

DP's observation
Actor Deepika Padukone says it is always easy to get carried away by fame and money

Iran vows revenge
Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards and First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber vows revenge for explosions that killed 100 people

Big move by IndiGo
IndiGo announces withdrawal of fuel charge collected from passengers, a move that will reduce airfares by up to ₹1K on certain long routes

Historic victory
Jasprit Bumrah helps India to a series-levelling win against South Africa in the shortest game ever played in Test history

QATAR ROW Indians get 60 days to appeal

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 4: The eight jailed former Indian Navy personnel in Qatar have been given 60 days' time to appeal against the varying prison terms handed by a Qatari court last week that came following commutation of their death sentences, the Ministry of External Affairs said Thursday.

The Court of Appeal in Qatar December 28 commuted the death sentence handed down to the Indians in October and sentenced them to prison for varying durations, weeks after their family members filed an appeal against the earlier order by another court.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the legal team of the Indian nationals received a copy of the court order that he described as a 'confidential document'. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



So much chatter on social media about this ten-year-old incident! Any idea what is PM's press conference?



FLYING KING: A young woman takes part in the 'Jeevan Kite and River Festival' in Guwahati, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Congress gets into poll mode

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 4: Getting into poll mode, the Congress Thursday initiated discussions on the party's strategy, manifesto and seat-sharing for the Lok Sabha elections while also finalising the route map for the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (earlier Bharat Nyay Yatra), a hybrid version of the earlier foot march.

As the top leadership of the party got into a huddle at the Congress headquarters to give final shape to their plans, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge told party leaders to unite by sinking their differences and not talk out of turn on sensitive issues outside the party line that often causes embarrassment. Sources said the party decided to concentrate with full strength on around half the Lok Sabha seats where the Congress stands a chance of victory. They added that the Congress is looking to contest more than half the total seats.

Sources said the party has asked the state units to begin the process of candidate selection and provide the first list. It is likely to announce screening committees for all states by this week and candidate selection would start immediately, the sources add, noting that the party would declare the first list of candidates 'soon'.

Drivers' stir begins

Over 5 lakh to protest en masse from Jan 6 against 'stringent' hit-and-run rules under BNS, and the state dragging its feet over a 10-point charter of demands

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Two days after the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC), the apex body of transporters, appealed to agitating truck drivers across the country to end their strike, the Odisha Driver Mahasangha, an association of over five lakh drivers, Thursday launched an indefinite protest against stringent jail and fine provisions for drivers in hit-and-run cases under the new penal law, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and the state government's alleged dilly-dally approach in fulfilling its assurances, including insurance for drivers.

Odisha Driver Mahasangha president Prashant Menduli said driver associations of different states had Wednesday held a discussion in New Delhi where it was decided to launch protests against the new law.

"We began the protest today. However, we have given flexibility of two more days as many of our members (drivers) are on assignments. After completing their ongoing trips, they will



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PRASHANT MENDULI | ODISHA DRIVER MAHASANGHA PRESIDENT

hand over the vehicles to the owners and join the indefinite protest from January 6 (Saturday)," Menduli said.

Menduli said as per the BNS provision, drivers who cause serious road accidents due to negligent driving and run away without informing police or the administration can face punishment of up to 10 years or a fine of ₹7 lakh.

He said as drivers earn meagrely, they cannot afford to pay huge fines under the new law. "In the event they go to jail, who will feed their families?" Menduli asked.

Apart from withdrawal of the new 'draconian' hit-and-run legislation under BNS, drivers in

Odisha are also pressing for the fulfilment of their long-standing demands, including social security and life cover, from the state government.

"We had placed a 10-point charter of demands before the Odisha government during last year's strike. However, the government is yet to pay heed to our demands," Menduli said.

The AIMTC Tuesday appealed to protesting truck drivers to end their strike after the government assurance that the decision to invoke stringent jail and fine provisions for hit-and-run cases under the BNS will be taken after consultation with the truckers' body.

NAVEEN NOD TO 67 NEW POSTS IN BDA

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday approved creation of 67 new posts in the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) in order to make the enforcement system of the organisation more efficient and functional.

The new posts will be created by Odisha Police. The posts are: one assistant commissioner of police, six assistant sub-inspector of police and 60 police constables.

"Bhubaneswar is one of the fastest-growing cities in eastern India. These positions will work for urban planned development. According to the proposal of BDA, 25 joint teams and five reserve teams were required for these works in the entire City. Each team will have two police constables. An assistant commissioner, six assistant sub-inspectors will work for the coordination and management of these teams," a release from the CMO stated. With the filling up of these posts, the Bhubaneswar Development Authority will ease and speed up the work of removing encroachments required for various development works in the City.

No SC relief for Gupta in Pannun murder bid

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 4: The Supreme Court Thursday refused to entertain a petition by a family member of Indian national Nikhil Gupta, under detention in a Czech prison over allegations of involvement in a foiled plot to kill pro-Khalistan Sikh separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun in the US, for consular access.

The US has accused Gupta of plotting to kill Pannun, an American citizen, at the behest of an Indian intelligence official.

"There is nothing much we can do. You are entitled for consular access under the Vienna convention, which you have already got," a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said.

It said in view of the principles of public international law and comity of courts, none of the prayers made in the petition (for intervention by the government of India in extradition proceedings and cooperation in legal proceedings in Czech Republic) can be granted.

"We have examined the prayers

made in the present writ petition. Keeping in view the principles of public international law and sovereignty and comity of courts, we do not think any of the prayers can be granted. As per the writ petition itself, the officer of the Indian embassy in Prague visited the petitioner while in detention September 17, 2023," the court said.

Keeping in view the principles of public international law and sovereignty and comity of courts, we do not think any of the prayers can be granted

SC BENCH

The SC told senior advocate CA Sundaram, appearing for Gupta's relative, that the court should respect the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the foreign court and law of that land and, therefore, it cannot go into the merit of the matter. When Sundaram claimed that Gupta has been lodged in solitary confinement, the bench said, "Don't argue about something which we will not go into and examine. Look, there are two principles. This is a matter related to public international law. We have to respect the sovereignty and jurisdiction of other courts. We will not allow you to comment upon and say something about the other court's jurisdiction etc."

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	71847.57	↑ 490.97
NIFTY	21658.60	↑ 141.30
DOLLAR	83.32	↓ ₹0.05
EURO	91.32	↑ ₹0.17
GOLD	₹62,590	↑ ₹83
SILVER	₹71,980	↓ ₹353

WEATHER

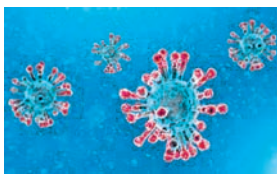
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.8°C	27.5°C
Min Temp	16.0°C	14.5°C
Humidity	84%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

SHORT TAKES

2 JN.1 CASES IN STATE

Bhubaneswar: Two cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected in Odisha, a senior official said Thursday. The two cases were detected in Sundargarh and Bhubaneswar, Health Services Director Bijay Kumar Mohapatra said, adding that the health conditions of both patients are stable. "Samples of 28 people, who were found to be Covid-positive, were sent for genome sequencing and of them, two were found to be infected with the JN.1 variant," he said. The patient from Sundargarh was under treatment at home and has completed his isolation period. None of his contacts were found to be symptomatic, Mohapatra said. The other patient is an elderly woman who was under treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. She is stable at present, he said. P3



TWO KILLED AS TANKER, TRUCK COLLIDE

Bhubaneswar: A chemical-loaded tanker collided with a container truck in Mayurbhanj district Thursday, following which the two vehicles fell into a gorge and caught fire, killing both the drivers, police said. The incident happened at Bangiriposi ghat, they said. The chemical tanker first caught fire after falling into the 15-foot-deep gorge, and soon the blaze engulfed the container truck too, they added. After four hours of fire-fighting, the charred bodies of the two drivers were recovered, said Kamalakanta Das, the officer in-charge (OIC) of Bangiriposi police station. In Dhenkanal district, a truck, a dumper and a bus with 50 picnickers onboard were involved in a pile-up. P5

US teen first player ever to beat Tetris

AGENCIES

San Francisco, Jan 4: A 13-year-old boy of Oklahoma, United States is believed to be the first person ever to beat Tetris since the game's release more than three decades ago. While playing the falling-block video game, popularised by the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), Willis Gibson's screen froze and he achieved a rare feat that was previously only credited to bots powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

Willis, who goes by streamer name Blue Scuti, said 'please crash' as he arranged the puzzle pieces cascading down the screen and moments later got his wish when the game froze, leading him to repeatedly exclaim 'Oh my God!' in a video uploaded to YouTube January 2.

"I'm going to pass out, I can't feel my fingers. When I started

playing this game, I never expected to ever crash the game, or beat it," Willis wrote in the video's

and conjoin seven different falling block shapes. It had been thought impossible for humans to beat the

■ First released in 1984, Tetris challenges players to rotate and conjoin seven different falling block shapes

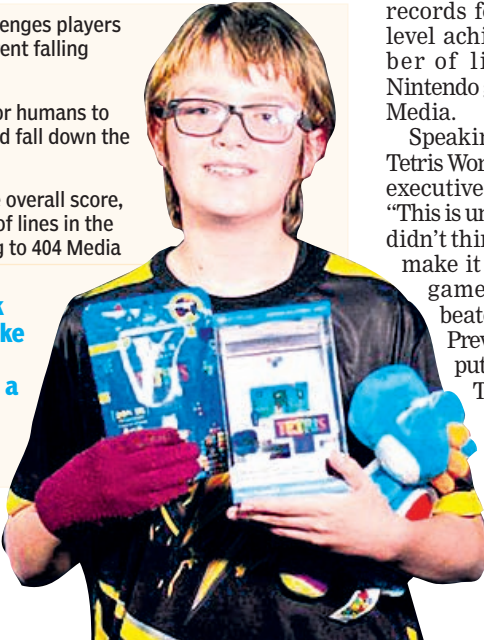
■ It had been thought impossible for humans to beat the game as the bricks would fall down the screen too fast for them to place

■ Willis broke world records for the overall score, level achieved and total number of lines in the classic Nintendo game, according to 404 Media

This is unbelievable. Developers didn't think anyone would ever make it that far and now the game has officially been beaten by a human being

VINCE CLEMENTE | CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CLASSIC TETRIS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

description. First released in 1984, Tetris became a near-immediate worldwide sensation. It challenges players to rotate



game as the bricks would fall down the screen too fast for them to place. Willis broke world records for the overall score, level achieved and total number of lines in the classic Nintendo game, according to 404 Media.

Speaking to Reuters, Classic Tetris World Championship chief executive Vince Clemente said, "This is unbelievable. Developers didn't think anyone would ever make it that far and now the game has officially been beaten by a human being. Previously, only an AI computer program had beaten Tetris."

Willis employs a 'rolling' controller technique popularised in 2021 that allows a player to move the blocks at least 20 times per second, far more than the previ-

ously popular 'hyper tapping' method, 404 Media said.

'Hyper tapping' involves hitting the controller D-pad with lots of quick presses, but this can strain fingers and even cause minor injuries. The 'rolling' method, however, involves keeping one hand still above the controller and continuously pushing it up from below in a smooth motion that is easier on the hands.

Created by Alexey Pajitnov at the Moscow Academy of Science during the height of the Cold War, Tetris has shown remarkable staying power, spanning generations. To date, over 200 official variants of Tetris has been released on at least 70 systems, a world record according to Guinness World Records. The Electronic Arts developed mobile version released in 2006 has been sold 100 million times, making it the third best-selling video game of all time, according to a Hewlett Packard report last year.

leisure



KYLE RICHARDS SAYS SHE'S OPEN TO DATE A WOMAN

Actress Kyle Richards has said that she is open to love in all forms. In a sneak peek of what's to come on *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, when Kyle was asked if she would consider dating a woman she answered the query with a simple 'yeah' and a little nod.

WILL NEVER RETURN TO MUSIC INDUSTRY: BRITNEY SPEARS

Pop star Britney Spears has debunked rumours that she is working on a new album in a social media post. Moreover, the *Circus* hitmaker declares that she will never return to the music industry.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You are feeling nervous today. There may be something particular playing on your mind which makes you circumspect. Ganesha advises you to make the best of the evening, when you might be invited to a party or a social gathering. Things may turn out to be in your favour.

TAURUS

You need to exercise great discretion in planning your agendas and taking important decisions. Do not undertake anything simply because it appeals to your nature. Be sure that, this day, you are going to feel uncomfortable in taking uncomfortable firm decisions on your own.

GEMINI

A hectic day at the home-front awaits you. You will spend your entire time taking care of household matters and projects. You will only be able to successfully pay attention to your work post noon, says Ganesha.

CANCER

You plan a slow but steady strategy to achieve your goals. Your business rivals can come nowhere in efficiency or expertise. You will win all-out praise for this from all quarters. And, Ganesha is highly delighted.

LEO

You will be bothered by health related issues. Your diet will be a major cause of worry. You will have opportunities to progress in your professional life. You need to make the most of this favourable period and seize all the opportunities that present themselves to you, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Ganesha advises you to work really hard so that your peers and superiors notice your efforts. However, recognition will not be forthcoming to the same extent. You may relax at the end of the day with the consolation that you have given it your best shot.

LIBRA

Ganesha says you will be able to spend unforgettable moments with your beloved. To please your beloved and be able to propose to them you will spend a happy evening with them and take them out for a romantic dinner. All those dreams that you have seen about a lovely romantic relationship will be coming true for you soon.

SCORPIO

The day will usher refreshing changes into your personal life, foresees Ganesha. No matter which side of the bed you woke up on, the day promises to present itself in a cheerful light. You will build and enjoy harmonious and cordial relations with your peers at work.

SAGITTARIUS

You are on a high today, professionally and personally. You have a good convincing power and you will be using it to the optimum level. Seek advice of experienced and seniors for better implementation of ideas on professional front, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

Most of us have an idol from whom derive motivation and inspiration. Today, you will find your idol and get inspired to perform better. During the latter part of the day, you get into a war of words with somebody. Avoid this, otherwise you may have to face some legal consequences, warns Ganesha.

AQUARIUS

You will play the role of a peace maker, today. You will create a harmonious environment around by solving problems of everyone, including yours, with tact and diplomacy. Embrace any career opportunity coming your way, because it may turn out to be one of the most advantageous decisions you have even made, advises Ganesha.

PISCES

You are very particular about the way you go about completing your tasks, and take yourself very seriously. While you may not always reap the benefits of your labor, today you will finally receive long due appreciation.

Ira drops picture with hubby

Mumbai: Top star Aamir Khan's daughter Ira Khan has dropped a picture featuring her and her newlywed husband Nupur Shikhare.

Nupur proposed to Ira in 2022 and is the official fitness trainer of Ira and Aamir. Both got married Wednesday in the presence of their families. Thursday morning, Ira took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a picture with her hubby.

In the photo, Ira is seen flaunting her "bride to be" hairband. However she cut out her "to be" and just went with "bride". Ira married her longtime boyfriend Nupur in Taj Lands End in Mumbai Wednesday evening.

She wore a deep green blouse paired with light pink lehenga while Nupur chose to wear black. Present at the wedding were Aamir, Reena Dutta, Kiran Rao, Azad and Junaid, who were seen posing for a family picture with the newly-married couple.

According to sources, Ira is set to take the traditional route with pheras in Lake City Udaipur after signing the marriage registration document Wednesday in Mumbai.

The couple, which is legally married now, will head to Udaipur for a round of traditional festivities lined up for family members.

The traditional wedding ceremony will take place at Taj Aravali Resort located on Kodyat Road in Udaipur with festivities taking place from January 8 to 10. All 176 rooms of the hotel have been booked for around 250 guests including Hindi film stars and family members of the bride and groom.

AGENCIES

'It's easy to get carried away by fame, money'

Mumbai: Deepika Padukone recently opened up about her plans of having kids with her husband Ranveer Singh.

In an interview with a popular magazine, the actress reportedly said "Ranveer and I love children. We look forward to the day when we will start our own family."

The *Pathaan* actress added, "When I meet the people I have grown up with—my aunts, uncles, family friends—they always mention how I haven't changed one bit. That says a lot about our upbringing." Further talking about the values that

she would want her kids to imbibe, the *Fighter* actress said "In this industry, it's easy to get carried away by fame and money. But no one treats me like a celebrity at home. I am a daughter and a sister first. I don't want that to change. My family keeps me grounded and Ranveer and I hope to inculcate the same values in our children."

Deepika Padukone tied the knot with Ranveer Singh in 2018 after being in a relationship with him for over 6 years. Not long ago, the couple appeared together on the popular celebrity chat show *Koffee With Karan* when they got candid about their relationship.



UPCOMING WEDDING FANTASY THRILLER

Naqiyah draws inspiration from Vampire Diaries

Mumbai: Actress Naqiyah Haji, who plays the character of Nikki in the upcoming wedding fantasy thriller *Shaitani Rasmlein*, revealed that her character draws inspiration from Nina Dobrev's portrayal in the American series *Vampire Diaries*.

