold storage, post harvest facilities of the farm like fruit ripening and aseptic pokes, frozen and freeze drying unit, FMCG processing unit, training centre, cashew processing unit, bio gas unit, Sam agri pomegranate processing unit etc. Agriculture Minister of Maharashtra Manikrao Kokate also addressed the trainees. The cost of the training is being borne by the state government.

Among others, Principal Secretary Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Arabintha Kumar Padhee, department director Prem Chandra Chaudhary and Horticulture director Nikhil Pawan Kalyan were present on the occasion.



REMEMBERING THE HERO: Artists from Shrine Dance Academy performs on the occasion of Parakram Diwas at Satyabrata Stadium in Cuttack, Friday

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I ARPITA PRIYADARSHINEE BEHERA, spouse of No.-14935669X, Rank Nk, Name Sushanta Kumar Behera, Village- Patnagarh, Post- Patnagarh, Teh-Patnagarh, Dist.-Balangir, State-Odisha, PIN- 767025 have changed my Name from ARPITA PRIYADARSHINEE BEHERA to ARPITA PRIYADARSHINEE DASH, affidavit date 29.07.2024 before Court of the Executive Magistrate, Patnagarh.

I Bidyut Prava Mohanty, W/o- Lachhman Behera, D/o- Dhuruba Charan Mohanty, resident of At- H.No-106, Badambadi near Special UP School, P.O.- Arunodaya Market, P.S.- Badambadi, Dist.-Cuttack- 753012, Odisha declare by this affidavit No- 243, dated- 22.01.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Bidyut Prabha Behera for all future purposes.

LOST

I, Sri Narayan Panda, aged about 56 years, S/o- Late Muralidhar Panda, resident of At/P.O.- Brahmansailo, P.S.- Gobindpur, Dist.-Cuttack (ODISHA), PIN- 754018, I have purchased the land from Smt. Shibani Dash, W/o- Rabindra Kumar Dash by virtue of Registered Deed of Sale vide Document No.- 11081212264 dtd. 24.05.2012. And Smt. Shibani Dash have purchased the same from Orissa Co-operative Housing Corporation Ltd. vide Regd. Sale Deed No.- 4184, dtd. 05.05.1990. I have lost the above mentioned Interim Regd. Sale Deed No.- 4184, dtd. 05.05.1990 some where while I was travelling from Lingipur to Brahmansailo on dtd. 22.01.2025 and inspite of my best effort. I could not find it out again. If any person find the same kindly call in my Mobile No.- 9835925130

Special board soon for coastal security

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: Odisha Police and Indian Coast Guard Friday decided to set up a special board for coastal security management as the eastern state has a long coastline of nearly 500 km. A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting here between Director General of Police (DGP) YB Khurania and Coast Guard ADG and Commander (Eastern Seaboard) Donny Michael.



The proposed board will work towards identifying specific requirements for coastal security and after reviewing the survey reports and necessary arrangements will be made in this regard, the DGP said, adding that efforts will always be made to maintain the long-term relationship that has been established with the Indian Coast Guard.

At present, Odisha's 500-km long coastline is under a three-tier security. While the first five nautical miles are being guarded by Odisha's Marine Police, the waters between five nautical miles and the country's maritime border at 80 km from the coast, is being managed by the Coast Guard. The Indian Navy monitors and patrols international waters, a police officer said.

Formation of an independent board will improve management and surveillance along the state's coastline, says DGP YB Khurania

"In the meeting, issues related to disaster preparedness and coastal securities were discussed. It was decided to have closer coordination between both the security agencies in the coming days," Odisha Police said in a post on X. The DGP said the formation of an independent board will improve management and surveillance along the state's coastline. The board will consist of officers from Odisha Police and the Indian Coast Guard, he said. According to the decision, Odisha Police and Indian Coast Guard officials will conduct surveys and assess the security needs of the state's coastal areas. Retired officers from the Coast Guard and Navy will be deployed under the Marine Police to utilise their expertise in coastal security, Khurania said.

AIIMS ICU Rehab project helps 400 chronically ill

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) ICU Rehabilitation (AIR) pilot project concluded with the final stakeholders' meeting here Friday during which it was revealed that the project benefited 400 chronically-ill, bedridden patients, and their families.

This landmark event marks the culmination of a transformative four-year initiative focused on improving post-ICU care and rehabilitation of critically-ill patients, benefiting over 400 chronically-ill, bedridden patients and their families. The AIR project introduced and implemented the patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) model, a pioneering approach that bridges the gap between healthcare providers and communities, empowering the public to contribute actively to healthcare initiatives.

AIIMS Director Ashutosh Biswas, during the inauguration of the programme, held an inspiring interaction with patients and their families, gathering first-hand insights into the project's impact. He praised the AIR team, led by Swagata Tripathy, and acknowledged the contributions of senior faculty from the departments of Anaesthesia & Critical Care, Trauma & Emergency, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and



the College of Nursing Sciences. Biswas highlighted the initiative's comprehensive approach, which included training family members in critical care procedures such as tracheostomy care, nasal feeding, physiotherapy, catheter management, and wound care. The initiative also aimed at facilitating timely home discharge with equipment support, regular follow-ups via telecommunication, and home visits. Reducing hospital-acquired infections and healthcare costs while ensuring better utilisation of acute care resources were among the critical goals of this effort.

It also aimed at educating district healthcare teams and primary healthcare workers about post-ICU care processes. Dinabandhu Sahoo, team leader, National Health Mission (NHM), emphasised the government's vision of expand-

ing the AIR project to all medical colleges across the state using a hub-and-spoke model. He commended the project's innovative and holistic approach, which addresses the unique challenges faced by ICU survivors.

The stakeholders' meeting also featured emotional testimonials from patients and families, sharing stories of improved recovery outcomes and enhanced quality of life. The AIR project's efforts in interdisciplinary teamwork, cutting-edge interventions, and patient-centered care were lauded as a model for future healthcare initiatives.

Prominent attendees included Nirod Kumar Sahu (additional director, Technical), Deepak Biswal (SPM, NIPi Innovation Cell, NHM Odisha), Dillip Kumar Parida (Medical Superintendent, AIIMS Bhubaneswar), Satyajit Mishra, and Swagata Tripathy.

IIT-Bhubaneswar hosts PIWOT satellite meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: In an attempt to foster a collaborative approach between industry and academia, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Bhubaneswar organised PanIIT World of Technology (PIWOT) satellite conference which was attended by a diverse group of leaders from industries, academia, and government sector.

The conference was jointly organised by the IIT Alumni Association, Wheels Global Foundation India, and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII).

At the inaugural session, Wheels Global Foundation India president Sujata Roy delivered the welcome address and highlighted the significance and objectives of the PIWOT Satellite Conference.

In his address, IIT-Bhubaneswar director Shreepad Karmalkar highlighted the transformation of the IITs beyond knowledge dissemination or teaching, and knowledge generation or research over the last five decades. Speaking on this occasion, MGM Chair Brahma Deo discussed the issues and concerns about Industry-Academia collaboration. He stressed that there should be an industry-academia interaction cell at every IIT to bridge the existing gap in this field.

Former chairman of CII Odisha SS Mohanty spoke on the role of IIT in the incubation of start-ups and new business processes. He highlighted the importance of a collaborative effort between industry and academia in a structured manner to boost research and development in the country.

Marine Biotech Lab opens at ILS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: Rajesh Gokhale, secretary of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) at the Centre, has inaugurated a state-of-the-art Marine Biotechnology Laboratory at Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) recently.

The cutting-edge facility marks a significant step forward in the institute's mission to harness the potential of marine biodiversity for sustainable development. During his official visit to the institute, Gokhale engaged with students, staffers and scientists, emphasising the critical role of genomics, data sharing, and collaborative efforts in unlocking the untapped potential of marine resources. "The challenges we face today can be transformed into sustainable, game-changing solutions by leveraging marine biotechnology. Data-driven approaches and collective collaboration will be key in this journey," he remarked during the event.

Highlighting the newly introduced Bio-E3 Policy, Gokhale underlined its transformative



potential for revolutionising coastal economies, particularly in Odisha with its vast coastal resources. The policy is expected to drive innovation, accelerate blue economy initiatives, and promote sustainable development across coastal regions, not only in the state but throughout India.

The secretary also participated in a satellite meeting titled 'Challenges and Opportunities of Marine Bioprospecting in India'. The meeting brought together leading scientists and policymakers to discuss strategies for effectively exploring India's immense marine biodiversity.

Key discussions focused on establishing frameworks for sustainable bioprospecting, enhancing research infrastructure, and fostering international collaborations to position India as a global leader in marine biotechnology.

ILS director Debasis Dash provided a comprehensive briefing on the institute's role and strategic plans. Emphasising the importance of marine resources in addressing global challenges, the Dash outlined ILS's commitment to unlocking the untapped potential of these resources through cutting-edge research and innovation.

Int'l conference on global business environment held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: International Management Institute (IMI) Bhubaneswar, in collaboration with EGADE Business School (EGADEBS) Mexico hosted the 10th international conference on 'Global Business Environment' on the theme 'International Business Diplomacy, Global Trade, and Economic Development in Developing Countries' here Friday.

IFSB India CEO Krishan Mishra, IMI Bhubaneswar director Pratap Chandra Biswal, EGADEBS professor and researcher Rajagopal, IIMT Bhubaneswar director Srikanta Patnaik, professor Sourabh Sharma and Ranjit Roy Ghatak attended the conference. Joining the event as the

chief guest, Krishan Mishra highlighted the need for a balanced People, Society and Environmental (PSE) approach to ensure inclusive growth which can address social inequalities and environmental challenges. He also appreciated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's work over the years and ended with a hope of more development of the overall economy.

The inauguration ceremony also released the 9th Global Business Environment conference Scopus indexed anthology entitled 'Corporate Democracy, Open Innovation and Growth in Developing Economies' which comprises of selected peer-reviewed papers published by international publisher Palgrave Macmillan, NY, USA.



Table with weather forecast: WEATHER, BBSR, CTC, Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, FORECAST Moderate Fog.

Table with market watch: MARKET WATCH, INDEX, VARIATION, SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, SILVER.

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Six-lane NH still a distant dream in Odisha's commercial corridor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 24: The six-laning of the 110 km stretch on NH 16 between Tangi-Chandpur by-pass and Berhampur is still to be explored...



thority of India (NHAI) carried out the expansion from single-lane road to four-lane two-way roads across the country under the 'Golden Quadrilateral' project back in 2004.

also straightened to increase the line of sight and visibility of the drivers. However, a similar expansion failed to take off on the Tangi-Chandpur by-pass and Berhampur stretch...

NIT-R develops AI-powered traffic solution

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Jan 24: Researchers at National Institute of Technology Rourkela (NIT-R) have developed an AI-based multi-class vehicle detection (MCVD) model...



Prof Sudhan Majhi, from IISc Bangalore. IVD systems perform well in developed countries with organised traffic, but in a country like India it faces problems where there are a wide variety of vehicles...

mand significant computational power. Deep learning (DL) models, a type of Artificial Intelligence (AI), provide an efficient way to detect vehicles in video feeds.

from traffic images, even when vehicles vary in size and shape. They also introduced a specialised tool called light fusion bi-directional feature pyramid network (LFBFPN) to further refine the extracted details.

Changing address of house sparrows: A struggle for survival

The birds are increasingly losing habitat to urbanisation in Kendrapara district

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mahakalapada, Jan 24: Rapid urbanization, coupled with climate change, environmental imbalance, natural disasters and deforestation, has drastically altered the habitat of house sparrows in areas under this block in Kendrapara district.



Before the 1999 Super Cyclone, the thatched roofs and kutcha houses of villages provided safe nesting places for these birds. Sparrows would lay eggs and raise their young securely within these natural shelters.



skies freely, forming strong ties with their surroundings. Now, with thatched roofs replaced by concrete structures, their habitat is under threat.

sparrows are seen gathering sticks and twigs to build nests in risky and unnatural locations. Near the Hanuman Temple on the main road at Mahakalapada, sparrows have created nests in-

side an electric transformer near the Gobari River. Their choice reflects the desperation and the dangers to their lives, as these unstable dwellings could collapse or pose immediate threats.

The widespread use of pesticides in agriculture, urbanisation, and proliferation of concrete jungles has significantly contributed to the decline of sparrow populations.

RSP to set up Coke Oven Battery 7 under Modex initiative

Rourkela: Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), a unit of the Maharatna steel conglomerate SAIL, has achieved another significant milestone under its Modernisation and Expansion (MODEX) initiative with the ground-breaking ceremony for the Coke Oven Battery 7 project.

RSP to host national-level half marathon from 2026



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 24: The Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) will organise a national-level half marathon from the next year (2026), inviting participation from top runners of the country, state as well as the periphery areas.

ulated the participants in the five-km SAIL Walk and Run event which he earlier flagged off. More than 2,300 employees and former employees of SAIL, as well as their family members along with school and college students, participated in the event.

