

In different league
 Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan says she enjoys social media but doesn't seek validation from it

LEISURE | P2



Iran seizes tanker
 Iran's navy seizes an oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman that once was at the centre of a major crisis between Tehran and Washington

INTERNATIONAL | P10



'Enemy property' on sale
 The Centre plans to sell over 2.91 lakh 'enemy property' shares in 84 companies to individuals and corporates

BUSINESS | P11



Paris ticket booked
 Rhythm Sangwan becomes the 16th Indian shooter to secure a Paris 2024 berth with a 25m pistol bronze in Asia Olympic Qualifiers

SPORTS | P12

Budget Session to start Jan 31

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: A brief Budget Session of Parliament is likely to start January 31 and conclude February 9, sources said Thursday. President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of the two Houses January 31, they said.

The government would present a vote-on-account or an 'interim Budget' February 1. The new government will present a full-fledged Budget later. Since the term of the 17th Lok Sabha ends June 16, it is set to be the last session of Parliament before general elections are announced.

In 2019, the Lok Sabha polls were announced March 10 and voting was held in seven phases between April 11 and May 19.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He decided without even reading the petitions. It took him 18 months to identify a rationale for his decision



SNOW CLAD MODELS: Sculptures by late French-American sculptor Niki de Saint Phalle and late Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely are frozen at the Stravinsky fountain in Paris where temperature fell below zero degree Celsius, Thursday

Shankaracharyas to skip Ayodhya event

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 11: All four Shankaracharyas – pontiffs of major Hindu shrines – will not attend the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya January 22, the Scroll reported.

The Shankaracharyas head four shrines (peeths) situated in Joshimath in Uttarakhand, Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha and Sringeri in Karnataka. The shrines were founded by eighth-century religious scholar Adi Shankaracharya.

The heads of the Puri and Joshimath shrines have said that they will not attend the consecration because religious scriptures were not being adhered to at the event.

In a video posted on his official X handle January 9, Joshimath Shankaracharya Avimuktshwaranand Saraswati said that none of the four pontiffs will be in Ayodhya January 22 as the consecration was being done before the construction of the temple was completed. "It is the duty of Shankaracharyas to ensure that religious scriptures are properly followed," Avimuktshwaranand said. "The

scriptures are being undermined by carrying out consecration before the construction of the temple is complete. There is no reason for this rush," he added. Earlier, January 4, the Shankaracharya of the Puri, Nischalananda Saraswati, had told reporters that he would skip the consecration ceremony as he was 'conscious of the dignity of his position'.

Modi will consecrate the temple, he will touch the idol, then what am I supposed to do? Stand and clap?" the seer can be heard saying in a video that has been widely circulated on social media.

While the Shankaracharyas of Dwarka and Sringeri have issued statements saying they were not displeased with the consecration ceremony, administrative officials at both the shrines said that the seers will not be present in Ayodhya January 22. The officials declined to cite any reason.

The Sringeri Shankaracharya, in the statement January 8, dismissed claims that he was displeased with the consecration as 'false propaganda'. He urged all believers to participate in the ceremony.

SHORT TAKES

5-yr-old bludgeoned to death in Nabarangpur

Dabugaon: A five-year-old boy was bludgeoned to death over a trivial issue at Mendra village under Dabugaon police limits in Nabarangpur district, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Chandan Pujari, son of Sanadhar Pujari of the village. The incident occurred when Sanadhar had gone to offer prayers at a temple on Sarguli hill, on the outskirts of the village, and Chandan was playing nearby.

416 Myanmar soldiers entered India: Army

New Delhi: About 416 Myanmar soldiers crossed over to India in view of the situation arising out of the fighting between Myanmar's armed ethnic groups and the government forces, and Indian military is 'closely watching' the unfolding developments, Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande said Thursday. "The situation across the Indo-Myanmar border is something that we are closely watching," he said.

Rahul to visit state

Bhubaneswar: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to spend four days in Odisha during his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra next month, a Congress leader said, Thursday. The yatra, which is scheduled to start January 14 from Manipur, will enter Odisha from Jharkhand and cover Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Jharsuguda.

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CARMEN ELECTRA APPLIES TO LEGALLY CHANGE HER NAME

Actress Carmen Electra has submitted paperwork to legally change her name to her stage moniker. The 51-year-old actress was born Tara Leigh Patrick but adopted her stage name 'Electra' on the advice of late singer Prince and she's now taking legal steps to keep the moniker she is familiar to millions as.

JASON MOMOA LIVING ON ROAD FOLLOWING DIVORCE

Actor Jason Momoa revealed he is living on the road following his divorce from Lisa Bonet. "I don't even have a home right now. I live on the road," Momoa told *Entertainment Tonight* Wednesday.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Bo! Are you ambitious today or what! You plan meticulously and perform impeccably. However, you will progress at snail's pace. But don't lose heart, as Ganesh showers his blessings on you, dear one.

TAURUS
Planning your own milestones and celebrating the success of friends is the agenda for the day. Your thoughts will be progressive in business or at work, and any plans you make will make a rock-solid foundation for your future. Social gatherings and parties will be on with bubbly and bruschetta.