Naqiyah shared insights into her preparation for the role. Talking about the same, the actress expressed: "Our show's concept is very unusual, and it's the first time that the Indian audience will experience something of this nature. With fictional characters, supernatural powers, and a unique storyline, it bears a resemblance to the American show *Vampire Diaries*." "My character, Nikki, mirrors Nina Dobrev's character, where the line between good and bad becomes blurred. Similarly, Nikki enters a new world where the boundaries between good and bad are not so clear for her: Nina's character was adored by many, and I hope the viewers will shower the same love on Nikki and the show," added the actress.

For the unversed, Nina plays the character of Elena Gilbert in the supernatural drama *The Vampire Diaries*.

The show marks the television debut of actress Shefali Jariwala, who will be essaying a pivotal role alongside Naqiyah and Vibhav Roy.

The show will air from January 15 on Star Bharat.

AGENCIES



MANANA'S STATE-LEVEL DRAMA FESTIVAL: DAY-2

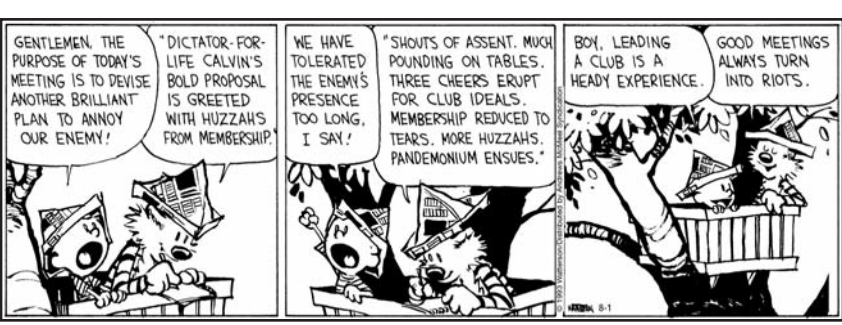


Actors of Bhubaneswar-based theatre troupe Dynamic Platform Thursday performed play *Shuna Sujane* on the second evening of the event being organised by Manana Natya Sanstha at Rabinindra Mandap. Written by Bishwajit Das, the play was designed and directed by Debabrata Pattnaik. The director, through his play, conveyed a message that one should not judge the worth or value of something or someone by their outward appearance alone. Nabin Parida, Bhakti Ranjan Das, Chiranjeev Biswal and Satyabrata Das played key roles in the play.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

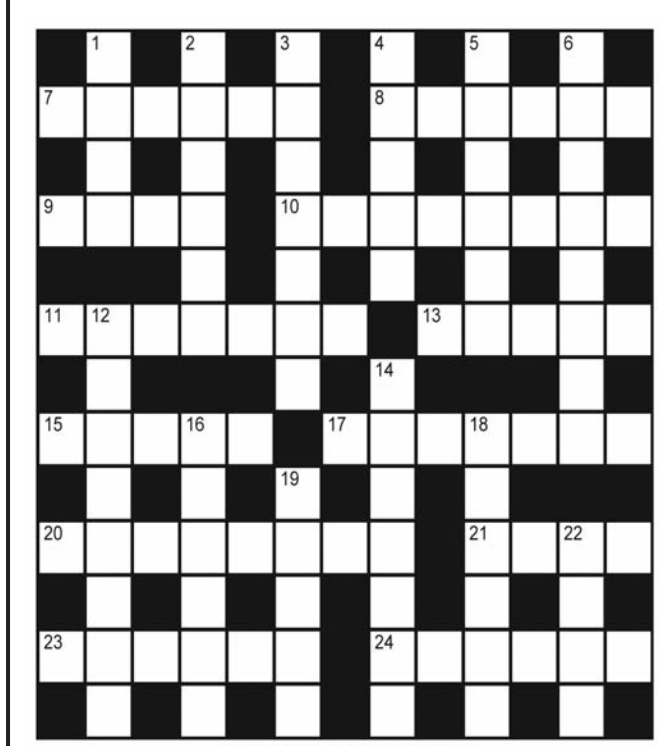


BREVITY



FUN post

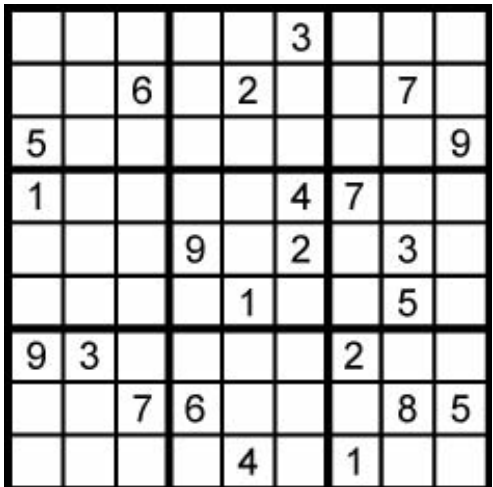
CROSSWORD



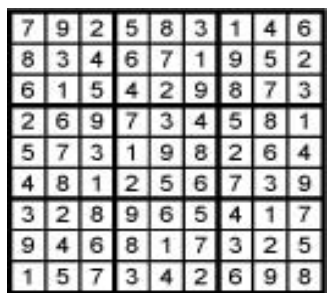
- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Military officer's cry
 - 8 Almost
 - 9 Ship part
 - 10 Volcanic glass
 - 11 Satellite name
 - 13 Flip response?
 - 15 Reef material
 - 17 Missives
 - 20 Data processor
 - 21 Food thickener
 - 23 Dresser
 - 24 Excused, as from military duty
 - 5 Ping pong game piece
 - 6 Poisonous flowering shrub
 - 12 Introduction to a play
- Down**
- 1 Patella's place
 - 2 Outer wear
 - 3 Absurd
 - 4 Apprehensive feeling
 - 14 Like a goat
 - 16 Pomes
 - 18 Go places
 - 19 Swagger
 - 22 Heidi's home

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

Pandian wraps up Sundargarh visit



The 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman reviewed the progress of the railway over bridge (RoB) which is being built at a cost of ₹48,11cr in Rajgangpur

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Jan 4: On the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha Kartik Pandian reviewed the progress of various development works in Sundargarh and interacted with the people during his two day visit to the district, which culminated Thursday. Along with the Goddess Samaleswari temple developmental project, he also reviewed the progress of works at other major temples like Vedvyas in Rourkela, Shiv temple at Ghoghar and Shiv temple at Belsara. At Rajgangpur, Pandian reviewed the progress in the construction of a railway over bridge (RoB) which is being built at a cost of ₹48.11 crore. The project, which was a long standing demand, was pending for the last 10 years. During one of his previous visits to the district, residents had requested him to expedite the project. Following his personal intervention which resulted in solving the long-standing land acquisition for the project, and redressal of some other issues the project finally took off. Later, he reviewed the progress of other development projects in the district, including the mega piped water supply projects at Kutra, Rajgangpur, Gurundia, Lahunipada, Koida, Nuagaon and Kuarmunda blocks. Besides, progress and bottlenecks in some of the important bridges in the district was reviewed. He also took special interest in the progress of the laying of the synthetic turf for hockey training centres at Kuarmunda, Nuagaon and Bisra blocks. Some of the major projects

were taken up in Sundargarh following the previous visit of Pandian to the district in March 2023 when he attended various public grievances meetings and took the necessary feedback. During interaction with people, Pandian said in 2019, the FIH (International Hockey Federation) announced the Hockey World Cup 2023 to be held again in Odisha. "Chief Minister sir insisted on second host venue at Rourkela," Pandian. He said, "While Bhubaneswar is the state capital, Rourkela is the Hockey capital of Odisha. FIH expressed concerns that there is no hockey stadium, no hotels and no airport in Rourkela and chief minister sir said we are committed and we will get it done."

In spite of COVID challenge and delays, the stadium, 225 room accommodation and airport were constructed in record time. He said, "Hon'ble chief minister has named the stadium after the legendary Birsa Munda as a token of respect towards his contribution in the freedom struggle." The Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium was constructed in record 15 months time and also entered the Guinness Book of Records for being the largest seated hockey stadium in the world. "This is a tribute to Sundargarh for its contribution towards hockey in India, the chief minister had said," he informed. During the day, he interacted with the public in Rajgangpur, Nuagaon and Bonai block and received the grievances on various issues and assured early resolution.

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Odisha tableau at R-Day parade



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The beautifully crafted Odisha tableau showcasing women empowerment in Raghurajpur heritage village has been selected for the Republic Day parade in New Delhi this year, the Ministry of Defence said, Thursday. For three consecutive years, Odisha was not able to showcase its tableau on the Kartavya Path in New Delhi during the Republic Day event. This year, Odisha's tableau featuring the state's heritage craft village Raghurajpur will participate in the parade January 26.

The design of the model was done by noted artist Kirti Kishore Moharana, while the fabrication of the model is in progress under the supervision of eminent artist Gajendra Sahu. Sahu said for three years, the Odisha tableau was not displayed at the R-Day event. "This year, Odisha's tableau will roll on the Kartavya Path. We have integrated two themes in our model showcasing women empowerment.

Pipli man duped of ₹45K in loan fraud

Bhubaneswar: In a case of loan fraud, a man from Pipli in Puri district was duped of ₹45,000 by a conwoman who impersonated the agent of a finance company. Maheswar Behera, 25, a native of Pipli, has lodged a complaint at Cybercrime police station here, Thursday, alleging that his uncle had taken ₹1 lakh loan from L&T Finance's Bhubaneswar branch in 2023. The lady trickster contacted his uncle over phone December 25, 2023 and demanded repayment of the loan amount. She also warned him that failure in repaying the loan would invite strict action. Fearing trouble, Behera said, his uncle transferred the entire amount to the bank account that was given by the fraudster. Later, when the family member's of the victim contacted the agent over phone, the woman was 'unavailable'. The Cybercrime police station has registered a case and started an investigation into the matter.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



ROAD SAFETY WEEK

A free health check-up camp was organised at Traffic police station in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, as part of the Road Safety Week programmes



CULTURE BOOST: Dignitaries including Secretary (additional charge) of Odia Language, Literature, and Culture Sujata Rout Karthikeyan, department's director Dilip Routray and others at the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Utkal University of Culture in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Tenure of 3 Odisha RS members ends in April

UNION MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, COMMUNICATIONS, ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASHWINI VAISHNAW, AND BJD MPs PRASANTA NANDA AND AMAR PATNAIK ARE COMPLETING THEIR TENURE

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 4: Three Rajya Sabha members from Odisha, including Union Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav, are completing their tenure in April this year. Apart from Vaishnav, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MPs Prasanta Nanda and Amar Patnaik are completing their tenure this year. Moreover, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who is a Rajya Sabha member from Madhya Pradesh, is also completing his tenure in the month of April.

As many as 68 Rajya Sabha members, including nine Union ministers, are completing their tenure this year, triggering a race of sorts among leaders across political parties to eye a six-year term in the Upper House of Parliament. Of the 68 vacancies, elections have already been called for three seats in Delhi where AAP leaders Sanjay Singh, Narain Dass Gupta and Sushil Kumar Gupta will complete their tenures January 27. Elections have also been called for the lone Rajya Sabha seat in



Sikkim where SDF member Hishey Lachungpa will retire February 23. As many as 57 leaders will complete their tenures in April. Uttar Pradesh will have the highest number of vacancies of 10 seats, followed by Maharashtra and Bihar (six each), Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal (five each), Karnataka and Gujarat (four each), Odisha, Telangana, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (three each), Jharkhand and Rajasthan (two each), and Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Chhattisgarh (one each). Four nominated members are retiring in July. For renomination to the Rajya Sabha from Himachal Pradesh, BJP president JP Nadda will have to look for a seat outside his home state as the Congress is in power there. The Congress can

also look forward to sending its nominees to the Upper House of Parliament from Karnataka and Telangana - the states where it came to power last year. In Karnataka, four Rajya Sabha members are retiring, and in Telangana, three. The retiring members include Manmohan Singh and Bhupendra Yadav (Rajasthan), BJP chief spokesperson Anil Baluni (Uttarakhand), Mansukh Mandaviya and Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala, and Congress members

Naranbhai Rathwa and Ameer Yagnik from Gujarat. Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan, MSME Minister Narayan Rane, former Union minister Prakash Javadekar, Congress member Kumar Ketkar, NCP member Vandana Chavan and Shiv Sena (UBT) member Anil Desai are retiring from Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, the Rajya Sabha elections will be keenly watched after the political realignment in the state due to splits in the NCP and the Shiv Sena. From Madhya Pradesh, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L. Murugan, BJP members Ajay Pratap Singh, Kailash Soni and Congress member Rajmani Patel are retiring from the Upper House of Parliament.

ORERA slaps notice on 285 promoters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) has issued show-cause notices before imposing penalty on 285 builders in the state on their failure to submit quarterly progress reports (QPRs) in respect of their ongoing real estate plotting and housing projects. In a press release, the regulatory authority stated that for the information of homebuyers, who have invested in various housing and plotted development projects, the promoters are required - under Section 11(1) of RERA Act, 2016 - to submit QPR indicating the status of construction involving details



of registration granted by ORERA. The QPR should also have the updated list of number and types of apartments, plots, garages booked, list of approvals taken, or, pending with planning authorities and updated status of the project, said the release.

Plus III colleges in 18 blocks soon



Bhubaneswar: In order to ensure equity and promotion of Higher Education in uncovered blocks, the state government has decided to open Government Degree (Plus III) colleges, in Arts stream, in 18 blocks of the state from 2024-25 academic session. The Higher Education department Thursday, through a notification, informed that the colleges will be opened in different blocks of Gajapati, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Sundargarh districts.

Pradhan happy over GI tag to 7 state products

Bhubaneswar: Union Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Thursday expressed his happiness over seven Odisha products getting geographical indication (GI) tag. Taking to X, Pradhan said, "It is a matter of great pride to learn that 7 more products from Odisha have received the coveted GI tag." He further said, "GI tag for Odisha Khajuri Guda, Dhenkanal Magji, Similipal Kai chutney, Nayagarh Kanteimundi brinjal, Dongria Kondh embroidery shawl, Koraput Kalajeera rice and the paintings of Lanjia Saora will help these distinct products gain global reputation and market." He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his colleague Piyush Goyal "for continuously supporting rural economies and promoting the unique colours and flavours of Odisha".

BIRD CENSUS: OVER 11.37L BIRDS FLOCK TO CHILIKA LAKE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The results of annual bird census conducted in Chilika Lake were out Thursday revealing presence of altogether 11,37,759 birds in the largest brackish water lagoon of Asia. Significantly, the census saw appearance of Pallas fish eagle after a gap of about 10 years. A total of 10,98,813 birds belonging to 108 migratory species and 38,946 birds of 79 local species were sighted during the census. The number of flamingos arriving at the lake rose to 820 as against 373 last year, said sources. Chilika is also the largest wintering ground for winged guests

in Indian Subcontinent, said sources, adding that the lake is hosting more than 1 million birds for the second consecutive year. Indian Forest Services (IFS) officer and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Chief Wildlife Warden Susanta Nanda shared the information on social media Thursday.

The annual bird census began in Chilika Lake Thursday morning. As many as 21 teams comprising five-six ornithologists each have been



deployed for the counting of the migratory and domestic birds in Chilika lagoon, which is spread over Puri, Khurda

and Ganjam districts of Odisha. The surveyor teams also include officials of Chilika Development Authority (CDA),

experts from Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Wild Odisha, Frow With Nature, Elephant Trust and members of various social organisations. The census is underway at five ranges - Satapada, Rambha, Balugaon, Tangi and Chilika. As many as 18 teams are undertaking the survey work in terrestrial areas and rest are engaged in aquatic areas. Migratory birds mostly come to Chilika from beyond the Himalayas every winter - from northern Eurasia, the Caspian region, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Lake Baikal and remote areas of Russia and neighbouring countries. They start their homeward journey before the onset of summer.

441 junior engineers join Water Resources dept

CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK URGES ENGINEERS TO KEEP THEMSELVES UPDATED IN NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND BRING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGING ISSUES



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urged Thursday the newly-appointed junior engineers (Civil) to serve the people in a proper manner. A total of 441 junior engineers joined the Water Resources department of the state government, Thursday. During their induction programme at Lok Seva Bhawan here, Patnaik asked the new entrants to keep themselves updated about new technologies. About 50 per cent of the new recruits are women.

tion projects have gained pace with the application of modern technology and tackle challenges innovatively.

“Now that you are in public service, your sole responsibility is to serve the people with utmost transparency, sincerity and commitment. Our every action has a direct impact on the lives of people. We must be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of people and do our best to serve them,” Patnaik told the new entrants.

Noting that water resources department is a critical wing of the state government that looks after a multitude of development works, Patnaik said engineers should take up various projects including provision of irrigation facilities to farmlands,

protection from floods and resource development for drinking water, industries, fisheries and other life-changing activities.

Patnaik told the engineers that there are approximately 4,000 dams in Odisha and several others are under construction. He added that the state government has taken up construction of 30 in-stream storage facilities in the first phase. These projects will help in water conservation, rural water supply and help improve the ground water level which is emerging as a critical environmental issue everywhere.

