



Navigating the shift

On completing 30 years in showbiz industry, actor Shilpa Shetty shares how the audience was different when she started her career

LEISURE | P2



Israel pounds Gaza

Israeli forces bombard cities, towns and refugee camps across Gaza, killing dozens

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Xiaomi's first EV

Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi unveils its first electric vehicle, dubbed the SU7

BUSINESS | P11



Rohit & Co humbled

India suffer a disappointing loss against South Africa in the first Test going down by an innings and 32 runs at Centurion

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BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY DECEMBER 29 | 2023

12 PAGES | ₹5.00

SHORT TAKES

Boat capsizes in Koraput; 1 dead

Koraput: At least one person drowned and four others went missing after a country boat in which they were travelling capsized in Patali river near Tansing village under Padua police limits here, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Lal Mani Sisa, 50, while the missing were Sasirekha Arlab, 35, Nabina Arlab, 14, Puspanjali Arlab, 5, and Kranti Sisa, 8, all residents of Tansing. "They were returning to their village in the boat after attending a function at Badela village when the mishap took place," said Nandapur SDPO Sanjay Mahapatra.

Acid attack leaves 3 injured

Phulbani: Three people, including a father-son duo, were injured in an acid attack in the town here in Kandhamal district, Thursday. The victims were identified as Chandra Mohanty, Suraj Mohanty and Rakesh Mishra, all hailing from Phulbani town. The incident took place when the trio was having a chat at a place near Masterpada Square. The accused, Pramod Sahu, reached the spot and suddenly threw acid on them over past enmity, a police officer said.

MP road mishap toll rises to 13

Guna (MP): The death toll in the accident involving a private bus which caught fire after a collision with a dumper truck in Madhya Pradesh's Guna district Wednesday rose to 13, Thursday. The bus did not have the permit to operate on the route nor did it possess the fitness certificate, and its owner had applied for getting its registration cancelled some time ago, an official said. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced the suspension of a local transport official and the chief medical officer of Guna for alleged negligence, and also ordered transfers of state transport commissioner Sanjay Kumar Jha, district collector Tarun Rathi and superintendent of police Vijay Khatri.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



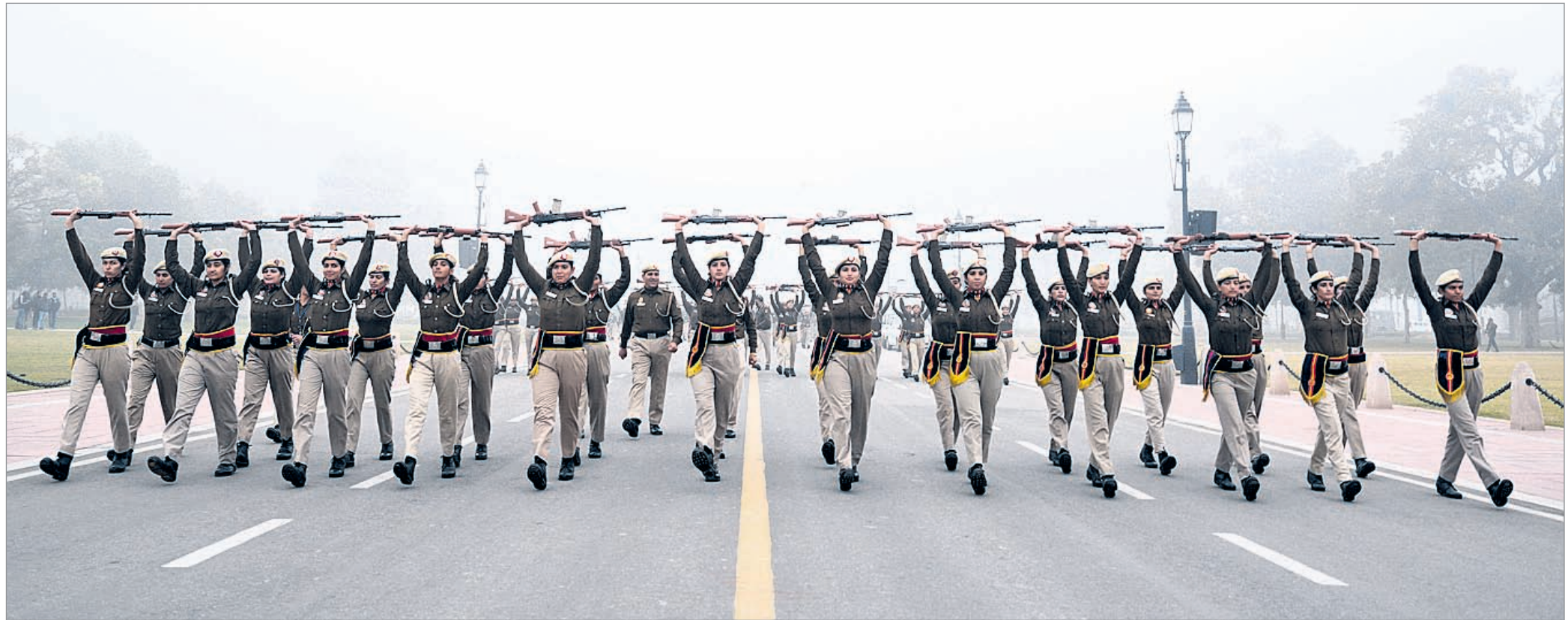
MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIAION
SENSEX	72410.38 ↑ 371.95
NIFTY	21778.70 ↑ 123.90
DOLLAR	83.19 ↓ ₹0.19
EURO	92.50 ↑ ₹0.39
GOLD	₹63,430 ↓ ₹248
SILVER	₹75,187 ↓ ₹460

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	28.8°C	27.0°C
Min Temp	17.0°C	16.2°C
Humidity	89%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY



WARMING UP: Delhi Police personnel take part in rehearsal for the Republic Day 2024 celebrations during a cold and foggy morning in New Delhi, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Escape from gallows 2 held after twin encounters

QATAR COURT COMMUTES DEATH SENTENCE OF 8 FORMER INDIAN NAVY PERSONNEL FACING ESPIONAGE CHARGES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: Eight former Indian Navy personnel, counting days for imminent death following the award of capital punishment by a court in Qatar, heaved a sigh of relief, Thursday, after an appellate court in the Gulf Sheikdom commuted their death sentence, in what is being termed as a huge diplomatic win for India. "We have noted the verdict today of the Court of Appeal of Qatar in the Dahra Global case, in which the sentences have been reduced," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement Thursday.

The ministry, however, did not specify what the 'reduced' punishment was and said a detailed judgment was awaited.

"Due to the confidential and sensitive nature of proceedings of this case, it would not be appropriate to make any further comment at this juncture," the ministry said and added that it was in close touch with the legal team as well as the family members to decide on the next steps. The appellate court verdict is also seen as a big diplomatic win for India as it comes weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, on the sidelines of the COP28 Summit in Dubai.

After the meeting December 1, Modi said they discussed the well-being of the Indian community in Qatar. The Indian nationals, who



- The Indian nationals, who were working with Doha-based AI Dahra Global Technologies, were taken into custody in August 2022 in an alleged espionage case
- While the charges against them were not made public by Qatari authorities, they were sentenced to death by Qatar's Court of First Instance in October this year

Appeal in Qatar against the death sentence last month.

"Our Ambassador to Qatar and other officials were present in the Court of Appeal today, along with the family members. We have stood by them since the beginning of the matter and we will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance. We will also continue to take up the matter with the Qatari authorities," the ministry statement said.

The court verdict was welcomed by political parties, former diplomats and security experts, among others.

"The Indian National Congress shares its immediate relief along with the entire nation that the Court of Appeals in Qatar has decided not to go ahead with the death penalty.. While full details are awaited, we express the hope that even the jail sentence that has replaced the death penalty will be set aside and the officers will be set free," Congress' Jairam Ramesh said on X.

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Puri, Dec 28: Breaking protracted silence, the guns of Odisha Police started booming again Thursday when the sleuths incapacitated two dreaded criminals during exchanges of fire at Puri and Bhubaneswar, respectively, before taking them into custody.

In the first incident, Raghu Biswal sustained a bullet injury in the encounter with a team of Mancheswar police and was admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack for treatment.

According to Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh, acting on information that two suspected anti-social elements were roaming near Balyatra Ground in a bike,

a team of Mancheswar police rushed to the spot at about 3am. He said the police team detected two persons on a bike. "When it approached them to verify their identities, they tried to escape towards Nandankanan but police chased them. One of them opened fire at the police team near Balyatra Ground," Singh said. The DCP pointed out that police retaliated in self-defence. "Biswal sustained bullet injuries in his leg while another accused, Punia Nayak, managed to flee the spot," the DCP said, adding that efforts are on to trace Nayak.

At least 10 cases, including of robbery and loot, extortion and dacoity, are pending against Biswal in several police stations in Bhubaneswar.

In the second incident, Puri po-

lice took Kalu Bhol into custody after the dreaded criminal suffered injuries in an encounter with cops under Satyabadi police limits in the Pilgrim City.

Puri Additional Superintendent of Police Vishnu Prasad Pati said Kalu is involved in 18 criminal cases under Puri Sadar, Chandanpur and Satyabadi police limits and was wanted by police in a number of cases.

Pati said police intercepted Kalu at Sagar Melan field near Suanda village. "When asked to surrender, Kalu opened fire at police. In retaliation, cops too opened fire at him. He suffered injuries," Pati said. A gun was recovered from his possession, Pati said, adding that the dreaded criminal has been admitted to SCBMCH for treatment under police custody.

INDIA TARGETING JOURNOS WITH SPYWARE: AMNESTY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 28: India's government has recently targeted high-profile journalists with Pegasus spyware, Amnesty International and The Washington Post said in a joint investigation published, Thursday.

Created by Israeli firm NSO Group and sold to governments around the world, Pegasus software can be used to access a phone's messages and emails, peruse photos, eavesdrop on calls, track locations and even film the owner with the camera. Amnesty said journalists Siddharth Varadarajan of The Wire and Anand Mangnole of The Organized Crime and Corruption

Reporting Project had been targeted with the spyware on their iPhones, with the latest identified case occurring in October. "Our latest findings show that increasingly, journalists in India face the threat of unlawful surveillance simply for doing their jobs, alongside other tools of repression including imprisonment under draconian laws, smear campaigns, harassment, and intimidation," said Donncha O Cearbhaill, Head of Amnesty International's Security Lab.

India's government did not immediately respond, but it denied similar accusations in 2021 that it used Pegasus spyware to surveil political opponents, activists and journalists.

'Captain' Vijayakanth passes away at 71



AGENCIES

Chennai, Dec 28: DMDK founder and yesteryear Tamil actor Vijayakanth - popular as 'Captain' after he performed the role of an IFS officer in the 1991 blockbuster 'Captain Prabhakaran' - who sowed the seeds of hope among his supporters on the possibility of a real alternative to the Dravidian majors, the DMK and AIADMK, died here Thursday following illness. He was 71.

Praised as 'Karuppu MGR' (black MGR) by his fans for his generosity, Vijayakanth had been ill and kept a low profile for the past four-five years and his wife Premalatha formally took over the reins of the DMDK December 14 and she was declared the general secretary at a party meet here. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

PM Narendra Modi and Chief Minister MK Stalin were among a string of leaders to condole the death. Swarms of people thronged the headquarters of the DMDK (Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam) here all day to pay homage to their much-loved actor and leader 'Captain'.

The government has announced full state honours for Vijayakanth's funeral. The DMDK said the last rites would be conducted December 29 at 4.45 PM on the premises of the party headquarters and party flags would fly at half mast for 15 days.

MORE: P9

Ukraine's frontline kids yearn for return to classroom

AGENCIES

Sloviansk (Ukraine), Dec 28: Sitting alone in her bedroom, Ukrainian third-grader Arina Herasymova cuts an image of loneliness as she stares at her teacher and classmates on a screen.

"I would like to go to school, to lessons. To play with friends during recess, not sit at home," she said. Herasymova, 8, lives near the frontline of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which is nearing its two-year mark and has forced many local children into online learning, the Reuters reported.

The war has deprived younger students, especially, of the opportunity to start off their schooling like most of their peers elsewhere. First the coronavirus upended Arina's daily schedule,

then came Russia's February 2022 invasion, according to her mother Iryna, 32, who said the once-active child is visibly sad. "I look at her now, and she has completely changed," she

PRICE OF WAR

said. "She doesn't want to do anything." Fighting rages as close as 25 miles (40 kilometres) away from their city, Sloviansk, in the eastern Donetsk region, which is under the regular threat of Russian air strikes.

Arina's teacher reminds her students that lessons are temporarily suspended if an air raid siren blares. Local school director Anatoliy Pohorelov said classes in frontline areas like Sloviansk would remain remote unless better bomb shelters were



Ukrainian third-grader Arina Herasymova attends an online reading class in her bedroom in Sloviansk, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine

built - or until the war ended. In the northeastern Kharkiv region, which borders Russia, officials have begun building heavily fortified underground

schools to allow children to safely return to in-person studies.

"Maybe when Ukraine retakes a major part of its territory, or all of its territory, we'll be able

to talk about mixed or in-person learning," Pohorelov said. "But right now, we don't have that opportunity."

As a result, both students and their parents say the lack of face-to-face interaction has taken a serious toll on the mental and social well-being of children.

"At school and in kindergarten, it was much more fun than online," said third-grader Angelina Bondarenko, 8, who returned to Sloviansk last month for the first time since March 2022.

"At school, I had friends, like Liza, we were two friends. Like twins." Both Angelina and Arina never meet their classmates, only know them from their little images online - an extraordinary situation given that most children forge their first true friendships at school.



GRANT HELPS SERVE X-MAS MEAL TO ELDERLY RESIDENTS

Actor Hugh Grant made a surprise appearance at the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's Christmas Day Lunch event. In photos from the event, Grant can be seen serving lunch to elderly residents in the community as the council gathered people who did not have family to celebrate Christmas with.

CHER FILES FOR HER SON ELIJAH'S CUSTODIANSHIP

Veteran singer Cher has filed for custodian of her son Elijah Blue Allman due to his alleged recent substance abuse issues. As per the documents filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, she is seeking to be the sole conservator of her son's estate, claiming that he is 'substantially unable to manage his financial resources.'



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today you will have to give in to your spouse's demands for improving the environment at home. In your own interest it will be advisable, says Ganesh, to hasten the measures needed to be taken and stay focussed on them as you are the one who is guilty of neglect.

TAURUS

You will be fondly thinking about your close friends, particularly about the ones of the opposite sex. It may suddenly dawn upon you that you are in love, says Ganesh. If per chance, there is a romantic encounter, go ahead and dive fearlessly in the pool of love. It is near certain that the wedding bells will be ringing for you sooner than you think.

GEMINI

Your family members and your friends will have much higher expectations from you today, and trying to fulfill the same will make you irritable. However, you will figure out creative ways to juggle the many demands made upon you and come out on top at the end of it all, says Ganesh.

CANCER

You will tackle with ease, even the most confounding challenges today. You may be the scapegoat, though, fears Ganesh. Beware, or this may shake up and lower your self-confidence. Try to shake off your weaknesses, and you should see yourself obtaining energy and positivity.

LEO

People involved in Sales and Marketing related jobs will attend productive meetings and will make effective presentations. However, delays in journeying are a possibility. It is a good time to recognise your inherent capabilities. You will be able to prove your worth in the next 2-3 days, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

In all likelihood you will indulge in some writing or artistic work, which will bring about wonderful results. As you are passionate about these things, you may convert them into your hobbies. If you are not involved in them as a professional, Ganesh gives you the green signal to enjoy the clout that you wield over others with your sweet words.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will spend time with your family members by putting them above other commitments. There may be plans made to go out for dinner or for a short excursion with them. Ganesh says that the health of a close relative maybe a cause of concern for you today.

SCORPIO

The one thing that we neglect the most about ourselves is health. But today you are unable to do that. Your health needs to be paid enough attention as you may be suffering from ailments. Try to regularise your routine along with healthy food and regular exercise, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

You are all set to groom your skills as a professional. Talking about work, determination and dedication are likely to rule you today. Putting your heart and soul, your work speaks volumes about your efforts. Appreciation, though slow in pace, is on its way to encourage you.

CAPRICORN

You'll be popular today at your workplace. Your honesty and efforts will be recognised, which will be fulfilling for you. But, tomorrow will be a different day and times may not be favourable for you. It is, therefore, necessary for you to understand the importance of today and utilise it to the maximum, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

You will go through some heavy mood swings today. And the people who know you well will get shocked and find it difficult to deal with you. Keep your guards on, and don't take uncalculated decisions, advises Ganesh, rather get your current assignments cross the finishing line.