GEMINI
You may come up with a precise understanding of others today, says Ganesh. You will please your sweetheart with both your presence and presents. You will browse through dozens of showrooms for that perfect, and expensive, gift for your beloved. You will also work towards achieving your long-term goals.

CANCER
Today, you and your soul mate will be rolling in the hay; there will be little time or inclination to do anything else. In fact, you will show such single-minded devotion to the act of rolling as if the future of the world lies in the haystack.

LEO
Try and put on some protective gear today - maybe a suit of armour should do fine, says Ganesh. For, you may find some need for it on this day of mixed fortunes as you miss out the expected and come face-to-face with the unexpected.

VIRGO
Today, you will be aspire to be a master of your own destiny. You have the ability to see through the facade that people put up to shield their true self. You will choose your company wisely and plan for success. Polish your presentation skills and you may need to work an extra bit to get your ideas approved, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh feels the day will be beneficial for you when it comes to transactions with the government. But you already expect that. It is more than likely that public servants will have encouraging and optimistic achievements lined up for their efforts. Your expertise may be put to test and it is your experience that will come in handy.

SCORPIO
Ganesh feels that you may be confronted with vital decisions at work. You will need to trust the opinions of your close friends and peers so that you may take informed decisions. Keep your mind away from negative thoughts and delegate responsibilities accordingly.

SAGITTARIUS
The sage within you will take the lead today. You are likely to prescribe yourself to your own medication for peace of mind. Wise and content that you are today, you will spread the message of love around you. All in all, a peaceful day is in store for you today.

CAPRICORN
People may call you a busy bee, but that you admittedly will be, says Ganesh. Work will demand your undivided attention, but the good thing is you will quickly get done with pending work one by one. In fact, you will be left with plenty of time in the evening which you are likely to spend romancing with your sweetheart.

AQUARIUS
Expect the unexpected today! Success, money, love, whatever it is that you'd lost hope of will suddenly come your way! In the evening, you may catch up with reading, research, discussion or other such activity, says Ganesh.

PISCES
Today is a day of mixed fortunes. So, while you may not win a gazillion dollars in the daily lottery, you might just end up winning a return air ticket to Timbuktu. No one has really been there, but it is better than nothing. However, the distress of those lost dollars is likely to be eased by the ecstasy awaiting you in the evening.

Rapper King to regale City fans January 13

Bhubaneswar: CASA BACARDÍ On Tour, a much-anticipated event, featuring legendary rapper KING, will be held at the picturesque Dream City Resort here January 13.

King's one-of-a-kind music has captivated audiences worldwide, and now Bhubaneswar will have the chance to experience his magic live, claimed the organisers.

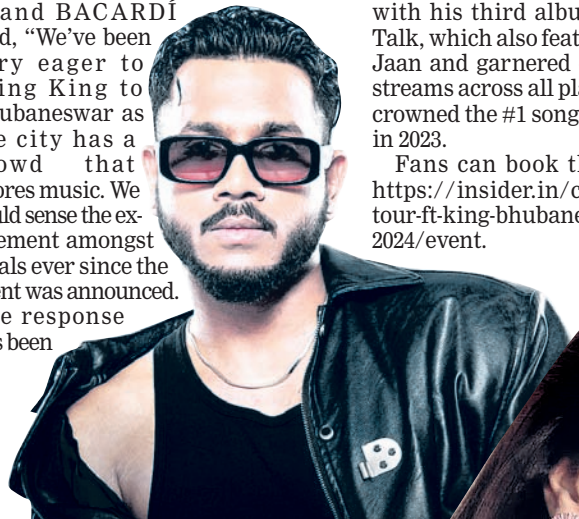
Sharing her excitement about the event, Sameeksha Uniyal, Brand Lead, Brand BACARDÍ said, "We've been very eager to bring King to Bhubaneswar as the city has a crowd that adores music. We could sense the excitement amongst locals ever since the event was announced. The response has been ab-

solutely phenomenal, and we can't wait to bring more such experiences to the city with CASA BACARDÍ On Tour."

In a short span of less than three years, the New Delhi popstar has made a strong mark for himself in the industry and is now on his way to break records and make his name globally.

He broke records by becoming #1 on the YouTube Music Global Top 50 along with the Spotify Global Top 50 with his third album, Champagne Talk, which also featured Maan Meri Jaan and garnered over one billion streams across all platforms and was crowned the #1 song by Spotify India in 2023.

Fans can book their tickets at: <https://insider.in/casa-bacardi-on-tour-ft-king-bhubaneswar-jan13-2024/event>.



'I don't seek support from social media'

New Delhi: Kareena Kapoor Khan has been in the Hindi film industry for over two decades and enjoys a massive fan following for the work she has done over the years. In 2020, the diva made her debut on social media which she enjoys using, and through which she connects with her fans, however, she said that she doesn't seek validation from it.

Asked how much importance social media validation holds for her, Kareena said: "I enjoy using social media but for me, it is a way to connect with my fans and give them a

glimpse into my life. I don't seek validation from social media at all but I'm happy that I get a lot of love from my fans."