Water Resources department Minister, Tukuni Sahu was also present during the programme. She said that the engineers will have a very crucial role to play in the supply of water to farmlands. In her welcome address, Development Commissioner and ACS Water Resources department, Anu Garg said pointed out the vital role the engineers will have to play. “The department empowers farmers by creating water infrastructure. Hence engineers in the department will have to play a key role in it,” Garg said.

Rahul's Yatra to enter Odisha in Feb

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 4: The second leg of Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' will enter Odisha in the month of February and cover a distance of 341 km in around four days.

The Nyay Yatra will enter Odisha from Jharkhand and pass through four districts, including Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Sundargarh, and then move to Chhattisgarh, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh informed Thursday while releasing a route map of the Yatra.

The Congress general secretary informed that the Bharat Nyay Yatra has been renamed as Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

The Yatra will start from Manipur January 14 and will cover a distance of 6,713 km in around 66 days before concluding at Mumbai in March end.

Dense fog likely for next 3 days

State government asks district authorities to take necessary steps for controlled plying of vehicles on highways to avoid road accidents



said that police and transport officials of respective districts may take necessary steps for 'controlled plying of vehicles on highways during the dense fog to avoid any road accident'.

According to the Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar, very dense fog engulfed Rourkela this morning, restricting visibility to 50 metres. Phulbani, Koraput, Subarnapur, Cuttack and Nayagarh also witnessed dense fog. Shallow and moderate fog was seen in Bhawanipatna and Keonjhar also, the weather office said.

The Met office has issued yellow alerts for dense fog for 3 more days.

According to IMD, dense fog

may occur in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Subarnapur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nayagarh, Khurda, Cuttack and Dhenkanal up to 8:30am of Friday. Such a weather condition is likely to prevail Saturday and Sunday across districts.

Meanwhile, the mercury level plummeted to 11 degrees Celsius and below at nine places in Odisha with Koraput being the coldest at 7.8 degrees Celsius Thursday, the Met office said.

Daringbadi, G Udayagiri and Phulbani, all in Kandhamal district, recorded 8.5, 9.4 and 10 degrees Celsius respectively, followed by Keonjhar at 10.3 degrees Celsius, Ranital in Bhadrak at 10.6 degrees Celsius.

The twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar recorded 14.5 degrees C and 16 degrees C respectively.

Veterinarians postpone agitation till January 18

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The veterinarians in the state have decided to postpone their mass leave agitation scheduled from Thursday till January 18. This development comes in the backdrop of the Odisha Veterinary Service Association (OVSA) presenting their long-standing demands before the Inter-Ministerial committee January 2. Jadunath Parida, president and Sankarsan Mahunta, general secretary of OVSA attended the meeting.

mands of the vet, OVSA officials informed.

Among the demands placed were complete reformation of the department, parity of vets with medical doctors, DACP and non-practising allowances. “This will not cause much of a financial burden on the Odisha government,” said an OVSA spokesperson here Thursday.

Even though the vets were given Group A status at entry level just two years back, it did not benefit them much.

This is because a veterinarian joining the Odisha government will have to work on the same salary structure for a minimum of 24 to 27 years. This in itself is quite demoralising, the OVSA said.

It should be stated here that the responsibility of the vets has increased manifold as Odisha has been selected as one of the states in India for a single health programme by the United Nations.

Woman cries foul after hubby's death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: A woman identified as, Bijayalaxmi Mohapatra, whose husband Kalindi passed away recently after suffering injuries in a road mishap, has alleged that the latter has been murdered. She lodged an FIR in this regard at the Mancheswar police station. In the FIR, she has alleged that Pradeep Nayak plotted the accident leading to Kalindi's death. She has also stated in the FIR that she has been receiving death threats from Pradeep.

Bijayalaxmi and Kalindi, originally residents of Jagatsinghpur district, were staying in Bhotapada area under Mancheswar police station limits. Kalindi was injured in an accident at Vani Vihar Square and breathed his last at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack recently.

In the FIR Bijayalaxmi has alleged that there were no visible marks of injuries on the body of her departed husband as is the case in accidents. As a result, she is suspecting same foul play behind Kalindi's death and blamed Pradeep for it.

In the FIR, Bijayalaxmi has alleged that Pradeep and Kalindi were involved in a tussle over a property. Since the time Pradeep acquired the property he had been threatening Kalindi.



PERFORMING ART: Artists of City-based theatre troupe 'Satabdira Kalakara' stage Odia play 'Jibanasya' on the second evening of government-sponsored drama festival Natyadhara. The play was presented by 'Kalinga Natya Sangha', a newly-formed outfit of over 30 theatre troupes of Odisha, at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Rose Show at KIIT from today

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: KIIT Rose Society, in collaboration with state Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment department, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Orissa Horticulture Society, and Directorate of Horticulture, is organising the 40th All India Rose Convention and Rose Show at the KIIT campus from January 5 to 7.

After an 18-year gap, this is the second time the Odisha Rose Society (ORS) is hosting the convention, the previous instance being 2006.

“This event promises to be a knowledge extravaganza, featuring insightful sessions on advanced rose cultivation technologies and training. The Rose Show will showcase a diverse array of rose varieties, reflecting the skill and dedication of growers nationwide,” said a member of ORS.



Some 400 delegates, including scientists, nurserymen, farmers, and entrepreneurs from across the country are expected to participate in the convention to gain and share knowledge about rose cultivation and commercialisation.

In conjunction with the convention, a Rose Show will be held in KIIT Campus-7, exhibiting potted roses of different varieties, colors, and fragrances. Sourced from all parts of the country, the roses will be displayed for competition and public viewing. The exhibition ground will also fea-

ture potted foliage and flower plants from industries and corporate houses.

The Rose Show will be open to the public from 4.00pm to 8.00pm January 5 and 9.00am to 6.00pm January 6.

“As part of the celebrations, a souvenir featuring popular articles on roses by authors from across the nation will be released. Additionally, a Scientific Journal of Odisha Horticulture Society, exclusively focused on roses, is planned for release during the seminar session,” said the ORS member.

Union Railway Min to visit state Jan 5

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Union Minister of Railways, Communications and Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav, in his three day visit to state, will reach Bhubaneswar in the evening of January 5.

During his visit, Vaishnav will join in scheduled programmes of Railways at Dasapalla and Postal Programme at Kantilo.

He will also join in some of the local programme at Khandapada January 6 and Athagarh, Baramba and Narasimhapur January 7.

Vaishnav will inaugurate Nuagaon-Dasapalla Railway Section of Khurda Road-Bolangir Rail Line project and Dasapalla railway station building and flag off the extension of four trains up to Dasapalla in the forenoon January 6.

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- 5th Kalingawan A Global Festival of Performing Arts by Kalingayana Touryatrikam, Utkal Rangamancha, XIMB Square, 3pm till 9pm
- Rose show by KIIT Rose Society in association with OUAT, KIIT campus-7, 9am to 6pm
- Trailer Launch event of Odia movie Dear Purusha by Jhilik Motion Pictures, Hotel Suryansh, 7pm
- 50th Anniversary Celebration of Indian Institute of Interior Designers, Bhubaneswar and Installation Ceremony of Bhubaneswar Centre, Hotel Welcome, Bhubaneswar, 5:45 pm

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

'Weavers keeping up with modern trends'

Bhubaneswar: Keeping up with trends of the modern world, weavers of Odisha have successfully brought changes to traditional handlooms, turning them into global products, while the Bargarh Handloom Summit, through its continuous efforts, has brought the state's handloom culture to the nation's attention, said Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) chairman Asit Tripathy on inaugural day of the National Handloom Summit in Bargarh, Thursday. He further said that the handloom summit will help in bringing together weavers, sellers, buyers and trainers to create a more evolved ecosystem. State Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department and WODC are organising the national level summit with district administrations to introduce handlooms such as Bomkai, Pashapali, Habaspuri, Sonpuri, Sambalpur Bandha, and Ikat to a national audience. “The national level event will also provide a platform to weavers to show their skills, popularise new designs at the national level, and create a national market,” said a WODC official.

Conference on astro science held in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Vice-chairman of Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan (MSRVVP), Prafulla Kumar Mishra said Thursday that astrology, astronomy and astrophysics are key branches of science. Hence all the three subjects must be taught in schools as all the three are very essential for the society. Mishra was speaking at the National Conference on Astrophysics, Astronomy and Astrology (Astro 2024) organised by Odisha Vidyay Mandal at the IGNOU campus here.

The first session was inaugurated by Mishra. Also attending the event as chief guest was former vice-chancellor of KISS University, Harekrishna Satapathy, conference chairperson, Jyotish Chandra Mohanty and IGNOU senior regional director, Bhubaneswar Suresh Kumar Tripathy. Other dignitaries present were guest-of-honour Bipin Prasad Nanda, Prabhat Kumar Mahapatra, Bijay Kumar Parida, Pandit Gopal Chandra Dash and Mayadhar Swain.

Satapathy said the conference has been organised in memory of renowned astronomer and



mathematician Pathani Samanta, who was an inspiration for many. Satapathy pointed out that old science books have a lot of information on astronomy, astrology

and astrophysics and students should go through them. These books are as important as the Vedas and Upanishads. Mohanty in his speech said

that vibration is the energy which creates the universe. Due to transfer of energy in various formats, one gets to see new creations in the form of asteroids and meteors.

Tripathy pointed out that Samanta was a great scientist and also a person who studied the sky with his naked eyes. He said that modern-day scientists have a lot to learn from Samanta.

Rajat Kumar Pradhan, HOD of Physics department Bhadrak (Auto) college said that Astrology is not a pseudoscience but real science and more research and focus on this will help science and mankind.

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Dialysis facility to start soon in Bonaigarh SDH

This was one of the demands presented by the local community members before the then 5T Secretary and current 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian during his visit to Sundargarh in March, 2023



dialysis center at Bonai SDH is equipped with cutting-edge technology and operated by a team of seasoned professionals dedicated to providing top-notch healthcare to individuals grappling with renal challenges.

The CDMO and PHO, Sundargarh, Dr Dharani Ranjan Satapathy expressed enthusiasm about the imminent launch. "The establishment of this dialysis center represents a pivotal step in our mission to offer comprehensive healthcare solutions to our community. Our focus has always been on providing accessible, high-quality care, and this new facility reinforces our dedication to that cause", he said.

The centre boasts of a range of modern dialysis equipment, ensuring optimal treatment for patients requiring renal support. More than 400 dialysis cases can be attended through this setup every month.

The setup has four dialysis machines for haemodialysis services, which will be available round the clock. The centre will ensure that that no patient has to wait for more than 24 hours from the scheduled dialysis session.

All the services here would be offered free of cost to all patients referred by the district and sub-district hospitals. Over five lakh population of Bonaigarh, Lahunipada, Gurundia and Koira blocks would be benefited from this initiative, the report added.

emergencies.

Notably, a large number of people with renal challenges require dialysis support regularly two to three times a week. In those cases taking patients to the hospitals of Sundargarh and Rourkela for regular dialysis was very challenging and the relatives often discontinue the necessary procedure leaving the patients resigned to their fate.

This was one of the demands presented before the then 5T Secretary and current 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian by the local community members during his visit to Sundargarh in March 2023. Later, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik directed to set up the dialysis unit immediately at the sub-divisional hospital in Bonaigarh.

Now, with dialysis system in place at Bonai SDH, the patients can easily access the services without undertaking frequent long-distance travels. The new



PEOPLE'S FEST: Artistes perform the traditional Dangi dance of Gujarat at a procession marking the commencement of district-level cultural festival Lok Mahotsav in Sambalpur, Thursday

Man shoots dead brother by 'mistake'; held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 4: Bisra police Thursday arrested two persons for a murder which occurred on the first night of New Year. Among the arrested are the deceased's brother and another person who allegedly possessed the country-made gun used in the crime.

The arrested duo has been identified as Umesh Singh, 29, the deceased's elder brother, and Gourang Gope, 30. Both of them have been forwarded to judicial custody after their bail pleas were rejected by a local court.

Bisra police station IIC Pradip Nayak had earlier said that a group of seven was celebrating the New Year in a room at Balughat near Teterkela river bank under Bisra police limits. An intoxicated Gope brandished the country-made pistol he had with him and everybody tried holding it. Meanwhile, Umesh accidentally fired the pistol while aiming at his brother Khirodhar and the bullet hit him on the chest. Fired from a very close range, the bullet went through his body. Soon, he was shifted to Ispat General Hospital (IGH) where doctors declared him dead.

2 die as tanker, truck collide, plunge into gorge, catch fire



ACCIDENT AT BANGIRIPOSI GHAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: A chemical-loaded tanker collided with a container truck in Mayurbhanj district Thursday, following which the two vehicles fell into a gorge and caught fire, killing both the drivers, police said. The incident happened at Bangiriposi ghat, they said.

The chemical tanker first caught fire after falling into the 15-foot-deep gorge, and soon the blaze engulfed the container truck too, they added.

After four hours of fire-fighting, the charred bodies of the two drivers were recovered, said Kamalakanta Das, the officer in charge (OIC) of the Bangiriposi police station.

In Dhenkanal district, a

truck, a dumper and a bus with 50 picnickers onboard were involved in a pile-up. The accident happened at Bhejia Square in the Mahabirod police station area.

The bus, which was heading to Barchana in Jajpur after a

picnic in Sambalpur district, collided with a dumper. Soon, another truck hit the bus from the rear.

Nine people, including the drivers of the bus and the dumper, were injured. The conditions of five of them were critical and they were shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack from a local hospital where they were initially taken.

As per preliminary investigation, the accident happened because of poor visibility due to dense fog.

In a separate mishap, nine were injured after the vehicles they were travelling in were involved in a pile-up owing to dense fog



PILE-UP IN DHENKANAL

Bhitarkanika Nat'l Park to remain shut from today

Kendrapara: With the annual census of estuarine crocodiles and migratory birds getting underway, Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district will remain shut for visitors for nine days from Friday, an official said. Several teams have been constituted to count crocodiles and birds in the creeks, nullahs, rivers, wetland sites and mangrove forests in the park and its nearby areas, he said. "The national park will remain closed for nine days (January 5 to 13) for the annual census of estuarine crocodiles and winter migrant feathered species," the official said. The temporary closure will ensure smooth and human interference-free counting exercise, he said. "In a bid to ensure that no form of human activity comes during the counting exercise of the reptiles and migratory birds, the curb on tourists' footfall has been imposed," he said. Bhitarkanika is home to 70 per cent of India's estuarine crocodiles or saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which started way back in 1975. The number of saltwater crocodiles, the species which are not found in any other river system in Odisha, stands at 1,793 in Bhitarkanika, as per the latest census. Adequate conservation measures by the state Forest department have led to a systematic rise in the number of these reptiles over the years, the forest official claimed.

CROC, BIRD CENSUS

Tension, blockade over student's death

SAMBALPUR ADMIN BANS ENTRY OF HEAVY VEHICLES ON MUDIPADA-SAMALESWARI TEMPLE ROAD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 4: Traffic on Mudipada-Samaleswari temple route here was severely hit Thursday after residents of Ambedkar Nagar staged a road blockade over the death of a Class-IX student in a road accident at Patnaikpada in the town the previous day.

Dishant Nayak, a resident of Ambedkar Nagar, died after a tourist bus hit his scooter near a club at Patnaikpada in the town, Wednesday night.

Tension continues to brew over the death of the boy as irate residents staged the road blockade Thursday demanding compensation of ₹50 lakh to the bereaved family and calling for a ban on entry of heavy vehicles to the town.

The agitators put up the deceased's body at the protest site and demanded action against the concerned officials for allowing illegal entry of the bus inside



side the town during the no entry period and release of all family members of the deceased and other persons from police custody.

Police had seized the bus and arrested the driver. However, irate locals vandalised the vehicle and tried to set it ablaze.

Police foiled agitators' bid to torch the bus and detained some youths. However, some protesters gheraoed the police station demanding compensation to the bereaved family and release of the detained people. Police resorted to lathi charge to quell

the protest and detained 12 persons in this connection.

They relented after administrative officials promised to ban entry of heavy vehicles on Mudipada-Samaleswari temple route and the police agreed to release all the people from custody except for those involved in vandalising the bus after the death of the boy in mishap. Later, the body of the deceased boy was cremated at Rajghat Thursday evening.

When contacted, ASP Harish Pandey said that compensation will be given to the bereaved family as per law while the SP has asked the Traffic DSP to probe the entry of the bus inside the town during the no-entry period. He said that action will be taken against the accused persons after completion of the probe.

Later, the passengers of the bus involved in the accident were sent back in a special vehicle arranged by the district administration.

BJP'S 12-HOUR KALAHANDI DIST BANDH PASSES OFF PEACEFULLY

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhawanipatna, Jan 4: The 12-hour bandh called by the BJP in Kalahandi district in support of farmers hit normal life Thursday with markets and educational institutions remaining shut and vehicles off the roads, police said.

Emergency services were exempt from the bandh, which was mostly peaceful, police said.

The bandh was called by the opposition BJP demanding justice for farmers who allegedly face problems at different government paddy procurement centres. The saffron party de-

manded relief from 'katni chatni' (deduction of certain amount of paddy) by millers during paddy procurement.

They also claimed that farmers were forced to go for distress sale of cotton and demanded lowering of electricity tariff and removal of country liquor manufacturing units in the district.