PISCES

Today will be a hectic day for you. Most of your time will be spent in making your relationships on the business as well as the personal front more meaningful. You will likely find yourself attending social events. There is also the possibility that you will attend some religious ritual today.

Shilpa on changing faces of showbiz

Mumbai: On completing 30 years in the showbiz, actress Shilpa Shetty has shared how the audience was different when she started her career, saying that today actors are exposed to the point of being trolled. The actress who began her career with

the 1993 thriller *Baazigar* alongside Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol, said, "When I started out, the audience was different because the exposure was much less for us vis-a-vis the audience. Today, we are exposed to the point of being trolled." The Indian actress also acknowledged the evolving audience and the constant need to 'please' them in today's digital era.



I always believed in my abilities: Tara

Mumbai: Actress Tara Sutaria delved into the significant moments that defined her in 2023. She acknowledged the ups and downs of the past year, emphasising the personal and professional growth she experienced.

While talking to the media, the actress shared insights into the impact of *Apurva* on her career, highlighting the positive feedback she received from industry peers like Arjun Kapoor, Kartik Aaryan, Mukesh Chhabra, and Punet Malhotra. She expressed her gratitude for the recognition, stating that she had been eagerly anticipating such responses for a long time.

Reflecting on self-confidence, she asserted that she always believed in her abilities but needed the right project to showcase her skills. She emphasised that 2023 taught her the significance of perception in the industry and acknowledged the shift in how she is perceived as an actor.

Despite the challenges of being boxed into a certain image, she expressed gratitude for the evolving narrative surrounding her acting prowess. She noted the industry's increasing openness to diverse scripts and narratives, signaling a positive shift in the projects coming her way. She concluded by expressing her excitement about the ongoing conversations in the industry and the prospect of exploring more roles that break conventional molds.

mainstream heroine with *Dhadkan* and has reached the pinnacle of her popularity with iconic songs like 'Chura Ke Dil Mera' and 'Main Aayi Hoon UP Bihar Lootne'. Her fame soared with films like *Big Brother, Life... In A Metro*, and *Phir Milenge*.

Speaking about her latest release, *Sukhee*, she said: "We make a lot of movies and garner love and fan-following because of the characters. But the kind of appreciation I got for *Sukhee* was something I'd not received in all these years."

On the work front, Shilpa will be seen next in *Indian Police Force*.

Snigdha Malviya bags KIIT Nanhi Pari title

THE TEEN FROM UTTAR PRADESH WAS CROWNED IN THE PRESENCE OF HINDI FILM ACTRESSES POONAM DHILLON AND DEEPSHIKHA NAGPAL

BHUBANESWAR: Snigdha Malviya of Uttar Pradesh has won KIIT Nanhi Pari Little Miss India 2023 title here during a glittering show held on the varsity's campus, Thursday.

The event was organized by the KIIT School of Film and Fashion.

Snigdha was crowned in the presence of Hindi film actresses Poonam Dhillon and Deepshikha Nagpal.

As per the benefits, the winner takes home the Swarovski crown and prizes worth Rs 21 lakh, including a cash prize of Rs 3 lakh. Besides, she gets a 100 percent fee waiver at KIIT if she wishes to pursue her higher studies at the university.

Twenty-seven participants between 15 and 17 years old were shortlisted for the semi-final from regional auditions held across the country.

In the grand finale, Chirashree Sagarika of Odisha was crowned the first runner, and Pareenita Das from Assam was adjudged the second runner-up. They received a cash award of Rs 1 lakh and Rs. 50,000, respectively, along with other gifts and substantial fee waivers for their studies at KIIT. Many other titles were decided in the final round. The Miss Rapunzel title was won by Shree Chaturvedi of Bihar, while the Miss Selfie title went to Palak Ray of Telangana. Chirashree Sagarika of Odisha was crowned Miss Active, and Pareenita also bagged the Miss Urvashi title. Prakriti Bhujel from Sikkim was the winner of the Miss Monalisa title, while Shree Satapathy from Odisha won the Miss Photogenic title. The winner of the 2023 title also won the Miss Personality title. Divyanshi Salvi from Rajasthan won the Miss Fashion title. The Miss Cinderella title was won by Vedika Solanki of Madhya Pradesh, while the Miss Wizkid title went to Alisha Sahoo of Karnataka.

Dr Achyuta Samanta, Chief Patron of KIIT Nanhi Pari and founder of KIIT and KISS; Malay Mohapatra, Patron, along with the other guests, crowned the winners.



Snigdha Malviya, Uttar Pradesh (C), with Chirashree Sagarika, Odisha, 1st runner-up (L) and Pareenita Das, Assam, 2nd runner-up (R)

KWANJA CELEBRATION-2023

Musicians, DJ from Mumbai to entertain City revellers today



Press meet of Kwanzaa Celebration 2023

BHUBANESWAR: There is a lot of enthusiasm here among the denizens to bid farewell to 2023 and welcome the New Year. To make it memorable, a colourful cultural and musical show

titled Kwanzaa Celebration 2023 will be held at the Ideo Exhibition Ground, Friday.

Bollywood musicians Jaden and Twin Strings along with DJ Tushar, are set to enthrall the

viewers, said the organisers—Mahipal, Vatsal Vardhan Patangia, Anmol Dash, and Aakash Kumar Singh—at a press meet, adding that over 4,000 people are expected to attend the event.

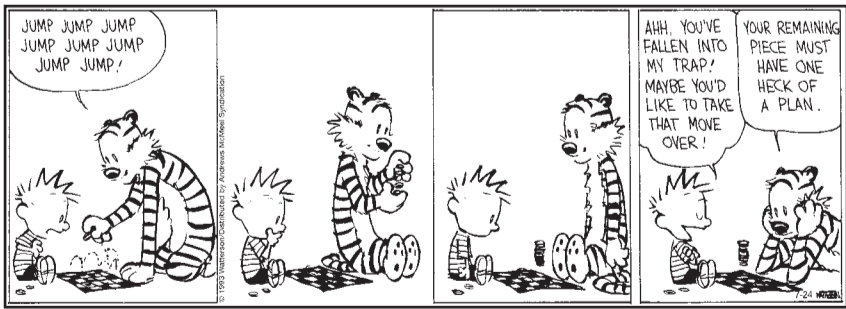
For the uninitiated, Kwanzaa Celebrations were also held in 2021 and 22. Keeping in view the huge success of both editions, it has been decided to organise this event again in Bhubaneswar, according to the event's organisers.

The objective of the event is to empower the youth and showcase the cultural diversity of the country, they further said.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

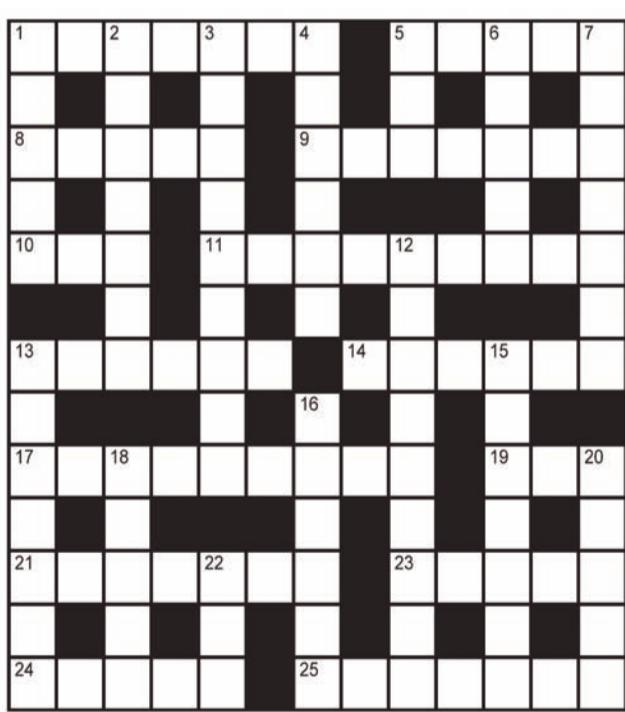


BREVITY



FUN post

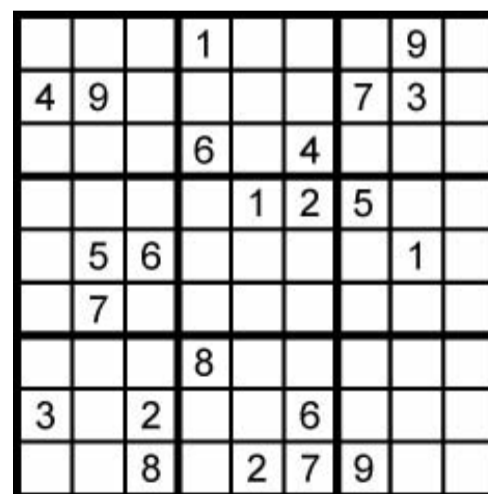
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Banker's modus operandi
 - 5 Kind of spray
 - 8 Echo sounder
 - 9 Vista
 - 10 Parked oneself
 - 11 Annoyed
 - 13 Dictate
 - 14 Measly
 - 17 Believable
 - 19 "O Sole ___"
 - 21 Silky fabric
 - 23 Tether
 - 24 Bring to bear
 - 25 Endure
- Down**
- 1 Hunger strikes
 - 2 Ongoing
 - 3 Mythical being who loved himself
 - 4 Complete
 - 5 Core
 - 6 Angelic
 - 7 Washables
 - 12 Tourist
 - 13 Burst inward
 - 15 Kettledrum
 - 16 Submarines (1-5)
 - 18 Slant
 - 20 Orange yellow colour
 - 22 Kook

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal addresses a gathering at the flagging-off event of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra at Maachhua Bazar in Cuttack, Thursday



NIJUKTI PARBA

Adopt humane approach: CM to young docs

2,473 MEDICAL OFFICERS INDUCTED INTO STATE MEDICAL SERVICE



The CM said healthcare being a priority area of 5T initiative of the state government, young doctors can contribute immensely to the drive

medical and para-medical officers on a large scale. "In the current year alone, we have made recruitments for 3,600 medical officers. In November, nearly 4,000 nursing officers have also joined the state government," he added.

He further mentioned that in order to improve quality of healthcare and achieve desirable patient experience, government hospitals are being converted into 'Ama Hospitals'. "Patient care in all government facilities is completely free of cost," he stated.

It may be mentioned here that in the past six years, eight new medical colleges and two new post graduate institutes have been established in the state. This has resulted in churning out 2,525 MBBS doctors and 856 specialists each year, making Odisha a doctor surplus state.

The Chief Minister also distributed high-quality stethoscopes to each of the newly-recruited medical officers and dental kits to dental surgeons.

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik called upon young doctors to adopt humane approach while attending to patients to create confidence in them.

Along with your professional excellence, your humane approach to patients can create confidence in them," Naveen said while speaking at the orientation programme for 2,473 medical officers, who have been inducted into state medical services, at Kalinga Stadium here Thursday.

Patnaik said with healthcare being a priority area of the 5T transformative initiative of the state government, young doctors

can contribute immensely to the drive. He hoped their inclusion would further strengthen the healthcare delivery system in the state.

"Remember that every pie spent on our salary, or for the building we are working in, is paid by the people of Odisha. We are here to serve them," he said. Of the 2,473 medical officers, 2,392 are MBBS doctors and 81 are dental surgeons. The medical officers have been posted to different districts through transparent merit-based online counselling system.

Welcoming the doctors to the state's healthcare system, Patnaik congratulated their family members and said that along with the successful candidates, their

family members have also made immense sacrifices for your success. The CM said his government is committed to providing universal access to quality healthcare to all. "Our objective is 'Sustha Odisha, Sukhi Odisha'. Our guiding principle to achieve this objective is 'every life is precious'," he added.

In realisation of this goal, the government is on a mission for massive infrastructure development of healthcare institutions. "We are producing eight times more doctors now than we were doing two decades ago. We will come up with more number of medical colleges in a few years from now," he said.

Patnaik said the government is also making recruitments for

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Customised vehicles for patrolling in Similipal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: The state government will roll out 14 customised four-wheelers for patrolling at Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj district, an official said Thursday.

Forest and Environment Minister Pradip Kumar Amat will flag off the vehicles Friday, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Susanta Nanda said in a statement.

Nanda said the customised vehicles will assist in movement of frontline staffs, transportation of camp equipment

and provisions for the staffs as well as carrying out patrolling at night during which wild animals pose a risk to the lives of frontline staffs. The vehicles will also protect the patrolling parties from poachers as two frontline staffs were killed by them in the recent past.

Nanda said the vehicles have been modified with support from state PSU Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC).

The vehicles have been modified to suit the working environment inside the forests and

carry out duty in all conditions, he said, adding it will help frontline staffs traverse steep ghat roads as well as muddy dirt roads during monsoons. The PCCF said the vehicles have been fitted with winches, which would be helpful in rescue operations especially during monsoons, and remote-controlled movable searchlights to see all directions at night. The vehicles will be deployed in the sensitive areas for use by the Similipal Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF), Joint Task Force (JTF) and other frontline staffs on protection duty, he added.

State logs three more Cov cases

Bhubaneswar: The total number of Covid-19 cases in Odisha has risen to eight after three fresh infections were detected, public health director Niranjana Mishra said Thursday. All the eight patients are currently in home isolation, he added. Mishra reassured the public that there is no need to panic as no one has been hospitalised in the state thus far. He said, "All districts have ramped up Covid-19 testing. On Wednesday, a total of 690 samples were tested, with three testing positive." Citing national statistics, Mishra said 92 per cent of Covid patients are in home isolation, and only those with comorbidities are being admitted to hospitals.

ODM Group bags 14th CCCL trophy

Bhubaneswar: The ODM Group has won the 14th Charitable Corporate Cricket League (CCCL) trophy defeating TPCODL by 97 runs. The tournament concluded at Hi-Tech Medical College Ground here December 25 evening. Batting first, the ODM Group scored 199 runs by losing four wickets. Chasing this, TPCODL could score only 102 runs with loss of eight wickets in 10 overs. Bibhab Jena from ODM Group scored 68 runs in only 14 balls with 10 sixes and 2 boundaries and was declared the Player of the Match. We4You organised 14th CCCL with an objective to bring together corporate teams in a spirit of friendly competition, fostering teamwork, sportsmanship and networking among professionals.

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- Gandhi Shilp Bazaar-State Level Mega Handicrafts Exhibition by Gandhi Shilp Bazaar Committee at Nayapalli Durga Puja Ground, 10am to 9pm
- Release of books - 'Gandhi Jayanti' and 'Bhraman Kahani' by Gaurahari Das at Jayadev Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, 5pm
- 90th Foundation Day of Odisha State Museum at Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar, 11:30am
- Kwanja Celebration 2023- Bollywood singers Jaden and Twin Strings at Idco Exhibition ground, 7pm

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to orissapost2011@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

Pandian charges Dharmendra on home turf

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: Continuing his attack on Dharmendra Pradhan, 5T Chairman and BJD leader Kartik Pandian Thursday charged the Union Education Minister with neglecting his birthplace.

During a visit to Angul, Pandian posed three direct questions to Pradhan to drive home his point. He said, "I humbly ask the Union minister what is his contribution to Angul district in spite of being an influential minister at the Centre for a long time? This is because he is a son of the soil and feels proud of the place," he said.

The 5T Chairman said Pradhan, who is the Union Education Minister, took little care to build educational institutions like Central schools, Navodaya Vidyalayas and community colleges in all 30 blocks of the district which could have given children of the area the opportunity to

study in CBSE standard. "Though he has been a minister for so many years, he did little for his region," he charged.

On the contrary, Pandian said, he was able to set up three Central schools, with the efforts of the Chief Minister, as the district Collector of Ganjam. "However, being a Union minister of that department, it is unfortunate that there are only two institutional Central schools in his district. On the other hand, the state government has converted the schools in the Central minister's own panchayat into smart classroom under 5T school transformation scheme," he said.

On Pradhan's accusation that people of Angul were forced to migrate for work, Pandian said the former could have set up skill development centres in all blocks of his area being the Minister for Skill Development. "There are companies like MCL, NTPC and Nalco in this area.



The youth of Angul, Dhenkanal, Sundargarh and other regions would have been able to get good jobs if their skills had been developed. But why did he not establish a skill development centre here," he questioned.

Pandian said the National Highway 55 - from Cuttack to Sambalpur via Angul - has become so dangerous that people are losing lives in accidents every day owing to lack of repairs for

Reviews projects in Angul, Dhenkanal

Bhubaneswar: Acting on the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian Thursday visited Angul and Dhenkanal districts to review the progress of various developmental projects. He reviewed the progress of development work at Ananta Sayan near Sarang. The 5T Chairman also reviewed the progress of some major projects including piped water supply projects to Chhendipada, Talcher, Kaniha, Banarpal, Pallahara, Athmalik & Kishorenagar blocks of Angul district. He also reviewed Pabitra Mohan Setu on Brahmani river at a cost of Rs 64.5 crore, road projects from Sibida to Khadaka Kumbharmati, Pallahara Farm to Naikanpalli, and Dhalgadia Saria road. Later, he also reviewed the progress of several major projects in Dhenkanal district.

pair the roads, why did the Union minister fail to do so.