The 43-year-old actress, who is married to actor Saif Ali Khan, does agree that the profession comes with a price to pay.

"Every profession comes with its price to pay, it only depends on how much are you willing to give in and how you prioritise your life," said the actress.

On the acting front, Kareena, who has lent her voice to Black Widow in *Marvel Wastelanders: Black Widow*, the third installment of the Hindi Audible podcast series, will next be seen in *The Crew* and *Singham Again*.

IANS

Vaani can't wait to shoot with Ajay

Mumbai: Actress Vaani Kapoor, who is starring opposite Ajay Devgn in the recently announced *Raid 2*, is thrilled to share screen space with the star and said that she is a big fan of his work.

Vaani said: "For actors, there is always a bucket list of people that one wants to creatively collaborate with. I have always been a big fan of Ajay Devgn's work. He is a sheer force of nature on camera, and I have too many of his films that I love. So, it is an honour to share the screen with Ajay sir, who is considered as one of the all-time best actors of our country."

She went on: "I think working with him, observing him on the sets will only help better my experience as an artiste. *Raid* is one of the most engagingly relevant films and Ajay sir in it was just swashbuckling! So, I really cannot contain my excitement that I'm a part of his massive franchise that will surely entertain people worldwide again."

Raid 2 is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Kumar Mangat Pathak, Abhishek Pathak, and Krishan Kumar. The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series and is a Panorama Studios production. The film will be released theatrically November 15, 2024.

IANS



I'm the Indian for all ages: SRK

New Delhi: Actor Shah Rukh Khan, who had three releases in 2023, celebrated patriotism in different ways. At a recent event organised by a media agency, he was honoured with the Indian of the Year award.

Shah Rukh said, "I don't just feel like the Indian of the year. I feel I have been the Indian of all the years gone by. And I will be the Indian for all the years to come. I am actually, ladies and gentlemen, the Indian for all ages."

The crowd cheered for the star, and he proceeded to thank them.

He said, "Hordes of you came to the theatres to watch my film; some of you may not have even

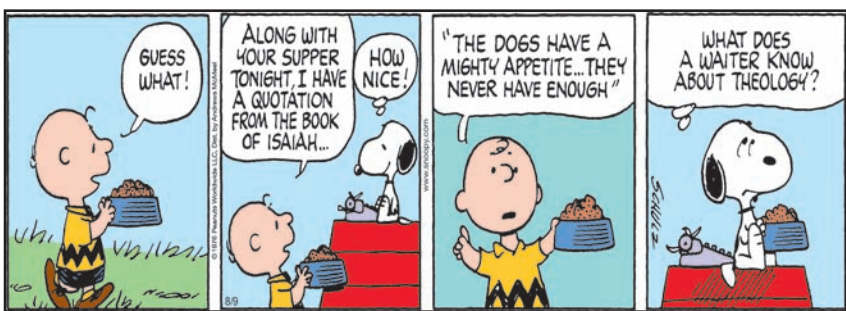
liked them, but I know deep down inside, you came there to support me and my family. So I bow down to you and thank you for bringing cheer to my family, my children, and my loved ones."

On the work front, SRK was seen in *Pathaan*, where he played a RAW agent who is protecting his country against the bad guy; in *Jawan*, he reminded people about their duty to vote responsibly; and in *Dunki*, he spoke about loving one's country as opposed to looking to move to another country.

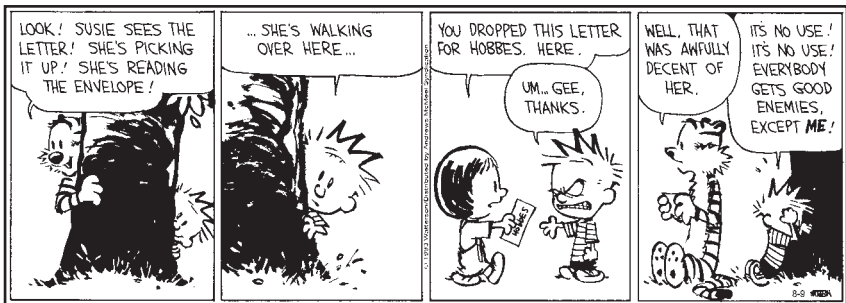
AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