BJP district unit president Artatran Mohapatra said the party called the bandh against the government's anti-farmer policies.

The bandh was aimed at awakening the government from slumber as millers looted the farmers, he said.

Utkal Alumina project raising farmers' income

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL), an Aditya Birla Group company, has enriched lives by raising farmers' income levels through zero-based budgeting in cultivable land.

Project UANAT, acronym for Utkal's Action for Agricultural Transformation, has been implemented in Rengansahil village under Kashipur block of Rayagada. It pushes for the use of organic pesticide and manure to ensure sustainable farming and stem out the environmental damage caused by chemical pesticides.

Mazhar Beig, Unit Head of UAIL, says, "Project UANAT is a flagship livelihood initiative by Utkal Alumina,

in collaboration with Bharat Rural Livelihood Foundations (BRLF) and Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD). The project is a part of our manifold CSR initiatives. Our aim is to enrich the lives of farmers through farm-based livelihood interventions. Our goal is to double the income of 15,000 small and marginal farming households of Thaumul Rampur block of Kalahandi and Kashipur of Rayagada within a timeline of four years."

Under this project, women farmers have been trained to make natural pesticides taking vermicompost (organic manure), 'Jibamrut' (natural pesticide) and 'Nimastra' (natural pesticide) as their base materials. Cow dung, urine, neem leaves and jiggery, which are integral to making nat-

ural crop protection agents, are available in abundance.

Till date, 185 women farmers from five villages have been trained and influenced to champion the usage of natural pesticides, recouring to demonstration plots. These women farmers move their knowledge around and train other farmers.

Up until now, already 1,560 households do organic farming in about 1,192.5 acre land spread in 73 villages across state. Furthermore 282 units of vermicompost beds have been set up. The project is soon to cover all the other villages as well.

"For Utkal Alumina, the project is the pathway to environment conservation, better health and income levels for the farming communities," recounts Beig.

Bank of India
Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jaydev Bihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph..0674-2362249

Gold Auction Notice

It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, person engaged in the business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/expenses) by 22.01.2024, their pledged gold ornaments will be auctioned at **Concerned Branch Premises on 25.01.2024 at 11.00 AM**. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reason in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be low or inadequate. Further, if needed be Bank reserves the right to change the date and time of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. Purity and net weight and reserve price of gold ornaments/ coins etc. will be available to interested bidders on auction date and auction venue/auction portal.

Sl. No.	A/c. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)	Gross Wt. in Gram	Net Wt. in Gram	Total Dues as on 31.12.2023 (excluding unapplied interest Charges, Cost & Expenses)
PURI BRANCH, OLD SADAR THANA ROAD, PURI-752001, MOB.: 8269080191					
1.	5552777610002230	Alok Kumar Satapathy, S/o- Sadashiba Satapathy, Brahmachari Math, Clark Road, Puri-752001	17.050	15.150	₹ 60,000.00
KHANDAGIRI BRANCH, PLOT NO.: 1215/1514, KHANDAGIRI BARI, KHANDAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR-751030, MOB.: 9178286377					
1.	558677610000368	Manasi Prusty, Govt. Land, Tapoban Lane Basti, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751030	31.49	30.1	₹ 89,336.68
2.	558677610000093	Rabindranath Maharana, At: Sampur, Via: Bolgarh, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda	48.17	45.9	₹ 1,70,966.00

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 04.01.2024
Zonal Manager, Bank of India

Be grateful for all ordeals they are the shortest way to the Divine.
THE MOTHER



The Inequality Debate

Debates about inequality trends in the United States have leapt from the pages of academic journals to leading media outlets. While conservatives have long questioned whether US inequality has really increased, The Economist recently weighed in, concluding that "the idea that inequality is rising is very far from a self-evident truth." Unfortunately, this debate has muddled several issues in an unhelpful manner.

There are different notions of inequality, each of which is relevant to a different question and complicated by its own unique measurement challenges. The most straightforward metric is labour-income inequality, which refers to what high earners receive relative to low earners. When we talk about how workers with college degrees are faring compared to those with just a high-school diploma, we are also talking about labour-income inequality.

Of course, measuring labour income is not a simple matter, because some earnings go unreported, and some very highly paid individuals deploy strategies to make their labour income look like capital income (which is taxed at a lower rate). Moreover, when it comes to determining if real (inflation-adjusted) wages have increased, there is a vigorous debate about whether the consumer price index is overstating true inflation. But even after accounting for these issues, there is no doubt that labour-income inequality has surged at least since 1980, and that the trend has continued since the post-2008 Great Recession.

This trend stands in stark contrast to the post-war era, when labour-income inequality was stable or declining. From the 1950s to the early 1970s, workers with a high-school diploma or less enjoyed real wage growth at the same rate as those with a college degree or more. But this pattern of shared prosperity ended sometime in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While the real earnings of workers with college degrees has continued to rise steadily, workers without one now earn less today than they did in 1980.

Contrary to what The Economist suggests, this general pattern is not in question. While a recent paper by David Autor, Arin Dube, and Annie McGrew shows that wages at the bottom of the distribution did finally start increasing around 2015 – leading to a notable compression between the top and the bottom of after 2020 – those at the bottom still earn much less, relative to the top, than they did in 1980.

A second definition of inequality rests on overall (pre-tax and transfer) income, which includes not just labour income but also income from dividends, capital gains, and business earnings reported on tax returns. The problem with this metric is that business income is not always reported, and other forms of capital income appear in tax records only when capital gains are realised (such as when someone sells stock for more than they paid for it).

Still, there is broad agreement on what has happened to "observed total income inequality" or "fiscal income inequality," which simply captures total incomes on tax returns. Here, the share of the top 1 per cent has increased from about 8 per cent just before 1980 to almost 18 per cent by 2019; when capital gains are included, it rises to over 21 per cent.

Much of the current debate stems from seminal work by Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez, and a complementary methodology they developed together with Gabriel Zucman. This trio allocates unreported capital income in a way that closely follows the distribution of reported capital income, thus finding a broadly similar increase in the overall income share of the top 1 per cent compared to its share of observed fiscal income. But now, recently published work by economists Gerald Auten and David Splinter challenges the trio's famous findings.

Part of the disagreement concerns untaxed capital income, whether because of tax evasion or various exemptions, such as those that apply to corporate retained earnings and income in various retirement accounts and trusts. Since this untaxed component is now estimated to account for nearly 90 per cent of all capital income, the question is how it is distributed. Auten and Splinter assume that untaxed capital income is much more equally distributed than Piketty, Saez, and Zucman do, and they estimate the top 1 per cent's claim to this income to be much less than its share of observed capital income (15 per cent versus about 50 per cent for taxed capital income today).

There are good reasons why the top 1 per cent may have a lower share of untaxed capital income compared to taxed capital income. Given the many options available to the very wealthy for tax avoidance and evasion, however, it seems unreasonable to assume that they truly command such a small share of untaxed capital income. Moreover, even with the Auten and Splinter adjustments, the top 1 per cent's share of overall income increased from 1980 to today, albeit by significantly less than what Piketty, Saez, and Zucman find.

When Auten and Splinter, and some in the media, argue that there has been no increase in inequality, they are referring to yet another important indicator: the level of inequality that exists after taxes and transfers. This one is particularly tricky to measure, because there is quite a bit of redistribution embedded in the US tax code, and the country's broader tax-transfer system is extraordinarily complicated. For example, determining who receives employer-paid benefits and retirement income is far from straightforward.

Here, Auten and Splinter make further adjustments and arrive at their headline finding that the top 1 per cent's after-tax-and-transfer share has remained roughly constant, at around 8 per cent, since the 1960s. But, because Auten and Splinter's estimates of the top 1 per cent's share of overall income is likely to be understated (owing to their treatment of untaxed capital income), their estimates of the top 1 per cent's after-tax-and-transfer share is also probably lower than it should be. The debate on this point will surely continue.

But such debates should not obscure what matters most in the story of the US economy since World War II. After three and a half decades in which all demographic groups largely benefited from economic growth, the pattern of shared prosperity unravelled. Though some of the resulting social and economic costs have been neutralised by taxes and transfers, that doesn't change the fact that the market economy – together with the technological trends it has engendered and the globalization it has encouraged – has malfunctioned and generated a huge amount of inequality.

The writer is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- Do something wonderful, people may imitate it. ALBERT SCHWEITZER
- Action is the foundational key to all success. PABLO PICASSO
- Art is anything people do with distinction. LOUIS DUKE

DOYEN OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

FOCUS HOMAGE

The hyper capitalist societies are what not filled with; be it resources, accessibility or say opportunities but let's not ignore the burgeoning percentages of young minds stuck with a labyrinth of discourses one paving another. The mundane concerns of the young college/university going women reveal that many times, they feel terribly hopeless and uncomfortable about various roles that they have to accomplish towards family, society, nation and so on. And when they make an attempt to negotiate with the complexities of society a feeling of trepidation corrodes them from inside and subsequently they take an exit from the entire situation. So, how can the above issues be addressed? What will be the pedagogical tools to engage with the students to address their problems? The need of the hour is to mull over and do a round of thorough engagements on the contributions of Savitribai Phule.

No discussion, discourse or debate on women's education can be complete without the mention of its doyen – Savitribai Phule. Having come from a humble Dalit background she has never ceased to prove her potential to become a panjandrum to liberate a large section of women against societal norms that squeezed them within domestic chores. It was that era where education was the privilege confined to upper caste and affluent males, specifically; women were not allowed to attend schools. The three major concerns of pre-independent India were to bring girl children to schools and the scarcity of female teachers and lastly there was no/limited access to formal education. And all these factors were associated with age-old established traditions, regressive social order and patriarchal structure. With the assistance of Fatima Sheikh and Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai established a girls' school in Bhidewada, Pune in



Savitribai was one of those organic intellectuals who preached the idea of creating an epistemic circle where women were encouraged to use the pedagogy of questioning the social structure

1848. This school is recognised as the first girls' school in India where Savitribai served the position of headmistress.

When Savitribai used to leave her home to reach the school the 'upper' castes people would come out and fling cow dung and mud at her. This practice got so repetitive and 'normal' that she used to carry with her an extra pair of clothes which she would change into on reaching her school. This is one of instances of her passive resistance to awaken women to conquer fear and conventional rules that forced them to be away from formal education. In the initial days of her campaign she even had to face incessant physical violence where people would literally throw stones at her and her cohorts. However, she remained unaffected by the hate-mongers and continued to chase her aspiration to unshackle women from the chain of patriarchy and caste. Balwant Sakharam Kolhe mentioned in the memoirs on Savitribai where she says, "As I do the sacred task of teaching my fellow sisters, the stones or cow dung that you throw seem like flowers to me, May God bless you!" The modern society still has this understanding of not en-

couraging girl children for education after marriage but it's important to note that at the age of nine Savitribai was married off but she started her formal education post marriage. Savitribai was always ahead of time and used to believe that "education is a lifelong endeavor." She has made an order on her own for the life of a girl child where she placed education at the top, play in the second position and domestic work at the last (if needed). She was one of those organic intellectuals who preached the idea of creating an epistemic circle where women were encouraged to use the pedagogy of questioning the social structure.

Savitribai had also played a critical role at the grassroots level to liberate women from various social evils like infanticide and ostracisation of widows. She established 'Mahila Seva Mandal', an organisation on advocacy in 1852 to address the issues of women. She also organised a barbers' strike in 1860 against the tonsuring of widows. As the widows were subjected to sexual exploitation and regressive treatments many of them committed suicide or killed off young widows to escape from social stig-

mas. Therefore, the Phules decided to open a special home for widowed mothers, and children born out of wedlock and named it 'Balyata Pratibandhak Gruha' to free them from cruelty of their societies and families. She also played a pivotal role in establishing 'Satyasodhak Samaj' (1873) to ignite the minds of the women about their rights and privileges. Through this platform she made women understand why their voices and visibility matter. Satyasodhak Samaj through the leadership of Phules witnessed an introduction of a unique marriage form called Satyashodhak that rejected the very idea of Brahmin rituals and dowry and promoted inter-caste marriages. She worked extensively to cater relief services to families affected by famine and was also at the front row to provide medical and rehabilitation aid to tubercular patients. In Indian history, Savitribai again challenged conventions and became the first ever woman to light the pyre of her husband Jyotiba Phule in 1890.

In recent times when Bharat is planning for the successful implementation of New Education Policy, more inclusivity through multidisciplinary disciplines and skill development a critical engagement with Savitribai's journey of life will surely encourage many young women to internalise the very idea of hope, aspirations and materialising their dreams uninterrupted. Let's not complain about what is not there in the system, rather let's invest energy to be a part of the system and transform society when needed. And all this is possible when we are educated, united, ready to march together, and well prepared to listen to the plights of other sections of the community.

The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Maitreyi College, University of Delhi. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM NATION

No voter to be left behind

The Election Commission of India, as a part of its Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) signed an MoU with the Ministry of Education on 2 November 2023 to incorporate voter education and electoral literacy formally into the university and college education system to prepare future and new voters for greater electoral participation. This much needed step can fulfil the aspirational goal of ECI to handover the voter ID card to every eligible student immediately after their attaining the age of 18 years. This can create an institutional framework for online registration of eligible and prospective students who have attained 17+ years of age after every qualifying date – 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October of every calendar year.

Over the time, India has proved its distinct identity as a thriving and vibrant electoral democracy by conducting 17 general elections to the Lower House of the Parliament, almost more than 400 elections to state Legislative Assemblies, 16 elections to of-

vice of President and office of Vice President each and number of by-elections and biennial elections, says the Electoral Statistics Pocket Book 2022. As many as 20 million first-time voters are added to the electoral list every year and the ECI wants to focus on this demographic of 15-17-year-olds or 62% of future voters to inculcate a sense of active participation and ethical voting in the elections.

The higher education regulator UGC wrote to the Vice Chancellors of all universities and principals of all colleges in the country informing about the MoU and instructed to incorporate voter education and electoral literacy formally into the university/college education system to prepare potential new voters for active and greater electoral participation. This can create conducive environment in the campus so that potential voters can use the voter registration portals and mobile apps of ECI to get themselves enrolled and participate in the election process after attaining the age of 18. This step sounds prudent as

almost 297 million electors (out of 910 million) did not cast their votes in 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The voting percentage was 67.4%, which the ECI wants to improve further. Ultimately, it is the youth who are to be taught responsible voting behaviour as they are the future of democracy of the country.

Getting registered as a voter is not sufficient, it is also necessary to participate in elections actively with full knowledge of the process. Or else, the same tantrums of buying the votes by candidates will continue resulting in spoilage of the sanctity of elections.

Many educated voters are not aware of none of the above (NOTA), forget about the uneducated. The Supreme Court said in 2013 that for a democracy to survive, it is essential that the best available men/women should be chosen as people's representatives for proper governance of the country. This can be best achieved through people of high moral and ethical values, who win elections on a positive vote. Thus in a vibrant democracy, the voter must be given an op-

portunity to choose NOTA button, which will indeed compel political parties to nominate a sound candidate.

The vote share of NOTA in elections to Lok Sabha, 2019 was 1.06%. In the polls, Bihar recorded the highest percentage of NOTA vote share of 2% whereas Nagaland recorded the least NOTA vote share of 0.20%. A total of 65,22,772 NOTA votes were polled during 2019 elections across the country. In Odisha NOTA received around 3,10,824 votes accounting for 1.31% of total votes. The point to be discussed is whether these are willingly done or the NOTA button is accidentally pressed as it happens always with the illiterate voters.

To overcome all these, proper awareness of the election process is to be made at the college level so that ethical elections can be held resulting in the emergence of true leaders. The role of teachers is more important in materialising the plans of the ECI and UGC.

The writer is Principal, Nabarangpur College.



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

20 MILLION FIRST-TIME VOTERS ARE ADDED TO THE ELECTORAL LIST EVERY YEAR

Crucial election

Sir, This refers to the editorial "Begum in Bangladesh," January 3, Orissa POST. The upcoming general election in Bangladesh holds profound implications for India, spanning strategic and geopolitical realms. Strategically, concerns regarding security underscore the importance of a government in Bangladesh that actively addresses challenges like illegal immigration and insurgent groups seeking refuge. Cooperation on border control and water-sharing agreements, particularly for transnational rivers like the Teesta and Brahmaputra would significantly alleviate India's apprehensions. On the trade and connectivity front, a government in Bangladesh prioritising regional collaboration and fostering stable trade relations is crucial for India given Bangladesh's role as a gateway to Southeast Asia and its status as India's largest trade partner. In the broader geopolitical context, the election outcome holds implications for China's influence in the region. A government in Bangladesh leaning towards China could pose strategic challenges for India, impacting the delicate balance of power. Furthermore, the stability of Bangladesh is integral to regional stability in South Asia, emphasising the importance of a free and fair election process. The global image of India as a democratic leader is also intertwined with the fairness and transparency of the Bangladesh election. Nevertheless, India must exercise caution to avoid interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs. In essence, the Bangladesh election's outcome has the potential to significantly shape India's strategic and geopolitical landscape, necessitating astute observation and diplomatic engagement for a stable and cooperative regional dynamic.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Chess wizards

Sir, D Gukesh capped a fabulous 2023 for India, earning a place in the prestigious Candidates' Tournament to be held in Toronto from April 2 to 25, 2024. In a historic first, three Indians - R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Santosh Gujrathi are the other two - will feature in the round-robin tournament. The winner of the Candidates Tournament will take on China's Ding Liren in the next world chess championship. Here's wishing the trio the best of luck!