Justice Sarangi to be J'khand HC CJ

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 28: The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended appointment of Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, acting Chief Justice of Orissa High Court, as the Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court.

The Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud along with Justices Sanjeev Khanna and BR Gavai passed the resolutions recommending the appointment of new Chief Justices (CJs) for the High Courts of Rajasthan, Allahabad, Guwahati, Punjab & Haryana and Jharkhand.

"While considering his name, the Collegium has taken into consideration the fact that after the retirement of Justice Sanjaya Kumar Mishra, there would be no representation of the High Court of Orissa among the Chief Justices of the High Courts," the resolution reads.

SOA faculty, students shine in OJS Exam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: Three former students and two faculty members of the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA) National Institute of Law (SNIL) and faculty of legal studies have emerged successful in the Odisha Judicial Service (OJS) Examination conducted by the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC). The results of the examination were published Wednesday.

Nilisha Pattanayak, a SNIL pass out, secured the second rank in the examination while the other two successful pass out students are Amlan Rath, Rank 20 and Sudatta Panigrahi, Rank 30. Besides, Vaishali Bahubalendra and Anshuman Rath, both Assistant Professors in the institute, have secured the 32nd and 50th ranks.

While Nilisha Pattanayak passed LLM from SNIL in 2022-23, Amlan Rath was a BBA LLLB (Hons) student of the 2014-19 batch. Sudatta Panigrahi was a BBA LLLB (Hons) student of the 2012-17 batch.

SOA founder president Manojranjan Nayak congratulated the former students and faculty members on their success.

ODISHA ONLINE CRICKET BETTING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday said it has attached bank deposits and immovable assets worth Rs 3.68 crore in a money-laundering investigation linked to a case of illegal online cricket betting in Odisha.

The accused - Dinesh Kumar Rathi, R Lalie Achary and their accomplices - were first booked by the Odisha Police under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Prize Chit and Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act, 1978.

The accused "allegedly com-

mitted the offence of illegal online cricket betting and lured the gullible public to invest money in this racket".

They gave the investors false assurances of getting a profitable margin of return while siphoning off their hard-earned money, the ED said in a statement.

The accused allegedly accumulated 'proceeds of crime', which were subsequently 'invested' in properties and also for their personal gain, it said.

A provisional order for the attachment of bank balances worth Rs 2.14 crore and immovable assets, situated in



Odisha, Kolkata and Pune, valued at Rs 1.54 crore belonging to Rathi and other associates has

Saiprasanna wins int'l beauty contest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: Saiprasanna Behera, an Odia woman graced with intellect and talent, clinched the Mrs Grand International 2023 title in a dazzling event held in Myanmar recently. Vying with contestants from 25 countries, she secured India's first victory in the prestigious pageant, forming a remarkable partnership with Audrey D'Silva of Audacious Entertainment.

Previously, Saiprasanna, a 41-year-old Clinical Research Professional from Bhubaneswar,



was also selected as Mrs Grand India 2023, showcasing her expertise in dance and professionalism.

Her winning speech emphasised on hard work and dedication that transformed dreams into reality, symbolizing India's strength and beauty.

The accused allegedly accumulated 'proceeds of crime', which were subsequently 'invested' in properties and also for their personal gain

agency added.

Notably, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in an order issued in November, blocked 22 illegal betting apps and websites including Mahadev Book and Reddyannaprestopro.

FOCUS POLITICS

REGRESSIVE RHETORIC



Recent developments point to the wave of right-wing and Islamophobic politics overtaking Europe

Recent events and political upheavals in many European countries point to the increasing Islamophobic and anti-Islam right-wingers inching closer to power in these countries.

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is often in the news for making bold statements, but she recently scoffed at Islamic culture and said that there is no place for it in Europe. She said that there is no place for Islam in Europe. "There is a problem of compatibility." Her comments were made at a political festival organised by her far-right party - the Brothers of Italy, in Rome, which was attended by the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and X's owner Elon Musk, too. In her speech Meloni said, "The Islamic cultural centres in Italy are financed by Saudi Arabia where Sharia is in force. In Europe, there is a very Islamisation process distant from the values of our civilisation! I believe that there is a problem of compatibility between Islamic culture and the values and rights of our civilisation." Meanwhile, an old video of her also re-surfaced on various social media platforms that shows her saying she would not allow Sharia law to be implemented in Italy. Meloni also criticised Saudi Arabia for its strict Sharia Law. "I believe that these should be raised, which does not mean generalising on Islam. It means raising the problem that there is a process of Islamisation in Europe that is very distant from the values of our civilisation," she added.

During his speech at the event, Rishi Sunak said that he would push for global reforms to the asylum system while warning that the threat of a growing number of refugees could 'overwhelm' parts of Europe. He even warned that some 'enemies' were deliberately "driving people to our shores to try and destabilise our societies." "If we do not tackle this problem, the numbers will only grow. It will overwhelm our countries and our capacity to help those who actually need our help the

most," Rishi Sunak said, adding, "If that requires us to update our laws and lead an international conversation to amend the post-war frameworks around asylum, then we must do that."

Meanwhile, Tesla's founder and X's owner Elon Musk marked a rare appearance as he met world leaders at the annual gathering. "Immigration isn't enough to combat population shrinking," he said at the event, explaining: "There is value in cultures, we don't want Italy as a culture to disappear, we want to maintain a reasonable cultural identity of those countries or they won't be those countries."

Analysing the speeches given by these three leaders makes it clear that not only political leaders alone but even business leaders are increasingly turning to Islamophobia, based on their belief systems and also converting political issues to anti-Islam utterances, to gain public support.

Both Sunak and Musk couched their Islamophobic feelings into anti-immigrants policies. This could be partly blamed to these countries' own doing. Firstly, various European nations opened their doors for immigrants from Muslim dominated countries. The migrant flow into many Western countries increased as the increasing prosperity there was matched with no desire to engage in menial jobs at lower wages, gaps which were filled by migrants. Further, they al-

lowed Muslim immigrants entry to assuage their own guilt feeling, as many of the migrants fleeing their homes were coming from those countries where these countries had started or were supporting wars against the so-called radical or Islamist elements. Though many of these immigrants were not connected to any radical ideology, they became an easy scapegoat to be blamed for any wrongs happening in these Western societies.

Rishi Sunak has been accused of adopting the "toxic" rhetoric of his former home secretary Suella Braverman, after he warned that migration would "overwhelm" European countries without firm action. Sunak also said that both he and Meloni, with whom he has been forging a close relationship over hardline migration policies, were taking inspiration from Margaret Thatcher's steadfast radicalism in their quest to do "whatever it takes" to "stop the boats." Sunak's relationship with Meloni, Italy's first female premier has blossomed over their shared hardline approach towards immigration through policies that have pushed the limits of legality. They have also bonded over their admiration of Thatcher.

As far as Elon Musk is concerned, recently studies have found that Islamophobic comments are being spread widely through X and the company does not respond to complaints

or seem to take any remedial action, to handle the issue. X users resort to spelling mistakes intentionally while debating controversial subjects like religion, terrorism, crime, and even the Indian history.

These are not errors made in the heat of the moment, but careful distortions meant to keep the tweet from being flagged or deleted for hateful content. For example, a tweet posted in November 2022 that singled out people with Muslim names from a series of random crime news reports did not refer to the perpetrators as "Muslims" but instead used the phrase "Ola ke Bande" (Ola's group or Ola's gang). The word "Ola," which refers to the Indian ride-hailing taxi service, was used in place of "Allah." The tweet's author currently has close to 7,00,000 followers.

Reporting such tweets for targeting a group of people based on their religion is now more difficult than reporting a hateful tweet simply referring to "Muslims," as the X moderators viewing the complaint would have to be familiar with not only the Hindi phrase being used, but also understand the double meaning of "Ola." Moreover, if the moderation process were automated, the machine would most likely see a user verbally abusing a taxi service, which does not constitute hateful conduct.

Meanwhile, reports from France speak of a parliamentary vote in favour of a new tough bill against immigrants. Right-wing French leader Marine Le Pen described this as an "ideological victory," due to the inclusion of many hardline measures.

In fact from Italy's Meloni to France's Le Pen, to Geert Wilders' popularity in the Netherlands and Austria and Hungary's increasing public support to right-wing politicians, the recent developments point to the wave of right-wing and Islamophobic politics overtaking Europe.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator. ©IANS

When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge.



SRI AUROBINDO

Threats to Stability

The International Economic Association (IEA) recently concluded its 20th World Congress in Medellin, Colombia. This triennial event brings together scholars from all over the world to share and discuss the latest developments in economic thinking. This year's edition underscored the urgency of re-evaluating some of the field's core assumptions. The rapidly escalating debt crisis in the Global South, while not a direct focus of the conference, cast a shadow over it.

The IEA was founded in 1950, with Joseph Schumpeter chosen to be its first president. Since then, the organisation has been led by some of the world's most renowned economists, including Paul Samuelson, János Kornai, Kenneth J. Arrow, Amartya Sen, and Joseph E. Stiglitz. With the world economy increasingly strained by supply-chain disruptions related to the war in Ukraine, the lingering consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cloud of uncertainty hanging over the fighting between Israel and Hamas, this year's Congress has thrown these daunting challenges into sharp relief.

As the global economy undergoes a fundamental transformation, some of the deeply held assumptions economists have relied on to model it must evolve, too. Unsurprisingly, many of the presentations during this year's Congress focused on the impact of digital technologies and social media on labour, wages, and inequality. Others focused on the changing nature of globalisation, the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar economic order, and the erosion of democratic institutions amid the rise of populist nationalism.

Danny Quah's lecture underscored the speed with which the global economy is changing. Building on earlier studies by Jean-Marie Grether and Nicole A. Mathys, as well as his own previous research, Quah illustrated the world economy's shifting center of gravity, which he defines as the "average location of economic activity across geographies." In 1980, he showed, this center was located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, reflecting the dominance of North America and Western Europe during this period.

As East Asian economies took off, the global center of economic gravity began to shift eastward. Quah estimates that by 2008, it had moved close to Izmir, Turkey, and kept moving east, driven by the Indian and Chinese economies' rapid growth. He projects that by 2050, the world's economic center will settle between India and China, unlocking opportunities but also stoking geopolitical tensions and giving rise to new threats.

Rising authoritarianism, in particular, remains a major driver of global economic uncertainty. The growing appeal of populist movements, Sergei Guriev argued (based on some of his earlier writings with Elias Papaioannou), could pose an "existential threat" to democratic governance, civil liberties, and the liberal world order.

To be sure, the populist surge is partly an understandable response to rising within-country inequality and reduced social mobility, as Adam Szeidl pointed out in his Congress presentation. Disillusioned Western voters' tendency to favour right-wing leaders is puzzling, however, given that these politicians' favoured policies will likely exacerbate the problems they purport to address.

A financial crisis could provide far-right authoritarians with the momentum they need to dominate Western politics.

Despite the grim predictions of a prolonged economic downturn, the global economy successfully dodged a recession in 2023, buoyed by unexpectedly robust GDP and job growth in the United States. While this has led some economists to adopt a cautiously optimistic outlook for 2024, I believe that such complacency is misguided.

The new optimism can be attributed to analysts' tendency to focus on rich countries when assessing the state of the global economy. A more granular analysis yields a bleaker picture of the world's economic landscape. Unlike the Great Recession of 2008-09, which was triggered by the collapse of the US housing market, the biggest threat to global economic stability today comes from the developing world.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, virtually every country in the world was forced to increase public spending. But while developed and middle-income countries had the resources to purchase vaccines, drugs, and equipment, low- and lower-middle-income economies borrowed massively to cope with the pandemic and subsequent food and energy crises. That left dozens of countries in debt distress or at high risk of it, underscoring the need to look specifically at the developing world.

According to the World Bank's latest International Debt Report, the world's poorest countries have been hardest hit by the sovereign-debt crisis. Their external debt service, which reached an all-time high of \$88.9 billion in 2022, is projected to surge by 40% in 2023-24. Ghana and Zambia have already defaulted, Ethiopia will likely default by 2024, and domestic debt levels in countries like Argentina and Pakistan are alarmingly high.

Not enough is being written about this, but urgent international intervention is necessary to prevent the situation from escalating. While the current crisis may not have the immediate global impact of the 2008 collapse of the US subprime mortgage market, its potential long-term effects could be far-reaching. Notably, it could exacerbate the migration crisis, further fueling the surge of right-wing populism across the developed world.

While the IEA's five-day Congress in Medellin felt like a breath of fresh air, tackling the developing world's debt crisis requires more than cutting-edge research. The international community, especially multilateral institutions like the World Bank, must act decisively before the situation spirals out of control.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Asad Mirza

RISHI SUNAK HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF ADOPTING THE 'TOXIC' RHETORIC OF HIS FORMER HOME SECRETARY SUELLA BRAVERMAN



Kaushik Basu

As the global economy undergoes a fundamental transformation, some of the deeply held assumptions economists have relied on to model it must evolve, too

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Year of inequality & debt

According to the World Bank, if 2022 was a year of uncertainty, 2023 is the year of inequality. For countries hopeful of bouncing back from the devastating losses of the COVID-19 pandemic, the battle has been made tougher by the compounding threats of climate change, fragility, conflict and violence, and food insecurity, to name a few—that make it difficult for economies across the board to fully recover. These polycrises have made development work more complicated.

Rising economic inequality in many countries, especially the rich ones, in recent decades has emerged as an important topic of political debate and a major public policy concern. Widening economic disparities and related anxieties are stoking social discontent and are a major driver of the increased skepticism about public institutions, political polarisation, and populist nationalism that are so evident today.

According to the UNO, inequalities are not only driven and measured by income, but are determined by other factors - gender, age, origin, ethnicity, dis-

ability, sexual orientation, class, and religion. Billionaire fortunes are increasing by \$2.7 billion a day even as at least 1.7 billion workers now live in countries where inflation is outpacing wages. While the richest 1% accumulated 54% of new global wealth over the past decade, this has accelerated to 63% in the past two years (2019-21), according an Oxfam report -2023.

Oxfam India's 2023 report, accurately titled "Survival of the Richest," claims that resources are not scarce in India, or in the rest of the world. Instead, it is the inequitable distribution of resources that creates scarcity in the first place. The richest 1% in India now own more than 40.5% of the country's total wealth, while the bottom half of the population together share just 3% of wealth.

While extreme poverty in middle-income countries has decreased, poverty in the poorest countries and countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence is still worse than before the pandemic. The persistence of poverty in these countries makes other key global development goals much harder to achieve.

Nearly 70 crore people around the world today live in extreme poverty, meaning they live on less than \$2.15 per day. India's poverty rate at 11.9% in 2021 also remained higher than the 2018 level of 11.09%.

India stands in a group of 40 countries where the scale of hunger has been termed as 'severe'. India ranked 111th out of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2023. While the rate of undernourishment in India stood at 16.6% and under-five mortality at 3.1%, the prevalence of anaemia in women aged between 15 and 24 years stood at 58.1%.

As with most crises, it's the world's poorest countries that are getting hit the hardest. Many of these countries, already in debt distress, find themselves even more squeezed for resources. The world's poorest face the risk of debt crises as borrowing costs surge.

The IMF has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's debt. It has cautioned that general government debt is likely to exceed 100% of India's GDP in the near future. India's public debt-to-GDP ratio

shot up from 75% in 2019-20 to 88.5% in 2020-21 and declined to 81% in 2022-23 as against the target of 60%. However, the problem is that interest payments swallow nearly half of India's revenues, with interest payments rising over 40% of revenue.

The economic outlook for developing economies has darkened in 2023. However, it is predicted that India will be witness to one of the highest GDP growths. But India's growth estimation is not beyond doubt and is not reflected in the wellbeing of people. India is abysmally placed behind at 138 in per capita GDP and 132 in human development index out of 191 countries. Inflation, unemployment, rising suicide, criminal activities, and a regressive tax regime have hurt Indians more. Households borrowed more to fulfil their consumption needs. Household financial savings hit a 47-year low dropping to 5.1% of GDP in 2022-23 from the previous year's 7.2% showing rising financial distress of people.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist. Views are personal.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

IMF HAS RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF INDIA'S DEBT

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1845:** US annexation of Texas approved. The annexation of the Republic of Texas by the United States, approved by the US Congress, sparked the Mexican War because land between the Rio Grande and the Nueces River was disputed territory.
- **1890:** Wounded Knee massacre. On this day, the US Army's 7th Cavalry tried to disarm the members of the Lakota tribe who were camped at the Wounded Knee Creek. During their attempt, a shot was fired and the cavalry massacred over 150 members of the tribe including women and children. Many historians believe that the number of people massacred was much higher. Wounded Knee is near present day Lakota Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the state of South Dakota.
- **1911:** Mongolian independence. The landlocked North East Asian country declared its independence from the Qing Dynasty, after the Mongolian Revolution of 1911. The country had been under the Qing rule for about 200 years.
- **1998:** Leaders of the Khmer Rouge, the radical communist movement that controlled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, publicly apologised for the estimated 1.5 million people who were killed during their rule.