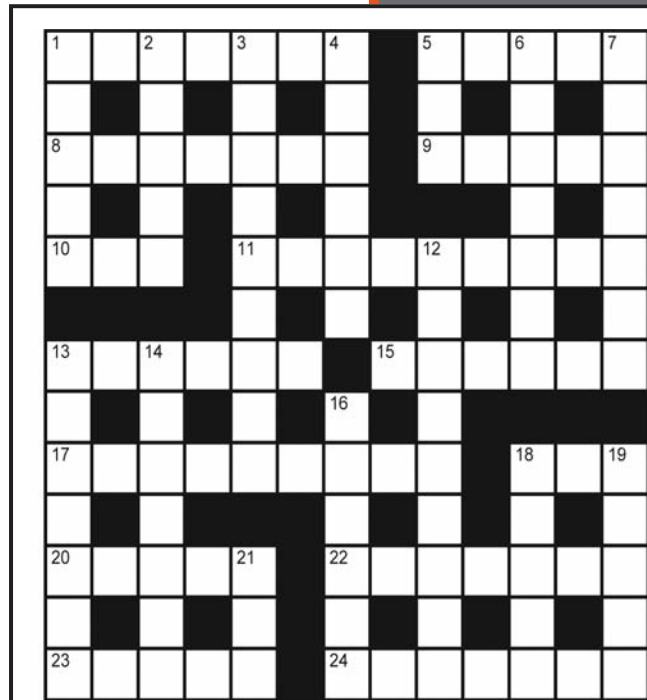


BREVITY



FUN post

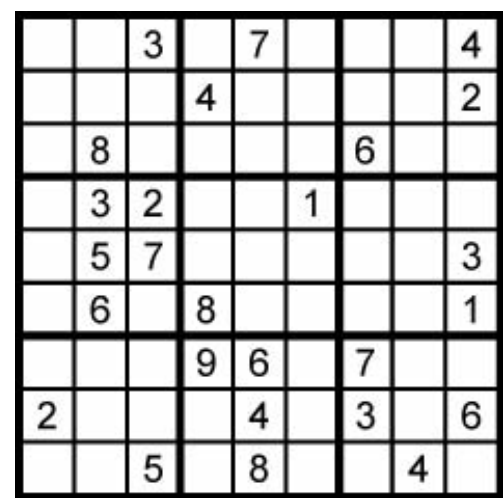
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Puffed up
 - 5 Childhood disease
 - 8 Like some candles
 - 9 Email provider
 - 10 Health club
 - 11 Meet
 - 13 Punctuation mark
 - 15 King of England, 1307 to 1327
 - 17 Guardian
 - 18 Personal quirk
 - 20 Ancient Mexican
 - 22 Part of a TV series
 - 23 Destiny
 - 24 Detectives
 - 4 Subtract
 - 5 Might
 - 6 Hindu sage
 - 7 Scrubbed
 - 12 Emphasise
 - 13 Coach's exhortation (3,4)
 - 14 Nature's alarm clock
 - 16 Tension
 - 18 Food fish
 - 19 Board game
 - 21 Half a dance?
- Down**
- 1 Foundation
 - 2 Wagner work
 - 3 Hamlet, e.g. (5,4)

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

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Parikrama Prakalpa

FRIDAY | JANUARY 12 | 2024 | BHUBANESWAR



FAMED WALL GETS NEW LOOK

PARIKRAMA SCHEDULE

January 13

Ankura Pujan of Yajna: 6pm

January 14

Yajna Mandap Sthapana & Ankura Pujan: 5pm

January 15

Akhanda Deepa Sthapana Pancha Karma, Brahmana Barana & Mandala Pujana: 7:30am

January 16

Surya Puja, Dharitri Puja, Go Puja, Sala Prabesh, Pancha Karma, Mandala Puja, Haban, Aarati, Puspanjali: 7:30am

January 17

Surya Puja, Dharitri Puja, Go Puja, Pancha Karma, Vastu Sodhana, Adhibasha Puja: 7:am Purnahuti, Aarati, Puspanjali, Parikrama Marg Inauguration by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik: 1:30pm-2:30pm



Meghanada Wall, the famed protection wall abutting the Srimandir in Puri, has been preserved and renovated under the Parikrama Prakalpa which is being implemented by the state government under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

The boundary wall, which has deep cultural connection with the 12th century shrine, acts like a buffer zone for the temple. It is believed that the Meghanada Wall prevents the roaring sound of the sea from entering the temple precincts.

The wall made of 'Shana' stones has four gates allowing passage to the shrine. The East Gate is

Gajapati Maharaja Kapilendra Dev in 1448 AD.

However, with the passage of time, the heritage structure became a victim of massive encroachments around it. Numerous business establishments and narrow roads came up adjacent to the wall, making it almost invisible while poor civic sense played havoc to the structure. People also never hesitated to answer nature's call near the wall. On top of this, waste and effluents

traction.

Realising the urgent need for preservation of the boundary wall, built 500 years ago, the Chief Minister took an exemplary step to preserve and renovate the structure which has regained its lost glory. Land acquisition was

Meghanada Wall have been shifted elsewhere to create space for devotees' seamless perambulation of the wall while there are three pavements on the Parikrama ring. This will allay chances of peo-



known as Lion's Gate, West is called Tiger Gate, North as Elephant Gate and South as Horse Gate.

According to Madala Panji, the Meghanada Wall was constructed during the reign of

released from the business establishments got accumulated near the wall and started raising a stink. Consequently, questions were raised on the safety and security of Srimandir even as Meghanada Wall lost its at-

made for the space abutting Meghanada Wall for the Parikrama Prakalpa which helped create a new buffer zone for the shrine.

Meanwhile, several structures that stood adjacent to

ple relieving themselves near the wall.

In all fairness, it can be said that the Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa will help ensure safety of the temple and amplify the beauty of the Meghanada Wall.