Advertisement for 'ଅଶ୍ରୁଣୁ ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାଞ୍ଜଳି' (Ashrunu Shradhanchali) featuring a portrait of a man and text about a memorial service.

Advertisement for IndianOil Marketing Division - Eastern Regional Office, regarding apprenticeship opportunities.

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY INDICATIVE EMPLOYMENT NOTICE, regarding recruitment for Scouts & Guides.

Advertisement for Government of Odisha 'e' procurement Notice, regarding recruitment for the Superintending Engineer, Koraput.

Girl student dies after falling off train

Bhubaneswar: In a tragic incident, a young girl student from Keonjhar district died after falling from a moving train while reportedly attempting to take a selfie.

Advertisement from the Government of India, Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, regarding recruitment for various posts.

Advertisement for the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Dhenkanal, regarding e-procurement.

Advertisement for the Government of Odisha, Department of Water Resources, regarding recruitment for the Addl. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar.



FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

THE DEVELOPMENT GAP

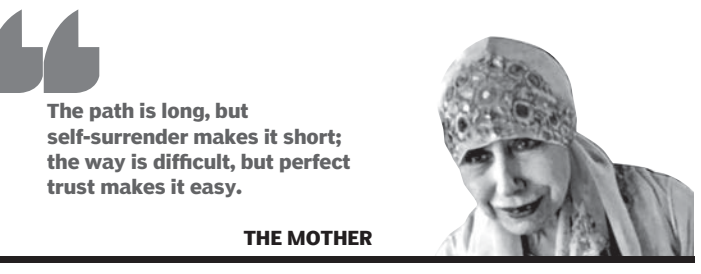


Africa's natural carbon sinks will continue to mitigate climate change, but only if they are preserved. And strengthened agricultural systems can stabilize global food supply chains against disruptions caused by pandemics, conflicts, and climate shocks, by helping to rehabilitate the continent's farmland, 65% of which is degraded

In total investment, far below comparable figures for India (\$800), Brazil (\$1,800), or Thailand (\$2,000). Some Britons and Americans spend more on coffee in the space of a month. This chronic underfunding has taken a heavy toll. African agricultural productivity is 60% below the global average, and food imports are projected to cost the continent \$110 billion annually by 2030. But with targeted capital and sustained attention, this can change. Boosting agricultural productivity would help feed a growing population, reduce import dependency, protect biodiversity, and restore soil health. Greater investments in the sector can secure the livelihoods of 250 million small-scale farmers and address the urgent need for climate resilience in a region disproportionately affected by global warming. The benefits of investing in African food systems extend far beyond the continent. Africa's natural carbon sinks will continue to mitigate climate

change, but only if they are preserved. And strengthened agricultural systems can stabilize global food supply chains against disruptions caused by pandemics, conflicts, and climate shocks, by helping to rehabilitate the continent's farmland, 65% of which is degraded. But unlocking global benefits requires global engagement. Fortunately, African agri-food systems represent a compelling business opportunity. Aside from the fact that the continent boasts an increasingly skilled, youthful labor force and much of the world's remaining arable land, investments in its food systems are 2.5-3 times more effective in raising incomes than those in other sectors. Investors also stand to gain by coupling agri-food investments with investment in infrastructure such as energy, water, and technology, which will transform African agricultural systems into major sources of growth. Hundreds of small and medium-size enterprises are already moving

inputs, providing services, and hauling hundreds of millions of metric tons of food between rural and urban areas every day. This is a strong base for investors to build on. So, what needs to happen next? At the Paris Peace Forum earlier this year, we unveiled the Agricultural Transitions Lab for African Solutions (ATLAS), a permanent platform to advocate for increased investment, align priorities, and promote transparency and accountability in African agri-food systems. Since then, 30 organizations have joined, demonstrating real momentum behind the initiative. Members span from the private sector, including OCP Group and the Boston Consulting Group, development organizations (including AGRA and ONE Campaign) and leading financiers, such as the International Finance Corporation and the French Development Agency (AFD). At this year's annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, ATLAS is launching the 2x30 Challenge, which calls on leading development funders to commit to doubling total annual investments (from about \$50 billion to \$100 billion) in Africa's agri-food systems by 2030. To ensure that the additional funding does materialize and has a meaningful impact, it will be tracked through an annual investment barometer. Increasing investment is a first step toward building more productive, sustainable, and resilient African food systems. Supporting Africa's farmers is not just an opportunity. It is indispensable to achieving global development goals. Pascal Lamy, a former director-general of the World Trade Organization, is the vice chair of the Paris Peace Forum and co-chair of ATLAS. Agnes Kalibata, a former Minister of Agriculture of Rwanda, is President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.



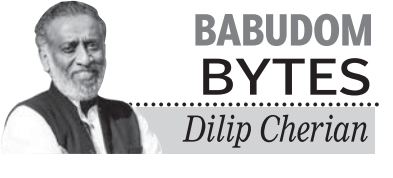
Lessons from Argentina

Argentina has sparked a global conversation with its decision to introduce a mandatory 'suitability test' for 40,000 public servants, a move aimed at streamlining government operations. Announced by Presidential spokesperson Manuel Adorni, the policy mandates that employees on temporary contracts pass an online examination to retain their positions. This initiative is part of President Javier Milei's broader effort to reduce fiscal deficits and enhance governmental efficiency. The policy has received significant praise from figures like Elon Musk, who lauded the focus on government downsizing, and US President Donald Trump, who commended Milei as a "strong leader." However, it has also raised questions about its implications if introduced in other countries, including India. In India, the general public perception of babus is far from flattering. Public servants are often criticized as arrogant, corrupt, and indifferent to citizens' needs. Despite some exceptions, this stereotype persists, eroding trust in government institutions. Introducing aptitude tests could address these concerns by holding public servants accountable and ensuring they possess the skills necessary for their roles. However, the implications of such a policy in India would be significant. Regular assessments could improve performance and public trust, ensuring that only competent individuals remain in service. But the logistics of implementing a standardized testing mechanism in a vast bureaucracy would be daunting. Also, tying job security to periodic evaluations might create stress and resentment among employees, potentially affecting productivity. Of course, the babus themselves can be expected to resist any such move. The civil service unions and political entities are likely to push back against such reforms, citing risks of politicization and favoritism in the testing process, even though it will be widely welcomed by the public as a much-needed measure to rein in the powerful babus. The sheer scale of India's administrative apparatus, coupled with entrenched attitudes and political complexities, makes this a challenging proposition. However, if implemented thoughtfully, such reforms could transform how public servants are perceived, bridging the trust gap between the government and its citizens.



Pascal Lamy & Agnes Kalibata INCREASING INVESTMENT IS A FIRST STEP TOWARD BUILDING MORE PRODUCTIVE, SUSTAINABLE, AND RESILIENT AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

Whistleblowers or scapegoats? It's not every day that an anti-corruption investigation makes headlines for all the wrong reasons. In Jammu and Kashmir, three officers of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) have been reassigned to the home department, raising quite a few eyebrows. Why? Because they were investigating allegations of large-scale corruption in the Srinagar Smart Cities Mission. This reshuffle comes just days after one of the officers, SP Abdul Wahid Shah, went public with claims of major irregularities in the project's execution. According to Shah, top officials in the Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) — the special purpose vehicle set up to implement the mission — were found with assets that didn't match their declared incomes. The ACB even registered a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act and carried out searches at multiple locations. So far, so good, right? Enter the twist: Instead of applauding the officers for doing their job, the administration decided to send them packing. Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti didn't mince words, calling it a case of "punishing the whistleblower." The bigger picture here is troubling. The Smart Cities Mission, launched with much fanfare in 2015, was supposed to transform cities like Srinagar. But if allegations of misappropriation and substandard materials are true, the whole project risks becoming another cautionary tale of big promises and poor execution. Mufti also touched on a deeper issue — the misuse of investigative agencies as tools to silence dissent rather than root out corruption. If this trend continues, it's not just the whistleblowers but the public who lose out. Accountability, it seems, is becoming a rare commodity. What's worse? Moves like this reinforce the perception that public servants who dare to challenge the status quo do so at their peril. If whistleblowers are punished, who's going to stick their neck out next time?



BABUDOM BYTES Dilip Cherian

A calculated gamble or insider confidence? The recent resignation of Shivdeep Waman Rao Lande, an IPS officer of the 2006 batch, has sparked widespread speculation. His decision to step down as IG of the Police Training Centre, Patna, citing personal reasons, is being widely interpreted as a precursor to a political debut. With Bihar's Assembly elections just around the corner, Lande is rumoured to be aligning himself with the Jan Suraj Party, helmed by Prashant Kishor. This isn't the first time a bureaucrat has swapped the comfort of administrative corridors for the rough-and-tumble of electoral politics. Ambitious civil servants have often gravitated toward established political powerhouses like the BJP or Congress, drawn by the promise of a ready platform and a robust organizational structure. However, Lande's rumoured move to join a fledgling party — one that, despite its founder's larger-than-life reputation, remains an untested entity — raises eyebrows. Is this simply a leap of faith, or does Lande know something the aam public doesn't? It's worth noting that Prashant Kishor himself has a quasi-bureaucratic background, having worked with the United Nations before carving a niche as India's most sought-after political strategist. His transition from international bureaucracy to political manoeuvring mirrors, in some ways, the path that Lande now seems to be considering. What makes Lande's choice particularly intriguing is the timing and the context. Bihar's political landscape is notoriously complex, and the Jan Suraj Party's grassroots experiment is still in its infancy. Whether Lande's gamble will pay off or add him to the growing list of babus whose political careers failed to take off remains to be seen. For now, it's a bold move, one that reflects the evolving aspirations of India's babus.

SPECTRUM DIPLOMACY

Australia & Odisha: Partners for prosperity



Hugh Boylan AS THERE ARE HUGE OPPORTUNITIES, I WANT AUSTRALIA TO BE A PART OF ODISHA'S GROWTH STORY

India has played a major role in my life. I first visited as a school student. I returned (as many Australians do!) as a backpacking university student. I spent three years at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi, and I am now Australia's Consul General in Kolkata. I am thrilled to be visiting Odisha, to see how Australia and this wonderful state can partner for our mutual prosperity. On 26 January, I will celebrate India's Republic Day as well as Australia Day. This joint day of celebration is just one of many things binding us together. We are both proud, multicultural democracies. We have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, a free trade agreement, and we are partners in the Quad. The Indian diaspora is the fastest growing in Australia. One million strong, in a country of only 27 million, and coming to the fore in all walks of life.

As the Indian diaspora grows, so too does economic engagement, driven by our bilateral Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). Since ECTA entered into force, Australia-India trade has grown to nearly Rs three lakh crore per year. ECTA is delivering for India: over the past five years, India's exports to Australia have grown 66 per cent. Australia and India have complementary economies: we can plug into and drive each other's economic growth. I am here for Utkarsh Odisha because I think Australian goods, resources, services and technologies can be key enablers of that too. I want Australia to be a part of Odisha's growth story, and there are huge opportunities. Our countries will be renewable energy superpowers. Our Prime Ministers recently announced a bilateral Renewable Energy Partnership. Australian critical minerals,

like lithium and cobalt, can fuel Odisha's battery manufacturing ambitions. Australian expertise in rooftop solar deployment, including grid integration technologies and green skilling, can be inputs to Odisha's solar plans. Australia is a world leader in mining equipment, technology and services (METS). The innovative Australian METS sector offers solutions which can help Odisha's mining sector achieve safety, sustainability and improved productivity, while assisting towards decarbonisation targets. Our countries are also agricultural powerhouses. ECTA is creating new opportunities for Indian farmers, including products grown here in Odisha. Last year under ECTA, India's rice exports to Australia went up 31 per cent, oilseeds went up 12 per cent, frozen vegetables up 37 per cent, and spices up 37 per cent. We are currently negoti-

ating the second innings of our free trade agreement, a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). I'd like to see CECA bring more Australian agricultural technologies here to Odisha, to increase productivity and contribute to improved food security across the country. A highlight of my visit will be watching women play Australian Football at Centurion University. Australian education institutions, including working with Indian counterparts, can offer skills training and education to Odisha's young people, creating new opportunities for economic participation. I look forward to seeing what your state and my country can do together! The writer is an Australian diplomat currently serving as Australia's Consul General in Kolkata

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- The only solutions that are ever worth anything are the solutions that people find themselves. SATYAJIT RAY
Man is a genius when he is dreaming. AKIRA KUROSAWA
The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder. ALFRED HITCHCOCK

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



Turn challenges into opportunities

Sir, Donald Trump's policies on immigration, H1B visas, and tariffs pose challenges for India, particularly for undocumented workers and software companies relying on H1Bs. However, these hurdles can serve as a catalyst for India to implement transformative reforms and strengthen its global standing. To capitalize on this opportunity, India must focus on economic liberalization. Deregulation, fostering innovation, and developing Indian-owned intellectual property are critical. Strategic FTAs, protecting sensitive sectors like agriculture while enhancing market access, can bolster trade. Manufacturing and service sectors must be scaled up, leveraging US-China tensions to position India as a global supply chain hub. Attracting top Indian-origin talent, encouraging return migration, and investing in emerging technologies like AI and IoT can fuel domestic innovation. Strengthening the pharmaceutical industry to develop high-value drugs and vaccines will also boost self-reliance. Political reforms like One Nation, One Election (ONOE) require compromises, such as greater fiscal devolution to states, to ensure acceptance. Learning from the 1991 economic reforms, bold and market oriented policies are essential.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

Just asking

Sir, This year's Mahakumbh in Prayagraj has seen a flurry of data and stats on the number of people attending the spiritual congregation, the tents pitched, akharas participating, private entrepreneurs taking part, police deployment, etc.etc. The AI assisted Kumbh has information on anything and everything related to the mega gathering. Will it be too much to expect if one demands that the UP government gives us data on the quality of the water in which crores of people are washing themselves spiritually as well as physically? From the laboratory point of view, how safe/unsafe/fit/unfit is the water at the confluence of the Jamuna and the Holy Ganga? This is the info that I have been patiently waiting for since the 'Mela' started. Is anyone in the Yogi Sarkar listening?