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

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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AYODHYA TO BE UNDER AI SURVEILLANCE

BESIDES AI SURVEILLANCE, 11,000 STATE POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES ARE LIKELY TO BE DEPLOYED FOR THE CONSECRATION CEREMONY OF RAM LALLA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 4: For the first time, Artificial Intelligence (AI) surveillance will be introduced for the security of the Ram temple, where pilgrim footfalls are expected to increase sizeably after the January 22 inauguration.

"The pilot project of AI surveillance is likely to be launched for Ayodhya. After some time, if found feasible, it could be made an integral part of the security and surveillance drill," a senior police official said. Besides AI surveillance, 11,000 state police and paramilitary forces are likely to be deployed for the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla.



"The threat perception of Ram temple is high that we need to keep a tight vigil on all movements in Ayodhya," the official said.

"The AI surveillance could help in detecting frequent visitors or any common trend followed by a group of people, or any other suspicious trend spotted within the temple premises. A security alert would be raised automatically, and security agencies would be able to follow-up," the official said.

He said the Uttar Pradesh Police have already intensified manual as well as social media vigilance in build-up to the consecration ceremony. "The security scheme for January 22 event is yet to be finalised," the official said.

He added officials from the state as well as the central agencies are still analysing the threat perception and security requirement. "The manual as well as video surveillance is already in place in the red zone where Ram Temple is located. About 38 officers of local intelligence unit have been deployed there to keep vigil on every movement," the official confirmed.

He said the verification process of every individual, from taxi drivers, e-rickshaw drivers, hotel staff, beggars, priests, residents, in the Ram temple vicinity, is being done as well as guest lists of the event and people or staff accompanying them was being verified.

The senior police official said 26 companies of paramilitary and PAC along with nearly 8,000 civil police personnel are likely for the event. "UP Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) and Special Task Force teams and central agencies like National Security Guards are also going to be deployed," he added.

"For the day of event, traffic diversions will be made on all roads heading towards Ayodhya. These road stretches will be made free of encroachments to ensure visitors do not face any problems," the official said.

UP to host International Kite Festival

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya (UP), Jan 4: The Uttar Pradesh government is formulating a plan to host the International Kite Festival in Ayodhya, ahead of the consecration ceremony scheduled for January 22.

The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) has initiated preparations for the festival, which is likely to take place between January 19 and 21, providing renowned kite flyers from both within the country and around the world with an opportunity to showcase their art.

The ADA will engage a private agency to give concrete shape to the event, said a government spokesman. The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) has invited applications through the Request for Proposal format to appoint an agency for the conceptualisation, designing, execution, and supervision

of event management, as well as the development of temporary structures and related infrastructure for hosting the International Kite Festival in Ayodhya.

The agency that will carry out this programme will be chosen based on the applications received through this process. The entire selection process is scheduled to be completed by January 8, following which a comprehensive plan for organising the International Kite Festival will be formulated.

It is noteworthy that to organise this event on a grand scale, inspiration is being taken from various kite festivals being held in the country and abroad. A visitor area will be made with seating arrangements for 750 people.

A lounge with 50 VVIP sofas will be constructed to accommodate the special invitees at the event.

UP reports first Covid death this year

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 4: A 63-year-old woman, who had tested positive for Covid, succumbed to the virus during treatment at SGP GIMS.

The woman died Wednesday. This marks the first Covid-related death among patients in the state this year. Dr Manoj Agrawal, chief medical officer (CMO) of Lucknow, shared details of the patient's medical condition, stating, "The patient was suffering from acute kidney injury (stage 3) along with hypertension, diabetes mellitus, morbid obesity, severe sepsis, type-2 respiratory failure, and Covid pneumonia."

She had been receiving treatment at PGI since December 31, 2023, and died January 2. During the day, no new Covid cases were reported, but four individuals were declared as recovered.

As of now, there is one active Covid-positive patient in Lucknow, spokesperson for the office of CMO in Lucknow.



A vendor sells woollen clothes on a cold day in Lucknow

PTI PHOTO

Surge in crimes against women in Bangalore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 4: Bangalore has witnessed a significant increase in crime against women in 2023 with the city police registering 3,260 cases including 1,135 related to molestation, shows official data.

The police attributed the rise to enhanced awareness, initiatives of filing suo moto cases and registration of e-FIRs, among other factors.

In 2023, the city also witnessed an increase in other crimes as compared to the previous two years with the police registering 205 cases of murder, 153 cases of chain snatching, 673 robbery cases, 1,692 cases of house thefts and 5,909 cases of motor vehicle thefts, according to the data shared by the police.

According to the data, the city police registered 2,020 FIRs related to crime against women in 2021, 2,630 FIRs in 2022 and 3,260 FIRs in 2023. Out of the total cases of crime against women reported last year, the



city police was successful in detecting 3,121 cases.

In 2023, the police registered 176 cases of rape, 1,135 cases of molestation, 60 cases related to insulting modesty of women, 25 cases related to dowry death, 696 cases related to cruelty by husband or relatives of husband, 161 cases of immoral trafficking act and 1,007 cases related to dowry prohibition act.

The city also saw an increase in cases of crime against children in 2023 with the police

registering 631 cases, out of which 560 were registered under the POC SO (Protection of Children against Sexual Offences) Act. Police succeeded in detecting 588 cases.

Last year, Bangalore saw an increase in gambling cases with police registering 639 cases as compared to the previous two years. 588 and 622 gambling cases were registered in 2021 and 2022 respectively, the data showed.

The city also reported 2,358

The police attributed the rise to enhanced awareness, initiatives of filing suo moto cases and registration of e-FIRs, among other factors

According to the data, the city police registered 2,020 FIRs related to crime against women in 2021, 2,630 FIRs in 2022 and 3,260 FIRs in 2023

suicides and 5,848 accidental deaths last year due to electrocution, drowning, burning, fall from height and poisoning, among others.

The data also stated that 6,006 persons were reported missing in Bangalore in 2023. Out of these, police succeeded in tracing 5,026 people while 1,189 kidnapping cases were registered. Out of this, 981 cases were detected.

Under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, the Bangalore police registered 3,443 cases, seized 5,387 kg drugs worth Rs 103.22 crore and arrested 4,399 persons in 2023, the data showed.

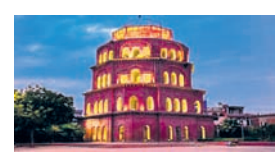
Man arrested for threatening wife

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Belagavi (Karnataka), Jan 4: A 45-year-old man was arrested here for allegedly threatening his wife with making her private pictures and videos viral on social media platforms after she refused to divorce him, police said Thursday. The accused Kiran Patil was allegedly having an affair with a woman he wanted to wed. His wife, a government school teacher, knew about this and refused his separation plea, they said. The accused had also subjected his wife to physical abuse and harassment following which she had also got a case registered against him for domestic violence. But the man still continued to harass her, a senior police officer said.

Lucknow heritage sites get a price tag

Heritage sites such as Rumi Darwaza, Satkhanda, Clock Tower, Bada and Chhota Imambaras, are among the sites that are favoured by couples for romantic shoots



Thursday onwards people will have to shell out Rs 2,000 for using the premises of heritage sites for photo shoots, read a recent circular released by Hussainabad and Allied Trust (HAT). The officials said that they have already formed a team that will do the rounds in the area and see to it that the orders are followed.

"As per the new rules, we will now be levying Rs 2,000 for each wedding shoot that is scheduled around heritage sites such as Bada Imambaras and Chhota Imambaras, Rumi Darwaza, Picture Gallery, Satkhanda, and the Clock

Tower. The pass will be valid only for two hours and once the time limit lapses, a new pass will have to be availed," said Habibul Hasan, Assistant Superintendent, HAT.

The trust hopes to generate around Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000 a day during the peak wedding season. Depending on the success of this experimental exercise, the trust will deliberate on setting up dedicated counters for booking wedding shoots.

"On an average, there are around 25 to 30 wedding shoots each day during the wedding season. The nominal fee that we have fixed will help us generate sufficient revenue that would be directed towards proper maintenance and upkeep of these sites," Hasan added.

Lucknow, Jan 4: Pre and post-wedding photo shoots at Lucknow's heritage monuments will now come at a cost.

Heritage sites such as Rumi Darwaza, Satkhanda, Clock Tower, Bada and Chhota Imambaras, are among the sites that are favoured by couples for romantic shoots. However, from

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.B-1549
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SUNDARGARH (R&B) DIVISION, SUNDARGARH
 E-mail ID: pvd_sng@yahoo.co.in
"e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.SE-R&B-SNG-45 of 2023-24
 Letter No.8050/ Date:29.12.2023

- The Superintending Engineer, Sundargarh (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in single cover system on ONLINE mode from eligible contractors with valid licenses for execution of **Building Work (including EI & PH)** as detailed in DTCN.
- Nature of Work :- Building work (including EI & PH)
- No. of Work :- 01 (One) No.
- Tender Cost :- Rs.6,000/-
- Class of Contractor :- C & B
- Availability of bid document in the website :- From 10.00 A.M. Date: 04.01.2024 to 05.00 PM Date: 17.01.2024
- Date of Opening of Bid :- 11.00 AM on Dt.18.01.2024
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website (https://tendersodisha.gov.in). Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd./ Superintending Engineer Sundargarh (R&B) Division OIPR-34043/11/0019/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.B-1550:
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, JHARSUGUDA (R&B) DIVISION, JHARSUGUDA
 E-mail ID: eepwdjsg2014@gmail.com. Telephone:06645-271242, Kalimandir Road, Jharsuguda, 768202
"e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.SE-R&B-JSG-14 of 2023-24

- The Executive Engineer, Jharsuguda (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in **Single/Double Cover** system on ON-LINE mode from eligible contractors for Construction of **Civil Work/ Electrical Works as detailed in DTCN.**
- Nature of Work :- Civil Work & Electrical Work
- Estimated Cost :- Rs.9.56 Lakhs to Rs.96.00 Lakhs
- No. of Work :- 03 (Three) Nos.
- Tender Cost :- Rs.4000/-, Rs.6000/- & Rs.10,000/- (as per DTCN)
- Class of Contractor :- 'D', 'C', 'B', Electrical MV/HT
- Availability of bid document in the website :- 10.00 A.M. of 05.01.2024 to 5.00 P.M. of 19.01.2024
- Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I) :- 6.00 PM on Dt.19.01.2024
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd./ Executive Engineer, Jharsuguda (R&B) Division OIPR-34094/11/0017/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-2092
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, BHADRAK
 ee_rwbdk2@yahoo.co.in
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Identification Online Tender 11/RWD/BDK-II/2023-24 Dtd.30.12.2023

- Name of the Work:- Building Works as per Annexure. 2. Total Number of Works:- 2 Nos.
- Approximate Estimated Cost:- Rs 58.82 lakhs - Rs.64.74 lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor:- As Per Annexure. 5. Period of Completion:- As Per Annexure. 6. Other details:- The details are as follows.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Bid	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Bhadrak	11	09.01.2024 At 11.30 A.M.	19.01.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.	18.01.2024 upto 3.00 P.M.	20.01.2024 at 11.00 AM	Will be intimated later

7. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in". 8. Any other changes/Corrigendum may be seen only in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./ Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Bhadrak OIPR-25090/11/0022/2324



Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav meets Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in Bodhi Gaya



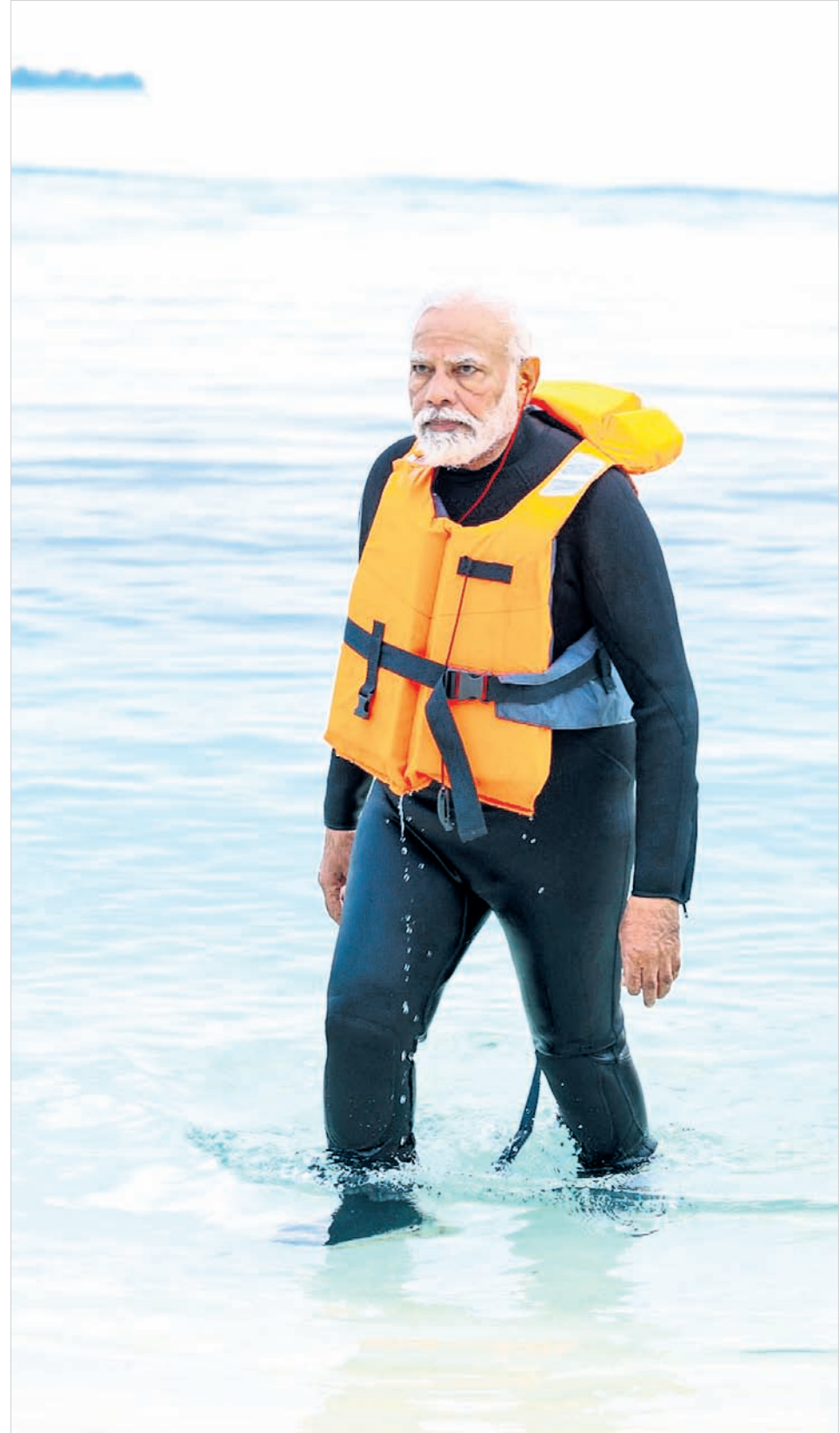
Students during the 8th convocation of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology in Jammu



Drying fish ponds in Hong Kong's Tai Sang Wai create circular potholes that attract many photographers



Civilians dressed up in creative, military-style uniforms march in honor of the black African soldiers who were conscripted into the South African army to fight in World War I, during the Diturupa Festival in Mabopane, South Africa



Prime Minister Narendra Modi tries snorkelling during his visit in Lakshadweep. Modi was in Lakshadweep January 2 and 3 to inaugurate the Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fiber Connection and lay foundation stone for the renovation of primary healthcare facility and five model Anganwadi centres



People stand around a bonfire to warm themselves during a cold winter morning in Jammu. Keeping in view harsh weather condition, the Directorate of School Education Jammu has extended winter vacations in schools of Summer Zone upto January 6



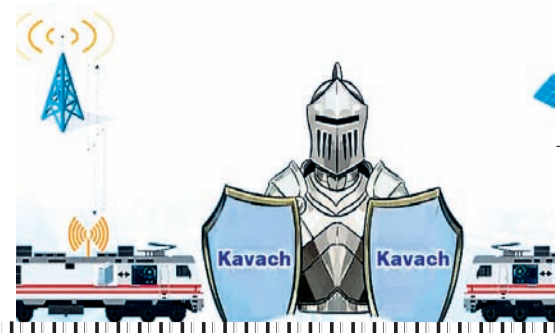
Commuters cover themselves with plastic sheets during rainfall, owing to formation of a low-pressure area in the Arabian Sea in Chikmagalur, Karnataka



The situation in the country is not favourable for the BJP
SHARAD PAWAR | NCP FOUNDER

RAILWAYS CONDUCTS KAVACH EFFICIENCY TRIAL AT 140 KMPH

Will the anti-collision system Kavach function efficiently when a train is running at a speed of 140 kmph? To find the answer, the Indian Railways conducted a trial by running an engine fitted with Kavach at 140 kmph for the first time between Mathura and Palwal December 30



of the day quote

All three branches of the government unanimously abrogated Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 of the Constitution, thereby fulfilling the dream of Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee

As Jammu and Kashmir leaps towards building a modern and sustainable agriculture and allied industry through Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), educational institutions will have to take innovative approach to minimize the input costs for farmers and maximise output with efficient growing techniques and technological support

Even the two MPs of the Shiromani Akali Dal - Sukhbir Singh Badal and Harsimrat Kaur Badal - have never bothered to raise any issue pertaining to interests of the state or its people in the Lok Sabha

SHORT TAKES

Wanted terrorist held from Delhi
New Delhi: The Delhi Police's Special Cell Thursday arrested a Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist, wanted in 11 terror attack cases in Jammu and Kashmir, from the national capital, an official said. It is a major breakthrough, Special Commissioner of Police (SCP) HGS Dhaliwal said at a press conference. Javid Ahmad Matoo, 32, a highly indoctrinated terrorist carrying a reward of Rs 10 lakh, was arrested from Delhi's Nizamuddin area. He was driving a stolen car when he was apprehend, police said.