Residents of Puri have appreciated the commitment and determination of the state government to transform the Pilgrim City through Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa. The move will not only boost economic growth, it will also help Puri become a developed city

SUKANT PUMAR PANDA | EDITOR, SISHU SAMACHAR



Srikshetra has undergone a sea change indeed as compared to the situation here earlier. Timely action in resurrecting the temple peripheries would help prevent future threats to the shrine. The drastic transformation of the Pilgrim City at such a high speed was beyond my imagination

NARENDRA KUMAR NAYAK | SAMBALPUR

WHEELS OF FAITH MARCH ON



Chants of magical Vedic hymns to render air

Works on the Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa have reached the final stages and the last touches are given on a war footing before the inaugural ceremony. After the offering of Purnahuti at a Yajna by Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb January 17, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will dedicate the historic project to the people.

The formal prepara-

tions ahead of the grand event, or the first phase of the Yajna ritual, is scheduled to commence today.

For the purpose, a Yajna Mandap, a platform made up of raw bricks, has been built on the Aishanya Kona (north-east angle) of the Srimandir (as well as the Parikrama Prakalpa). The floor of the Yajna Mandap has been given coats of cow dung-soil plaster. Bamboo has been used to erect the

structure above the Yajna Mandap having thatched roof. Four smaller Yajna Kundas about the main Kunda on equal number of corners. As per Vastu specifica-

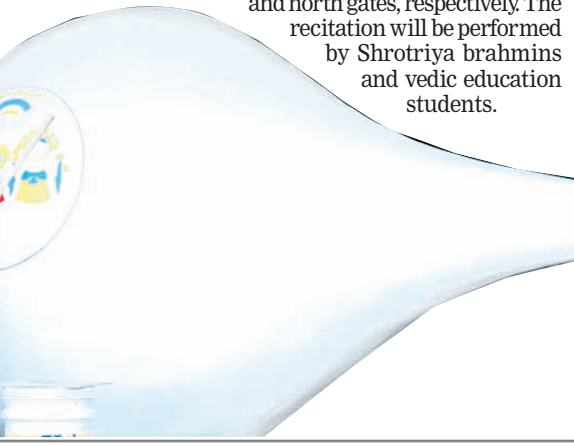
tions, the length and width of the two-and-half-foot high platform has been kept at 24 ft 3 inches, each. Likewise, the length and width of the main Yajna Kunda has been kept at 8 ft 1 inch in conformity with all sacred rules.

The Gajapati Maharaja is scheduled to welcome the brahmins today in a ritual called 'Barana', while the Ankura Ropana ceremony will be held Jaury 13 and 14. The formal Yajna will begin January 15.

The Gajapati

will perform Purnahuti (signaling the culmination of the Yajna) January 17 amid floral offerings by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. The Yajna will culminate with the chanting of Vedic hymns by 108 brahmins.

Likewise, Yajna will be performed on the Aishanya Kona along with chanting of the four Vedas at equal number of gates of Srimandir after the culmination of the main Yajna. For the purpose, the administration has set up Veda Parayana Yajna Kundas near the four gates of the Srimandir. While Rig Veda hymns will be recited in front of the Lion's Gate, hymns from the Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda would be chanted near the south, west and north gates, respectively. The recitation will be performed by Shrotriya brahmins and vedic education students.



5T Chairman reviews projects in Bolangir dist

Pandian reviewed 650-bed teaching hospital at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital being constructed at a cost of ₹305 crore



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 11: Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha Kartik Pandian Thursday visited Bolangir to review the progress of various developmental works in the district and to interact with students and general public.

He participated in the Nua-O programme being organised at Gandhi Stadium, where he interacted with the participants. The 5T Chairman encouraged them to exploit the opportunities presented by the programme, which provides a platform to youths to showcase their talent

and help them achieve holistic personality development in addition to academic excellence.

Citing examples of prominent individuals from the district, Pandian motivated the students to work hard with self-confidence to achieve success in their lives.

Later, he reviewed progress of the 650-bed teaching hospital at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital being constructed at an estimated cost of ₹305 crore. He instructed the officials concerned to complete all remaining works at the earliest adhering to the 5T principles.

The 5T Chairman also reviewed other major projects in

the district: ISS projects at Kukudmal, Patharla, Kursud, Silatkani and Kutasingha, being constructed at a cost of around ₹1,217 crore; mega piped drinking water projects in different blocks being built at a cost of ₹1,312 crore; Bolangir and Patnagarh bypass roads being constructed at a cost of ₹176 crore and ₹140 crore respectively; development of the Tusura Airstrip at a cost of ₹65 crore, major roads and bridges, along with the development of the Harishankar Temple.

“Work for some of the major projects has been taken up after the previous visit of the 5T Chairman to the district in August 2023, when he attended the grievance meetings and took feedback from the locals,” said an official.

Moreover, during his visit, Pandian also interacted with pupils at the Kantabanji Vocational Degree College and the RN Singh Deo stadium, Saintala, collecting their grievances on various issues and assuring them an early resolution.