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)



# Ensuring a 'dip-safe' Ganga with advanced waste mgmnt

# Jail in Assam becomes farming hub

Daily water testing, removal of pooja waste among measures to keep Ganga safe

## MAHA KUMBH



Mahakumbh Nagar (UP), Jan 24: Daily sample testing of river water by the Pollution Control Board, round-the-clock separation of flowers and pooja material from water, a 200-km temporary drainage system to channel all greywater to treatment facilities and state-of-the-art technology to deal with human waste are among the measures being taken to ensure the Ganga is "dip-safe" during the Maha Kumbh.

Maha Kumbh, a mega-religious event organised every 12 years, is being held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days. More than eight crore pilgrims have so far taken a holy dip at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the Saraswati rivers.

On major bath days, like on Mauni Amavasya January 29, officials estimate a footfall of 50 lakh visitors. These visitors, the authorities say, are expected to generate nearly 16 million litres of fecal sludge and about 240 million litres of greywater (waste water generated from cooking, washing and bathing) per day. According to Additional District Magistrate (ADM) of the Maha Kumbh Mela, Vivek Chaturvedi, the river water is absolutely safe to take the holy dip.

"A team from the pollution control board is doing sample testing of the river from different ghats on a daily basis and the levels are within control. The second area of attention is the pooja waste which is going into the rivers -- there are flowers, coconuts and other things which are offered as part of rituals. We have deployed ma-

chines on various ghats to fish these out of the river every two hours," he told PTI.

"There is a team of Ganga Sevadoots, who are stationed on ghats to promptly collect and dispose the material to maintain the purity of the river and the ghats. They work in rotational shifts," he added.

According to Uttar Pradesh government officials, of the ₹7,000 crore being spent by the state government on the Kumbh Mela this year, ₹1,600 crore has been earmarked for water and waste management alone.

Installation of 1.45 lakh toilets; establishment of prefabricated faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) to handle the waste and sludge collected in makeshift septic tanks of toilets; setting up of a 200-km temporary drainage system to channel all greywater to treatment facilities, and temporary and permanent sewage pipelines; creation of water treatment ponds; deployment of sludge carrying vehicles and the use other state-of-the-art technologies, are also among the measures being taken by the administration.

Authorities are using

Located in lower Assam, the fields in the jail compound are filled with mustard, along with trees laden with fruits and vegetables, a mini bee farm, and even rare crops like nutritious apple berries



Barpeta (Assam), Jan 24: It might appear to be just another normal prison at first glance, but as one steps inside the Barpeta District Jail complex in Assam, it is nothing less than an agricultural hub with vast fields of multiple crops.

Located in lower Assam, the fields in the jail compound are filled with mustard, along with trees laden with fruits and vegetables, a mini bee farm, and even rare crops like nutritious apple berries.

Spread over 127 bighas (almost 42 acres), the Barpeta jail has a capacity to house 413 inmates - 368 men and 45 women. It currently has 335 inmates, including 325 men and 10 women.

"I, along with the jailer, got transferred to this prison around a year ago. At that time, only paddy farming was done. We decided to go for multi-cropping to utilise the land through-

Vegetables like lady finger, mustard, ginger, brinjal, cabbage, reddish and several cruciferous ones, including perennial Indian favourites cauliflower and cabbages, are grown in the jail premises

Additionally, the compound houses a small fishery for inhouse consumption

Another highlight is a small berry farm, housing around 200 trees producing several precious variants of the fruit - Apple Berry, Miss India and Thailand Berry

out the year," Barpeta District Jail Superintendent Pranjal Kumar Sarma told PTI.

Thanks to the new initiatives, the jail generated a revenue of over ₹1 lakh for the government during the April-December period last year by selling agricultural produce alone, he said.

"Apart from revenue generation, there was another reason for introducing year-long agriculture activities. The inmates are always mentally stressed due to their jail terms and for staying away from home. We tried to reduce their stress level by engaging them in productive work. They laugh and

share jokes with each other while working in the fields," Sarma said.

He said all the produce is purely organic and no chemical or fertiliser is used during farming. What makes this transformation even more special is that the prisoners are engaged in all agrarian activities within the premises, which keeps them engaged and helps them learn a new skill for the life after release from jail.

Jailer Nilotpal Kakati said multi-cropping started from April last year, after the authorities cleared the weeds from the unused barren lands and made

them cultivable.

"We could utilise only 35-40 bighas of land as there is shortage of manpower. Though we have over 300 inmates, we could engage only 20-25 of them serving rigorous imprisonment due to legal restrictions. The law does not allow the rest to work in the fields," he said.

Kakati, however, said the jail authorities are planning to expand the farming area this year by engaging a few more people, thereby increasing the produce.

Asked about the marketing, he said, "So far, we have not marketed it outside Barpeta. Local vendors come and collect the vegetables from us. The jail inmates also consumed around 1,000 kgs of vegetables last year, resulting in savings for us."

The jailer said that with expansion of produce and introduction of some cash crops, the authorities will explore outside markets later this year.

Vegetables like lady finger, mustard, ginger, brinjal, cabbage, reddish and several cruciferous ones, including perennial Indian favourites cauliflower and cabbages, are grown in the jail premises. Additionally, the compound houses a small fishery for inhouse consumption.

Another highlight is a small berry farm, housing around 200 trees producing several precious variants of the fruit - Apple Berry, Miss India and Thailand Berry.

## Assam to revamp 252 govt schools

Guwahati, Jan 24: Aiming to revamp the infrastructure of prominent rural schools, the Assam government is developing new buildings for 252 such state-run educational facilities at an expenditure of over ₹1,800 crore, officials said. Director of Secondary Education, Mamata Hojai, told PTI that the 252 government vernacular schools have been selected from each of the 126 Assembly constituencies as per budget announcements last year.

"We are upgrading the infrastructure of these schools as

part of a project under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). The selection of the schools is done according to suggestions of the respective MLAs," she said. The construction work in most of the schools has begun and will be complete by next year, Hojai said. Asked about the expenditure, she said, "The construction cost for each school will be ₹7 crore to ₹8 crore. The total outlay is of ₹1,827 crore."

In the 2024-25 budget, Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog had announced an initiative to improve the infrastructure of government schools across the state.

**PANCHAYAT SAMITI OFFICE, JHARSUGUDA**

**Tender Call Notice**

No. - 509 / Date - 22.01.25

No.i- : The Block Development Officer, Jharsuguda invites sealed tenders on percentage rate basis for 01 (one) No. of projects. The sale of bid documents will be available in website of Jharsuguda <https://jharsuguda.odisha.gov.in> from dt-24.01.2025 to dt.10.02.2025 and receipt of the bid documents starts from dt-24.01.2025 to dt.10.02.2025 up to 5.00 P.M. on all working days in the Office of the Panchayat Samiti, Jharsuguda. The bid will be opened on dt-11.02.2025 at 11.00 A.M. Intending class "B" and "C" Class contractors may visit website of Jharsuguda <https://jharsuguda.odisha.gov.in> for details information.

Sd./- Block Development Officer Jharsuguda

OIPR-19363/11/0004/2425

## Assam's volleyball finale draws Olympic stars, FIVB chief



Tezpur (Assam), Jan 24: From Olympic medallists to top bosses of volleyball global body, players and administrators from different parts of the world converged in the northern Assam town of Tezpur Friday to be a part of the ongoing finale of a grassroots-level tournament.

Olympic volleyball gold medallist Vladimir Grbic, silver medallist Eliezaveta Bracht and Federation Internationale de Volley Ball (FIVB) president Fabio Azevedo, among others, attended the second day's events of Brahma Putra Volleyball League (BVL) season 5 Super League Finals here.

Founded in 2020 by former India volleyball team captain Abhijit Bhattacharjya, the BVL is an initiative to popularise the sport and channelise youth energy into a positive mode at the grassroots level which has drawn global appreciation and support. It has been officially recognised as a Silver Level Project by the FIVB Volleyball Foundation, which has pledged support across three areas of the league: advancing coaching programmes, enhancing match broadcasting and providing professional expertise to strengthen league operations.

Talking to reporters at the

venue here, Azevedo said, "This is one of the best volleyball initiative in the world. BVL is impacting kids positively in the region and I am sure it can do more for the country and world."

He maintained that the league has turned into a "global movement and is making the world a better place through sports".

Appreciating the involvement of local people as well as patrons and supporters across the country, many of them travelling to Tezpur for the final round, the FIVB chief said, "It is a fantastic event of collaboration, to see so many people being volunteers to help these kids play together and stick together."

Among others attending the final league are Nootsara Tomkom, best setter, and FIVB World Grand Prix, Hitesh Malhotra, head of Volleyball Empowerment and NF Relations.

Guwahati-based author and journalist Mrinal Talukdar, who has 'adopted' one of the BVL teams, underlined the popularity of the league which has grown over the years.

Explaining the competition format of BVL, Talukdar said the first stage involved teams of different villages competing in home and away matches with teams of other villages of the same district.

## Muslim temple caretaker exemplifies communal harmony through service

Press Trust of India

Bahraich (UP), Jan 24: A heartening story of communal harmony has emerged from the Uttar Pradesh district of Bahraich which has been in the headlines recently for communal tensions and wolf attacks.

Mohammad Ali, a devout Muslim, has become an enduring symbol of unity through his 18-year-long service as the caretaker and president of a trust managing a Hindu temple.

In Jaitapur Bazar, 27 kilometers from the Bahraich district headquarters, Ali oversees the Vriddh Mateshwari Mata Gurudevi Temple, a site which is now revered by Muslims too.

Observing Islamic traditions like roza and namaz, 58-year-old Ali also devotes himself to the worship of Goddess Gurudevi and Lord Hanuman, balancing his dual roles with remarkable dedication. Ali recalls a turning point from his childhood, "When I was seven, I suffered from leukoderma, leaving my eyes white. Treatments failed until my mother took me to the Gurudevi temple."

He further said he believes that "applying water from the sacred pindi" helped cure the condition which inspired his lifelong connection to the temple. He said he began actively serving there in 2007 after he had a rather dramatic dream in which the Goddess asked him to care for the temple.

Under Ali's leadership, the temple has flourished. Initiatives like fundraising through grain collections during harvest seasons have generated significant resources. "This year alone, ₹2.7 lakh was raised for temple development," Ali told PTI.

Public contributions and government support have also helped in its renovations, with over ₹30.40 lakh utilised for construction and maintenance.

Recently, a 5.5-foot Hanuman idol, sourced from Jaipur for ₹2.5 lakh, was consecrated during a five-day ceremony attended by thousands. The invitation card for the event prominently featured Ali's name as the temple committee president alongside local BJP MLA Sureshwar Singh as the chief guest.

District Tourism Officer Manish Srivastava confirmed the temple's inclusion in a religious tourism initiative two years ago, further enhancing its status.

The temple's impact transcends religious lines, attracting Muslim women who join Hindu devotees in prayers.

"I respect both Hindu and Muslim faiths. Serving the temple fulfils my devotion and my commitment to communal unity," Ali said.