Unruly tourists

Sir, New Year is near, and an average tourist nurtures serious misconceptions about some of India's famous tourist spots. For example Goa, the beautiful little state has much more to its tradition and culture than beaches and booze. Plenty of tourists, however, get carried away and immerse themselves in the two 'B's. Dirt and debris along the Goa beaches, including empty alcohol bottles, is not a sight for sore eyes at all. Such unruly tourists should be dealt with an iron hand no matter who they are and from where they come. Ditto with other popular tourist destinations. Sign boards warning mischief mongers of fine and punitive actions should be erected at all sensitive places where tourists throng. Consumption of alcohol, smoking, spitting should attract heavy penalties, so should relieving oneself all over the place. Besides, round the clock monitoring of the important beaches of India is a must.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Strategic move

Sir, The rupee's standing in global trade has risen as evidenced by India making its inaugural payment to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in rupees for crude oil. This strategic move aims to strengthen the internationalisation of the Indian currency, reducing dependence on the US dollar and mitigating the impact of sudden monetary shocks on the Indian economy. Currently, more than 80% of India's oil imports are settled in dollars. The shift towards rupee transactions is part of ongoing efforts by the Indian government and the Reserve Bank of India to bolster the rupee. Historically, the US dollar has dominated global currency reserves, but recent trends indicate a decline from over 70% in 1999 to 59% in 2022. The Euro follows as the second most traded and collected currency within the European Union. However, to establish the rupee as a global currency, additional groundwork is necessary. A recent survey by the Bank for International Settlements reveals that India's share among major exporters and importers is relatively modest, with the daily average share of the rupee in the foreign exchange market turnover standing at 1.6%.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 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

OrissaPOST
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Inclement weather: Steel City remains cut off by air

CANCELLATION OF FLIGHTS HAS BECOME A DAILY AFFAIR IN ROURKELA AIRPORT OWING TO BAD WEATHER



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Dec 28: As bad weather continues to play spoilsport dashing the denizens' hope of direct flight connectivity to Kolkata, Rourkela remains cut off by air. Sundargarh district has been experiencing extreme foggy weather conditions for the last several days.

According to a source in Alliance Air, the visibility factor led to cancellation of flights from Rourkela Airport to Bhubaneswar and Kolkata. Rourkela Airport was supposed to start direct flights to Kolkata from December 26. However, bad weather has prevented the flight's take off giving a harrowing time to those who had booked tickets.

The source informed that the visibility remained below 3,500 feet Thursday and it is dangerous for the plane to land in such weather conditions. Meanwhile, this was bad news for the 37 persons from Rourkela and 36 from

Kolkata who had booked the tickets. Similarly, 57 persons had booked tickets to Rourkela and 54 to Bhubaneswar through the lone service provider Alliance Air. The visual flight rules (VFR) is the answer to this problem. "With VFR trained staff the plane can land with the visibility of just 1,500 feet," said Bimal Bisi, president of Sachetan Nagarika Mancha, who is waging almost a lone battle for the smoothening of the flight connectivity.

Instrument landing system (ILS) remains a costly affair at this moment and there are other issues that are preventing the installation of the equipment here. Meanwhile, four staffers of Airport Authority of India (AAI) underwent one-day training for VFR recently. In all probability, they would be in a position to handle it from January 2.

Meanwhile, Jual Oram, Sundargarh MP and Member of Parliamentary Standing

Committee for Defence, has written to Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister for Civil Aviation, regarding issues faced by the Rourkela Airport.

In his letter, Oram has mentioned about the flight condition at the airport and sought actions in this regard. "The airport land belongs to the state government who has leased it to Rourkela Steel Plant. This is a major roadblock in the development of the aerodrome as the AAI is unable to undertake any developmental work here." Oram has further requested that the land should be immediately transferred to AAI and some "RSP quarters be given to the agency for its staff."

Besides, he has also requested to start direct ATR flights to Delhi from this airport so that it would benefit the people and also the Smart City's development. He has stressed that the airport should have a night landing system so that planes from other areas can fly in during night time, which will benefit the city immensely. The airport is in urgent need of the ILS, he said in his letter.

While the MP is busy in pursuing the development of the airport, passengers continue to be tormented owing to the erratic flight connectivity. The Kolkata flight will be tri-weekly and will operate on alternate days of the week starting from Tuesday.



SAFETY MEASURE: Fire personnel cordon off a stretch of National Highway-26 to stop traffic movement after a tanker carrying hydrochloric acid overturned on the highway at Ralegada under Pottangi police limits in Koraput district, Thursday

Red dump recovered near Andhra border

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/Jeypore, Dec 28: Koraput Police has seized a huge cache of explosives as it busted a Maoist hideout during a combing operation at Gumudapat jungle under Machhkund police limits in Koraput district, police said Thursday.

The combing operation was being carried out in the jungle comprising the jawans of a joint team of district police, District Voluntary Force (DVF) and Special Operations Group (SOG) personnel. The seized explosives concealed by the Red rebels include 15 guns, 17 tiffin bombs (eight tiffin bombs weighing



around 7 kg and nine more weighing 3 kg), two detonators, codex wires of 50 metre length, one steel box, two empty tiffin boxes and other explosives.

Police suspect that the explosives may have been stored there by the members of AOBSZC and were intended to be used against innocent civilians and security

forces to carry out their subversive, anti-national activities and to establish Maoist presence again in this area.

This was stated here by Koraput SP Abhinav Sonkar in a press release issued in Koraput, Thursday.

The combing operation was undertaken after intelligence

inputs alerted about Maoist movement in Gumudapat and Kodapat jungles bordering Malkangiri district and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh under Machhkund police limits.

The team carried out an intensive search in the bordering jungle and busted the major Maoist dump in Gumudapat forest near Machhkund village. This led to the recovery and seizure of a huge cache of ammunition and other Maoist articles, the press release mentioned.

Meanwhile, further combing and search operations are underway in this area, a senior police official said.

35 picnickers injured in two road mishaps

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ghashipura/Sonepur, Dec 28: As many as 35 picnickers including students sustained injuries in two separate incidents of road mishap in Keonjhar and Subarnapur districts, Thursday.

In the first incident, the mishap occurred after a bus carrying students and teachers for a picnic hit a truck from rear at Bhalukuma Square on National Highway-20 near Dhakotha under Ghashipura police limits in Keonjhar district. The mishap occurred after a truck allegedly applied brakes while overtaking one of the buses.

Over 60 students and teachers of Bramhoshmi Coaching Centre in Balasore district were returning in two buses after a picnic in Sambalpur. Among them, 20 were injured including two critically. Ghashipura police rushed the injured students and teachers to a hospital and launched an investigation.

In the second incident, 15 students and guardians were injured while three of them sustained critical injuries after a bus carrying them hit a stationery truck at Kadamtal Square on Khurda-Bolangir National Highway-57 near Khamdeshwarpali.

The injured were rushed to the district headquarters hospital in Sonepur and 12 of them were discharged after primary treatment. The critically injured were shifted to VSS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research at Burla.

MKCG doc held over fake caste certificate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 28: The Koraput Police has arrested a senior doctor on the charge of securing a job at the MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Berhampur in Ganjam district producing a fake caste certificate.

The accused doctor, identified as Durgadatta Sasani, is a resident of Samabaya Colony in Semiliguda area of tribal dominated Koraput district.

Durgadatta is currently working as an assistant professor in the anaesthesiology department of MKCG Medical College in



Berhampur:

He was arrested Wednesday in connection with a case registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by his younger brother July 20, 2023. The complainant

had accused that Durgadatta who originally belongs to the Brahmin caste, studied till graduation in arts streams as a general category student.

He also pursued D Pharma course at a college in Bhubaneswar under general category with his original identity.

According to the complaint, Durgadatta allegedly secured a fake certificate identifying himself as an Adivasi. He reportedly got admitted to MBBS course in 2006 and a three-year specialisation course in 2014 at the MKCG Medical College using the fake caste certificate.

He has reportedly been working as an assistant professor in the anaesthesiology department of the medical college since 2021.

"In 2003, the accused managed to get a false caste certificate under the surname Jani by showing himself as the son of a person in Mandarguda village belonging to scheduled tribe," said a local police official.

The police officials claimed that the accused later studied Class X through distance education, Plus II regular course in science stream at the BJB College in Bhubaneswar producing the fake certificate.

20-yr RI for sexually assaulting minor girl

PNN & AGENCIES

Jajpur, Dec 28: A local court sentenced a person to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) after holding him guilty of sexually assaulting a 10-year-old girl in Korei area of Jajpur district.

The 44-year-old convict, Biswanath Barik, has also been fined ₹10,000, and as per the court verdict pronounced Wednesday, he will serve a further jail term of six months if he fails to deposit the amount.

The convict used to give tuition to primary and high school students of the village and nearby areas at his home. He also conducted extra classes when the schools were closed due to the Covid-induced lockdown in 2021.

"The victim along with her friends was studying at Barik's residence March 16, 2021 when he took her to his bedroom under some pretext and sexually assaulted her. She luckily managed to escape from Barik's clutches and revealed her ordeal to her parents," said Rajendra P Nayak, special public prosecutor.

Based on the complaint filed by the victim's mother, the police had registered a case the next day and arrested the accused April 4, 2021. The court examined the statements of 19 witnesses and other exhibits before pronouncing the order. The court has also directed the district legal services authority in Jajpur to pay ₹4 lakh to the victim under the Odisha Victim Compensation Scheme.



TRIBAL BALLET: Artists perform tribal 'Dhema' dance on the third evening of district-level Lok Mahotsav 'Chaiti' in Rayagada, Thursday

OP PHOTO

4 new buildings of Berhampur University to be solar-powered

As there is no separate power supply transformer for the university, the students are facing power cuts very frequently. Moreover, the power systems of the university faced threats due to cyclones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Dec 28: Berhampur University (BU) in Ganjam district has decided to install rooftop solar plants of 95-kw capacity in four more new buildings, as a part of its green campus drive, an official said.

The solar plants will be installed in the newly constructed two hostels for girls, a new boys' hostel and the residential quarter of the vice-chancellor, the official said Thursday.

The university has already installed an on-grid 30-kw rooftop solar plant at its Central

Instrumentation Center (CIC) in the first phase with an investment of ₹17 lakh.

"We have already placed an order for installation of solar plants of the state government-owned Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA) in the hostel buildings, last week," said Geetanjali Dash, Vice-Chancellor of the university.

The university has sanctioned ₹58.82 crore to OREDA for the purpose, said Sachidanand Nayak, Registrar of the university.

"We will seek funds from the government for installation of more on-grid rooftop solar plants



in some other new buildings," the VC said.

The main objective is to drastically reduce the consumption of energy and to gradually increase

charge, she said.

As there is no separate power supply transformer for the university, the students are facing power cuts very frequently. Moreover, the power systems of the university faced threats due to cyclones, as the institute is located near the Bay of Bengal in the coastal Ganjam district.

The power systems in the university were damaged in the super cyclone Phailin which hit near university in October 2013 and it took around a month to restore the power supply, officials said.

The proposed rooftop solar plants will be cyclone-proof, which will function in the natural disaster, they said. Apart from making the university energy-independent, the project will also create awareness of the use of renewable energy amongst students, said Laxmidhar Rout, convener of the project.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender No. e-T-M-KUR-ANGL-WR-239-23
Name of Work: REPAIR OF WAGONS DURING EXAMINATION AT ANGUL (ANGL) YARD FOR A PERIOD OF 01 YEAR.
Advertised Value: ₹ 48,23,558.51, EMD: ₹ 96,500.00, Tender Document Cost: ₹ 3,540.00, Period of Completion: 12 Months.
Bidding Start Date: 27.12.2023, Date & Time of tender closing: At 1500 hrs. on 10.01.2024.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-tender documents are available in website : www.treps.gov.in
Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer, PR-928/O/23-24 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY
E-AUCTION FOR PARKING STANDS
Auction Catalogue No.: Prkg-KUR-23-54, Station & Location: (1) BHUBANESWAR - 4 Wheeler (in circulating area), (2) PURI - 2 Wheeler (in circulating area).
Auction start Date & Time : 03.01.2024 at 1100 hrs. (for sl. no. 1 & 2).
Auction end Date : 03.01.2024 (for sl. no. 1 & 2) and End time : 1130 hrs. (for sl. no. 1), 1140 hrs. (for sl. no. 2).
E-AUCTION FOR PAY & USE TOILET & CLOAK ROOM
Auction Catalogue No.: PnU-T-KUR-23-28, Station & Location : (1) MALPATAPUR (PRE-FABRICATED) (in circulating area), (2) BHADRAK - P&U -Toilet (on Platform-1 & 2, middle), (3) PURI (near outward parcel office), (4) KHALIKOT (in circulating area), (5) BHUBANESWAR (in circulating area Platform-1 side), (6) KHURDA ROAD - CLOAK ROOM (in new station building).
Auction start Date & Time : 03.01.2024 at 1300 hrs. (for sl. no. 1 to 6).
Auction end Date : 03.01.2024 (for sl. no. 1), 1340 hrs. (for sl. no. 2), 1350 hrs. (for sl. no. 3), 1400 hrs. (for sl. no. 4), 1410 hrs. (for sl. no. 5) and 1420 hrs. (for sl. no. 6).
Note: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the www.treps.gov.in and check the upcoming e-Auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-Auction.
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, PR-930/O/23-24 Khurda Road

FORM NO. URC-2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI [Pursuant to section 374(b) of the Companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the Companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014.
1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application has been made to the Registrar of Companies Odisha that SAMAL SALES CORPORATION LLP a business entity may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.
2. The principal objects of the company are as follows:
01. Retail/wholesale of New Motor Cycle, Moped, Scooter and Three wheeler
02. Repair and maintenance of Motor-Cycle, Moped, Scooter and Three wheeler
03. Retail/wholesale of Motor Cycle, Moped, Scooter and Three wheeler.
3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at PLOT NO-526/1685/2397, JAGANNATHPUR, BONTI CHHAKA, BHADRAK.
4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar of Companies Odisha, Corporate Bhawan, 3rd Floor, Plot No. 9 (P), Sector-1, CDA, Cuttack: 753014 within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.
Dated this 29th day of December, 2023
Name(s) of Applicants:
01. Mr. Abhishek Samal, DPIN: 0007925172 (Designated Partner/ Partner)
02. Mr. Gouranga Chandra Samal, DPIN: 0007925186 (Designated Partner/ Partner)
03. Mrs. Puspapalata Samal, DPIN: 0007925200 (Designated Partner/ Partner)

ECSTASY & EPITAPH

Yes, I am being pushed by the youngsters and that is something I enjoy. It gives me the chance to go a notch higher
NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Every time you walk on to the field give it to yourself. You never know who is watching and how it might inspire them
MOHAMMED SHAMI

You've got to be confident when you're competing. You've got to be a beast
GABBY DOUGLAS

Hey KKR fans, I am thrilled to be joining the team for this year's IPL. I cannot wait to get to Eden Gardens, to experience the home crowd, fans and atmosphere
MITCHELL STARC

For any budding sports person, a science centre is essential and the Odisha government is taking the right path in promoting sports
ABHINAV BINDRA



NaMo Stadium heart-break

For a cricket-crazy nation, it couldn't have been more shattering... the loss in the final of the ODI World Cup. For a country which woke up November 19, agog with excitement and expectations, it was utter disbelief as India meekly surrendered to Australia by six wickets. It was expected to be revenge time after the loss in the World Test Championship final against the same opponent, but then Cricket's god had destined otherwise. In

between India won a few bilateral tournaments, the Asia Cup and a couple of Test series in 2023. However, all that faded into oblivion with that one stupendous loss on home soil. It was a calamity that struck even though there was not the slightest inkling after India created history by winning 10 games on the trot. But not to take away anything from the Indian cricketers, they topped the ICC rankings in all the three formats, yet left the entire nation desolate with that one loss.