Bajrang Dal worker killed
Indore: A 26-year-old Bajrang Dal activist died after being stabbed in his throat Thursday morning following an altercation over jostling during a religious procession in Indore city of Madhya Pradesh, police said. Two of the eight accused have been detained in connection with the incident, they said. According to police, thousands of people took part in the religious procession taken out this morning.

Udhayanidhi meets PM Modi
Chennai/New Delhi: Tamil Nadu Minister and DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin Thursday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and invited him for the opening ceremony of the Khelo India Youth Games slated to be held in Chennai later this month. He also met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, whom he referred to as "brother" and briefly discussed "the progress of the INDIA alliance in safeguarding the secular ethos of the nation".

Chinese man dies after New Year party
Noida: A Chinese national was found dead in Noida under mysterious circumstances after a New Year party held here, police officials said Thursday. The foreigner, who lived and worked in Noida, had parted with his friends and colleagues December 31 but was found dead January 1, the officials said. The police identified the dead man as 48-year-old Chinese national Tanxiaohua, who had been living in India for around six months now.

QATAR DEATH SENTENCE ROW

Legal team has 60 days to appeal: MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 4: The eight jailed former Indian Navy personnel in Qatar have been given 60 days' time to appeal against the varying prison terms handed by a Qatari court last week that came following commutation of their death sentences, the Ministry of External Affairs said Thursday. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the legal team of the Indian nationals received a copy of the court order that he described as a "confidential document". "The Court of Appeal had given a judgement December 28. Thereafter, we issued a press release giving details (and) telling that the death penalty has been reduced. Now, we have the judgement order, which is a confidential document," he said in a statement.



The Court of Appeal in Qatar December 28 commuted the death sentence handed down to the Indians in October and sentenced them to prison for varying durations, weeks after their family members filed an appeal against the earlier order by another court

Jaiswal was responding to a question. "The court has given 60 days for the appeal to be made before the Court of Cassation, which is the highest court in Qatar. And it is for the legal team now to decide the next course of action. So, that is where we are," he also added. The spokesperson further added: "What we can confirm to you is that the death penalty has now been converted into varying prison sentences for the eight Indian nationals." "We are in touch with the family members. We are also in touch with the legal team," Jaiswal said. It is learnt that the prison

terms handed to the former Indian Navy personnel ranged from three years to 25 years. The Navy veterans were October 26 given death sentences by Qatar's Court of First Instance. The Indian nationals, who worked with private company Al Dahra, were arrested in August last year reportedly in an alleged case of espionage. Neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against the Indian nationals public. The charges were filed against the eight Indian navy veterans March 25 and they were tried under Qatari law. All of the former Navy officers had "unblemished stints" of upto 20 years in the

Indian Navy and had held important positions including that of instructors in the force. In May Al-Dhara Global closed its operations in Doha and all those working there (primarily Indians) have since returned home. It is learnt that India is also looking at the possibility of invoking provisions of a bilateral pact on the transfer of sentenced persons. The pact signed between India and Qatar in 2015 provides for citizens of India and Qatar who have been convicted and sentenced for criminal offences to serve their sentences in their home country. However, there was no clarity on whether Qatar had ratified the agreement.

Kejriwal calls ED summons 'illegal'

The AAP national convener has so far skipped three summons by the Enforcement Directorate for questioning in connection with a money laundering case linked to the alleged liquor scam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 4: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Thursday alleged the BJP-led Central government wanted to arrest him and prevent from campaigning for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, saying the ED summons issued to him was aimed at hurting his "biggest asset" honesty and defaming him. Kejriwal, however, said that he would cooperate with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) provided he was issued legally valid summons. "My lawyers have told me that the ED summons are illegal. The BJP wants to arrest me to stop me from campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls," he alleged at an online press briefing. Kejriwal said the liquor scam case that was being talked about for the last two years was "fake" and the probe agencies have so far failed to present any evidence of corruption. "My biggest asset is my honesty and the BJP wants to hurt my honesty with fake cases. I have always fought for the country, every breath of mine, every drop of my blood is dedicated to the country," Kejriwal asserted. The AAP national convener appealed people for their support to him at his hour of crisis. "The country cannot move forward by putting honest leaders in jail and allowing corrupt people to join their party. What's going on? Whatever is going on is very dangerous. This is very



bad for our democracy. It must be stopped," he said. Kejriwal said that he has written to the ED, saying their summons are "illegal" but has not got any response. "They haven't replied because they know that their summons are illegal. Should I follow illegal summons? If legally sound summons will be issued, I will follow them. My greatest wealth is my honesty. They want to break me by tarnishing my image," he said. Kejriwal said that he had appeared before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) when he was called by the agency eight months ago. Sources said the ED is currently examining Kejriwal's five-page reply sent to the investigating officer of the case Wednesday and may reject his charges of calling the summons ille. The agency may issue its fourth summons to Kejriwal as per provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

YS SHARMILA JOINS CONGRESS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 4: YS Sharmila, the daughter of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy and founder of YSR Telangana Party, joined the Congress here Thursday. She announced the merger of her YSR Telangana Congress with the Congress, and said she would fulfil any responsibility given to her. Sharmila joined the Congress in the presence of party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and former party president Rahul Gandhi. She later met Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi at her residence and paid her respects. Sonia Gandhi welcomed her in the party fold. Lauding the Congress, she said it is the largest and "most secular" party in the country as it unwaveringly serves all communities and unites all sections of people. "I am very happy to be merging the YSR Telangana party with the Congress. It gives me immense joy that the YSR Telangana party is going to be a part of the Indian National Congress from today onwards," she said. Describing her father and former Chief Minister YSR Reddy as a legendary leader of the Telugu people, she said he not only served the Congress all his life, but also gave his life serving the Congress. "Today, it would give him great joy that his daughter is following in his footsteps and is going to be a part of the Congress itself," she said.

Autorickshaw driver arrested for murder of Punjab DSP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 4: Four days after a Punjab Armed Police (PAP) deputy superintendent was found dead in Jalandhar, the police have arrested an autorickshaw driver for his murder, officials said Thursday. The accused allegedly killed Dalbir Singh (54), who was an Arjuna awardee and a weightlifter, with the officer's service pistol after a scuffle, the police said. Singh's body bore injury marks and was found lying on a road Monday in Basti Bawa Khel in Jalandhar, where he was posted, the police had said earlier. The incident took place December 31 night on New Year's eve after the DSP asked the auto driver Vijay Kumar to drop him to his village Khojewal in Kapurthala, Jalandhar Police Commissioner Swapan Sharma told reporters. Kumar, an alleged drug addict, refused to go that far, following which they got into an altercation, Sharma said.



Farmers during their protest outside the NTPC office on a cold winter day in Noida, Uttar Pradesh

SNNIPETS

Maha minister asks cops to 'break bones' of revellers
Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: Maharashtra minister Abdul Sattar drew flak from Opposition parties Thursday after a video showing him purportedly asking police to "break the bones" of unruly audience members during a dance show organised on his birthday in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district went viral. The incident took place Wednesday night in Sillod town when popular Lavani dancer Gautami Patil's performance was underway. Sattar, who belongs to the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, represents the Sillod assembly constituency and holds charge of the Minority Development department.

EC to visit states from January 7
New Delhi: The Election Commission (EC) will start reviewing preparedness of states for the Lok Sabha elections with a visit to Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu next week. The commission led by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and comprising Election Commissioners Anup Chandra Pandey and Arun Goel will be in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu between January 7 and 10. Ahead of the visit, deputy election commissioners will brief the full commission about the preparations in the two states January 6. The deputy election commissioners have visited almost all the states to oversee the preparation for the Lok Sabha polls.

SC refuses relief to Pawan Khera for jibe against PM
New Delhi: In fresh trouble for Congress leader Pawan Khera, the Supreme Court Thursday dismissed his petition challenging the Allahabad High Court order refusing to quash criminal proceedings against him for making objectionable remarks targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, paving the way for his trial. At a press conference in Mumbai in February 2023, Khera had called the prime minister "Narendra Gautam Das Modi", a comment that did not go down well with BJP leaders and supporters, and was seen as a reference to industrialist Gautam Adani. Prime Minister Modi writes his full name as Narendra Damodar Das Modi, with Damodar Das being his father's name.

CALCUTTA HC JUDGEMENT ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Certain paragraphs in verdict problematic: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 4: The Supreme Court Thursday observed that certain paragraphs in a Calcutta High Court verdict, which advised adolescent girls to "control sexual urges", were "problematic" and writing such judgements was "absolutely wrong". The West Bengal government informed the apex court it has filed an appeal challenging the high court verdict. The top court, which had initiated a suo motu writ petition in the matter, had observed that judges are not expected to "preach" while writing judgements. The matter came up for hearing Thursday before a bench of justices A S Oka and Ujjal

Bhuyan. Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for West Bengal, informed the bench that the state has filed an appeal in the apex court against the October 18 last year verdict of the high court. "The appeal was listed today before another bench of this court. That bench unfortunately could not sit," he said in a statement. The bench said the suo motu writ petition and the appeal filed by state will have to be heard together. "It is not only about observations. See the kind of findings," it observed, adding, "Writing such judgements is absolutely wrong... What kind of principles the judges have invoked." During the hearing, Ahmadi

referred to one of the paragraphs in the high court verdict. The bench said certain paragraphs in the judgement were "problematic". "We have marked all the paragraphs," it said, adding, "In the course of this, so many findings have been recorded. Where from these concepts come, we don't know. But we want to deal with



each and everything which is said. Your assistance is required." The bench asked the registry to list the suo motu writ petition and the special leave petition (SLP) filed by the state January 12 after taking approval of the

Chief Justice of India. In its judgement, the high court had said that female adolescents should "control sexual urges" and "not give into two minutes of pleasure". In its order passed December

8 last year, the apex court had referred to certain observations made by the high court and said, "Prima facie, the said observations are completely in violation of the rights of the adolescents guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India." It had observed the issue before the high court was about the legality and validity of order and judgement dated September 19/20, 2022 by which a man was convicted for offences under sections 363 (kidnapping) and 366 (kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage) of the Indian Penal Code as well as section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

international



The Houthis' attacks on maritime trade are not merely an escalation nor are they a spillover. It did not happen magically by itself. This reality is a glimpse into the dark future of the region and the entire globe if action is not taken
GILAD ERDAN | AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL TO THE UN

EXTREME COLD WREAKS HAVOC

Extremely cold temperatures compounded by gale-force winds and snow wreaked havoc across the Nordic region Thursday, leaving thousands without power while others braved the cold for hours stuck in their cars along clogged highways



of the day quote

Semiconductors are the key input in so many goods that are vital to our economy
LAEL BRAINARD
DIRECTOR OF THE WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL

Those who killed innocent people by perpetrating the act of terror and those who masterminded and ordered it, will be the definite target of just punishment from now on
ALI KHAMENEI | IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER

There's a recognition that my government is committed to climate action and that we're playing a positive role, not just with our commitment to reduce our emissions by 43% by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050, but that, importantly, we are playing a role in the region, and indeed, around the globe
ANTHONY ALBANESE | AUSTRALIAN PM

SHORT TAKES

India, Nepal ink agreements

Kathmandu: India and Nepal Thursday signed a slew of agreements as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a "comprehensive and productive" meeting with his Nepalese counterpart NP Saud and discussed overall bilateral ties, trade, connectivity projects and cooperation in key areas like defence and security, power and water resources. Jaishankar, who arrived in Nepal earlier in the day on his first visit to a foreign country in 2024, co-chaired with Saud the 7th India-Nepal Joint Commission meeting.

US warns Houthi rebels

Washington: The United States and 12 allies issued what amounted to a final warning to Houthi rebels Wednesday to cease their attacks on vessels in the Red Sea or face potential targeted military action. The Yemen-based militants have carried out at least 23 attacks in response to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza since December 19.

Imam killed outside mosque

Newark (US): A New Jersey imam was gunned down outside his mosque before dawn Wednesday, leaving authorities hunting for a shooter and saying they have found no evidence yet that an anti-Muslim bias played a part in the shooting. Imam Hassan Sharif was in his car when he was shot more than once at about 6 am near the Masjid-Muhammad Mosque in Newark, the state's largest city, Essex County Prosecutor Ted Stephens said at a news conference.

IS claims responsibility for blasts

In a statement posted on its affiliate Telegram channels, the militant Sunni Muslim group said two IS members had detonated their explosive belts in the crowd which had gathered at the cemetery in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman Wednesday for the anniversary of Soleimani's death

Dubai, Jan 4: Islamic State claimed responsibility Thursday for two explosions in Iran that killed nearly 100 people and wounded scores at a memorial for top commander Qassem Soleimani who was killed in Iraq in 2020 by a US drone. In a statement posted on its affiliate Telegram channels, the militant Sunni Muslim group said two IS members had detonated their explosive belts in the crowd which had gathered at the cemetery in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman Wednesday for the anniversary of Soleimani's death. Tehran earlier blamed the explosions on "terrorists" and vowed revenge for the bloodiest such attacks since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The twin blasts also wounded 284 people, including women and children. "A very strong retaliation will be meted out to them by the hands of the soldiers of Soleimani," Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber said in Kerman. Earlier, an unnamed source told the state news agency IRNA that the first explosion at the cemetery in Kerman, Soleimani's home town, "was the result of a suicide bomber's action".



including Kerman, chanting: "Death to Israel" and "Death to America". Iranian authorities have called for mass protests Friday, when the funerals of the victims of the twin blasts will be held, state media reported. Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards Corps described the attacks as a cowardly act "aimed at creating insecurity and seeking revenge against the nation's deep love and devotion to the Islamic Republic". The Guards commander in Kerman denied state media reports of a shooting in Kerman Thursday. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has condemned Wednesday's "heinous and inhumane crime". In 2022 Islamic State claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a Shi'ite shrine in Iran which killed 15 people. Earlier attacks claimed by Islamic State include twin bombings in 2017 which targeted Iran's Parliament and the tomb of the Islamic Republic's founder,

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The United States denied Wednesday any involvement in the explosions and said it also had no reason to believe Israel was involved. It said the blasts appeared to represent "a terrorist attack" of the type carried out in the past by Islamic State. Tehran often accuses its arch enemies, Israel and the United States, of backing anti-Iran militant groups that have carried out attacks against the Islamic Republic in the past. Baluchi militants and ethnic Arab separatists have also staged attacks in Iran. The U.S. assassination of Soleimani in a January 3, 2020, drone attack at Baghdad airport, and Tehran's retaliation - by attacking two Iraqi military bases that house U.S. troops - brought the United States and Iran close to full-blown conflict. As chief commander of the elite Quds force, the overseas arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Soleimani ran clandestine operations abroad and was a key figure in Iran's longstanding campaign to drive US forces from the Middle East.

ELITE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS JOIN CALLS FOR REVENGE
CROWDS CHANT SLOGANS AGAINST US AND ISRAEL
FUNERALS, MASS PROTESTS PLANNED FRIDAY

PPP nominates Bilawal as its PM candidate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Jan 4: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has nominated its chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as its official prime ministerial candidate ahead of the general elections February 8, a media report said Thursday. The party's nomination came at the PPP's Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting held late Wednesday evening at Bilawal House.

Soon after the meeting, a detailed post on PPP's official X handle with photos of the meeting informed that members of the CEC expressed their confidence in the leadership of party president Asif Ali Zardari and chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. "President Asif Ali Zardari presented the name of chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the candidate for the Prime Minister on behalf of Pakistan Peoples Party. The CEC has endorsed Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the Prime Ministerial candidate of PPP," the party posted on X.

"It is with profound gratitude & great humility that I accept my party's nomination for the office of Prime Minister of Pakistan. On February 8th, we must put an end to the old politics of hate & division. Unite the country around a new politics of services," Bilawal posted on his official X handle after the meeting.