**REGIONAL OFFICE (SAMBALPUR REGION), Bank of Baroda**

1st Floor, At: Christian Para, G.M. College Chowk, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN - 768001, Mob.: 7682829040

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 6(2) and 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to be held on For SI. No.1: 20.02.2025 from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM & For SI. No.1 & 3: 28.02.2025 from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrowers / Co-Borrowers / Guarantors that the below described Immovable properties Mortgaged/Charged to the Secured Creditor, will be sold on the basis of "SYMBOLIC POSSESSION" of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", and "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis for recovery of dues in below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrowers/Co-Borrowers/Guarantors/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/e-Auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below-

Sl. No.	Name & Address of Borrowers / Guarantors	Description of the Properties & the Owner	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increase Amount	Total Dues (Type of Possession)
1.	<b>SONEPUR BRANCH / Borrowers: 1) M/s Gouri Shankar General Store, Prop.: Mr. Muralidhar Sahu, S/o: Late Gouri Shankar Sahu, 2) Mr. Muralidhar Sahu, Co-Borrower: Mrs. Namita Sahu, W/o: Mr. Muralidhar Sahu, All are At: Kartang, P.O.: Mahadevpali, PS/Tahasil: Binka, Dist.: Sonepur, Odisha, PIN-767019</b>	Equitable Mortgage of Land and Building situated at Khata No.: 424/199, Plot No.: 273/2051, Area: Ac.0.100Dec., Plot No.: 273/2062, Area: Ac.0.120Dec., Total Area: Ac.0.220Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Kartang, PS/Tahasil: Binka, Dist.: Sonepur, Owner Name: Mr. Muralidhar Sahu, S/o: Late Gourishankar Sahu, Bounded by East: Road, West: Gopinath Pradhan, North: Najar Sahu, South: Ballabha Khamari	₹1,25,00,000/- ₹12,50,000/- ₹20,000/-	₹ 61,12,687.53 as on 19.01.2025 plus further interest and charges, legal expenses thereon till full payment (Symbolic)
2.	<b>DEOGARH BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. Shashi Bhusan Pradhan, S/o: Mr. Khireswar Pradhan, Flat No.: A 415, 4th Floor, Kalpana River View Complex, Bankual, Near Bankual Shiv Mandir, At: Plot No.: 174, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khordha, Odisha, PIN-751002 / Co-Borrower: Mrs. Namita Pradhan, W/o: Mr. Khireswar Pradhan, At: Panda Sahi, P.O./P.S.: Deogarh, Dist.: Deogarh, Odisha, PIN-768108 / Guarantor: Mr. Khireswar Pradhan, At: Ward No.: 1, P.O./P.S.: Deogarh, Dist.: Deogarh, Odisha, PIN-768108</b>	Equitable Mortgage of Land & Building bearing Khata No.: 248/680, Plot No.: 320/1292, Area: Ac.0.06058 Dec. i.e 2639 sqft, KISSAM: Gharabari, Duplex No.: 7 & 8, Block-04 in name & style of Duplex "PENGUIN CAVES" in Mouza: Gotalagram, P.S./Tahasil: Balianata, Dist.: Khordha, Odisha, PIN-752101, along with G+1 storied building of GF/FF, Built Up Area: 1421 Sqft. each floor, Carpet Area: 1136.8 sqft. each floor as per physical. Owner of the property Mrs. Namita Pradhan, Bounded by East: Govt. Road, West: Geetanjali Nayak, North: Part of Revenue Plot No.: 320 and South: Vendor	₹58,50,000/- ₹5,85,000/- ₹20,000/-	₹ 24,61,478.50 as on 19.01.2025 plus further interest and charges, legal expenses thereon till full payment (Symbolic)
3.	<b>VSS MARG BRANCH / Borrower: M/s. Jagannath Trading, Prop.: Mr. Bansidhar Maharana / Guarantor: Mr. Gadadhar Moharana, S/o.: Mr. Ramcharan Moharana, Both are At: Farm Road, Modipara, Near Modipara Post Office, Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN-768002</b>	Equitable Mortgage of Land & Building situated at M.S. Khata No.: 572/4, Plot No.: 602, KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Sambalpur Town Unit No.: 7 Modipara, P.S.: Sambalpur No.: 18, Tahasil No.: 226, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, admeasuring Area: Ac.0.010 Dec, in the name of Mr. Gadadhar Moharana, S/o.: Mr. Ramcharan Moharana, residence of Modipara, Sambalpur, Odisha, Bounded by East: Odisha State transport Corporation Sambalpur, West: Road, North: Land of Narayan Chandra Moharana, South: Plot No.: 602	₹11,66,000/- ₹1,16,600/- ₹20,000/-	₹ 16,80,309.51 as on 19.01.2025 plus further interest and charges, legal expenses thereon till full payment (Symbolic)

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com>

For SI. No. 1: STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE TO THE BORROWER/GUARANTOR/MORTGAGOR FOR SUBSEQUENT SALE UNDER RULE 9(1) AS PER AMENDED SARFAESI ACT 2002

For SI. No. 2 & 3: STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE TO THE BORROWER/GUARANTOR/MORTGAGOR FOR SALE UNDER RULE 8(6) AS PER AMENDED SARFAESI ACT 2002

This may also be treated as notice under rule 6(2), 9(1) of security interest (Enforcements)Rules, 2002 to the Borrowers / Guarantors of the said loan abiding holding of E-Auction sale on the above mentioned date

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 24.01.2025

Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

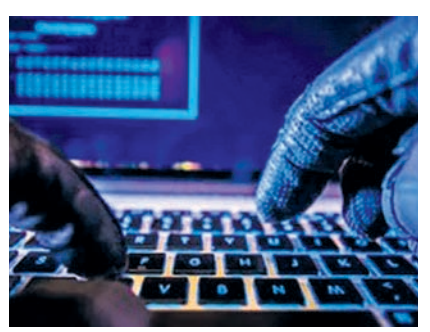




**Atishi is the Chief Minister of Delhi, but their anti-women stance is evident as her face is missing from posters and hoardings**  
ANURAG THAKUR | BJP MP

## CYBERCRIMINALS TARGET RURAL BANK IN K'TAKA

Cyber criminals have siphoned off ₹2.3 crore after targeting a rural bank in Ballari district of Karnataka, said officials Friday. According to police, the incident was reported from the Ballari District Credit Cooperative (BDCC) bank in the limits of Hospet Town police station. The bank operates in the neighbouring Vijayanagar and Ballari districts



## of the day quote

Some people demand withdrawal of Governor Ravi. However, have we ever passed a resolution on that demand? No such resolution has been passed in the Assembly. He should be the Governor and the DMK will grow further



M K STALIN | TN CM

Uddhav Thackeray had earlier also expressed sentiments about going solo in the elections. Two days ago, he had a detailed discussion with me regarding this and what he said yesterday (Thursday) during a Shiv Sena 'melava' (gathering) reflects his opinion



SHARAD PAWAR | NCP (SP) PRESIDENT

In the first step to bring about an end to drinking in the state, liquor vends in 17 holy towns will be shut down. These shops will not be shifted elsewhere. Liquor shops will be completely shut in Ujjain Municipal Corporation limits



MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

# Centre, Delhi cops conspiring to kill Kejriwal, says AAP



There are two players involved in this conspiracy to kill Kejriwal -- the BJP and the Delhi Police. They are both conspiring to end Kejriwal's life. Attacks have been attempted on him one after the other. In October (last year), an attack was made on Kejriwal. Upon investigation by us, it was found that the attackers were BJP workers, but police took no action

ATISHI | DELHI CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Friday accused the BJP-led Centre and the Delhi Police of conspiring to "kill" its supremo Arvind Kejriwal and urged the Election Commission (EC) to restore his security cover provided by the Punjab Police that was withdrawn. There was no immediate reaction from the BJP or the Delhi Police to the allegation.

concern regarding the security arrangements of Arvind Kejriwal, ex-Chief Minister of Delhi and the national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), who has been consistently facing grave threats to his life and deliberate lapses in his security detail.

Addressing a press conference here, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and her Punjab counterpart, Bhagwant Mann, said they have written to the EC demanding "fair grounds" for the AAP in the February 5 Delhi Assembly polls and the restoration of Kejriwal's security cover given by the Punjab Police, along with an audit of "life-threatening" attacks on him.

It alleged that on different occasions over the last three months, multiple targeted attacks on Kejriwal, including incidents of physical assault and stone pelting during a political rally, were attempted, exacerbating their concerns.

They alleged that the Delhi Police, which comes under the Centre, has turned a blind eye on the alleged attacks on Kejriwal in accordance with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's order.

The letter complained that police "simply acted as mute spectators" and did not make an attempt to protect Kejriwal.

"There are two players involved in this conspiracy to kill Kejriwal -- the BJP and the Delhi Police. They are both conspiring to end Kejriwal's life. Attacks have been attempted on him one after the other. In October (last year), an attack was made on Kejriwal. Upon investigation by us, it was found that the attackers were BJP workers, but police took no action," Atishi alleged.

The Chief Ministers called the Union Home Ministry's reported order to withdraw the Punjab Police's security cover for Kejriwal in Delhi a "politically-motivated" decision.

"We have written to the EC demanding that Kejriwal's security be restored. We do not trust the Delhi Police as it is under Amit Shah's control," she added. The AAP leaders alleged that resorting to "dirty politics" ahead of the Delhi polls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has conspired to get Kejriwal's security removed.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reportedly asked to withdraw the Punjab Police's security cover for Kejriwal in Delhi as he already enjoys Z-plus security here.

"We write to you with utmost urgency and grave concern regarding the security arrangements of Arvind Kejriwal, ex-Chief Minister of Delhi and the national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), who has been consistently facing grave threats to his life and deliberate lapses in his security detail."

Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav Thursday said the police personnel from his state deployed for Kejriwal's security have been withdrawn.

The AAP leaders urged the EC to "conduct an immediate and thorough review of Arvind Kejriwal's security arrangements and implement robust measures to ensure his safety" and "reinstate or augment the presence of the Punjab Police in his security detail to provide reliable and impartial protection".

"Those who receive Z-plus security are supposed to be provided protection. Yogi Adityanath, for example, gets security from his own state and also receives protection here while campaigning as he is Z-plus protectee."

Union Home Minister Amit

# CBI busts ₹350cr crypto ponzi scam

The accused persons were allegedly running seven separate modules based in the cities of Delhi, Hazaribag, Bathinda, Ratlam, Valsad, Pudukkottai and Chittorgarh, taking money from gullible investors promising investments in cryptocurrencies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** The CBI has conducted search operations across seven locations after registering a case of ₹350 crore crypto ponzi scam against seven persons, officials said Friday.



The accused persons were allegedly running seven separate modules based in the cities of Delhi, Hazaribag, Bathinda, Ratlam, Valsad, Pudukkottai and Chittorgarh, taking money from gullible investors promising investments in cryptocurrencies, they said.

converted into cryptocurrencies to obscure their origin," CBI's spokesperson said in a statement. It is alleged that they had conducted transactions of over ₹350 crore in these schemes, the officials said.

du and Rajasthan. During the searches, the CBI seized digital virtual assets totalling \$38,414 (approximately) in the cryptocurrency wallets of the accused persons, which had been digitally secured for investigation.

"These ponzi schemes were being promoted through multiple social media groups. An analysis of bank account transactions and cryptocurrency wallets has revealed that the illegal proceeds from these schemes were being

On Thursday, the agency swooped down at locations in Delhi, Jharkhand, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Na-

"The searches resulted in the recovery of cash amounting to ₹34.2 lakh (approx), along with

significant digital evidence including seven mobile phones, one laptop, one tablet, three hard disks, 10 pen drives, memory cards, SIM cards, ATM/debit cards, email accounts, and several incriminating documents," the statement said.

The agency registered the case under Indian Penal Code section 120-B (criminal conspiracy), read with Section 420 (cheating) and Section 66D of the Information Technology Act, 2000, because it was part of an ongoing investigation that predated the introduction of three new criminal laws last year.

"It was alleged that accused persons, acting in criminal conspiracy, have been actively floating various ponzi and fraudulent schemes, promising high returns based on cryptocurrency investments."

## SHORT TAKES

### SC pulls up Maha govt

**New Delhi:** Irked over non-implementation of rules, the Supreme Court Friday pulled up the Maharashtra government for failing to allocate funds for solid waste treatment plants in the Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation and said the state was duty-bound to protect the environment. A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan expressed strong disapproval of Maharashtra's previous stand that there were no funds available for essential projects. It directed the state to submit a detailed affidavit specifying the time the funds would be released and the number of civic bodies in Maharashtra complying with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

### UP: Man dies in accidental firing

**Kaushambi (UP):** A 22-year-old man died after being accidentally shot while a firearm was being loaded by his friend at a wedding here, police said Friday, adding that a case has been filed against six people. The incident occurred in Lalapur village Thursday evening during the wedding of Aman Singh Yadav's daughter, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Rajesh Kumar Singh said.

### Tremors in Uttarkashi

**Uttarkashi/Dehradun:** An earthquake hit Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district and neighbouring areas early Friday, forcing people to run out of their homes in panic. However, there were no reports of any loss of life and property. A 3.5-magnitude earthquake was recorded in the district at 8:19 am, the National Center for Seismology said. At 7:41 am, an earthquake measuring 2.7 had hit the district.

### 2 charred to death

**Arrah (Bihar):** A truck driver and his helper were burnt alive Friday when the vehicle inside which they had fallen asleep after parking it on the roadside caught fire in Bhojpur district, a senior police officer said. The incident took place in Koilwar police station area, where the 18-wheeler trailer went up in flames in the early hours, SP Raj said.