Back with a bang

For those who had predicted the swansong of Virat Kohli, the batter had other ideas in 2023. The World Cup final may have gone wrong, but Virat emerged as the top scorer in the tournament with 765 runs at an average of over 95-plus. In the process, he also broke Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 centuries in the ODI format. In front of his idol, Kohli got his 50th ODI hundred at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai and described the feeling as 'surreal to do it in front of Sachin Praaji'. Overall Virat scored six centuries in 2023, including his maiden T20 ton against Afghanistan to take his tally to 80.



NEW KID ON THE BLOC

There was this question... after Rafael Nadal who. Well Carlos Alcaraz burst on to the tennis horizon like a rainbow enthralling all with his take. Despite Novak Djokovic winning three of the four Grand Slams in 2023, Alcaraz proved that the 'Generation Next' after the 'Fab Four' had arrived. His epic Wimbledon win over Djokovic was one of the talking points of 2023.



Battling all odds

Odisha para-badminton player Pranod Bhagat once more made 2023 a memorable year winning the gold medal in the SL3 category at the Para-Asian Games in Hangzhou in October defeating compatriot Nitesh Kumar. It was a good year for Pranod as he won a number of singles, doubles and mixed doubles titles in various tournaments across the world. The Asian Games title made him richer by ₹2 crore presented to him by the Odisha government. Among his other feats were finishing runner-up at the Spanish Open in singles and winning the doubles crown. At the Canadian Open, the Padma Shri winner won a silver in singles and a bronze each in doubles and mixed doubles. "I have only one goal left and that is to defend my Tokyo gold at Paris," Pranod said after his Asian win.



Registering record feats

The Indian women's cricket team led by Harmanpreet Kaur created history by achieving their first Test wins over both England and Australia in December. In the process, India recorded their sixth and seventh wins respectively in the 40 Tests that they have so far played. It was the spinners like Deepti Sharma and Sneha Rana who conjured up the triumphs for India. Kaur also acknowledged the role played by newly-inducted coach Anil Kumar. "He has brought about a huge change in mentality," Kaur said after India's first-ever win December 24 against Australia in Mumbai. "His inputs have gone a long way in changing the mentality of our players," the Indian skipper added.



Courting fresh controversy

A four-year doping ban hit sprinter Dutee Chand as she prepared for a swansong at the Paris Olympics, next year. Dutee has promised to challenge the ban, but the fact is that she tested positive after banned anabolic steroids were found in her samples taken December 5 and 26, last year. The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) announced the ban in August which was imposed retrospectively from January 2023. Knowing Dutee, she is one athlete, who will go all out of her way to prove her innocence.



Record Asian Games medal haul

For the first time in their sporting history, India won more than 100 medals at the 2023 Asian Games. India bagged 28 gold, 38 silver and 41 bronze medals - a tally of 107 that made India the fourth country after China, Japan and Korea to breach the three-figure mark. Shooters with seven, athletes with six and archers with five led the gold rush. Yes, the likes of Neeraj Chopra hogged the limelight, but there were sports persons like Avinash Sable, Parul Chaudhary and Annu Rani who created distinct niches for themselves with their outstanding feats.



DOUBLES DELIGHT

Badminton seemed to be on the decline as the likes of PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal had an injury-plagued poor 2023. In the men's segment Kidambi Srikanth and others did nothing extraordinary save HS Prannoy, who bagged a World Championship as well as an Asian Games bronze. But elsewhere it was the story of two Indian shuttlers who scripted history as a pair - the duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy. From being the World No.1 pair for some time in 2023, to winning five titles, the two treaded a path that Indian doubles pairs had never done before. The two went on to win an Asian Games gold, the first Indian combo to achieve the feat and also bagged four BWF titles. Currently ranked second in the world, Chirag and Satwik are one of the title contenders at the Paris Games next year. Let's just hope they keep the Tricolour fluttering.

GRANDMASTER SIBLINGS SHINE

India has always been known as a chess powerhouse and produces grandmasters at the drop of a hat. One such player has been Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa who became a Grandmaster at a very young age. To follow suit in 2023 was his sister Vaishali Rameshbabu. The two created history by becoming the first siblings to achieve the Grandmaster tag. At the age of 12, Vaishali had once defeated World Champion Magnus Carlsen and finally in 2023 she fulfilled her potential by becoming India's third woman GM.

It has been a trend-setting 2023 for Indian sports... an year where there have been many ecstatic moments, but a few epitaphs also. As Indian sportspersons excelled in many disciplines, the failure to win either the World Test Championship and the ODI World Cup left the millions of cricket-crazy fans in the country heart-broken. Cricket is a game, no Indian wants to lose and the defeats in the final of both the events to Australia left deep wounds. However, 2023 can easily be proclaimed as India coming of age in sports. There were huge success stories in badminton, archery, hockey, athletics, para-athletics, boxing, women's hockey, table tennis, shooting, kabaddi and many more disciplines. What stood out was the 'never say die' spirit of Indian sportspersons as they created a niche for themselves in Asia and in some cases, the world. Individual and team milestones were achieved with hard work, grit and determination. The world also saw some incredible feats, both individual and team efforts. The emergence of Carlos Alcaraz as a successor to the 'Fab Four' and the triple crown by Manchester City will forever be etched in memory.

Orissa POST takes a look at the year gone by in sports

SETTING A BENCHMARK

In 1978 when a tall gangly fast bowler broke into the Indian team, there was disbelief as pacers were a rare breed in India. Today 45 years later, the Indian pace attack is one of the most feared in the world. It may not take that long for India's next generation of champion athletes, inspired by the one and only indomitable Neeraj Chopra. Since winning the Olympic gold in 2021, Neeraj has gone from strength to strength. More importantly he has proved, India

also can hold its own in the athletics world. Neeraj won gold in the javelin event at the World Athletics Championships at Budapest in August, followed it up with the Asian Games gold and finished second in the Diamond League finals. In the process he became the first Indian to win a gold medal at the World Championships and the Olympics. His deeds will certainly inspire the next generation of youngsters to take athletics as a career in future.



Hockey team qualify for Paris

India's historic Olympic hockey bronze in July 2021 - a medal in the game after 41 years - has suddenly whetted the yearnings of the fans. They now want the team to do better and go a couple of steps further and annex the gold. Yes, it is certainly a tough ask, but over the years, India has shown that they have the ability to take on the best in the world. The Harmanpreet Singh-led team have already sealed their place at the Paris Olympics by emerging champions in the Asian Games defeating Japan 6-1 in the final at Hangzhou in October. Currently ranked No. 3 in the World and with players like Amit Rohidas, Neelam Sanjeev Xess, Manpreet Singh, Abhishek... India certainly have the wherewithal to strike it big. Earlier in August, the men's team had won the Asian Champions Trophy beating Malaysia.



Salute to para-athletes

Not to forget the para-athletes who overcame their handicaps to bring laurels to India. They won 111 medals at Hangzhou including 29 gold, surpassing their previous best of 72, achieved at Jakarta five years back. The two who stood out were Ankur Dhama who became the first Indian to win two gold medals in the 1,500m and 5,000m, and Sundar Singh Gurjar who set a new world record in the men's F46 javelin throw as he sent his spear to a distance of 68.60m en route to finishing on top of the podium.



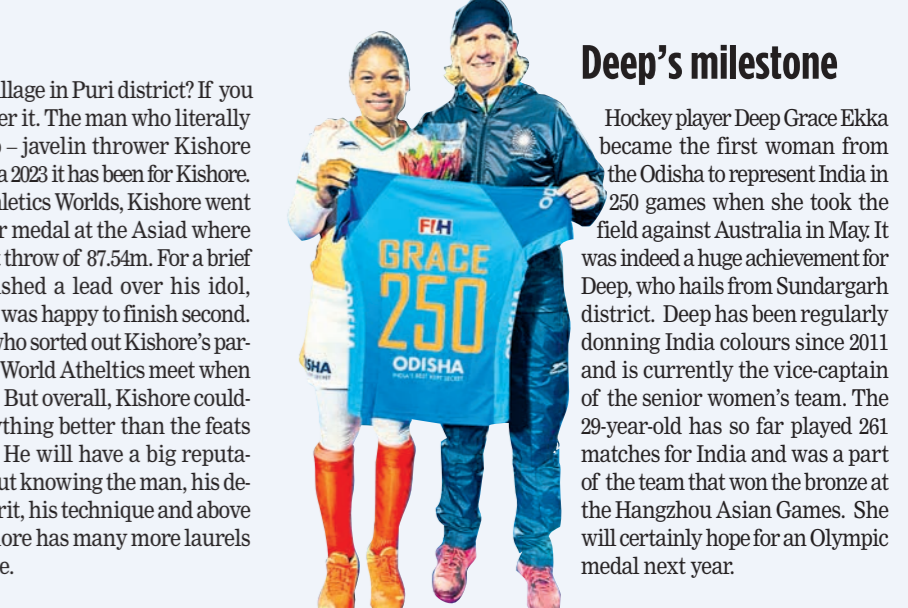
And the 'Cake' goes to Odisha

Odisha proved in 2023 that it is the 'place' and the 'best sporting hub' in India. From successfully hosting national and international events to providing the best of facilities for sportspersons, the Odisha government has shown that the state has become the global destination for all sports. The successful hosting of the Senior Men's Hockey World Cup at Rourkela and Bhubaneswar at the beginning of 2023 and various other tournaments including the BWF Masters badminton tournament in Cuttack have clearly displayed the sports administration capabilities the state possesses.



FASCINATING FAIRYTALE

Ever heard the name of Kothasahi village in Puri district? If you haven't, now is the time to remember it. The man who literally put Odisha on the global athletics map - javelin thrower Kishore Kumar Jena - belongs to the village. What a 2023 it has been for Kishore. Starting with fifth place finish in the Athletics Worlds, Kishore went from strength to strength to win a silver medal at the Asian where he also achieved his personal best throw of 67.54m. For a brief period, Kishore even established a lead over his idol, Neeraj Chopra, but then he was happy to finish second. Incidentally it was Neeraj who sorted out Kishore's participation at the Budapest World Athletics meet when the latter had visa issues. But overall, Kishore couldn't have dreamt of anything better than the feats he achieved in 2023. He will have a big reputation to live up to, but knowing the man, his determination, his grit, his technique and above all his talent, Kishore has many more laurels to bring back home.



Deep's milestone

Hockey player Deep Grace Ekka became the first woman from the Odisha to represent India in 250 games when she took the field against Australia in May. It was indeed a huge achievement for Deep, who hails from Sundargarh district. Deep has been regularly donning India colours since 2011 and is currently the vice-captain of the senior women's team. The 29-year-old has so far played 261 matches for India and was a part of the team that won the bronze at the Hangzhou Asian Games. She will certainly hope for an Olympic medal next year.



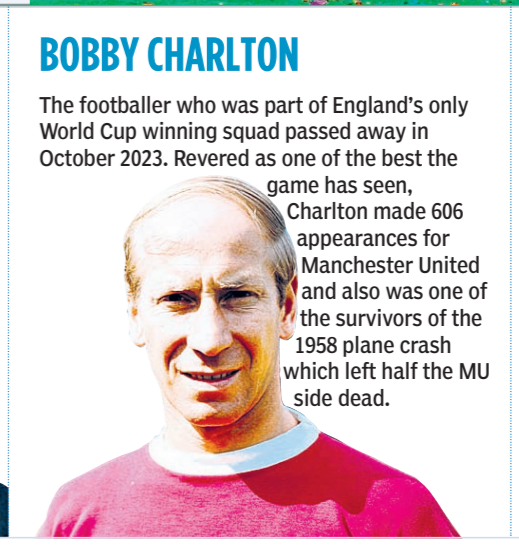
A DATE WITH HISTORY

Football is not that a popular sport in Odisha, may be because the state or its clubs haven't done so well at the national level. Slowly, but surely that is changing thanks to the efforts of Odisha FC. The side defeated puma Jones Vingaard (Team Jumbo Visma) successfully defended Ragan and Basundhara Kings from Bangladesh to qualify for the AFC Cup 2023-24 inter-zone play-off semifinals, the first team from Odisha to do so.



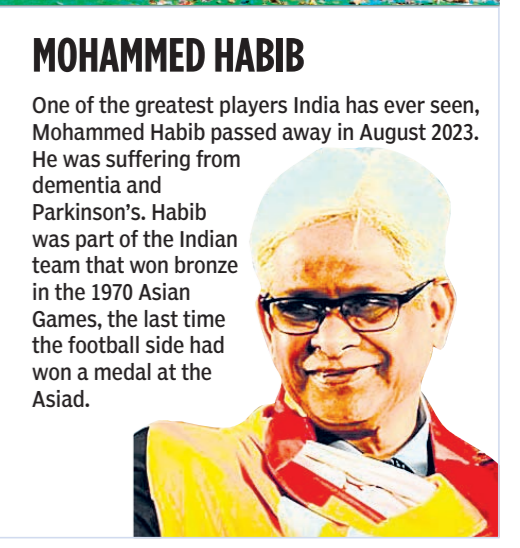
THEY WILL BE MISSED

BISHAN SINGH BEDI
"Floats like a butterfly and stings like a bee". This is how the legendary Sunil Gavaskar describes the bowling of another legend Bishan Singh Bedi, a man who spoke from the heart and passed away in October. He was 77. Probably one of the greatest left-arm spinners the world has ever seen, Bedi took 266 wickets in 67 Tests and led India 22 times.



BOBBY CHARLTON

The footballer who was part of England's only World Cup winning squad passed away in October 2023. Reversed as one of the best the game has seen, Charlton made 606 appearances for Manchester United and also was one of the survivors of the 1958 plane crash which left half the MU side dead.



MOHAMMED HABIB

One of the greatest players India has ever seen, Mohammed Habib passed away in August 2023. He was suffering from dementia and Parkinson's. Habib was part of the Indian team that won bronze in the 1970 Asian Games, the last time the football side had won a medal at the Asian.



Young dancers perform, during a ballet event in Kibera, one of the busiest neighborhoods of Kenya's capital, Nairobi. The ballet project is run by Project Elimu, a community-driven nonprofit that offers after-school arts education and a safe space to children in Kibera



A weaver bird sitting on a branch of tree near its nest in Centurion



BJP councillors protest inside the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) House against the alleged fake medicine row during a session in New Delhi



Members of All India Matua Mahasangha participate in a rally over their demand for Indian citizenship in Kolkata, West Bengal



Workers decorate Lata Mangeshkar Chowk ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan during the centenary ceremony of 'Vaikom Satyagraha', at Periyar Thidal in Chennai



Participants at the 7th Telangana State Regatta Sailing Championships that began at Hussain Sagar in Hyderabad

AP/AFP/REUTERS/PTI PHOTOS

national

of the day quote

The BJP is exploiting the citizenship issue for its political agenda. It is misleading the people on the issue. Previously, grant of citizenship was decided by the district magistrates, but now those powers have been taken away from them for politics

Not including the tableaux of Delhi and Punjab in the Republic Day parade shows the dirty politics of the BJP. BJP-ruled states like Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are consistently given the opportunity (to showcase their tableaux) in the Republic Day parade but like last time, Delhi and Punjab have been sidelined this time too

I have not received any invitation for the inauguration of Ram Mandir so far, but if I receive it, I will attend the ceremony

SHORT TAKES

ED conducts raids at 9 locations in Kolkata

Kolkata: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday conducted raids at nine different places in Kolkata in connection with its investigation into the alleged teachers' recruitment scam, a senior official said. The raids that started early in the morning continued till late at night, he said. Nine ED teams conducted raids at the offices, residences and other premises of various people, primarily chartered accountants, in Burrabazar, Kankurgachi, Alipore, and Salt Lake areas, he said. The search operations started early Thursday following a tip-off from a person who was arrested in connection with the ED's probe into the cow smuggling scam.

CISF arrests 5 at IGI

New Delhi: Four AISATS staffers and an Indian passenger bound for the UK were apprehended at the Delhi airport by CISF personnel for their alleged involvement in a human trafficking racket, a senior officer said Thursday. The company said it has suspended the staffers and that it was part of the operation to unearth this crime.

10 sentenced to RI

Bhopal: Special CBI Judges in Bhopal and Gwalior have sentenced 10 persons to rigorous imprisonment for three to seven years in three separate cases related to the Vyapam entrance examination scam in Madhya Pradesh. The Special CBI Judge in Bhopal has handed down a seven-year rigorous imprisonment sentence along with a fine of ₹0,000 each on Hardik Patel, Sravan Sonar, Dhananjay Kumar, Rakesh Kumar Patel and Mukesh Mourya, who have been charged with fraud and impersonation during the 3013 Pre Medical Test (PMT).