GRACEFUL MOVES: Artistes perform at 11th Gotipua Nrutya Utsav organised by Aradhana Dance Academy at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

SWACHH SURVEKSHAN Bhub cleanest city



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 11: Odisha capital Bhubaneswar has been ranked the cleanest city in the state in the ‘Swachh Survekshan 2023’ for cities with a population of over 1,00,000. In terms of hygiene and sanitation, Bhubaneswar has left behind all the other cities and towns in Odisha. Overall, it has secured 34th rank at the national level.

The Swachh Survekshan 2023 was conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). The awards were given away Thursday in New Delhi. Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Mayor Sulochana Das, Deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar, standing committee chairman Biranchi Naryan Mahasupakar and Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange were present on stage to receive the awards.

Odisha which had been ranked ninth in the last ‘Swachh Survekshan’ also jumped few notches to fourth position. The other cities with population of more than 1,00,000 that featured in the top 100 were Puri (62nd) and Balasore (99th).

1st World Odia Language Conference logo unveiled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 11: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday unveiled the logo of the first World Odia Language Conference (Biswa Odia Bhasa Sammilani) with the tagline ‘Language in the Future’.

The conference is scheduled to take place from February 3 to 5.

“I hope that this conference will provide a good platform for the exchange of views among intellectuals, researchers, scholars, and students,” Patnaik said in a statement.

Noting that Odisha was the first state in the country formed on linguistic basis, Patnaik emphasised that the Odia language has gained the status of one of the classical languages, enriching the glory of the state and the language itself.

According to an official release from the CMO, the first World Odia Conference will discuss the past, present, and future of the Odia language, and set goals for its propagation.

The Chief Minister has directed the Odia language, literature, and culture department to coordinate with all parties concerned to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. Eminent linguists and language researchers



from around the world will participate in the discussions during the conference.

“The conference aims to educate the present generation about the language. The discussions will focus on integrating the Odia language with professional courses, the role of the language in the digital era, and providing inputs to formulate policies accordingly,” said Sujata K Rout, Secretary of the Odia language, literature, and culture department.

BHARAT JODI NYAY YATRA Rahul to stay in state for 4 days next month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 11: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to spend four days in Odisha during his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra next month, a Congress leader said Thursday.

The yatra, which is scheduled to start January 14 from Manipur; will enter Odisha from Jharkhand and cover the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Jharsuguda, said senior Odisha Congress leader Sarat Rout.

Addressing a press conference, Rout said, “We are expecting that the yatra will be held in Odisha during the second and third week of February before it enters neighbouring Chhattisgarh.”

Though the programme is scheduled to cover 341km in four districts, the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) has requested the Central leadership to include few more districts within the state, he said.

Strict measures adopted for safety of SC/ST students

Bhubaneswar: The state government has adopted a well-planned strategy to ensure the overall safety and security of tribal students in all SSD schools and hostels especially girl boarders. Among the measures implemented are disease surveillance mechanism, SOP for ensuring safety and security of students, strict governance and management of SSD hostels including safeguarding of educational ecosystem, proper documentation of entry and exit of boarders and visitors and the establishment of a dedicated school and hostel monitoring cell (SHMC). A total of 1,736 educational institutions in the state provide education to ST&SC students from primary to secondary level. There are approximately 6,000 hostels accommodating 5.2 lakh boarders, out of which 58 per cent are girls. In order to run and monitor the educational institutions as well as the hostels, the ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Development Welfare department has formed an efficient and technical team. All issues in the institutions and hostels are handled by a 24x7 grievance centre. So far smart phones have been provided to 1,725 girls’ hostels with 100 or more boarders. A toll-free number (18003453040) has also been set up to receive complaints from students, especially girls over any issue.

Committee to frame rules for rare diseases

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 11: For prevention and management of rare diseases, the state government has formed an eight member committee to frame a comprehensive state policy, with special focus on Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD). Consistent with the existing National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021, the state policy will not only strengthen detection of conditions in the population and provide proper healthcare to the suffering persons but will also generate awareness about such conditions among the people.

The high-level technical committee will be chaired by special secretary (SS) of the state Health and Family Welfare Department. Other members include Director Medical Education and Training (DMET), DHS, Professor and HoD, Department of Neurology, SCBMCH, Cuttack, Professor and HoD, Department of Medicine, PGIMER and Capital Hospital, Professor and HoD, Department of Paediatric,

PGIMER and Capital Hospital, Professor and HoD, Department of Immunology, SCBMCH and Joint Secretary, I/C Scheme Section. DMD symptoms start manifesting early and if left untreated, patients generally lose the ability to walk by the time they are eight to 12 years of age. Early diagnosis of such diseases is a major challenge owing to a variety of factors that include lack of awareness among primary care physicians, and lack of adequate screening and diagnostic facilities.

The condition is caused by a defective dystrophin gene, which hinders production of the very vital dystrophin protein. The disease is generally detected at 6 or 7 years of age and progresses rapidly affecting every muscle of the body including the heart and lungs.

Earlier, the Odisha DMD Association (ODMDA) had demanded that as long as medicines are not available, the government should provide assistance to parents of DMD-affected children.