Police personnel are seen during rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day Parade, at the Ridge in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

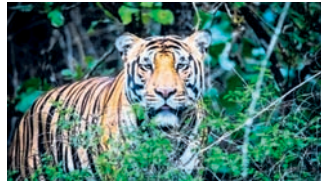
## Woman killed by tiger; incident sparks protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Wayanad (Kerala), Jan 24:** A 47-year-old woman was killed in a tiger attack at Priyadarshini Estate at Mananthavady village in this district Friday morning, sparking intense protests by locals in the area.

The victim, Radha, who belonged to a scheduled caste, was mauled by the tiger while she was out plucking coffee at the estate in the morning.

The incident occurred a day after Kerala Forest Minister A K Saseendran claimed in the state assembly that human-animal conflicts were declining in the state and the government was taking effective action. Following the incident, locals protested by not allowing the woman's body to be taken for postmortem till the authorities ensured that the people of the area were protected and the ti-



ger was killed or captured. The locals staged a protest in front of O R Kelu, the Minister for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, when he visited the area.

Besides that, Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) were being deployed in the area to ensure the safety of the people who go to work early in the morning. Kelu also said that a fencing project was sanctioned for the area and he had set aside funds for it, but it could not be implemented till now as several rounds of the tendering process were not successful in finding someone to carry out the work.

## SC refuses to cancel actor Darshan's bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** In an interim order, the Supreme Court Friday refused to cancel the bail granted to Kannada actors Darshan Thoogudeepa, Pavithra Gowda, and others in a murder case but agreed to examine the Karnataka government's challenge against it and issued notice.

## MEA slams disruption of 'Emergency' film in UK



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** India Friday said it expects the UK to take strong and appropriate action against anti-India elements allegedly involved in disrupting the screenings of actor Kangana Ranaut's new movie "Emergency" in that country.

Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Slough, Staines and Manchester. "We have seen several reports on how the film 'Emergency', which was being screened in several halls, was being obstructed," Jaiswal said. "We consistently raised concerns with the UK government regarding incidents of violent protest and intimidation by anti-India elements," he said, responding to a question at his weekly media briefing. "Freedom of speech and expression cannot be applied selectively and those obstructing it must be held accountable. We hope that the UK side will take appropriate action against those responsible," he added.

"Since state is praying for cancellation of bail, it would not be proper to stay the operation of the order as it would amount to cancellation of bail. Yet, to protect the interest of prosecution, if any co-accused prays on bail, the court concerned shall not place reliance on the order challenged before us. Any bail application filed shall be decided on its own merit," clarified the bench.

Jaiswal said the Indian high commission in London remained in touch with the Indian community members for their safety and welfare.

There were reports that the screening of the movie was disrupted in North-West London,

"We expect the UK side to take strong and appropriate action in this matter," he said.

# DELHI POLLS Dalit votes may split between AAP, BJP, Cong: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** As the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) battles to protect its main turf, the Dalit voters of Delhi are in focus in the upcoming Assembly polls in the national capital, with both the Congress and BJP challenging the ruling party, leading to the possibility of a split in the Dalit votes between the three parties, experts say.

Shah's remarks in the Rajya Sabha on B R Ambedkar, which had triggered a sharp attack from opposition parties, including the AAP and Congress, added fuel to the war of narratives ahead of the February 5 polls. However, the BJP has countered it aggressively.

Kejriwal, whose AAP is eyeing a third straight term in power in Delhi, has enjoyed the support of the Dalit voters in the past, even as the experts say that some disillusionment has crept in. On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has come up with a slew of promises for the Dalits and is holding extensive reach-out programmes in Dalit-majority constituencies.

In the 2020 Delhi polls, the AAP won all 12 seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and a large chunk of Dalit votes, which helped the party secure its second term in the capital. This time, however, the votes may split three-way, the experts say.



"The two photos that Kejriwal has in his office are of B R Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh, because Dalits are in large numbers in Delhi as well as Punjab. The AAP's election symbol - broom - also resonates with the Dalit voters and they can feel a connection. A

huge chunk of Dalit votes had gone to the party. But today, the Dalit community is not as happy with Kejriwal because there has not been much change in their lives," Ambedkarwadi told PTI.

Kejriwal, whose AAP is eyeing a third straight term in power in Delhi, has enjoyed the support of the Dalit

The BJP has promised education for students in need from kindergarten to post-graduation in government institutions, while the AAP has announced the Dr Ambedkar Samman Scholarship, which promises scholarships for Dalit students wishing to pursue higher education abroad.

voters in the past, even as the experts say that some disillusionment has crept in

The BJP has also promised a "B R Ambedkar Stipend Scheme", which will give SC students studying in industrial training institutes (ITIs), skill centres and polytechnic colleges ₹1,000 per month.

On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has come up with a slew of promises for the Dalits and is holding extensive reach-out programmes in Dalit-majority constituencies

According to a survey conducted by the National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organisations (NACDAOR) and The Convergent Media, the AAP is still the leading choice for Delhi's Dalit voters, even though its popularity has gone down.

According to data compiled by Subaltern Media Foundation, there are around 1.23 crore Dalit voters in Delhi. The Chamar community, which includes Jatavs, has more than

24 lakh members and presence in all Delhi districts. The number of Valmikis is more than 12 lakh, while the other major Dalit groups include Mallahs, who are over two lakh in numbers, more than 4.82 lakh Khatiks and over 4.18 lakh Kolis.

dra Pal Gautam, who was one of the prominent Dalit faces of the AAP till he quit the party and joined the Congress last year, also said the ruling party has not fulfilled its core promises to the community.

He, however, dismissed the prospects of parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Azad Samaj Party (ASP) in making a dent in the Dalit votes.





Uttar Pradesh now has world-class institutional infrastructure, aligning with global standards. Its advancements in technology, trade, and governance are exemplary

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

ADHIKARI DEMANDS MAMATA'S RESIGNATION

Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, along with other BJP leaders, Friday demanded the resignation and arrest of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and health secretary NS Nigam over alleged administration of 'expired' intravenous (IV) fluid at a Midnapore hospital, which led to the death of a mother post-childbirth and left four post-partum mothers critically ill



DEMOLITION IN SAMBHAL

Apex court adjourns contempt plea hearing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: The Supreme Court Friday said it would hear after a week a plea seeking contempt proceedings against Sambhal authorities for allegedly violating its verdict on demolition of properties.

Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih posted the matter after a week after the lawyer appearing for petitioner Mohammed Ghayoor sought an adjournment on the ground that the arguing counsel was in a personal difficulty.

He requested the bench to post the matter after a week.

In his plea filed through advocate Chand Qureshi, the petitioner alleged the authorities violated the top court's November 13 2024 verdict which laid down pan-India guidelines and barred demolition of properties without a prior showcause notice and giving 15 days to the aggrieved party to respond.

The plea claimed authorities in UP's Sambhal bulldozed a part of the petitioner's property January 10-11 without a prior notice or an opportunity to him or his family members.

"The petitioner and his family members had all the necessary documents, approved maps and other related documents of the property but, the contemnors came to the premises of the petitioner property and started demolishing the said property," the plea said.

The petitioner, said the plea, was aggrieved by the arbitrary and illegal action of the authorities which was in "complete violation" of the top court's verdict.

Sambhal district magistrate and others were made respondents in his plea. It said the apex court in its November 2024 verdict directed the state authorities to strictly adhere to the guidelines before bulldozing and demolishing properties in the country.

Authorities disobeyed the guidelines and bulldozed a part of the petitioner's factory situated at Tiwari Sarai in Sambhal without giving any prior notice, it added.

The plea argued the authorities had no respect for the court and the rule of law and the administration of justice.

Aside from seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against the authorities, the plea sought to restrain them from creating any third party interest in the premises in question. It also sought a direction to the authorities to maintain status quo as January 11.

Accused's father claims false framing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: The father of the Bangladeshi man accused of stabbing actor Saif Ali Khan will soon approach that country's foreign ministry and the Indian High Commission for his son's release, claiming he was being framed for reasons unknown to him.

In a 12-minute interview, Mohammad Ruhul, the father of Shariful Islam, told PTI from Bangladesh that his son did not have proper documentation for his stay in India and he lived in constant fear of being arrested.

The January 2024 re-election of Sheikh Hasina had forced Shariful to leave Bangladesh, he claimed.

Ruhul also alleged that the man seen in the CCTV camera footage was not Shariful and added that his son was being framed.

"I will get in touch with the Bangladeshi foreign ministry and also seek help from the Indian High Commission in Dhaka for the release of my son," Ruhul said.

He claimed that he learned about his son's arrest through Facebook and news channels and added he had not been contacted by police in this connection. "The police have not said anything to us," Ruhul said. He revealed that Shariful

SAIF ALI KHAN STABBING CASE



Police Friday told a Mumbai court that they needed to conduct a facial recognition test of the Bangladeshi man

week of March and the first week of April 2024.

A Mumbai court Friday related to January 29 the police custody of Shariful, arrested for allegedly stabbing Khan at his home during a robbery attempt last week.

The police informed the court that they had to conduct facial recognition of the man to ascertain if he was the person seen in the CCTV camera footage from the actor's Bandra building.

Shariful, arrested from Thane city, changed his name to Vijay Das after illegally entering India last year, the police earlier said.

allegedly stabbed repeatedly by the intruder inside his 12th floor apartment in upscale Bandra in the early hours of January 16.

Ruhul claimed that his son was not involved in the stabbing incident, saying it would not have been possible for Shariful to enter the home of a star of Khan's stature and commit such a crime.

"In the video footage we saw, the man (in the footage) has hair till the eyebrows. My son doesn't wear his hair like that. He is 30 years old and has never kept his hair this long, not even as a teenager,"

YSRCP's Vijayasai to quit politics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, Jan 24: In a surprise move, YSRCP Raja Sabha member and party general secretary V Vijayasai Reddy Friday announced his decision to quit politics and said he will be resigning from his parliament membership January 25.

Further, he said agriculture will be his future. Reddy, who is also the party's floor leader in the Upper House, said he is not joining any other political party. Reddy, 67, is currently serving his second term as Raja Sabha member from Andhra Pradesh.

He is the fourth YSRCP Raja Sabha member to resign from the party after its rout in the 2024 Assembly elections.

"I am quitting politics. I am resigning from the Raja Sabha membership tomorrow, (January) 25th. I will not join any political party. I am not resigning hoping for any position, benefits, or money. This decision is completely my personal one. There was no pressure. No one influenced me," he said in a post on 'X'. Reddy, who was one of the key figures in former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP in the state, said he was indebted to YS Rajasekhara Reddy family, which has supported him for four decades and three generations.

SC refuses PIL seeking to scrap TDS system

The PIL challenged the TDS framework under the Income Tax Act, which mandates the deduction of tax at the time of payment by the payer and its deposit with the income tax department

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: The Supreme Court Friday refused to examine a PIL seeking scrapping of tax deducted at source (TDS) framework under the Income Tax Act and said it was levied everywhere in the world.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said TDS was levied almost everywhere in the world, and moreover, there were judgements in support of it.



The PIL challenged the TDS framework under the Income Tax Act, which mandates the deduction of tax at the time of payment by the payer and its deposit with the income tax department.

The deducted amount is adjusted against the payee's tax liability. "Sorry we will not entertain it... It is very badly drafted. However, you can move the Delhi High Court,"

said the bench. Advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, who filed the PIL in his personal capacity through advocate Ashwani Dubey, said the TDS system needed to be scrapped.

The CJI, however, said there could be some important issues related to IT Rules and it could be filed in the Delhi High Court. The bench, in its order, did not make any observations on the case's merits or demerits and left it to the high court to decide it afresh when the plea was filed. The plea sought to scrap the TDS system calling it "arbitrary and irrational" and violative of various fundamental rights, including equality and made the Centre, Ministry of Law and Justice, Law Commission of India, and NITI Aayog as parties.

It sought a direction to "declare the TDS system manifestly arbitrary, irrational and against Articles 14 (right to equality), 19 (right to practice profession) and 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of the Constitution, hence void and inoperative".

The plea further sought directions to the NITI Aayog to consider contentions raised in the plea and suggest necessary changes in TDS system.

It said the law commission should examine the legality of the TDS system and prepare a report within three months.



Preparations underway ahead of the inauguration of 38th National Games, in Dehradun, Uttarakhand

PTI PHOTO

UPSC EXAM APPLICATION

Submission of age, quota-related papers mandatory

The move comes in the backdrop of the controversy involving former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who was accused of cheating, wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits to ensure her selection in the government service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: The Centre has made submission of documents in support of age and reservation-related claims mandatory by candidates while applying for the civil services preliminary examinations, according to recently notified rules.

Earlier, such documents were to be uploaded after candidates qualified the preliminary test. The move comes in the backdrop of the controversy involving former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who was accused of cheating, wrongly availing Other Back-

ward Class (OBC) and disability quota benefits to ensure her selection in the government service. She has denied all allegations though.