Nitish Kumar debunks 'internal rift' rumours

New Delhi, Dec 28: Debunking speculation of an internal rift with the Janata Dal (United), party's supreme leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Thursday said that JDU's two-day conclave in Delhi was a "normal" and "annual affair", adding that there was "nothing extraordinary" about it. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Janata Dal (United) national president Lalan Singh attended a

Rahul reiterates caste survey promise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 28: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday said the OBCs, Dalits and tribals do not have enough representation in many sectors and reiterated that a caste census will be conducted if the Opposition's INDIA alliance came to power, while party chief Mallikarjun Kharge promised implementation of the NYAY scheme to empower women and the poor.

The two leaders were speaking at the Congress's 139th foundation day rally -- titled 'Hain Taiyyar Hum' (we are ready) -- in Nagpur city which houses the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and sounded the bugle for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Nagpur has two ideologies, one of Dr B R Ambedkar which is progressive and the other of the RSS which is "destroying the nation", Kharge said. Notably, the city is also home to the Deekshabhoomi where Ambedkar converted to Buddhism along with his followers. Senior party leader Sonia Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra did not attend the rally. Gandhi attacked the BJP and RSS, accusing them of taking the country back to the pre-independence era of slavery, and said the BJP's ideology is the ideology of "Raja-Maharajas" (kings) who do not listen to anyone and where an order comes from the top and everybody has to follow it. Citing a conversation with a BJP MP who was earlier with the Congress, he claimed that the BJP treats its workers and leaders like slaves and the voice of the lower rungs is not heard. That was what happened with (present Maharashtra Congress chief)



Nana Patole who left the saffron party after questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi on farmers' issues, he added. In the Congress, concerns of the workers are listened to by the higher-ups including him, Gandhi said. Slamming the BJP for questioning the Congress's contribution, Gandhi said before independence the princely states were "in partnership with the British," while it was the Constitution shaped by Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru which protected the people's rights and gave every citizen the right to vote. "The people in the RSS and BJP were against this...For years they never saluted the national flag," he alleged. The people of India including women had no rights before independence and Dalits were subjected to untouchability, Gandhi said, alleging that "this was the ideology of the RSS which Congress changed, and these people want to bring back the pre-independence era situation again." The foundation of the battle for political power is ideology and

We do not want two Indias. Only the INDIA alliance can provide employment to the youth. The INDIA alliance's government will conduct a caste survey. How many youth have been given employment in the last ten years by the Modi government? Unemployment is at an all-time high now

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

the Congress's objective is to hand over power to the common man," he said. The BJP government has pushed a large number of people back into poverty, he claimed.

OBCs, Dalits and tribals do not have representation in commensurate with their population in many sectors, Gandhi claimed. Speaking in Marathi, Kharge said Nagpur is the land of revolutionaries where Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi once worked. "Democracy is under threat.

Inflation has skyrocketed, unemployment is also high. There are 30 lakh vacancies which are not being filled up because Backward Classes would have to be accommodated," he said. The poor are becoming more poor while the rich are becoming richer under the Modi government, Kharge said.

"If the INDIA alliance is voted to power, the NYAY scheme will be implemented for the empowerment of the poor including women," he said, referring to the scheme promised by the Congress before the 2019 elections where the poor households were to get ₹6,000 per month. Modi does not visit Manipur where atrocities took place on women but he goes to Surat to inaugurate a diamond bourse, the Congress president said. He also alleged that the prime minister does not respect Parliament as he does not attend its proceedings.

Nina Singh becomes 1st woman to head CISF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: Three Manipur-cadre IPS officers were appointed as chiefs of central paramilitary forces Thursday, with astute Intelligence Bureau officer Rahul Rasgotra getting the charge of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and Nina Singh becoming the first woman to head the Central Industrial Security Force.

She is currently the Special Director General of CISF, which mans airports, Delhi Metro, government buildings and strategic installations throughout the country. Singh was inducted into the Indian Police Service (IPS) as a Manipur-cadre officer, but she later moved to Rajasthan cadre.

A 1989-batch IPS officer, she has been holding the additional charge of CISF DG since the superannuation of Sheel Vardhan Singh August 31 this year. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved Nina Singh's appointment as the DG, CISF till July 31, 2024, i.e. The date of her superannuation, a Personnel Ministry order stated. Anish Dayal Singh, a Manipur-cadre IPS officer of 1988 batch, has been made the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

He has been holding the post as an additional charge for the last few weeks besides heading the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

Condolences pour in for 'Captain' Vijayakanth



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 28: Swarms of people thronged the headquarters of the Desiya Murpokku Dravidia Kazhagam (DMDK) here all day to pay homage to their much-loved actor and leader 'Captain' Vijayakanth, who passed away Thursday, following illness. After Vijayakanth's body was brought from a hospital to his residence, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, along with his cabinet colleagues laid a wreath and paid rich tributes to the departed leader, describing him as a beloved friend who scaled the heights of cinema and shone in public life through his dedicated work.

Later, after the mortal remains were brought in a procession to the DMDK headquarters at Koyambedu here, AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami and senior party leaders paid floral tributes.

Describing Vijayakanth as 'dear brother', the former Chief Minister said the DMDK founder won laurels both as a leader and as an actor in the world of cinema.

Besides celebrities, common people, party workers, fans and admirers stood in unending lines in the nooks and crannies of Koyambedu to pay their last respects. Police had a tough time regulating the crowds. By evening, thousands of people had paid homage while chants of 'captain, captain' continuously rent the air.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, former union minister P Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President K S Alagiri, BJP state chief K Annamalai, IUMI leader Prof KM Khader Mohideen, actor-politician Kamal Haasan, and leaders of Left parties as well as Pattali Makkal Katchi, Manithaneya Makkal Katchi were among those who consoled the demise of Vijayakanth. While there are innumerable people and artists in the Tamil film world who remember with gratitude the bighearted icon, actor Sonu Sood said he owed his career to Vijayakanth. On social media platform X, Sood said 'Kallazhagar', his first film ever, was a gift from Vijayakanth.

meeting of its national office-bearers here Thursday, a day before its national executive and council meetings, amid a buzz that Singh may make way for Kumar to lead the party.

Some party leaders said there have been talks even within the organisation about Singh quitting his position in Kumar's favour but made it clear that no such message has been conveyed by either of them so far.

A party leader noted that the

council meeting is generally called to ratify any important decision taken by the national executive.

While the office-bearers discussed the contents of political agenda which will be approved at the meeting of the party's apex bodies, a combative Singh earlier reacted contemptuously to reports about his resignation and a rift within the party, which has a history of swinging across the ideological spectrum to change allies. "You are trying to set the nar-

ative... JD (U) is one and will remain united," he said in response to the media's queries on his resignation and differences in the party, asserting that it is a routine meeting, a view also echoed by Kumar before he boarded the flight from Patna to Delhi.

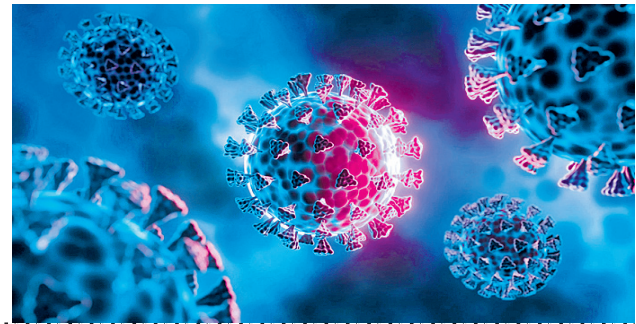
"If I have to resign, I will call you (mediapersons) and consult you about what to write in the resignation letter so that you can go to the BJP office and get the draft," Singh said sarcastically.

India has asked the G20 nations to contribute to the G20 satellite proposed by it through payloads, instruments and it will be launched in the next two years

S SOMNATH | ISRO CHIEF

157 CASES OF JN.1 DETECTED IN INDIA

A total of 157 cases of COVID-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected in the country, with Kerala reporting the highest number of 78, followed by Gujarat at 34, according to the INSACOG's data updated Thursday



Priyanka Gandhi named in ED chargesheet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: Purchase of three plots of land in Haryana in 2005-06 by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra from a real estate agent is being probed along with a land deal made by his wife Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the ED claimed in a recently filed money laundering case charge sheet.

The federal agency filed the charge sheet (prosecution complaint) in November before a Delhi court against UAE-based NRI businessman C C Thampi, who is allegedly linked to Robert Vadra, and Sumit Chadha, a relative of alleged middleman Sanjay Bhandari.

Though Robert Vadra and Priyanka Gandhi, a Congress general secretary, have not been named as accused in the charge sheet, this is the first time that



Priyanka Gandhi has been named in a charge sheet filed before a court.

A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Delhi took cognisance of this charge sheet December 22 and listed the matter for next hearing January 29, 2024. Bhandari fled to the UK in 2016 and the British government approved his extradition to India in January this year acting on a legal request made by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
M.I. DIVISION GANJAM NO.I, BERHAMPUR
E-Procurement Notice
No.A-1097:
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/05/GMID-1/2023-24
 Name of Work : Civil Construction Works
 No. of Work : 07 (Seven)
 Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.16.62 Lakh to Rs.29.92 Lakh
 Period of Completion : 06 (Six) Calendar Month
 Date and Time of Sale and receipt of Bid document online : From 18.01.2024 at 10.00 Hours to 03.02.2024 upto 17.00 Hours.
 Date & Time of Opening of bids : 03.02.2024 at 11.00 Hours
 Name & Address of the Officer : Superintending Engineer
 Inviting Tender : M.I. Division, Ganjam-I, Berhampur
 Further details can be seen from the website: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation of can also be seen in the said website.
 Superintending Engineer
 M.I.Divn., Ganjam-I, Berhampur
 OIPR-32104/11/0019/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-2008
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
KALAHANDI RWS&S DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA
 e-mail: eerwssld@gmail.com, eerwss_kld@nic.in, Phone No. 06670-230784
INVITATION OF BID THROUGH e-TENDERING
Bid Identification No. 77/SE/RWSS/2023-24/Bpt Dated: 27.12.2023
 01. Name of the Work : As per ANNEXURE - A

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for Bidding on office hour only	Date of Opening (Technical Bid)
1	2	3	4
Superintending Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna	77/SE/RWSS/2023-24/Bpt Dated: 27.12.2023	04.01.2024 10.00 A.M.	19.01.2024 05.30 P.M. 20.01.2024 10.00 A.M. Onwards

Cost of tender paper to be made online payment system.
 Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>.
 The original documents should be scanned and uploaded.
 OIPR-25005/11/0014/2324 Sd./ Superintending Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.L-198:
AGRICULTURE & FARMERS EMPOWERMENT DEPARTMENT
DIRECTORATE OF SOIL CONSERVATION & WD, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR
PROJECT DIRECTOR, WATERSHEDS (DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SOIL CONSERVATION), GANJAM, BERHAMPUR
e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification Number-EE (A), SC&WD, SZ-03 of 2023-24
Tender Call Notice No.2119 Date:28.12.2023

Name of the Work	Construction of Infrastructure Works, 2023-24
Total No. of Projects	03 (Three) Numbers
Tender Value of Projects	Varies from Rs.11.00 lakh to Rs.18.00 lakh
Class of Contractor	"D" & "C" Class (Of Odisha PWD) or relevant Class of other licensing authorities
Period of Completion	As per TCN

Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification Number	Availability of Tender online for bidding	Submission of Original Documents	Date & Place of Opening of tender
1	2	3	4	5
Executive Engineer (Agril), Soil Conservation & WD (S/Z), Berhampur-03 of 2023-24	E.E (A), SOIL Conservation & WD (S/Z), Berhampur-03 of 2023-24	01.01.2024 from 11.00 AM upto 5.00 PM	16.01.2024 upto 5.00 PM	During office hours of working days from 17.01.2024 from 11.00AM to 18.01.2024 up to 05.00 PM in the Office of the Executive Engineer(Agril), SC & WD,SZ, C/o Project Director, Watersheds Development-cum-Deputy Director of Soil Conservation, Court-peta, Ganjam, Berhampur, 760010 (To be dropped in the sealed Box)

 Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
 Sd./ Executive Engineer (Agril), Soil Conservation & WD Southern Zone, Berhampur
 OIPR-01503/11/0005/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA Mail Id: sebcbpd@gmail.com
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
BARIPADA IRRIGATION CIRCLE
AT/PO:TAKATPUR, BARIPADA, DIST-MAYURBHANJ
Government of Odisha, "e" Procurement Notice
No.A-1094:
Notice No.ACEBIC/BLS/03/2023-24

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Bid Identification No.	Estimated Cost	Bid Security/ E.M.D
1	Improvement to road on Adhuan mohanpur saline embankment and extension portion	03/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,28,02,698.00	Rs.4,29,000.00
2	Improvement to Dhamara Bansada saline embankment	04/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,28,37,913.00	Rs.4,29,000.00
3	Improvement to connecting road from Parapokhori right side embankment to Dhamara PWD road	05/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,28,15,494.00	Rs.4,29,000.00
4	Improvement to road on Raigharpokhori sardar sahi to Raigharpokhori & OCC R-V left embankment	06/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,28,03,618.00	Rs.4,29,000.00
5	Improvement to road from Baunsa adia CC road to Khala-bania via Kansabansana sluice and Panchavisa sluice	07/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,27,93,285.00	Rs.4,28,000.00
6	Improvement to Jamkunda F.E. from RD 00 m to 2500m & Palpa F.E. from RD 3400m to 5000m	08/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,61,70,623.00	Rs.4,62,000.00
7	Improvement to road on OCC Range-iv (B) Left Bank from Solpata to Tiakhia (RD138.400km to 145.400km), right bank from solpata foot bridge to Gududa Chhak (RD140.600km to 142.600 km) & Kasaba TRE (RD 0.00 to 2.00 km)	09/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,36,51,995.00	Rs.4,37,000.00
8	Improvement to road on OCC R-V right embankment from Avana RD road to Baranadi OCC sluice via Kharasahapur	10/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,27,93,357.00	Rs.4,28,000.00
9	Improvement to road on Laxmannath Pirahat TRE, Gobarghata TRE and Tikayatpur TRE	11/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,28,03,931.00	Rs.4,29,000.00
10	Improvement to right bank of OCC R-(V) from RD 14.00 to 16.00 km	12/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,28,81,608.00	Rs.4,29,000.00
11	Improvement to road Barunisingh to Kulgaon TRE from RD 0.00km to 4.00 km	13/23-24 of ACE/BIC	Rs.4,34,45,723.00	Rs.4,35,000.00

General Instruction for all 11 nos. of Works

1	Period of Completion	6 (Six) Calendar Months
2	Class of Contractor	"A" Class
3	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	04.01.2024 at 10.00 AM
4	Last date/time for receipt of bid in the portal	23.01.2024 upto 5.00 PM
5	Date of Opening of Bid	24.01.2024 at 11.00 AM
6	Name & Address of the O.I.T.	Additional Chief Engineer, Baripada Irrigation Circle, AT/PO- Takatpur, Baripada, Dist-Mayurbhanj

 Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>".
 Sd./ Additional Chief Engineer
 Baripada Irrigation Circle, Baripada
 OIPR-32162/11/0008/2324

international



It is necessary to cut the vicious cycle of violence, to remove the injustice that several generations of Palestinians have been suffering from. This is the only way to achieve stabilisation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict area and in the entire Middle Eastern region in general
SERGEY LAVROV | RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

PLANE LANDS ON FROZEN RIVER BY MISTAKE

A Soviet-era Antonov-24 aircraft carrying 30 passengers landed on a frozen river near an airport in Russia's far east Thursday because of pilot error, transport prosecutors said



of the day quote

The use of military tactics and weapons in law enforcement contexts, the use of unnecessary or disproportionate force, and the enforcement of broad, arbitrary and discriminatory movement restrictions that affect Palestinians are extremely troubling
VOLKER TURK | UN RIGHTS CHIEF

In case of provocations, I ask you to immediately retaliate in response and report it later
YOON SUK YEOL | SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

France will work in the coming days in cooperation with Jordan to carry out the humanitarian operations in Gaza
EMMANUEL MACRON | FRENCH PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Qureshi sent to 14-day custody

Islamabad: A court in Pakistan Thursday rejected a police plea seeking a 30-day remand of former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and instead sent him to a 14-day judicial custody in a fresh case linked to the May 9 attack on military installations. The development comes a day after the 67-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vice chairman was arrested by the Punjab police in a bizarre show of power by pushing him into an armoured van as he was booked in a fresh case linked to May 9 riots, just when he was released on bail in the cipher case. According to media reports, he was also implicated in a dozen similar cases.

Iran holds funeral for a general

Tehran: Iran held a funeral Thursday for a high-ranking general of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard who was killed by an alleged Israeli airstrike in Syria. Hundreds of mourners accompanied the flag-draped casket of Gen. Razi Mousavi from a central square of Tehran to a shrine in the north of the city where he was buried. The head of the Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami, praised Mousavi and vowed his death would be avenged. "We will never keep silent in the face of martyrdom of the sons of this nation," Salami said.