STA issues fog advisory for drivers

Bhubaneswar: With dense fog affecting many districts of Odisha and also leading to road accidents, the State Transport Authority (STA) has issued guidelines and advisory for drivers. Officials feel that if the advisory is followed properly, there will be reduction in the number of mishaps. Most of the time fog-related accidents occur due to low visibility. Drivers have been advised to drive at slow speed even if it takes more time to reach the destination. They have also been asked to maintain sufficient distance between vehicles so that the brake time can increase. Vehicle drivers have also been asked to use fog lights and also to watch out for road signages. They have been advised not to use mobiles while driving and not listen to music through earphones. The department said that daily fog updates will be provided on all social media handles of the STA. Drivers have been requested to plan their travel accordingly. For the past few days, dense fog has been engulfing Bhubaneswar and Cuttack and many other districts and towns including, Kendrapara, Rourkela, Angul, Balasore, Bhadrak and Phulbani. In all these places the visibility early in the day has been very poor. Visibility in the Capital was recorded at 100 metres Thursday.

Last hope for animals against sexual violence

DEBASISH PANIGRAHI, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 10: Following the exclusion of any legislation protecting animals from sexual abuse in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) - one of the three ‘transformative’ criminal code bills that received presidential approval December 25, animal rights activists have now pinned hopes on Cabinet approval to the amended Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 2022 that has long been waiting to see the light of the day.

“During inter-ministerial consultations, the MHA has approved the inclusion of provisions to deal with sexual violence against animals with a combination of penal action and monetary fines in the amended Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act. However, the Cabinet is sitting over the draft since long,” Gauri Maulekhi, Trustee of People For Animals (PFA), India’s largest animal welfare organisation, told Orissa POST. She said PFA had earlier urged

the Union government not to drop the provision in BNS so as to protect mute animals from the worst form of violence. “But they were not keen on keeping the provisions in the new law. Therefore, we demanded to bring it in the amended Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. We appeal the government to give animals their deserving justice,” she added.

Earlier, PFA and another animal rights body, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA) had raised serious concerns before the Home Affairs Committee about the omission of sections criminalising animal sexual abuse in BNS draft bill.

The MHA had clarified that the non-inclusion of the provision, embedded in Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code - which criminalised sexual abuse of animals since 1860 - was on account of the Supreme Court’s partial removal of the impugned law in a 2018 judgement, while retaining protection for animals, children and others.

The top court had observed that the provisions of Section 377 will continue to govern non-consensual sexual acts against adults, all acts of carnal intercourse against minors and acts of bestiality, while dropping sexual violence against animals under its ambit.

Meanwhile, Maulekhi said that the new draft legislation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act must take into account sexual abuse against animals beyond carnal intercourse. “IPC Section 377 defined sexual abuse (against animals) only as carnal intercourse, or penile-vaginal penetration, which is not the case always. More often than not it involves mutilation of the animal’s sexual organ using screw drivers, rods or other objects. The new act should take those into account too,” she said.

The absence of the legislation, she feared, will give a free run to abusers, while the speechless species will suffer in silence. “Earlier, one case out of 5,000 could make it to police records.

Given that experience, offenders will go berserk in the absence of any law,” she added.

Stating that sexual abuse of animals is a serious mental distortion, she said if the abuser is not brought to law, he will be tempted to repeat the behaviour with humans, which will lead to larger law and order issues.

Speaking in agreement, Purabi Patra of Animal Welfare Trust, Ekamra, while citing the example of security guard in a housing society in Bhubaneswar who was caught red-handed while sexually abusing a female dog a few years ago, said he was punished because of IPC Section 377.

“Isn’t it evident that when one can do this to a dog, won’t he target innocent kids later if he went unpunished,” she asked.

Amulya Nayak of People for Animals, Bhubaneswar said, “Every living being including animals should not suffer sexual abuse, and I hope the new act should be tougher against the culprits.”

(WITH INPUTS FROM ARINDAM GANGULY)

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Youth bludgeons kid to death before father

Sources said the accused also severed the kid's limbs and drank his blood after committing the murder for unknown reasons



POST NEWS NETWORK

Dabugaon, Jan 11: In a gruesome incident, a five-year-old boy was bludgeoned to death in front of his father at a hilltop temple in Mendra village under Dabugaon police limits in Nabarangpur district, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Chandan Pujari, 5, son of Sanadhar Pujari, the priest of a Shiva temple on Sarguli hilltop in the village. Later, police arrested the murderer Jalendra Santa, 25, after being informed by the villagers. Sources said, the accused not only killed the kid but also severed his limbs and drank the blood oozing out from the child's body. The spine-chill-

ing incident has sent shockwaves in the area and mourning in the priest's neighbourhood. The incident occurred when Sanadhar had gone to the temple to conduct the daily worship rituals. Later, Chandan was taken to the temple by his grandfather after the kid cried and insisted on visiting the temple. The boy was playing outside when Jalendra reached there and picked up a heated brawl with the priest. Enraged, he dragged the boy to the temple verandah and bludgeoned him to death in front of his father. Jalendra also severed the limbs of the body and drank the blood oozing out from it. Sanadhar lost his senses on seeing his son