The civil services examination is conducted annually by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in three stages -- preliminary, mains and interview -- to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

"A candidate who is willing to apply for civil services examination shall be required to apply on-line and submit the requisite information and sup-



porting documents towards various claims, such as date of birth, category (viz. SC/ST/OBC/EWS/PwBD/ex-servicemen), educational qualification and service preference etc. as may be sought by the Commission alongwith the on-

line application form," reads the civil services examination rules-2025 dated January 22.

The failure to provide the required information/documents along with the registration and online application form will entail cancellation of

candidature for the examination, it said.

The civil services preliminary examination 2025 will be held May 25, a notice issued by the UPSC said.

"The number of vacancies to be filled through the examination is expected to be approximately 979 which include 38 vacancies reserved for persons with benchmark disability category, i.e. 12 vacancies for candidates of (a) blindness and low vision; 7 vacancies for (b) deaf and hard of hearing; 10 vacancies for (c) locomotor disability including cerebral palsy, leprosy cured, dwarfism, acid attack victims

and muscular dystrophy; and 9 vacancies for (e) multiple disabilities from amongst persons under clauses (a) to (c) including deaf-blindness," it said. Reservation will be made for candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, the Economically Weaker Sections and persons with benchmark disability in respect of vacancies as may be fixed by the government, the notice said.

Candidates are required to apply online by using the website http://upsconline.gov.in. The online applications can be filled up to February 11, 2025 till 6 pm, it said.

of the day quote

Uttar Pradesh would become a \$1 trillion economy in the next four years and was moving towards becoming a zero-poverty state

Delhi Assembly elections are local elections. In the last Lok Sabha elections, we were fighting an ideological battle as part of national politics

For Indian nationals, whether in the US or elsewhere, if they are overstaying or residing in a country without proper documentation, we will bring them back

POST OF THE DAY

Our VIP politicians travel alone when in Davos, but when they are in our own country, they need a cavalcade for their personal security! Isn't it ironic that they feel safer in a foreign country, and not in the country that they govern!

SHORT TAKES

Man booked for raping girl in Una

Una (HP): Una police Friday registered a case of rape against a man on a complaint by a 16-year-old girl who has also accused him of harassing her to convert and marry him, officials said. The girl, a Class XI student, also alleged that the man threatened to kill her and her parents, and fired gunshots near their house, police said. In her complaint, the victim said that the accused, Shahid Khan from Amb, was acquainted with her for the past one and a half years and used to call her repeatedly.

Mumbai's taxi fares set to rise

Mumbai: The MMRTA has approved a hike of ₹3 in the basic fare of autorickshaws and black-and-yellow taxis from February 1 in Mumbai and its surrounding metropolitan region, an official said Friday. A Mumbai Metropolitan Region Transport Authority release said the new basic fare for autorickshaws will be ₹26 instead of ₹23, while it will rise to ₹31 from the current ₹28 for black-and-yellow taxis. The fare for blue-and-silver AC cool cabs will start at ₹48 instead of the current ₹40 for the first 1.5 kilometres, the release added.

14 Naxals held

Bijapur: As many as 14 Naxalites, eight of them collectively carrying a cash reward of ₹36 lakh on their heads, were arrested from separate places in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Friday, police said. The cadres, including five women, were apprehended from forests of Tekmetla, Nadpalli and Mallempenta villages under the Usoor police station area of the district, the site of a major encounter January 16, a police official said. A joint team of the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG), the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and its elite unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) were involved in apprehending the Naxals, he said.





We've obviously got a services-based economy. The US does not have that deficit with us so if that's the logic of that position, I think we've got an argument to engage with

ANANT SINGH JOINS GLOBAL ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL

South African Indian-origin filmmaker Anant Singh has been appointed to the Global Arts and Culture Council (GACC), which was inaugurated at the latest session of the World Economic Forum in Davos Wednesday.



of the day quote

We welcome Foreign Secretary Shri Vikram Misri's travel to China for the meeting of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism between China and India



On Sunday, many of my constituents gathered and paid for a screening of the film 'Emergency' in the Harrow Vue cinema. At about 30 or 40 minutes into the screening of the film, masked Khalistani terrorists burst in, threatened members of the audience and forced the screening to end



Chinese officials, along with state-sponsored media and individuals, continue to spread distorted and twisted narratives to malign our efforts and justify their unilateral claims



Trump stuns federal workers

During his presidential election campaign, Trump frequently pledged to slash the size of government and rid it of bureaucrats deemed insufficiently loyal to his political agenda

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 24: US President Donald Trump and his team have acted with stunning speed to begin removing or sidelining hundreds of government workers, while he has also sought to give himself the power to fire hundreds of thousands more.



The Republican president has been in office less than a week but the wrecking ball he has already taken to parts of the US government has sent shock waves through much of America's federal bureaucracy.

At the National Security Council 160 staffers have been sent home. About 20 senior career attorneys at the Justice Department were reassigned.

Government offices focused on workforce diversity are being permanently shuttered, the staff on leave, while a flurry of executive orders overturning Biden administration policy have left many officials uncertain about their futures.

Trump said Tuesday he also plans to fire over 1,000 officials appointed by his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden.

ment about government worker concerns.

During his presidential election campaign Trump frequently pledged to slash the size of government and rid it of bureaucrats deemed insufficiently loyal to his political agenda.

Still, the speed of Trump's swift and coordinated moves targeting workers at a swath of government agencies shocked federal employees in Washington and even public sector unions who had spent months anticipating Trump's arrival.

"A lot of people did not expect him to act with such a broad stroke," said Don Quinn, an employment lawyer who represents federal employees.

- TRUMP MOVES QUICKLY TO REMAKE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY
UNIONS FEAR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF FIRINGS
LAWSUIT SEEKS TO BLOCK SWEEPING CHANGES

their livelihood, people are concerned about their families."

Steve Lenkart, executive director of the National Federation of Federal Employees, faced a similar reaction when he addressed a group of 30 federal employees in a class he was teaching Thursday.

Lenkart pointed to lesser-known agencies, like the TSA, where it usually takes

West Bank violence imperils Gaza ceasefire

The UN rights office raised the alarm over the killing of what it said were mostly unarmed people, calling for an immediate end of the violence and a halt on expanding settlements



REUTERS

London, Jan 24: Israeli operations in the West Bank have killed at least 12 Palestinians since Tuesday and could threaten the newly agreed ceasefire in Gaza, United Nations Human Rights office spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan said Friday.

Hundreds of Jenin residents fled their homes as the military demolished a number of houses on the third day of a major operation in the West Bank city Thursday.

The operation was launched within days of the start of a ceasefire in Gaza that saw the first exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails since a brief truce in November 2023.

Israeli officials said the Jenin operation was aimed at what the military said were Iranian-backed militant groups in the refugee camp adjacent to the city, a major hub for armed Palestinian groups for years.

what it said were mostly unarmed people, calling for an immediate end of the violence and a halt on expanding settlements.

"Our office has verified that at least 12 Palestinians have been killed and 40 injured since Tuesday, most of them reportedly unarmed," Al-Kheetan told a televised briefing.

"We are also concerned by repeated comments from some Israeli officials about plans to expand settlements further still and a fresh breach of international law. We recall again that the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into territories it occupies also amounts to a war crime."

Israel has occupied the West Bank of the Jordan River, which Palestinians want as the core of an independent state, since the 1967 Middle East war. It has built Jewish settlements there that most countries deem illegal. Israel disputes this and cites historical and Biblical ties to the land.

SHORT TAKES

Confirmation hearing for Patel set for Jan 30

Washington: Kash Patel will appear before a US Senate committee January 30 for a confirmation hearing to be the next director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Patel, 44, is the highest-ranking Indian-American nominated by President Donald Trump in his administration.

Ministerial privileges slashed in Sri Lanka

Colombo: The Sri Lankan government has announced stringent new regulations limiting the benefits afforded to its ministers, a move aimed at addressing public concerns over political privilege and accountability.

US arrests 538 illegal immigrants

Washington: The US has arrested 538 illegal immigrant criminals, including a suspected terrorist, and several illegals convicted of sex crimes against minors.

Taliban reject court move to arrest two top officials



The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor Karim Khan announced Thursday he had requested arrest warrants for two top Taliban officials, including the leader Hibatullah Akhundzada

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kabul, Jan 24: The Taliban Friday rejected a court move to arrest two of their top officials for persecuting women, accusing the court of baseless accusations and misbehaviour.

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor Karim Khan announced Thursday he

had requested arrest warrants for two top Taliban officials, including the leader Hibatullah Akhundzada.

Since they took back control of the country in 2021, the Taliban have barred women from jobs, most public spaces and education beyond sixth grade.

A Foreign Ministry statement condemned the ICC request.

The court was making baseless accusations against Afghanistan's leadership at a time of peace in the country and people had "breathed a sigh of relief". The ministry alleged the court had turned a blind eye to decades of war and crimes against humanity committed by foreign forces and their allies.

misbehaviour further destroys the weak credibility of the said structure (ICC) and makes its status and position at the international level completely meaningless," the statement said.

The ministry warned the court against imposing its interpretation of human rights and ignoring the religious and national values of others.

Earlier Friday, an Afghan women's group had hailed the court's move. The Afghan Women's Movement for Justice and Awareness celebrated the ICC decision and called it a "great historical achievement".

"We consider this achievement a symbol of the strength and will of Afghan women and believe this step will start a new chapter of accountability and justice in the country," the group said. An official in the former Western-backed administration said the Taliban leadership was likely to exploit the decision for propaganda purposes by framing it as proof of their strong faith and resilience.

"They may tell their followers that their beliefs are so powerful they have provoked the collective opposition of global powers," Mohammad Halim Fidai said on the X platform.



In this image provided Friday by Sepahnews of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, a missile is launched as a part of the guard's drill from the coast of the Persian Gulf

SNIPPETS

Hamas publishes names of 4 hostages to be released

Tel Aviv: The Hamas militant group has published the names of four hostages it says it will release Saturday as part of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

UN suspends all trips into Houthi-held areas of Yemen

Dubai: The United Nations Friday suspended all travel into areas held by Yemen's Houthi rebels after more of their staff were detained by the rebels.

Thousands of endangered tortoises rescued in Madagascar

Flood waters a metre high engulfed the sanctuary, and the tortoises - many of them mere whippersnappers in the tortoise world at about 25-50 years old - were carried away

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Town, Jan 24: A community in southern Madagascar has pulled together to save thousands of critically endangered tortoises swept away from their sanctuary and left swimming for their lives in floods this month caused by a tropical cyclone.

The 12,000 radiated and spider tortoises that were housed at the Lavavolo Tortoise Centre had been confiscated from illegal wildlife traffickers but faced a new and unexpected ordeal when Cyclone Dikeledi hit the southern part of the In-

dian Ocean island in mid-January. Flood waters a metre high engulfed the sanctuary, and the tortoises - many of them mere whippersnappers in the tortoise world at about 25-50 years old - were carried away.

Sanctuary staff, members of the community and even police officers joined together in a rescue operation, wading through the water with large containers to collect the bewildered tortoises. Some rescuers converted damaged building structures into makeshift rafts for the tortoises to ride on as they moved around to find others.

Hery Razafimamonjiraibe,



the Madagascar director for the Turtle Survival Alliance, which runs the sanctuary, said they were optimistic that they had saved more than 10,000 tortoises, although they still had to do an official count.

The rescuers had recovered around 700 dead tortoises so far, which Razafimamonjiraibe said were trapped by rocks and debris in the floods.

"Fortunately, most of the tortoises were able to float," Razafimamonjiraibe said. "Tortoises are actually very good swimmers," he added. "You should see them."

Most of the tortoises at Lavavolo are radiated tortoises, which are native to Madagascar and the nearby islands of Reunion and Mauritius. They generally grow to about 30 cm in length but are long-lived and can reach 100 years or more

Radiated and spider tortoises are critically endangered in Madagascar because of habitat destruction and poaching

They are eaten, but also illegally trafficked to be sold as pets because of the striking yellow and black markings on their shells

them. More confiscated tortoises arrived later.

Most of the tortoises at Lavavolo are radiated tortoises, which are native to Madagascar and the nearby islands of Reunion and Mauritius. They generally grow to about 30 cm in length but are long-lived and can reach 100 years or more.

British explorer Captain James Cook is believed to have given a radiated tortoise to the Tongan royal family as a gift in 1777. The tortoise reportedly died in 1966 at the age of 188.

Radiated and spider tortoises are critically endangered in Madagascar because of habitat destruction and poaching. They are eaten, but also illegally trafficked to be sold as pets because of the striking yellow and black markings on their shells, Razafimamonjiraibe said.