Six of Indian family killed in US

Houston: In a horrific accident, at least six members of an Indian family, including two children, were killed when their minivan collided head-on with a pickup truck in the US state of Texas, officials said. The accident occurred Tuesday evening near Johnson County, near Fortworth, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). Seven people of the same family from Amalapuram town in Andhra Pradesh were in the minivan, and only one of them, 43-year-old Lokesh Potabathula, survived with critical injuries.

10 dead, 57 hurt

Ankara: A chain-reaction crash Thursday involving seven vehicles on a motorway in northwest Turkey killed at least 10 people and injured 57 others, officials said. The pileup occurred in dense fog and low visibility on the Northern Marmara Highway in Sakarya province, some 150 kilometres (93 miles) from Istanbul. An investigation has been launched into the accident but Gov. Yasar Karadeniz of Sakarya said it likely occurred when a vehicle hit a truck in poor visibility, triggering other crashes at the rear.

TIES MAKING STEADY HEADWAY: PUTIN

THE TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND RUSSIA REMAINED STRONG NOTWITHSTANDING MOSCOW'S INVASION OF UKRAINE
INDIA HAS NOT YET CONDEMNED THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE AND IT HAS BEEN MAINTAINING THAT THE CRISIS MUST BE RESOLVED THROUGH DIPLOMACY AND DIALOGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Dec 28: Russia's relations with India and its people are making "steady headway" despite the "current turbulences" in the world, President Vladimir Putin has said and expressed confidence that the two countries will maintain their traditional friendly ties in "any alignment of political forces" after elections in India. Putin's remarks came Wednesday when visiting External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on him at the Kremlin. "We are very pleased to note that despite the current turbulences in the world, relations with our traditional friends in Asia, with India and the Indian people are making steady head-



It is complicated considering that India will hold general elections to Parliament. We wish success to our friends in India. We believe we will maintain our traditional friendly ties in any alignment of political forces
VLADIMIR PUTIN | RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

way," Putin said. The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been main-

taining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue. "We know Prime Minister Modi's position and we have repeatedly spoken about this — the position concerning his attitude to complex processes, including hotspots, to the situation in Ukraine," Putin said. "I have repeatedly informed him about the situation around this conflict. I know about his desire to do everything to resolve this problem peacefully, but we will now talk more about it. We will provide you with additional information about this situation," Putin said. Putin said he would be happy

to see "our friend", Prime Minister Modi in Russia. "We will have an opportunity to discuss the current issues and talk about the prospects for developing Russian-Indian relations. We have to cover a lot of ground," Putin said. "So I would like to ask you to convey to him my best wishes and please, give him our invitation — we are looking forward to seeing him in Russia," Putin said. He acknowledged that India's domestic political calendar is not simple. "It is complicated considering that India will hold general elections to parliament. We wish success to our friends in India. We believe we will maintain our traditional friendly ties in any alignment of political forces," Putin, who is seeking a fifth term in office in March next year, said. Jaishankar, on his part, conveyed the personal greetings of Prime Minister Modi and also handed over a letter to Putin in which he expressed his thoughts about the state of India-Russia cooperation and the progress that the two sides have made in recent days, according to a press release issued by the Kremlin.

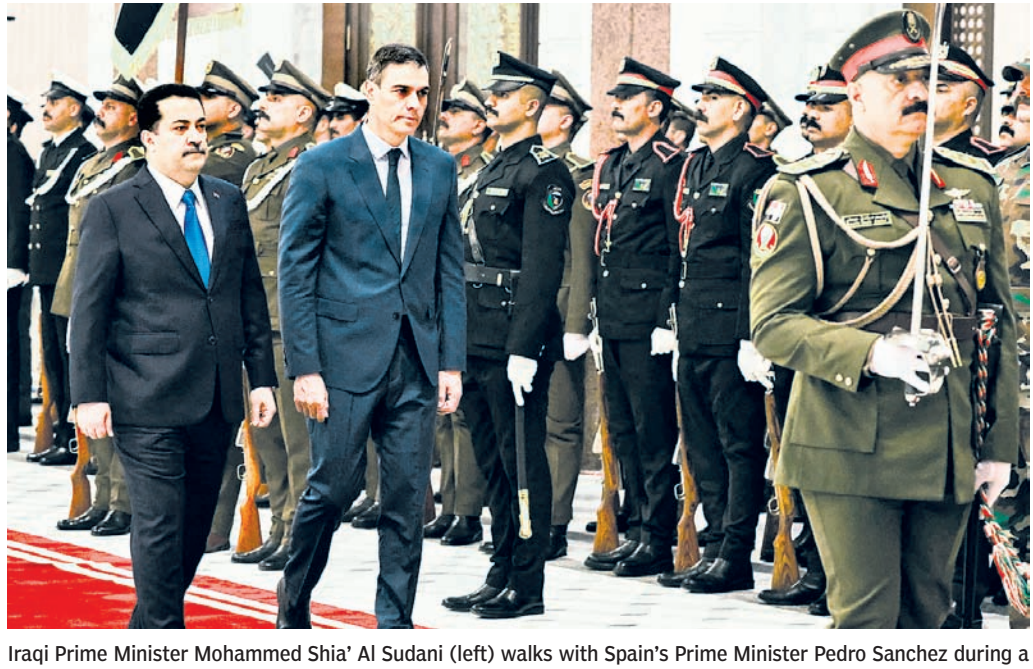
Human error behind plane crash: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Dec 28: The crash of a Yeti Airlines' aircraft in January this year that killed all 72 people on board, including five Indians, in Nepal's resort city of Pokhara was caused by human error, according to an inquiry report submitted to the government Thursday. Yeti Airlines' 9N-ANC ATR-72 aircraft crashed on the bank of the Seti River between the old airport and the new airport minutes before landing January 15. A five-member Investigation Commission formed after the crash said in its report that the aircraft crash January 15, 2023, was due to human error, Nepal's official news agency RSS reported.



The five Indians - Abhisekh Kushwaha (25), Bishal Sharma (22), Anil Kumar Rajbhar (27), Sonu Jaiswal (35) and Sanjaya Jaiswal (26) - were among 72 people on board when the plane crashed. The Commission formed under the coordination of former Secretary Nagendra Prasad Ghimire submitted the report to the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Sudan Kirati. It took eight months and three days for the Commission to carry out the investigation and prepare the report. The government had formed the five-member probe commission on the day of the plane crash.



Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani (left) walks with Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez during a welcoming ceremony in Baghdad, Iraq
PTI PHOTO

Zelensky thanks US for \$250 mn aid

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Kyiv, Ukraine, Dec 28: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky Thursday thanked the US for releasing the last remaining package of weapons available for Ukraine under existing authorisation, as uncertainty surrounds further aid to his war-torn country. Zelensky had warned that any change in policy from the US -- Kyiv's main backer -- could have a strong impact on the course of the war. "I thank President Joe Biden, Congress, and the American people for the \$250 million military aid package announced yesterday," Zelensky said on social media. "To defend freedom and security not only in Ukraine and Europe but also in the United States, we must continue to respond to ongoing Russian aggression," he said. President Joe Biden has made backing Ukraine a priority and US weapons and financial assistance have been crucial in helping the pro-Western country battle against a far larger attacking Russian force. Republicans have led a push to halt the effort, refusing to authorise new budget outlays unless the Democrats first agree to sweeping, tough new measures against illegal migration. Zelensky said that the equipment provided in the final package -- including air defence missiles, anti-tank weapons and mine clearing equipment -- "will cover Ukraine's most pressing needs". The Ukrainian President also thanked the US for 34 military aid packages worth over \$24 billion this year and its "historic decision" to provide F-16 jets, saying: "We will always be grateful for all of this support."

Israel pounds Gaza, dozens killed



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deir Al-Balah, Dec 28: Israeli forces bombarded cities, towns and refugee camps across Gaza overnight and into Thursday, killing dozens of people in an air and ground offensive against Hamas that has widened to most of the territory and forced thou-

sands more to flee from homes and shelters. The war has already killed over 20,000 Palestinians and driven around 85 per cent of the population of 2.3 million from their homes. Much of northern Gaza has been leveled, largely depopulated and isolated from the rest of the territory for weeks.

Many fear a similar fate awaits the south. Israel has vowed to dismantle Hamas — which is still putting up stiff resistance, even in the north — and bring back more than 100 hostages still held by the militants after their October 7 attack into southern Israel, in which some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed. Israel has brushed off international calls for a cease-fire — saying it would amount to a victory for Hamas. The United States — while providing crucial support for the offensive — has urged Israel to take greater measures to spare civilians and allow in more aid. But aid workers say the amount of food, fuel and medical supplies entering is still far below what is needed, and 1 in 4 Palestinians in Gaza are starving, according to U.N. officials.

No thaw in sight in India, China ties for 4th year

The ties between the two countries after the two high-profile informal summits between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping remain frozen and India has made it clear that peace and tranquility at the border is the sine qua non for the overall development of bilateral ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 28: With Beijing remaining intransigent on the withdrawal of additional troops deployed by the PLA since the deadly border clash in 2020 in eastern Ladakh, India's bilateral ties with China remained frozen in 2023 with no forward movement on the horizon despite several rounds of diplomatic and military talks. The relationship has remained frozen since May 2020 when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) amassed troops in eastern

Ladakh that led to a deadly clash between the two militaries at the Galwan Valley in June 2020, resulting in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese military personnel. In the words of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the Chinese literally brought tens of thousands of soldiers in full military preparation at the border in Ladakh in violation of all bilateral agreements. The ties between the two countries after the two high-profile informal summits between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and



Chinese President Xi Jinping remain frozen and India has made it clear that peace and tranquility at the border is the sine qua non for the overall development of bilateral ties. "There has been no significant de-escalation or de-induction of additional troops deployed by both sides since mid-2020, even during winter months of four consecutive years," former Indian Ambassador to China

Ashok Kantha said, commenting on the present state of Sino-India ties. "Thus, the situation in border areas in Eastern Ladakh remains seriously disturbed due to unilateral actions taken by China," Kantha, who made two visits to China in recent months and interacted extensively with the Chinese think tanks on India-China relations, said in an email interview here.

As the ties remained frozen, India may have to maintain "strategic patience" in its engagement with China to break the logjam, Kantha, who is also the Honorary Fellow and former Director of the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi said. Amid the prevailing tensions, the two countries held 20 rounds of Corps Commanders level talks besides the diplomatic channel called Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) and completed disengagement from five areas. "Through difficult negotiations, there has been disengagement of troops at five friction points", though only after the deadly clash in the Galwan Valley," Kantha said. "These understandings on disengagement have involved the creation of 'buffer zones' partly on our side of the Line of Actual Control

(LAC) and denial of access to our troops to several patrolling points they were visiting earlier," he said. Talks, however, are deadlocked over disengagement in the Depsang and Demchok areas as the Chinese argue that they are legacy issues that happened well before May 2020. "As a result, the situation in border areas in Eastern Ladakh remains seriously disturbed due to unilateral actions taken by China," Kantha said. He pointed out that there is a basic divergence in the positions of the two sides. While India has maintained that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal, China continues to press India to delink the border issue and bilateral relations and work for normalcy.



Reliance can and Reliance will grow to be among the top 10 business conglomerates of the world
MUKESH AMBANI | CHAIRMAN AND MD, RELIANCE

MINERAL BLOCKS IN FOCUS FOR 2024

Auctioning of critical mineral and offshore mineral blocks as well as giving exploration licences in 2024 is set to rejuvenate the country's mining sector that has the potential for a multiplier effect on economic growth. As the government focuses on self reliance, Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi told PTI, "every few months (in 2024) we will bring out a new batch of critical minerals for auction"



of the day quote

Banks should effectively manage their interest rate risks. They will have a tough time if they depend too much on higher-priced bulk deposits

SWAMINATHAN J | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

It's an irony that despite being the largest debt investor, we don't have access to debt or the national debt database CRILIC. We are in active discussion with the regulator for the same and are confident of getting that access

SIDDHARTHA MOHANTY | CHAIRMAN, LIC

From the rise in generative AI skills to the enduring importance of programming languages and the growing demand for expertise in cybersecurity, it's clear that adaptability and upskilling remain pivotal for success in the tech industry

SASHI KUMAR | HEAD OF SALES, INDEED INDIA

MULTI-YEAR LOW

Banks' NPAs drop

On the back of country's resilient domestic financial system, the bad assets of banks have witnessed a significant downfall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

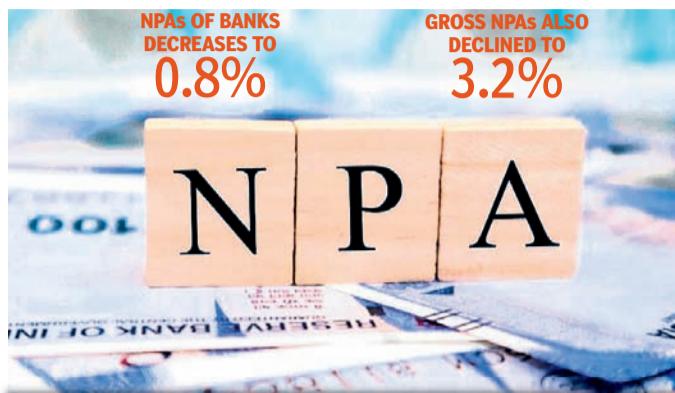
Mumbai, Dec 28: The Reserve Bank Thursday said net non-performing assets (NPAs) ratio of banks declined to a multi-year low of 0.8 per cent at the end of September 2023 and the country's domestic financial system remains resilient.

"The resilience of the non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) sector improved with CRAR at 27.6 per cent, GNPA ratio at 4.6 per cent and return on assets (RoA) at 2.9 per cent, respectively, in September 2023," said the RBI's Financial Stability Report (FSR). The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of banks also declined to a multi-year low of 3.2 per cent, it said.

The report reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on risks to financial stability and the resilience of the Indian financial system.

Further said that the capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) and the common equity tier 1 (CET1) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) stood at 16.8 per cent and 13.7 per cent, respectively, in September 2023.

"Macro stress tests for credit risk reveal that SCBs would be able to comply with minimum



India is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world with a rising potential growth profile. We remain alert and committed to act early and decisively to prevent any build-up of risks

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

capital requirements, with the system-level CRAR in September 2024 projected at 14.8 per cent, 13.5 per cent and 12.2 per cent, respectively, under baseline, medium and severe stress scenarios," the report said.

The consolidated balance sheet of SCBs in 2022-23 expanded by 12.2 per cent, driven by credit to retail and services sectors. Deposit growth also picked up, although it trailed credit growth.

The acceleration in gross bank credit at 15 per cent during 2022-23 was led by personal loans, which grew by 20.6 per cent and credit extended to the services

sector, which registered a growth of 19.8 per cent.

Within the personal loans segment, the growth in credit card receivables, which are a form of unsecured lending, rose sharply to 30.9 per cent. Unsecured lending, which are characterised by absence or inadequacy of collateral, the report said such loans present a higher credit risk for banks in the event of defaults. The share of unsecured advances in total credit of banks has been increasing since end-March 2015, reaching 25.5 per cent by end-March 2023. More than 50 per cent of loans

India may remain fastest growing major economy in '24: Assocham

India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6% in last quarter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: India is likely to remain the fastest-growing major economy in the world in 2024 on the back of strong consumer demand leading to a pickup in investment across sectors such as construction, hospitality and infrastructure including railways and aviation, Assocham said Thursday.

India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6 per cent in the July-September quarter on booster shots from government spending and manufacturing. The country's Gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.6 per cent beat most estimates, including 6.5 per cent projected by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The growth compares to 6.2 per cent in the same quarter last year and 7.8 per cent expansion

in the preceding quarter, official data released Thursday showed. India's GDP growth beat China's 4.9 per cent rise in July-September, while the Western economies are getting crushed under high-interest rates and energy prices.

According to the industry body, India Inc led by financials, construction, hotels, aviation, automobile and other manufacturing areas like electronics are on a strong pitch to further improve performance in the coming year.

The trajectory is being helped by the low crude oil prices, keeping inflation in check with a big positive on raw material cost. "Sectors like construction have several related industries which too have gained momentum. These include steel, cement, mining, electricity generation and consumer durables," Assocham stated.

The macroeconomic indicators including government balance sheet reflected in strong tax collections, record foreign exchange reserves, stability in the rupee against major currencies and signs of revival in merchandise exports are expected to further improve, it estimated.

India's macro picture looks quite convincing with the overall economy following a trend growth of seven per cent with critical building blocks combining to give it brighter prospects

DEEPAK SOOD | SECRETARY GENERAL, ASSOCHAM

Investors' wealth surges as equities continue to climb

BENCHMARKS HIT FRESH LIFETIME HIGHS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: With the equity markets rallying for the fifth day running, investors' wealth climbed ₹12.80 lakh crore, amid prevailing bullish sentiments due to optimism over the country's macroeconomic fundamentals and fresh foreign fund inflows.