Putin offers citizenship to fight for Russia



Moscow, Jan 4: President Vladimir Putin issued a decree Thursday allowing foreign nationals who fight for Russia in Ukraine to obtain Russian citizenship for themselves and their families. The order said people who have signed contracts during what Moscow calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine can apply to get Russian passports for themselves and their spouses, children and parents. Neither Russia nor Ukraine has disclosed the extent of its losses in the 22-month war.

designers fighting on its side in Ukraine. However, Reuters has reported previously on Cubans who signed up for the military in return for bonuses equivalent to more than 100 times the average Cuban monthly salary, and three Africans recruited by Wagner, of whom two were killed in action. A declassified U.S. intelligence report assessed that the Ukraine war has cost Russia 315,000 dead and wounded troops, or nearly 90% of the personnel it had when the conflict began, a source familiar with the intelligence told Reuters last month. Russia drafted an extra 300,000 men in September 2022 in its first mobilisation since World War Two. There has been persistent speculation it could repeat the unpopular move, perhaps after the next presidential election in March in which Putin is set to stroll to a new six-year term. The Kremlin has repeatedly said no further mobilisation is needed, however, because hundreds of thousands of men signed voluntary contracts last year to become professional soldiers.

The order said people who have signed contracts during what Moscow calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine can apply to get Russian passports for themselves and their spouses, children and parents. Neither Russia nor Ukraine has disclosed the extent of its losses in the 22-month war.

Those eligible include people who have signed contracts with the regular armed forces or other "military formations" - a description that could apply to groups such as the Wagner mercenary organisation. The measure appeared to be aimed at creating additional incentives for foreigners with military experience to apply to join Russian ranks. Moscow does not publish data on the number of for-

Four Iran-backed militia fighters killed

The United States has 900 troops deployed in Syria and 2,500 in Iraq to prevent a resurgence of Islamic State militants



REUTERS

authorisation of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. The United States has 900 troops deployed in Syria and 2,500 in Iraq to prevent a resurgence of Islamic State militants. Al-Sudani has limited control over some Iran-backed factions, whose support he needed to win power a year ago and who now form a powerful bloc in his governing coalition. Police and militia sources said Thursday's rockets had targeted a vehicle inside the Nujaba'a headquarters and that the dead included a local group commander and one of his aides. Health sources confirmed the death toll. Video footage published by pro-militia websites showed a destroyed vehicle in flames. Reuters could not independently verify the authenticity of the footage. Iraqi security sources said they had no further detail on who might have carried out the strike pending a government investigation.

Baghdad, Jan 4: A drone strike killed four members of an Iran-aligned Iraqi militia and wounded six in Baghdad Thursday, police and security sources said, in an attack blamed by Iraqi authorities on the U.S.-led international coalition. Police sources and eyewitnesses said the drone had fired at least two rockets at a building in eastern Baghdad used by the Iraqi militia group al-Nujaba'a. "The Iraqi armed forces hold the international coalition forces responsible for this unjustified attack on an Iraqi security entity", said a statement which described the militia group as an Iraqi force operating with the



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukrainian prisoners of war react after prisoner exchange near Sumy, Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine exchanged hundreds of prisoners of war in the biggest single release of captives since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022

US Army starts school to train in drone defence

In a first, the US armed forces has started a school to train American soldiers on ways to defend against the emerging threat of drones, commonly known as unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). The Joint Counter small unmanned aircraft systems University (JCU) will train about 1,000 troops a year in response to the surge in drone warfare. "Warfare is changing very fast. This threat right here, this current threat with respect to UAS, it's the pace of your phone changing," Col. Moseph Sauda, Director, joint c-suas University told the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). Needless to say, the purpose of opening such a facility by Pentagon is to ensure that the US soldiers stay ahead of the fast evolving drone technology, particularly after witnessing the damage caused by these remotely-con-

trolled improvised flying devices in Ukraine and Israel, or previously in Iraq and Afghanistan by the ISIS. In fact, the proliferation of small, cheap, commercially-available drones is transforming modern warfare. Col Sauda said, "The need is outgrowing capacity right now. So we're trying to train as many people as possible and trying to grow as fast as possible to fit that need." The students at the school are being trained on a variety of weapon systems, to counter small unmanned aircraft, like the Smart Shooter. It is a small optic that is placed onto the M-4 weapon system to allow the user a better opportunity to engage small UAS threats that are very close, Col Sauda adds. The training does involve drones. However, students don't shoot directly at them. Instead, they shoot at bal-



loons dangling below the drones on a string. The JCU said balloons are more cost effective and become a harder target to hit in high winds. The students are also learning how to use another handheld system, the Drone Buster, which is essentially an electronic attack system. The soldier carrying the system points in the general direction of the target visible to the naked eye, and then uses various jamming means to interdict it. The JCU says these weapon systems and others like them are already in the hands of US forces around the

world. Stacie Petty John, Defense Program Director, Centre for New American Security said apart from the US Air Force, ground forces at every echelon are using different types of drones that provide them with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, as well as targeting and sometimes strike capabilities. Before the JCU was created, soldiers who trained on anti-drone weapon systems did so within their own branches. Training at the JCU lasts between one to three weeks. The commanders select their students, but some volunteer to attend. Subsequent to the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US deployed large, sophisticated and expensive drones for surveillance and strikes in Iraq and Afghanistan. The first time commercial drones were used in a conflict was in Iraq when ISIS deployed the

technology in the battle for Mosul. The terror group improvised small quadcopters and used them to attack Iraqi and US forces, which presented an unprecedented challenge, Stacie told the WSJ. In recent years, civilian drones modified with explosives have become a growing menace for troops in Syria, Gaza, and Ukraine. Drones have dramatically changed conventional military engagements. The little flights are allowing different states to perform missions that were earlier very costly, or having an air force on the cheap, added Stacie. The students at the school are also trained to meet another emerging threat, 'drone swarms', which is a network of multiple unmanned aerial flying platforms integrated together by a single system. PNN & AGENCIES

BNP declares 48-hour general strike in B'desh

Dhaka: Bangladesh's main opposition party BNP Thursday called for a 48-hour nationwide general strike starting Saturday to demand the resignation of the "illegal government" of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and to protest against the January 7 general election, which it is boycotting. Led by former Prime Minister Khalida Zia, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is boycotting the general election Sunday. It is demanding an interim non-party neutral government to hold the election. The demand was rejected by the government headed by Prime Minister Hasina, who is heading the ruling Awami League. BNP Joint Senior Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced the general strike at a press conference Thursday. "The 48-hour hartal will be observed from 6 am on January 6, to 6 am on January 8," Rizvi said in a virtual press conference.



Blending of ethanol into petrol has resulted in savings of over Rs 24,300 crore of foreign exchange in the supply year 2022-23

DISNEY, RIL START MERGER PROCESS

Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries (RIL) and Walt Disney have appointed law firms and started antitrust due diligence of their planned Indian media and entertainment merger, reports said.



of the day quote

With the Indian economy on a strong growth path, we will see a rise in capital expenditure and private investment and an increasing need for collaborative and innovative financing structures

Despite initial challenges, such as rising interest rates, escalating input costs, and surging real estate prices amid global uncertainties, the industry demonstrated exceptional resilience

Torrent Power intends to make a significant portion of its future investments across key national priorities of renewable generation, pump storage hydro projects, green hydrogen / green ammonia production and power distribution

IndiGo drops fuel charge

The country's largest airline removes fuel surcharge citing lower jet fuel price

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 4: The country's largest airline IndiGo Thursday announced the withdrawal of fuel charge that was collected from passengers, a move that will reduce airfares by up to Rs 1,000 on certain long routes.

In the wake of a spike in jet fuel prices, the airline started levying the fuel charge on each domestic and international ticket from October 6, 2023. The quantum of the fuel charge varied from Rs 300 to up to Rs 1,000 depending on the distance.

The airline, which is expanding its operations, said the fuel charge has been withdrawn with effect from January 4, due to the recent reduction in Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices.



"As ATF prices are dynamic, we will continue to adjust our fares and components thereof, to respond to any change in prices or market conditions," IndiGo said in a statement.

Fuel cost accounts for a significant chunk of a carrier's operational costs.

Last year, IndiGo was also the first Indian carrier to announce that they would levy fuel charge to offset the spike in ATF prices.

A fuel charge of Rs 300 was levied from each passenger if the flight distance was up to 500 kilometres and the amount was Rs 400 for a distance of 501-1,000 kilometres.

The fuel charge was Rs 550 for 1,001-1,500 kilometres, Rs 650 for 1,501-2,500 kilometres and Rs 800 for 2,501-3,500 kilometres.

The amount was Rs 1,000 for 3,501 kilometres and above. With the removal of the fuel charge, the overall ticket price for an

Airfares to reduce by at least ₹300 and up to ₹1,000

respond to any change in prices or market conditions," IndiGo said in a statement. The fuel charge was introduced from October 6, 2023. IndiGo is the country's largest airline. In November 2023, IndiGo carried 78.76 lakh passengers and had a domestic market share of 61.8 per cent, as per official data.

IndiGo passenger will come down by at least Rs 300 and up to Rs 1,000.

In recent times, there have been concerns in various quarters about rising airfares at a time when the domestic air traffic is on an upward trajectory.

Last month, the civil aviation ministry advised airlines to self-regulate and keep passengers' interest in mind while fixing the fares. While announcing the introduction of the fuel charge, IndiGo, October 5 last year, had said the decision was on account of a significant increase in ATF prices.

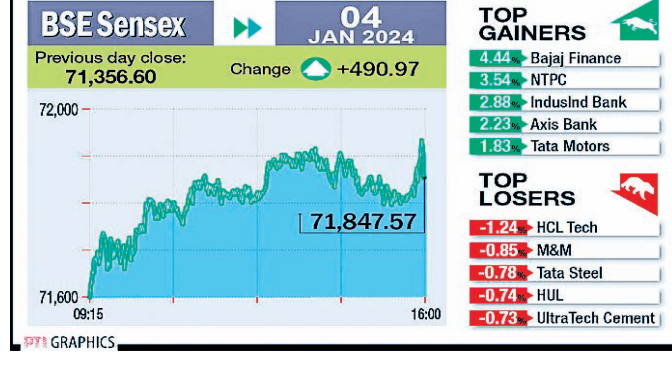
"ATF accounts for a substantial portion of an airline's operating expenses, necessitating fare adjustment to address such a cost surge," it had said.

The fuel charge was introduced from October 6, 2023. IndiGo is the country's largest airline. In November 2023, IndiGo carried 78.76 lakh passengers and had a domestic market share of 61.8 per cent, as per official data.

Civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, last month, informed the Lok Sabha that airfare is neither established nor regulated by the government.

"The fares are fixed by airlines keeping in mind the market, demand, seasonality and other market forces. The airfare increases with increase in demand of seats as the lower fare buckets get sold out faster and move to higher fare buckets," he had said.

Markets rebound after 2-day slump



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 4: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 1 per cent Thursday after sliding for the past two sessions, propped up by bargain hunting in realty, power and financial stocks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 490.97 points or 0.69 per cent to settle at 71,847.57 points. During the day, it rallied 598.19 points or 0.83 per cent to 71,954.79 points. The Nifty climbed 141.25 points or 0.66 per cent to 21,658.60 points.

"Market bounced back after the last two negative trading days led by strong monthly business updates of leading banks, emphasising robust credit growth. The Realty sector was the highest gainer in anticipation of robust demand in the residential category, which was supported by healthy housing loan disbursement data announced by banks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Bajaj Finance was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising 4.44 per cent, followed by NTPC, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Tata Motors, Nestle, Power Grid, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv and HDFC Bank. HCL Tech, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti and Hindustan Unilever were among the losers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.49 per cent, and smallcap index climbed 1.04 per cent. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 666.34 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

On Wednesday the BSE benchmark fell 535.88 points or 0.75 per cent to settle at 71,356.60 points, while the Nifty slipped 148.45 points or 0.69 per cent to 21,517.35 points.

Investors' wealth grew by Rs 3.24 lakh crore Thursday as the BSE Sensex jumped nearly 1 per cent after a two-day slide. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies climbed Rs 3,24,010.1 crore to hit an all-time high of Rs 3,68,32,843.41 crore.

SHORT TAKES

Jio maintains lead

New Delhi: India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio added 31.59 lakh mobile users while rival Bharti Airtel's subscriber gain came in at 3.52 lakh in October 2023, as per monthly subscriber data by TRAI. There was no relief for the troubled telco Vodafone Idea on subscriber front, as it lost 20.44 lakh wireless subscribers in October. With the addition of 31.59 lakh users, Jio's total wireless subscriber count climbed to 45.23 crore in October from 44.92 crore in September. Sunil Mittal-led Airtel's wireless subscriber gain of 3.52 lakh pushed up the telco's user tally to 37.81 crore in October. The subscriber losses of Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) dragged its wireless user base to 22.54 crore in October, the data by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) showed.

CDEL default rises

New Delhi: Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd has reported a total default of Rs 433.91 crore on payments of interest and repayment of principal amount on loans from banks, financial institutions, and unlisted debt securities for the December quarter. Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd (CDEL), which is parring its debts through asset resolution, in a regulatory update said "the delay in debt servicing is due to liquidity crisis". CDEL reported a default of Rs 183.36 crore on the payment of the principal amount on loans or revolving facilities like cash credit from banks or financial institutions as December 31, 2023.

IGX jumps in '23

New Delhi: The Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) Thursday said volume of gas traded on the platform rose 16 per cent in 2023 as producers and consumers flocked to the exchange. IGX recorded 1.22 billion cubic meters or 3.3 million standard cubic meters per day of gas traded in 2023, it said in a statement. December volume at 67 million standard cubic meters or 2.2 million standard cubic meters per day was a 7 per cent decline MoM.

Bandhan Bank's Q3 credit grows

Kolkata: Private lender Bandhan Bank reported a growth of 18.6 per cent in its loans and advances during the third quarter ending December 31 at Rs 1,15,964 crore. In a regulatory filing Thursday, the Kolkata-based bank said the figure stood at Rs 97,787 crore during the year-ago period.

GUJARAT IN FOCUS

PFC vows ₹25K-cr for power projects

NEW DELHI: State-owned Power Finance Corporation has inked an initial pact with the Gujarat government to provide comprehensive financial backing for the state's generation, transmission, and distribution projects. Power Finance Corporation (PFC) signed a MoU with the government of Gujarat January 3, 2024, according to a company statement issued Wednesday. The MoU was signed by Parminder Chopra, CMD PFC and Jai Prakash Shivhare, MD (GUVNL) in the presence of Bhupendra Patel, Chief Minister of Gujarat. Under the terms of the MoU, the envisaged financial assistance stands at an impressive Rs 25,000 crore, dedicated to powering up various projects across Gujarat, it stated.

Juniper Green pledges ₹8K-cr for RE

NEW DELHI: Juniper Green Energy has inked an initial pact with the Gujarat government to develop 1GW of wind and solar projects entailing investment of Rs 8,000 crore. Juniper Green Energy, a leading player in the renewable energy sector, has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Gujarat government during the Investment Promotion Activity for Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024, a company statement said Thursday. The MOU signifies an ambitious collaboration to establish 1GW of wind and solar projects in the state, with an investment of Rs 8,000 crore.

ArcelorMittal JV, others commit \$86bn

AHMEDABAD: India's Gujarat state Wednesday said it has signed initial investment agreements worth \$86 billion with 58 companies including steelmaker ArcelorMittal's joint venture and others operating in sectors such as energy, oil and gas, and chemicals. Gujarat has been signing these agreements ahead of its biennial Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit which is scheduled to take place in state capital Gandhinagar from January 10 to January 12. The companies that signed the pacts included ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India, which signed a Rs 1.14 trillion (\$13.68 billion) pledge for a green hydrogen project, an integrated steel plant and expansion of its existing steel manufacturing capacity in the state, according to a state government document. NTPC Renewable Energy Limited proposed an investment of Rs 900 billion (\$10.80 billion) to create 15 gigawatt (GW) renewable energy parks and projects to meet the agricultural sector's power needs, a senior Industries Department official said. NTPC also proposed a further investment of \$8.40 billion for fuel cell electric vehicle mobility, hydrogen blending with natural gas, production of green chemicals such as ammonia and methanol, the official added. Torrent Power similarly signed an agreement to invest Rs 474 billion (\$5.69 billion) to create solar power projects with 3,450 MW and 7,000 MW capacity, green hydrogen and ammonia manufacturing plants, and distribution networks in cities including Ahmedabad and Surat.

Sutraa exhibition in City draws huge footfall

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The inaugural day of lifestyle and fashion exhibition 'Sutraa' drew a huge footfall at Hotel Mayfair in City, Thursday.

A plethora of stalls from all over India exhibited their finest clothing lines, jewellery and lifestyle products. The Bhubaneswar edition is a two-day affair ending Friday.

The first day witnessed a huge crowd as denizens of the City queued up to buy their favourite items in both jewellery and garments sections.

Sutraa aims to bridge the distance between connoisseurs of fashion and leading designers throughout the country. The organisers believe in providing service and living up to their great reputation.



It is the next biggest exhibition for fashion and lifestyle products, which aims at providing hassle free and enjoyable shopping experience to shoppers, especially women, by making available the widest range of brands and products from across the country. The attempt is to bring the latest fashion to shoppers with an array of

the trendiest products available in the country. The exhibition also seeks to promote fashion throughout all the B-cities and has succeeded in over 400 shows all over India. Now, Sutraa is taking a giant leap forward and after so many years of success it is stretching its wings in Bhubaneswar.