# Business



**“The kind of talent pipeline we have is not there in many countries. Trust and talent are two very important factors behind global investors looking at India”**  
ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION MINISTER

## SURPRISE MOVE

Italian lender Monte dei Paschi di Siena announced Friday it was launching a 13.3 billion euro (\$13.9 billion) takeover bid for peer Mediobanca in a surprise move that could reshape the country's banking sector. The offer values Mediobanca's shares at 15.99 euros each, a 5 per cent premium to their closing price Thursday



## of the day quote

**A weaker rupee is not a one-size-fits-all solution to boost exports. A strategic, multi-pronged approach is needed to address the root causes of depreciation while mitigating its adverse effects**



ASHWANI KUMAR | PRESIDENT, FIEO

**Credit-to-GDP ratio and bank assets to GDP are the two factors that can lead India's economy to \$30 trillion**



ASHOK CHANDRA | CEO & MD, PNB

**Banks must adapt to rapid changes, modernise core systems, and prioritise compliance and risk measures to ensure resilience amid global challenges**



M NAGARAJU | SECY, DEPT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

## SHORT TAKES

**IndiGo Q3 profit falls 18 per cent**

**New Delhi:** The country's largest airline IndiGo Friday saw its profit after tax slide 18.3 per cent to ₹2,448.8 crore in the three months ended December 2024 due to foreign exchange loss even as revenue jumped on higher capacity and passenger traffic. The carrier, which had a fleet of 437 planes at the end of December, is planning to induct wet leased planes for long range flights and expects the number of grounded aircraft to come down to 40s by the start of next financial year from the current level of 60s. With increase in the number of capacity as well as passengers, the carrier's total income jumped 14.6 per cent to ₹22,992.8 crore in the third quarter of the current financial year. In the year-ago period, the same stood at ₹20,062.3 crore, according to a release.

**Tata acquires 60% stake in Pegatron**

**New Delhi:** Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd (TEPL) Friday announced the acquisition of a controlling 60 per cent stake in Taiwanese contract manufacturer Pegatron's India unit, cementing its position as a key player in the Indian electronics manufacturing sector. The financial details of the transactions were not disclosed. Pegatron India is a subsidiary of Taiwanese Pegatron Corporation, engaged in the provision of contract-based electronics manufacturing services (EMS) to global giants like Apple.

## ₹83K-MARK BREACHED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Gold prices extended the rally for the eighth consecutive session and climbed ₹200 to breach the psychological level of ₹83,000 per 10 grams for the first time in the national capital Friday amid aggressive buying triggered by global market uncertainties.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity rose ₹200 to hit a fresh lifetime high of ₹83,100 per 10 grams.

## Patanjali Foods recalls 4 tonnes of red chilli powder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Patanjali Foods Ltd has recalled 4 tonnes of red chilli powder from markets following the direction from food regulator FSSAI.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) asked Patanjali Foods to recall a specified batch of packed red chilli powder due to non-conformity with food safety norms.

"Patanjali Foods has recalled small batch of 4 tonnes of 'Red Chilli Powder' (200 gram pack)," the company's CEO Sanjeev Asthana said in a statement.

The product samples when tested were found not conforming to the maximum permitted limit of pesticides residue. The FSSAI sets Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides residue for various food items including red chilli powder, he said.



In line with specified regulatory norms, Asthana said the company has taken immediate steps to inform its distribution channel partners and also released advertisements to reach out to the consumers who have purchased the product.

He urged customers to return the product to the place of purchase and claim full refund.

The value and volume of the recall product is very small, Asthana said.

The company is undertaking assessment of its agricultural produce suppliers and taking measures to have stringent quality control processes for procurement of agricultural produce and to ensure full compliance with the FSSAI regulations, he added.

The company stands committed to maintain the highest quality standards in all its products and ensuring a fully compliant supply chain, Asthana said.

# Gold sees no end to dazzling show

It had closed at ₹82,900 per 10 grams Thursday.

Gold extended gains Friday, with spot gold in the domestic market hitting fresh all-time highs, Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HD-FC Securities, said.

The current bullish momentum in gold is driven by uncertainty surrounding the potential US tariffs plan and other policies from President Donald Trump, which has led to a recent surge in safe-haven buying, Gandhi added.

The yellow metal of 99.5 per



**Bullish momentum in gold driven by uncertainty surrounding the potential US tariffs plan and other policies of Trump, leading to a surge in safe-haven buying**

cent purity also appreciated by ₹200 to hit a record high of ₹82,700 per 10 grams from the previous close of ₹82,500 per 10 grams.

Additionally, silver climbed ₹500 to ₹94,000 per kg Friday.

The white metal finished at ₹93,500 per kg in the last trading session.

On the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery climbed ₹334 or 0.42 per cent to ₹79,960 per 10 grams, in the futures

trade. The yellow metal had jumped ₹424 or 0.53 per cent to trade near a record high of ₹80,050 per 10 grams in the intraday.

Prices in MCX are near record high as Trump trade policies and tariff plans created an uncertain environment in the market, which may boost safe-haven demand, Deveya Gagani, Research Analyst-Commodities, Axis Securities, said.

The precious metal on the futures index had hit a record high of ₹80,282 per 10 grams October 30, 2024.

## ₹ rises 22p to close at 86.22 against \$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 24:** Rupee appreciated 22 paise to close at 86.22 against the US dollar Friday, as a decline in the US dollar index supported investor sentiments.

Forex traders said weak crude oil prices also boosted the local unit, while sustained foreign fund outflows weighed on the local unit.

Traders further noted that the upcoming Union Budget will play a crucial role in shaping market sentiment and the rupee's trajectory.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a strong note at 86.31 against the greenback. During the day, the local unit touched an intraday high of 86.16 and a low of 86.36.

It finally closed at 86.22, rising 22 paise against the US dollar from previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee declined 9 paise to settle at 86.44 against the US dollar.

# Indices snap 2-day rally

**Earnings worries yank shares to third week of losses**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 24:** Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close with losses in a volatile session Friday, snapping their two-day winning streak as investors pared exposure to realty, oil & gas and healthcare stocks amid a mixed trend in global markets.

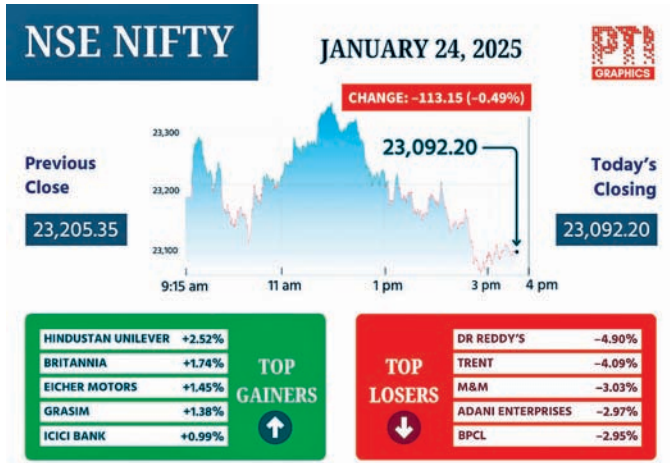
Unabated foreign fund outflows also dented investor sentiment.

After swinging between gains and losses, the 30-share BSE benchmark dropped 329.92 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at 76,190.46. During the day, it slumped 428.63 points or 0.56 per cent to 76,091.75.

The NSE Nifty declined 113.15 points or 0.49 per cent to 23,092.20.

On a weekly basis, the BSE index declined 428.87 points or 0.55 per cent, and the Nifty dipped 111 points or 0.47 per cent.

Markets ended weak in volatile trade amid selling in auto, oil & gas and realty shares. A sharp appreciation in the rupee against the dollar limited the fall, but the undertone contin-



ues to remain cautious with a weak bias. Investors are likely to maintain caution ahead of the upcoming Union Budget announcement, Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports and Bajaj Finserv were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, Hindustan Unilever, Tech Mahindra, Nestle, Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank were among the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge dropped 2.23 per cent, and the midcap index declined 1.60 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices,

**Investors in India are yet to find a silver lining with regard to the ongoing earnings season, with many analysts calling it a disappointing third quarter**

realty tanked 2.50 per cent, oil & gas went lower by 2.30 per cent, industrials (2.22 per cent), energy (1.95 per cent), capital goods (1.89 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.79 per cent) and auto (1.69 per cent).

Teck and BSE Focused IT were the gainers.

The market is haywire, with sentiment so weak that even re-

# Forex kitty tumbles to \$623.9bn



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 24:** India's forex reserves dropped by \$1.88 billion to \$623.983 billion in the week ended January 17, the RBI said Friday.

Earlier, the overall kitty declined by \$8.714 billion to \$625.871 billion in the week ended January 10, the Reserve Bank

of India said.

The reserves have been on a declining trend for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee.

The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in end-September. For the week ended Janu-

ary 17, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$2.878 billion to \$533.133 billion, the data released Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by \$1.063 million to \$68.947 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$01 million to \$17.782 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was down by \$74 million at \$4.122 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

# Amul cuts milk prices for 1-litre packs by ₹1



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets dairy products under the Amul brand, has reduced milk prices by ₹1 per litre across India.

However, the reduction in prices is only for one-litre packs. "We have reduced the prices

of one-litre packs by ₹1 per litre across India," GCMMF managing director Jayen Mehta told PTI. This is to encourage consumers to buy larger packs of milk and get incentive for the same, he said. In Delhi, the rate of Amul Gold milk has been reduced to ₹67 from ₹68 per litre while price of Amul Taaza will now be ₹55 from ₹56 per litre earlier.

GCMMF's turnover increased 8 per cent to ₹59,445 crore in the 2023-24 financial year.

Mehta had earlier said that the cooperative is expecting double-digit growth in revenue during this fiscal on strong demand.

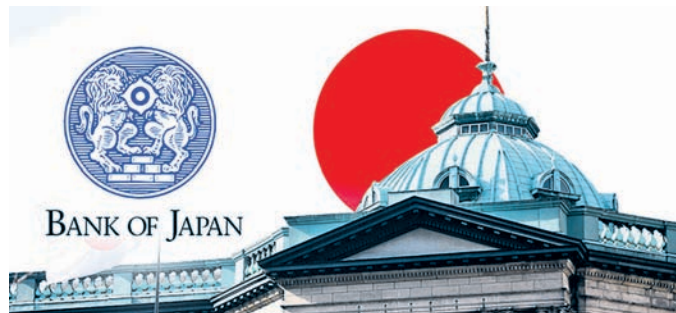
# Bank of Japan ups interest rates to 17-yr high

REUTERS

**Tokyo, Jan 24:** The Bank of Japan raised interest rates Friday to their highest since the 2008 global financial crisis and revised up its inflation forecasts, underscoring its confidence that rising wages will keep inflation stable around its 2 per cent target.

The decision marks the BOJ's first rate hike since July last year and comes days after the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, who is likely to keep global policymakers vigilant ahead of potential repercussions from threatened higher tariffs.

BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda said the central bank will keep raising interest rates as wage and price increases broaden, adding that there was scope to push up borrowing costs further before they reach levels



deemed neutral to the economy.

But he offered few clues on the timing and pace of future rate hikes, saying the decision will be based on how soon Japan will see trend inflation sustainably hit the BOJ's target.

"We don't have any preset idea. We'll make a decision at each policy meeting by looking at economic and price developments as well as risks," he told a press conference after the

policy decision.

At its two-day meeting concluding Friday, the BOJ raised its short-term policy rate from 0.25 per cent to 0.5 per cent - a level Japan has not seen in 17 years. It was made in an 8-1 vote with board member Toyooki Nakamura dissenting.

The widely expected move marks another step Japan is taking away from the deflation and stagnant economic growth that dogged the coun-

- BOJ raises short-term policy rate 25 bps to 0.5% from 0.25%
- Board raises price forecasts, flags brightening wage outlook
- BOJ sees price risks skewed to upside, says markets stable
- Ueda says rates still below neutral, signals more hikes
- US growth solid, markets stable but Trump risk looms

try for decades.

The likelihood of achieving the BOJ's outlook has been rising, with many firms saying they will continue to raise wages steadily in this year's annual wage negotiations, the central bank said in a statement announcing the decision.

The BOJ made no change to its guidance on future policy, saying that it will continue to raise interest rates if its economic and price

forecasts are realised.

But it removed a phrase stressing the need to scrutinise risks surrounding overseas economies and markets, underscoring its conviction that solid US growth will underpin Japan's economy - at least for now. Various data shows the US economy is in firm shape. Markets have been stable as the broad direction of Trump's policies become clearer, Ueda said.

The BOJ's path is bound with uncertainty, however, with trade uncertainties and Trump calling for further rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve and similar action from central banks around the world.

There's very high uncertainty on the scale of Trump's expected tariff hikes, Ueda said. "Once there is more clarity, we will take that into our forecasts and reflect them in deciding policy."

The yen rose as much as 0.8 per cent to 154.845 per dollar following the policy decision, but pared gains after Ueda's news conference. The two-year JGB yield briefly rose to 0.725 per cent, a level last seen in October 2008.