Rising for the fifth consecutive day, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 371.95 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 72,410.38. During the day, it rallied 445.91 points or 0.61 per cent to reach its lifetime peak of 72,484.34. In the last five trading sessions, the BSE benchmark rallied 1,904.07 points or 2.70 per cent.

Thanks to the optimistic trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms went up by ₹12,80,559.2 crore in five days to reach an all-time high of ₹3,63,00,558.07 crore.

The Nifty climbed 123.95 points or 0.57 per cent to settle at a fresh record of 21,778.70. During the day, it zoomed 146.7 points or 0.67 per cent to hit its lifetime high of 21,801.45.

"Markets witnessed bullish



LAST 5 TRADING SESSIONS

INVESTORS GET RICHER BY ₹12.80-LACRORE

M-CAP OF BSE-LISTED FIRMS AT RECORD HIGH

bets on the monthly F&O expiry day, indicating that the risk-on sentiment is likely to continue going ahead on hopes of a strong local macro play in the new year. The waning higher inflation concerns and expectations of an early rate cut in the world's largest economy has further strengthened hopes that India's growth momentum would continue further thus boosting investors' confidence," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Among the Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, Power Grid, Nestle, Tata Motors, ITC, Bharti Airtel and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the major gainers. In contrast, Larsen & Toubro, Wipro, UltraTech Cement, TCS and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul,

Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled with gains, while Tokyo ended lower. The US markets ended in the green Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.73 per cent to \$79.07 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers Wednesday after continuous offloading and bought equities worth ₹2,926.05 crore, according to exchange data.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.66 per cent, and smallcap index advanced 0.23 per cent.

Among the indices, oil & gas jumped 2.45 per cent, energy rallied 2.18 per cent, metal (1.60 per cent), FMCG (1.24 per cent), realty (0.97 per cent) and power (0.95 per cent).

On the other hand, industrials and IT were the laggards.

SHORT TAKES

Coal production rises over 12%

New Delhi: The country's coal production increased 12.29 per cent to 664.37 Million Tonne (MT) from April to December 25 this fiscal over the year-ago period, according to an official statement. The country's coal output was 591.64 MT in the same period last year. "As per the latest statistics of the Ministry of Coal, the cumulative achievement in coal production during FY 2023-24, from April 2023 to December 25, 2023, has touched 664.37 MT, indicating a substantial 12.29 per cent growth compared to the corresponding period last year at 591.64 MT," according to an official statement.

Pruthi new CGM of SBI Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar: Dinesh Pruthi took charge as the Chief General Manager (CGM) of Bhubaneswar Circle, State Bank of India (SBI). Prior to the new assignment, 1991-batch Probationary Officer Pruthi was working as the Chief General Manager (Special Projects), Corporate Centre, Mumbai. He replaced Chander Shekhar Sharma, who was transferred to SBI Bhopal Circle as the CGM.



WITH THE LAUNCH OF SU7, THE CHINESE FIRM PLANS TO BECOME TOP AUTOMAKER GLOBALLY

Xiaomi unveils first electric car

REUTERS

Beijing, Dec 28: Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi took the wraps off its first electric vehicle Thursday and promptly announced it was aiming to become one of the world's top five automakers.

The sedan, dubbed the SU7 with the SU short for Speed Ultra, is a highly anticipated model that Chief Executive Lei Jun touted as having "super electric motor" technology capable of delivering acceleration speeds faster than Tesla cars and Porsche's EVs.

But the car - likely to go on sale in several months - is making its debut at a time when China's auto market - the world's largest - is wrestling with a capacity glut and slowing demand that has stoked a bruising price war.

That didn't stop Xiaomi Chief Executive Lei Jun from outlining big ambitions. "By working hard over the



next 15 to 20 years, we will become one of the world's top 5 automakers, striving to lift China's overall automobile industry," he said at the unveiling.

Those plans include building "a dream car comparable to Porsche and Tesla," he added.

The SU7 is also expected to appeal to customers due to its shared operating system with Xiaomi's popular phones and other electronic devices. Its drivers will have seamless access to

the company's existing portfolio of mobile apps.

The SU7 will come in two versions - one with a driving range of up to 668 km (415 miles) on a single charge and another with a range of up to 800 km. By comparison, Tesla's Model S has a range of up to 650 km.

Pricing has yet to be announced. Lei said the cost would "indeed be a bit high, but one that will have everyone will think is justified."

Amid one of the coldest Decembers for China on record, the SU7 was also being positioned to appeal to consumers worried about winter. Lei said it had fast-charging capabilities in low temperatures and is equipped with advanced tech allowing it to recognize obstacles under challenging conditions such as falling snow.

China's fifth-largest smartphone maker has been seeking to diversify beyond its core business to EVs amid stagnating demand for smartphones - a plan it first flagged in 2021. Other Chinese tech companies that have partnered with automakers to develop EVs include telecoms giant Huawei and search engine firm Baidu.

Xiaomi has pledged to invest \$10 billion in autos over a decade and is one of the few new players in China's EV market to gain approval from authorities who have been reluctant to add to the supply glut.

TAX TROUBLE

Zomato gets ₹401.7 crore GST liability notice

New Delhi: Online food delivery firm Zomato Ltd has been served a ₹401.7 crore GST liability show cause notice over delivery charges, the company said in a regulatory filing. Zomato, however, asserted that it is not liable to pay the amount, as delivery charge is collected by it on behalf of delivery partners. Zomato asserted that it "strongly believes that it is not liable to pay any tax since the delivery charge is collected by the company on behalf of the delivery partners." The company will be filing an appropriate response to the SCN, Zomato added.

M&M gets ₹56L tax penalty

New Delhi: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd Thursday said it has been imposed a penalty of over ₹56 lakh for wrongly carrying forward input service distributor credit available in pre-GST into GST regime with regards to its two-wheeler business. The company has received an order from the office of the Assistant Commissioner, Division-IV, CGST & Central Excise, Ahmedabad South imposing a penalty amounting to ₹56,04,246 in relation to the two-wheeler business of Mahindra Two Wheelers Ltd (MTWL), which was demerged from MTWL and has since been merged with M&M, Mahindra & Mahindra said in a regulatory filing. The company said based on its assessment, an appeal will be filed.

ICICI, Kotak Mahindra get GST demand notice

New Delhi: ICICI Bank Thursday said tax authorities have slapped a demand notice of ₹26.8 crore on it for alleged short payment of GST. Goods and Services Tax (GST) demand of ₹24.37 crore with a penalty of ₹2.43 crore was served on December 27, ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing. Kotak Mahindra Bank in a separate regulatory filing said it received a ₹62.3 lakh GST demand notice December 27.

FUNDRAISING SHINES

QIP cos garner ₹50K-cr in 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: Fundraising through the issuance of shares to institutional investors skyrocketed, as companies raked in ₹50,218 crore in 2023, marking a six-fold surge from the previous year and indicating a positive outlook among investors.

Apart from QIPs, fund mobilisation through rights issue of shares and OFS (Offer-for-Sale) route too surged in 2023.

Market experts attributed the primary reason for the increase in Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) fundraising to the market and investor sentiments that play an important role in their success.

As long as positive market vibes persist, and investors continue to reap returns, listed companies lean towards opting for fundraising through QIP as this avenue ensures swift access to funds, they added.

According to data by the National Stock Exchange (NSE), companies collected ₹50,218 crore through QIPs in 2023, which was way higher than ₹8,196 crore raised in the preceding year. Bajaj Finance Ltd spearheaded the largest QIP, securing about ₹8,800 crore. Following suit, Union Bank of India and Bank of India raised around ₹5,000 crore and ₹4,500 crore, respectively.

Bata gets ₹60cr sales tax notice

Kolkata: Footwear major Bata India has received a notice from the State Tax Officer, Anna Salai Assessment Circle, Chennai, amounting to ₹60.56 crore, the company said in a filing to the bourses Thursday. The notice dated December 27, 2023, pertains to several issues raised in a final audit report December 25, for the 2018-19 financial year, according to the filing. The company said it initially received an audit notice April 27, 2023, and submitted relevant documents in response. Bata India was given a personal hearing January 10, 2024, to present its case and provide further information on the disputed issues, as per the filing.

ICICI Bank



Proteas pin down India Eves go down against Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Marco Jansen (R) and Dean Elgar



Virat Kohli fought a lone battle

have been licking their lips. With 163 runs in arrears, there was little chance of survival on a track where the ball was flying around and also jugging a fair bit. Once Elgar and Jansen batted India out of the match, least one expected was a decent fightback but save Virat Kohli (76, 82b, 12x4, 1x6), who showed why he is cut above the rest in terms of technique and temperament, others were found wanting.

Earlier veteran Elgar missed out on a well-deserved maiden double hundred but inflicted enough damage on India in company of young Jansen to bat the visitors out with a 111-run sixth wicket stand. Jasprit Bumrah (4/69) was the best bowler for India.

BRIEF SCORES

India 245 & 131 (Virat Kohli 76, Shubman Gill 26; Nandre Burger 4/33, Marco Jansen 3/36, Kagiso Rabada 2/32) lost to South Africa 408 (Dean Elgar 185, 287b, 28x4). Even Marco Jansen (84 n o, 147b, 11x4, 1x6) made merry on a track where fast bowlers would

Mumbai, Dec 28: India Women succumbed to their sixth consecutive defeat and eighth in a row at home despite recording the highest-ever ODI total against Australia, as the visitors registered a commanding six-wicket win in the first match here Thursday.

Phoebe Litchfield (78, 89b, 8x4, 1x6) and Ellyse Perry (75, 72b, 9x4, 2x6) anchored the chase with a resolute 148-run stand for the second wicket as Australia replied with 285/4 in 46.3 overs to overhaul India's 282/8 and take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

After Phoebe and Ellyse fell in quick succession, Beth Mooney (42, 47b, 4x4) and Tahlija McGrath (68 n o, 55b, 11x4) flattened India with a 67-ball 88-run stand for the fourth wicket. Australia got over the line with 21 balls and six wickets to spare with none of the Indian bowlers able to make any impact.

India made a perfect start by dealing an early blow to



Phoebe Litchfield (L) & Ellyse Perry

Australia, who lost Alyssa Healy (0) in the first over when Sneha Rana flew to her left to take an acrobatic catch off Renuka Thakur. But India could not capitalise further on the initial success as Australia ran away with the game, aided by some ordinary effort in the field from the hosts.

Earlier, a fine 82 (77b, 7x4) from Jemimah Rodrigues and a brisk unbeaten 62 (46b, 7x4, 2x6) from Pooja Vastrakar pro-

pelled India Women to their highest ODI total of 282/8. India's previous-best against Australia in ODIs was 281/4 at Derby in 2017.

With several top-order batters failing to convert starts, Jemimah battled energy-sapping heat and humidity to carry her imperious form. She forged several partnerships, including a 68-run stand with Pooja for the eighth wicket.

India's late surge saw the hosts collect 56 runs in the last six overs with Pooja carrying on after Jemimah had fallen to Ashleigh Gardner (2/63). Opening the batting for India, Yastika Bhatia too played a handy knock (49, 64b, 7x4).

BRIEF SCORES

India Women 282/8 (Jemimah Rodrigues 82, Pooja Vastrakar 62 n o, Yastika Bhatia 49; Georgia Wareham 2/55, Ashleigh Gardner 2/63) lost to Australia Women 285/4 (Phoebe Litchfield 78, Ellyse Perry 75, Tahlija McGrath 68, Beth Mooney 42; Renuka Singh 1/30) by 6 wickets.

UP MEN ACE JUNIOR ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS NATIONAL C'SHIPS

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: Uttar Pradesh claimed the gold medal in the men's team event on the opening day of the Junior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships at the Gymnastics Centre in the Kalinga Stadium here, Thursday. Maharashtra secured silver, while West Bengal bagged bronze.

Uttar Pradesh posted an all-around score of 278.40, Maharashtra cumulated a total of 274.25 and West Bengal recorded 268.80 points to secure podium finishes in the men's category. Odisha secured fourth place with a total of 267.00 points, while Delhi finished fifth with 253.95 points.

In the individual all-around ranking, Uttar Pradesh's Pranav Mishra finished on top with a



total of 71.55 points. He recorded 12.65 points on the Floor Exercise, 10.90 on Pommel Horse, 12.60 on Rings, 12.15 on Vault, 11.65 on Parallel Bars and 11.60 on Horizontal Bar.

Odisha's Alok Kumar finished third. He posted an all-around score of 68.90 on the back of Floor Exercise (11.75), Pommel Horse (10.60), Rings (11.80), Vault (12.35), Parallel Bars (11.05) and Horizontal Bar (11.35). Another state lad Biru Chandra Rao finished seventh with an all-around score of 67.40.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Odisha FC pitted against ASEAN Zone champs

KUALA LUMPUR: Odisha FC have been pitted against a yet to be determined ASEAN Zone champions in the Inter-Zone semifinal of the ongoing AFC Cup during a draw ceremony here Thursday. The ISL side had emerged victorious in the AFC Cup South Zone, having beaten Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh in their final Group D encounter earlier this month. The ASEAN Zone final will take place February 22 and the winner will face the Bhubaneswar-based club in the Inter-Zone semifinal, which will be a double-leg affair.

Roll ball tourney

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha teams left for Jamshedpur Thursday for the National East Zone U-14 Roll Ball Championship in Tata, Jamshedpur Dec 29-30. **Girls' team:** Bhavya Ishana Rout (C), Vansika Guru, Kamal Krishna (GK), Anushka Mahapatro, Wanshika Sriipta Rout, Nafisa Naaz, Aishwarya Patra, Lola Deekshita, Kripalini Behera, Adwita Pandey, Swetaparna Priyadarisni & Bhumija Padhi; **Boys' team:** Pratik Arnav Jena (C), Vivaan Tikmani, Saatvik Raysamanta, Saswat Kumar Sahoo, Harshit Goel, Biren Das (GK), Subham Kumar Dora, Arush Das, Sithitapragyan Jena, Anish Patnaik, Ganeswar Behera & Tridibesh Panda.

CCCL cricket meet

BHUBANESWAR: The 14th Charitable Corporate Cricket League (CCCL) concluded successfully at Hi-tech Medical College Ground with the ODM Group emerging as the champions. It was a lopsided final as ODM Group crushed TPCODL by 97 runs. Batting first, ODM Group posted 199/4 on the board. The scoreboard pressure got into TPCODL team and they could reach 102/8 wickets in the allocated 10 overs. Bibhab Jena from ODM Group scored a 14-ball 68 with 10 sixes and 2 fours and he was adjudged the Player of the Match.

Man City rally for win

LONDON: Trailing 1-0 to Everton at halftime, Manchester City didn't much look like the newly crowned Club World Cup champion despite the new golden FIFA badge on the front of the players' shirts. Phil Foden started the comeback by equalising in the 53rd minute, before Julian Alvarez's penalty and a late goal by Bernardo Silva secured a 3-1 win at Everton to put the defending champions back into the Premier League's top four. City are five points behind leaders Liverpool with a game in hand. League victories at Stamford Bridge have been hard to come by for Chelsea in 2023. But their last home game of the year ended in a 2-1 win over Crystal Palace after substitute Noni Madueke converted a late penalty for the hosts. Blues took the lead through Mykhailo Mudryk in the 13th minute. Michael Olise equalised for Palace just before the break.

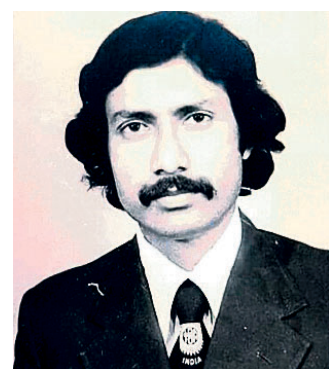
Former India footballer Prabir Majumdar no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 28: Former Indian defender Prabir Majumdar died Thursday after suffering from a brief illness. He was 77 and is survived by his wife and a son.

A stylish wing-back of the 1960s and 1970s, Majumdar was a member of the Indian team in the 1974 Asian Games. He also featured for the national side during the 1974 Asian Games held in Tehran, where the team failed to create an impact and finished at the bottom of the group table.

Expressing his condolences, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey said: "Prabir-da was one of the most dependable and respected defenders of his time and stood out among many star players. I extend my sincerest condolences to his



family at this time of sorrow." In the domestic circuit, Majumdar was a part of East Bengal and Eastern Railways, besides also representing Bengal in the Santosh Trophy. His stint with East Bengal was the highlight of his career during the 1970s, as the club had a golden run during that phase.




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