Global funding winter takes down M&A activities

DEAL-MAKING INVOLVING DOMESTIC FIRMS PLUNGE 51% TO \$83BN, A THREE-YEAR LOW, IN 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 4: In line with the global funding winter, deal-making involving domestic firms hit a three-year low after falling 51 per cent to \$83.8 billion in 2023, saved by the mega-merger of HDFC twins -- the biggest deal in India Inc's history till date, according to an industry report.

Excluding the \$60.4-billion HDFC Bank-HDFC merger, year-on-year deal value comparison would have been down by another 23 per cent, as per LSEG Deals Intelligence, formerly Refinitiv, one of the world's largest providers of financial markets data.

The bleak global deal environment translated into fewer mega deals in 2023. As a result, there was only one deal above \$3 billion in the year -- the HDFC Bank-HDFC \$60.4 bil-

lion deal -- compared to five deals in 2022, Elaine Tan, senior manager at LSEG Deals Intelligence said in a note Thursday.

However, in terms of the volume of deals, it was a minimal 1.7 per cent decline on-year, indicating that a healthier level of mid-market transactions dominated the market.

Accordingly, worldwide M&As fell 17 per cent to a 10-year low of \$2.9 trillion.

The equity capital market rose 60 per cent to \$31.2 billion in the year, making it the highest annual total since 2021. The total proceeds from follow-on offerings more than doubled to \$24.4 billion, driven by record-high block trades and accounted for 64 per cent of the follow-on proceeds.

On the other hand, fresh equity issuance through IPOs saw the busiest annual period since 1996 as the number of IPOs grew 56 per cent from year-on-year, with



It can be noted that a global funding winter started in March 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine in late February of that year as economic uncertainty rose. The negative approach was also due to higher interest rates due to record high inflations across the globe making companies more cautious about engaging in M&As

at least 236 small-to-mid-sized listings raising \$6.8 billion, which, however, was 11 per cent less than in 2022. Target India M&As reached

\$76.4 billion, down 51.5 per cent year-on-year and the lowest annual period by value since 2020. Domestic M&As totalled \$51.8 billion, down 56.4 per cent from

Given the likely fall in interest rates on the back of a steep fall in inflation globally, leading to improved economic conditions in 2024, making capital less costly to access, 2024 could drive an uptick in M&A activity both in the country after elections and also across the globe

2022. Inbound M&As fell 36.4 per cent to \$24.6 billion, the lowest annual period since 2015. Outbound M&As reached \$5.9 billion, down 40.4 per cent and the US was the most targeted nation with 22.6 per cent of the share. Private equity-backed M&As amounted to \$13.4 billion, down 60.7 per cent, and the lowest annual total since 2020. The majority of the deal-mak-

ing activity targeted the financial sector, which totalled \$31.4 billion, down 56 per cent in value. Financials accounted for 37.5 per cent of the total deal market share.

Industrials came second with \$12.9 billion, down 8.7 per cent or 15.4 per cent of the market, followed by high technology with a 10.8 per cent market share at \$9.1 billion.

Equity capital markets raised \$31.2 billion, up 59.6 per cent in the year, making it the highest annual total by proceeds since 2021. The number of ECM offerings also saw a 48.9 per cent increase.

Initial public offerings (IPOs) raised \$6.8 billion, down 11.3 per cent in value, but in terms of issues, it was up 56.3 per cent. Follow-on offerings, accounting for 78 per cent of overall ECM proceeds, raised \$24.4 billion, up 105.1 per cent, while the number of FPOs grew 39.8 per cent.

**BUMRAH BAMBOOZLES
PROTEAS AS INDIA
RECORD HISTORIC
VICTORY IN CAPE
TOWN TO LEVEL
TWO-MATCH
RED-BALL
SERIES**

STATFACTS

The series-levelling win gave Rohit the bragging rights of being only the second skipper after MS Dhoni (2010-11) to draw a series in the 'Rainbow Nation' 642 - Balls bowled in Cape Town, making it the shortest completed Test ever. The previous shortest Test lasted 656 balls, played between Australia and South Africa in Melbourne in 1932

1 India's seven-wicket win at the Newlands is their first victory at the venue in seven attempts. It was also India's first Test win while batting second in the Rainbow Nation, as their four previous wins came batting first

2 Test matches won by India where none of their batters got a 50-plus score. Virat Kohli's 46 was the highest individual score here, while Murali Vijay's 40 was the highest during their 124-run win against South Africa in Nagpur in 2015

4 Men's Tests hosted at Newlands that finished in two days - SA vs England in 1889 and 1896, and SA vs Zimbabwe in 2005 are the others. Kennington Oval is the other venue with as many as four two-day Test matches

2 Instances of two 6-plus-wicket hauls by Indian pacers in a Test match, including Mohammed Siraj and Bumrah in Cape Town. Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Ishant Sharma did the same against England at Lord's during the 2014 tour

60.23 Percentage of SA's second-innings total scored by Aiden Markram. It is the highest contribution for an individual in a completed Test innings for SA. The previous highest was 59.89% by Herbie Taylor, who scored 109 out of 182 against England in Durban in 1913

Madrid, Girona continue impressive runs in Spain



Girona's Ivan Martin (2nd from R) was mobbed by teammates after scoring the winner against Atletico Madrid, Wednesday

Madrid, Jan 4: Real Madrid and Girona extended their impressive runs to reach the halfway point of the Spanish league season at the top of the standings.

Both teams won Wednesday to reach 48 points after 19 games, with third-placed Atletico Madrid 10 points back. Real Madrid were ahead of Girona on a tie-breaker. Barcelona can move within seven points of the leaders if they win at Las Palmas Thursday. Madrid edged Mallorca 1-0 at home with a late goal by Antonio Rudiger in a match that marked the return of Vinicius Junior from injury. Girona, the surprise team in Spanish football this season, de-

feated Atletico 4-3 with a winner by Ivan Martin in stoppage time. Alvaro Morata scored a hat-trick for Atletico, while Antoine Griezmann was held scoreless to remain tied with Luis Aragones as the club's all-time top scorer with 173 goals.

Faced with another difficult challenge, Girona rose to the occasion yet again, overcoming Diego Simeone's Atletico to show it can be considered a genuine title contender. Martin scored the winning goal one minute into stoppage time.

The hosts led 3-1 until Morata capped his hat-trick with an equaliser in the 54th. Valery Fernandez, Savinho and Daley Blind scored Girona's other goals at Montilivi Stadium.

TEST TELLS TESTING TALE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cape Town, Jan 4: Just more than four sessions, 107 overs (642 deliveries) - this is the length of the second Test between India and South Africa here which the visitors came out on top, Thursday.

The numbers might be showing that the bowlers, pacers to be exact, dominated the match. However, it was the pitch that humbled the batters, even leaving the bowlers clueless sometimes. The spongy and odd-even bounce tricked the batters throughout the duration.

Jasprit Bumrah had once said, "Cricket is a game of uncertainties, and you need to be prepared for challenges and adapt to changing situations."

And he just followed his words as India's priceless fast bowling mean machine produced a hostile spell to guide India to a series-levelling seven-wicket victory against South Africa in the shortest game ever played in Test history.

Bumrah (6/61), the master practitioner of fast bowling, knocked the stuffing out of South Africa's middle-order in a men-

acing morning spell though Aiden Markram (106, 103b, 17x4, 2x6) fought like a lone ranger on a burning deck to take South Africa to 176 in 36.5 overs at stroke of lunch on day two.

A target of 79 even on the toughest of tracks wasn't exactly a tall order and young Yashasvi Jaiswal (28) threw his bat around before skipper Rohit Sharma (16 not out) completed the formalities in the company of Shreyas Iyer (4 n o) in just 12 overs.

This was India's first victory at Newlands in seven attempts and one that would be remembered for the hostility exhibited by two Indian fast bowlers - Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj, who produced a career-best six-wicket haul (6/15) to bowl out South Africa for 55 in the first innings.

It would be surprising if the Newlands Stadium track doesn't receive a "Below Average" rating from ICC match referee Chris Broad. In fact, South African batting consultant and former national skipper Ashwell Prince had termed it as the "fastest Day 1 track" he has even seen at this venue but what worried him

was the "inconsistent bounce" on offer.

As a venue, Newlands' host body West Province Cricket Association is bleeding financially and one and a half day game is basically a loss making event for it.

Skipper Rohit won't mind winning his first Test as a skipper in a SENA country but more importantly, the decisions he took was a reflection of his leadership acumen.

Playing Mukesh Kumar (4 wickets) in place of Shardul Thakur was a good move and also making the bowlers realise the ideal length to bowl after the goof up in Centurion.

The way Bumrah and Siraj read the pitch in the first essay was an example how the current generation doesn't throw in the towel after a debilitating defeat.

BRIEF SCORES

South Africa 55 & 176 (Aiden Markram 106; Jasprit Bumrah 6/61, Mukesh Kumar 2/56) lost to India 153 & 80/3 (Yashasvi Jaiswal 28, Rohit Sharma 16 n o; Marco Jansen 1/15) by 7 wickets.



REACTIONS ON CAPE TOWN FEAT

When you come to this part of the world, it's always difficult but we take pride in our performance outside of India. South Africa always challenge us and for us to come out here and win, we can take pride in this performance. We would have loved to win the series. We came back very well, especially our bowlers. Had some plans and the boys got rewarded

ROHIT SHARMA

A tough one for us. Pretty positive coming into this game. The first innings killed us with the bat. India bowled fantastically and used the conditions to a T. Still a draw, still a lot of positives for the young players that we have within the side. I would have liked to do more in this game. Still very proud of my performance I had in Centurion

DEAN ELGAR

This ground will always hold a special place in my heart. The journey started here in 2018, always have fond memories. Very happy it went well today (Thursday). Our bowling unit was experienced and we wanted to make an impact. I didn't expect the game to go this fast

JASPRIT BUMRAH

OTHER REACTIONS

Well bowled by Bumrah, who showed us exactly, how bowling in the channel consistently is all that's required on such type of wickets. Markram's approach was fantastic because sometimes attack is the best form of defence on a pitch like this

SACHIN TENDULKAR

Aap karo toh chamatkar... Hum karein toh pitch bekaar (It's a miracle if you (opposition) do it... And if we achieve it, the pitch is bad). 107 overs - Test match over. Also proves, anything there for the fast bowlers, we are more threatening with our quality. Bumrah and Siraj were spectacular and a good beginning to 2024

VIRENDER SEHWAG

This match had so much in so little time! To bat in a bowler's paradise is a big Test. Some great bowling performances and a brave knock from Markram on such a tricky pitch. Would have loved to see another Test in this intense series for a decider

DINESH KARTHIK



Rohit Sharma hands Dean Elgar a special jersey signed by Indian players after the match, Thursday

ROHIT SLAMS ICC, MATCH REFS OVER PITCH RATINGS

CAPE TOWN: Skipper Rohit Sharma left no stone unturned while commenting on the double standards shown against Indian pitches compared to tracks like Newlands. "I mean, we saw what happened in this match, how the pitch played and stuff like that," Rohit said. "I honestly don't mind playing on pitches like this. As long as everyone keeps their mouth shut in India and don't talk too much about Indian pitches, honestly." Taking his dig further, he said: "Look, when you are here to play Test cricket, we talk about Test cricket, the ultimate prize, Test cricket being the pinnacle and stuff like that. I think it's important that we also stand by it. But, in India on day one, if the pitch starts turning, people start talking about 'Puff of dust! Puff of dust!' There's so much crack here on the pitch. People are not looking at that." Rohit singled out the match referees and some of the ratings pitches received in last year's World Cup, held in India. "I think it's important that we stay neutral everywhere we go," Rohit said. "Especially the match referees. You know some of these match referees need to keep their eye on how they rate pitches. It's quite important. So I hope they keep their ears open, they keep their eyes open and look into those aspects of the game. All I wanna say is 'be neutral'."

ODISHA CRICKET HIT BY AGE FRAUD AGAIN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Age fraud in cricket is nothing new to Odisha and the unlawful act has returned to haunt the Odisha Cricket Association, Thursday.

Sumit Sharma, who was a part of the Odisha Ranji team for the 2023-24 season, has been handed a two-year ban by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

According to reports, the BCCI acted soon after it

found out about the discrepancies in the Sumit's age from the documents he had submitted earlier and the documents submitted for the Ranji team.

The ban led to his ouster from the Ranji team. Tarini Sa has

been included in the squad as Sumit's replacement. This recent episode of age fraud in OCA has surfaced a day before the start of Odisha's Ranji campaign. Odisha are scheduled to open their Ranji campaign against Baroda, Friday.

Wrestling U-15, U-20 Nationals to be held in January-February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 4: The IOA ad-hoc committee will organise the U-15 and U-20 National championships for the previous year in January-February to ensure grapplers don't lose out on one precious year of competition.

Hundreds of young grapplers had marched to Jantar Mantar here Wednesday, venting their ire at Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat for "spoiling one year of their careers by holding up wrestling activity in the country with their protests".

"The ad-hoc committee for Wrestling Federation of India intends to organise the 2023 U-20 and U-15 National Wrestling Championships (FS/GR/WW) in January-February of 2024," said the IOA-constituted ad-hoc panel, headed by Bhupender Singh Bajwa, in a statement Thursday.

"The age criteria for the participants has been kept as if the (national) championship would have been organised in calendar year 2023, ensuring that there is no loss to any player due to conducting of the championship in January/February 2024. The participants will get all the benefits, as if the championship was organised in calendar year 2023," said the statement.

The newly-elected WFI body under Sanjay Singh had announced the Nationals before Dec 31 last year but the body was suspended by the Sports Ministry just three days after it took charge. The ad-hoc panel also said that the 2024 Nationals will be held separately at a later date.

Dipa, Rakesh claim all-around gold at Nat'ls

POST NEWS NETWORK

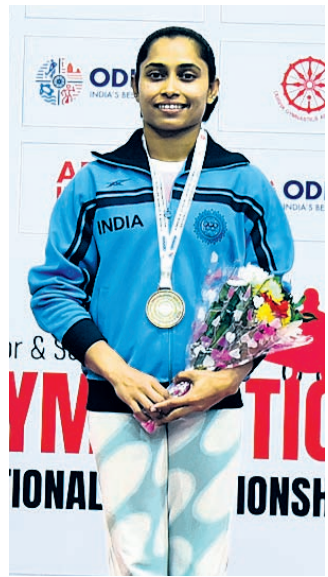
Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Dipa Karmakar and Odisha's Rakesh Kumar Patra clinched the all-around titles in the men's and women's categories, respectively, at the Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championship at the newly-built Gymnastics Centre in the Kalinga Stadium here, Thursday.

Railways' Pranati Das had a memorable day as she claimed a two gold medals (uneven bars and floor exercise) apart from finishing second in the all-around women's category. Her teammate Pranati Nayak bagged two medals - a gold in vault and a bronze in balance beam.

Meanwhile, Dipa, who represented Tripura and was in action in a competition after eight years, bagged a total of three medals - a gold (all-around), two silvers in vault and uneven bars in the women's competition.

Odisha star Rakesh capped off the championship with a double gold (all-around and rings), a silver in parallel bars and a bronze in the horizontal bar.

Speaking after the event,



DIPA KARMAKAR



RAKESH KUMAR PATRA

Odisha's Sports & Youth Services Secretary Vineel Krishna stated, "It is indeed a great pleasure to see the way the Gymnastics National Championships has happened here, with all the top gymnasts coming here and participating in this championship. We are really glad that our infrastructure has been utilised

in this manner for the championship.

"I thank everyone who has been part of this National Championship that was held here at the Kalinga Stadium. I hope everyone had a memorable experience and hope to see the Gymnastics family again and again every year."

LIST OF MEDALLISTS

Women's category (Top 3s)

Vault: Pranati Nayak (13.067 points), Dipa Karmakar (12.584) & Protitha Samanta (12.350)

Uneven Bars: Pranati Das (10.433), Dipa Karmakar (10.433) & Karishma (10.300)

Balance Beam: Ritu Das (13.167), Riddhi Hatte (10.933) & Pranati Nayak (10.433)

Floor Exercise: Pranati Das (11.900), B Aruna Reddy (11.867) & Shatakshi Takke (11.533)

Men's category (Top 3s)

Floor Exercise: Gaurav Kumar (12.867 points), Jatin Kumar (12.533) & S Ruban Meitei (12.467)

Pommel Horse: Harikrishnan (13.133), Siddharth Verma (13.033) & Yogeshwar (12.400)

Rings: Rakesh Kumar Patra (13.533), Swathish KP (13.200) & Tapan Mohanty (13.167)

Vault: Siddharth Verma (13.134), Ujwal Naidu (13.050) & Shreyas Chaudhary (13.017 points)

Parallel Bars: Saif Tamboli (13.900), Rakesh Kumar Patra (13.433) & Gaurav Kumar (13.333)

Horizontal Bar: Yogeshwar (13.000), Gaurav Kumar (12.300) & Rakesh Kumar Patra (12.233).