Markets were pricing in one more 25-basis-point rate hike by the end of this year, unchanged from before Ueda's comments. Their logic remains the same. They are still far away from neutral, so it's natural to make an adjustment, said Naka Matsuzawa, chief macro strategist at Nomura Securities in Tokyo.

Unless the BOJ either changes the logic of rate hikes, or even raises the neutral point, which they have been mulling - about 1 per cent - there's not going to be much room for the market to price in further hikes in the future.

# OLA DENIES OS BASED PRICING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Ride-hailing firm Ola Friday clarified that it follows a homogenous pricing structure and does not differentiate pricing based on users' mobile operating systems (OS) for identical rides.

In a statement, an Ola consumer spokesperson said the company has communicated this to the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), which had earlier issued a notice to the company.

"We have a homogenous pricing structure for all our customers and we do not differentiate based on the operating system of the user's cellphone for identical rides," the spokesperson said.

The company added that it will work with the CCPA to clear any misunderstandings.



# Djoko quits in semis

Novak Djokovic's bid for the record 11th Australian Open took a major blow as the Serbian great retired with injury

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Jan 24: Spectators booed an injured Novak Djokovic as he left the court in Rod Laver Arena after quitting one set into his Australian Open semifinal against Alexander Zverev Friday.

Dealing with a what he said was a torn muscle, Djokovic lost the opener 7-6 (5) when he put a forehand volley into the net, then began shaking his head and immediately walked over to shake Zverev's hand. The 37-year-old Djokovic packed up his equipment and walked off toward the locker room, pausing to respond to the jeers by giving two thumbs-up.

At his news conference, Djokovic said the pain in his taped left leg was "getting worse and worse." He hurt it during his quarterfinal victory over Carlos Alcaraz Tuesday night.

He was bidding for an 11th championship at the Australian Open and record 25th Grand Slam title overall.

But this is the second time in the past four major tournaments he was unable to finish because of an injury: He withdrew from last year's French Open before the quarterfinals because he tore the meniscus in his right knee during a match.

Djokovic underwent surgery in Paris and, less than



I knew, even if I won the first set, it was going to be a huge uphill battle for me  
NOVAK DJOKOVIC | SERBIAN TENNIS PLAYER

two months later, reached the final at Wimbledon, then won a gold medal for Serbia at the Paris Olympics.

The No 2-seeded Zverev reached his first title match at Melbourne Park and on Sunday will face the winner of Friday's second semifinal between No 1 Jannik Sinner of Italy, the defending champion, and No 21 Ben Shelton of the United States.

Zverev, a 27-year-old German, is a two-time runner-up at other major tournaments, losing finals in five sets at the 2020 U.S. Open and 2024 French Open.

"My goal is still to compete

## AUSTRALIAN OPEN

with the big guys and to compete for these kind of tournaments and try to win them," Zverev said.

"For that, I need to get better. I need to improve on the court. I need to improve physically."

During his on-court interview, Zverev pleaded with the fans not to give Djokovic a hard time. "I know that everybody paid for tickets and everybody

wants to see hopefully a great five-set match," he said. "But you've got to understand — Novak Djokovic is somebody that has given this sport, for the past 20 years, absolutely everything of his life."

The only set of Djokovic vs. Zverev lasted 1 hour, 21 minutes and included 19 points that lasted nine strokes or more apiece. The first four games alone last-

ed 31 minutes, slowed both by the lengthy baseline exchanges and Djokovic's deliberate pacing between points, taking the 25-second serve clock down to — and occasionally slightly beyond — the full allotment.

The match was grueling — and would have been even without dealing with a leg problem that initially became an issue late in the first set against Alcaraz.

"I didn't hit the ball (from after the) Alcaraz match until like an hour before today's match," Djokovic said.

"I did everything I possibly can to basically manage the muscle tear that I had. Medications and, I guess, the (tape) and the physio work helped to some extent today," he added.

"But towards the end of that first set, I just started feeling more and more pain and it was too much for me to handle. Unfortunate ending, but I tried."

Zverev said he could sense "some dents" on the other side of the net in the tiebreaker and noticed that Djokovic was struggling "maybe a bit more."

Two years ago at Melbourne Park, Djokovic hurt his left hamstring but still managed to depart with the trophy. Against Alcaraz, he was down a set against someone who is 16 years his junior but won.

# Sports Minister felicitates Indian PD cricket team



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 24: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Friday felicitated the Indian cricket team for its historic victory in the Physically Disabled Champions Trophy in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

India defeated England by 79 runs in a thrilling final at the FTZ Cricket Grounds, Katunayake Tuesday.

If you are a 'divyang' person, it doesn't mean you cannot make the nation proud. Your victory is a testament to that, Mandaviya said in a statement.

The passion shown by the Indian PD Cricket Team, from the rigorous selection process to their performance in Sri Lanka, highlights your immense resolve. Winning five out of six matches, including victories over England, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, is no small feat, he added.

The selection of the Indian team took place in Udaipur, where over 450 cricketers from 28 states participated in the Nationals.

From this pool, 56 players were chosen for the Challenger Trophy in Jaipur, and 17 were finally selected to represent India.

Reflecting on the achievements of specially-abled athletes, Mandaviya said, "Our 'divyang' athletes are giving us many reasons to be proud and pushing us to increase our support for them. The government stands with you, and you must use your success to inspire more youth across various platforms."

The event was attended by the entire team, coaches, DCCI General Secretary Ravikant Chauhan, Svyam Founder-Chairman Sminu Jindal, and Sports Ministry officials at the Sports Authority of India.

## SHORT TAKES

### GM Iniyam wins title in Malaysia

New Delhi: Indian Grandmaster Iniyam Panneerselvam clinched the 9th Johor International Open chess tournament title in Malaysia with a dominating performance. The 22-year-old from Erode in Tamil Nadu accumulated 8.5 points in nine games. He finished 1.5 points ahead of his nearest rival, winning against four International Masters and one Grandmaster. The nine-round tournament, which ended Thursday, had 84 participants from eight countries, out of which 24 were titled players. In fact, at the end of the penultimate round where he beat Indonesian IM Nayaka Budhidharma, Iniyam had already secured the title as he was 1.5 points ahead in the points table. Iniyam beat Vietnamese GM Nguyen Van Huy in the final round in an impressive performance. Indian IM VS Raahul and Chinese IM Li Bo finished second and third respectively.

### Anush Agarwalla bids farewell to Manni

New Delhi: India's Asian Games gold-winning rider Anush Agarwalla Friday announced the end of a seven-year-old successful partnership with his horse Manni which 'retires' from competitive sport. Agarwalla, who won a gold medal in the dressage team event and a bronze in the individual event at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023, bid an emotional farewell to his equine partner. He said Manni will "enter retirement" and will no longer compete. The 19-year-old Manni played a key role in Agarwalla's rise in the equestrian world. From competing in prestigious Grand Prix events to gaining international recognition, Manni was crucial in shaping Agarwalla's career.

### Barcelona extends contract of Araújo

Barcelona: Barcelona has extended the contract of Uruguay central defender Ronald Araújo for six more seasons, ending speculation about a possible move to Juventus. The club said Thursday it reached an agreement with the player to keep him until June 2031. The 25-year-old defender has been with Barcelona since 2018, first with the club's "B" squad and then full-time with the main squad beginning in the 2020-21 season. Araújo has 154 appearances with Barcelona's first team, with eight goals and six assists.

# India keep an eye on Shami's fitness

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 24: Unruffled by the lingering fitness concerns surrounding Mohammed Shami, the well-oiled machine that is India's T20 team will be eyeing an encore of its opening game performance against a stunned England in the second game of a five-match series, here Saturday.

India lead the rubber 1-0 after a facile seven-wicket victory at the Eden Gardens Wednesday. The hosts would certainly want to see Shami in action but his inclusion in the eleven, as things stand now, will depend on further evaluation of his fitness.

The 34-year-old was expected to feature in the first game and he was actively involved in the nets too, but his comeback was postponed possibly because the management wanted to take a deeper look at his readiness.

However, India did not miss Shami much in Kolkata where pacer Arshdeep Singh, with the new ball, and spinner Varun



Chakravarthy, in the middle phase, wrecked England, producing impressive spells.

### The Chepauk spin

The Eden pitch had enough help for both quicks and their slower colleagues but the corresponding 22-yard trampoline here could offer more assistance to the spinners, as it often has been the case in the past.

India would not be complaining whatever be the nature of the track. The home side

boasts of quality and variety in a line-up consisting Varun, vice-captain Axar Patel and Ravi Bishnoi.

From England's perspective, they would require much better contributions from experienced spinners Adil Rashid and Liam Livingstone to challenge the Indians. Apart from pacer Jofra Archer, none of the other English bowlers could survive the onslaught of Abhishek Sharma and the mini cameo of Sanju Samson in the first match.

### Sanju-Abhishek pair on a roll

Since coming together in the T20s last year, Samson and Abhishek have had considerable success, often giving India a flying start.

The desired double-barrel firing has been occasional, but at least one of them has produced the goods rather consistently.

In Kolkata, Abhishek hurt England with a brutal knock, striking at over 230.

Samson has three hundreds in the last six innings, and it would not be unrealistic to imagine these two as the first-choice openers once India hit the road to next year's T20 World Cup at home.

They also offer that rare right-hand-left-hand combination at the top. Here too, the Indian openers will have to give their side a solid start considering the tricky nature of the pitch.

England too will hope for a fiery start from their openers to clinch early momentum, as Phil Salt and Ben Duckett jointly made just four runs off seven balls.

## India-England Barabati ODI: Ticket updates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 24: The Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) has announced the dates for the online and offline sale of tickets for the ODI match between India and England at Barabati Stadium in Cuttack February 9 (Sunday).

The OCA will sell around 4,000 tickets online February 2. The redemption of online tickets will be done from February 7 to 9, said the OCA.

The redemption centres for online tickets will be opened at Cambridge School in Cuttack and KIIT in Bhubaneswar. The redemption of the online tickets will be done from 10 am to 4 pm on February 7 and 8, and from 7 am to 12 noon on February 9.

The tickets will be sold from 10 am to 6 pm, said the OCA. According to the cricket association, the tickets will be sold to the general public at the counters of Barabati Stadium from 9 am to 6 pm, February 5 and 6.

# Mandhana, Deepti in Team of the Year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Jan 24: Star batter Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepti Sharma were named in the ICC women's ODI Team of the Year 2024 Friday but none of their male counterparts found a place in the men's side that was dominated by Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The women's all-star team has three players from England, two Australians, two South Africans and one each from Sri Lanka and West Indies, besides the two Indians. South African batter Laura Wolvaardt, who scored 697 runs in 12 matches in 2024, was named captain of the ICC team.

The men were, however, absent from the ICC XI and that can be attributed to lack of ODI engagements for the country last year. India played only three ODIs -- an away series against Sri Lanka --, losing two of them while the third one ended in a tie.

The 28-year-old Mandhana accumulated 747 runs in 13 matches to be the highest run-scorer in women's ODIs

## ICC ODI



Smriti Mandhana

in 2024. She is also in the running for the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award.

In the home series against South Africa, Mandhana was in sublime form, beginning with back-to-back centuries in the first two ODIs.

She narrowly missed a third



Deepti Sharma

consecutive ton, falling for 90, though her remarkable tally of 343 runs in the series earned her the Player-of-the-Series award.

Mandhana had a shaky start in the first two ODIs against New Zealand in October, but ended the series on a high note

with a brilliant century in the final match. With this hundred, Mandhana became the most prolific century-maker for India in the Women's 50-over format.

Deepti scored 186 runs and took 24 wickets in 13 matches in a fine all-round show in 2024.

## RANJI TROPHY

### Rohit falls for 28 in second essay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 24: He pulled Umar Nazir for a trademark six, effortlessly lofted Auqib Nabi and Yudhvir Singh for a couple of more hits over the ropes to give a glimpse of his absolute best. But eventually, a fifty on Ranji comeback was not meant to be for India captain Rohit Sharma who fell for 28 here Friday.

Playing his first game for Mumbai in domestic red-ball cricket in nearly a decade, Rohit's first day on the field was a disaster with the 37-year-old falling for a 19-ball 3 in the opening hour of the Ranji Trophy clash against Jammu Kashmir.

But on Friday, Rohit gave a far better account of himself to notch up a fluent 28, his best in first-class cricket since a 52 in the second innings of the Bengaluru Test against New Zealand last year.

It indeed has been that long for Rohit, who has since scored 0, 8, 18, 11, 3, 6, 3 and 9 in subsequent outings against New



Zealand and Australia.

Back then in mid-October, India were cemented on top of the World Test Championship points table and the house was in complete order for the national side. But it all came crumbling down following defeats to New Zealand and Australia which forced Indian superstars to play domestic cricket.

On Friday, he looked for a big one but it wasn't to happen. Rohit's knock of 28 was mixed with hits and misses in the initial stages, which all began with a tough dropped chance by Nazir in the fourth over when he could not grab a return catch on his follow through.