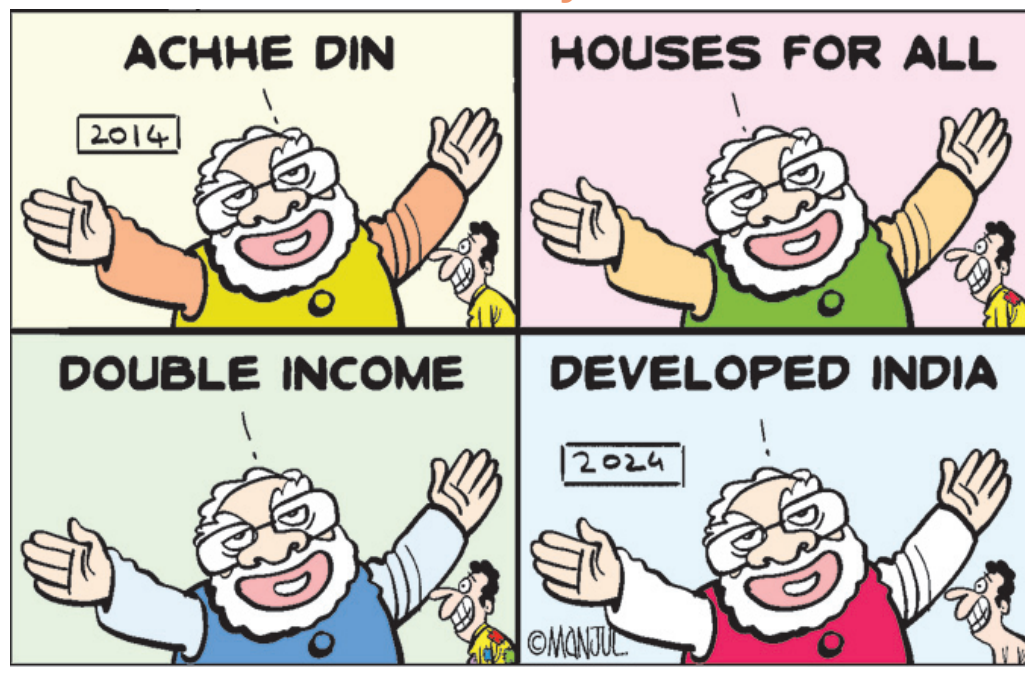
being gored and murdered. Later, he regained his senses and raised an alarm. Hearing his screams, villagers rushed to the temple. Panicked, Jalendra ran back to the temple carrying the severed limbs of the boy. He rushed to his backyard and concealed the severed limbs inside a bunch of twigs kept as firewood under a maize plant. Villagers chased and overpowered him before tying him to a tree. Later, they informed the Dabugaon police who reached the spot and arrested Jalendra for the gruesome offence. The child's severed limbs and torso were seized and sent for post-mortem, Dabugaon IIC Sunil Kumar Pradhan said. Later, Nabarangpur SP Rohit Verma, Umerkote SDPO Madhusikta Mishra and a scientific team visited the spot and conducted preliminary probe into the incident. Police registered a case of murder over a complaint filed by Sanadhar and launched an investigation. According to a source, the youth committed the crime for reasons not known yet. Jalendra was taken into custody and being interrogated in this connection.

BDO found hanging in official quarters

PNN & AGENCIES

Balasure, Jan 11: A block development officer (BDO) in Balasure district was found hanging in his government quarters Thursday, police said. After receiving information, a police team rushed to the spot, broke open the entrance door and discovered him hanging from the ceiling. Simulia PS IC Swarnalata Minz said. A doctor was called, and Biswaranjan Mohanty, the BDO of Simulia block, was declared dead, she said. A scientific team also went to the official residence of Mohanty to collect circumstantial evidence and investigate the cause of the officer's death. According to a preliminary investigation, the officer was alone in the quarters when the incident occurred. The tehsildar along with revenue officials reached the spot. Post-mortem examinations will be conducted under magistrate supervision, they said. Meanwhile, the BDO's father Narendra Mohanty alleged that Biswaranjan was in depression as he was not given leave by the Collector to visit home. He took charge of the Simulia BDO in October last year and was supposed to retire from services in June 2026, he said. However, Balasure Collector Dattatraya Bhausaheb Shinde rejected the allegation of the BDO's father and said, "He never applied for leave. He attended a review meeting last week and we have not noticed anything unusual. Inquiry will be conducted to find whether he was under work pressure or not."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Slum dwellers gherao MLA's house over evacuation order

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 11: The dwellers of the Hilltop Busti laid a siege to the official residence of Raghunathpalli MLA Subrat Tarai Thursday while demonstrating against the RSP's order for eviction of the slum's residents. Over a hundred slum dwellers staged a sit-in in front of the house of MLA Subrat Tarai and they were in no mood to budge from there as long as their demand was not met. However, they left the place when the report was being filed saying that they would come back later. "We are not going to go away from here until and unless our demand is met. We want alternate pieces of land to set up our households. We have been staying there for more than 30 years," said one Sumati Nag, a resident of the slum.



The problem arose when RSP served them with the eviction notice acting on a proposal to widen the road in front of the Hilltop Busti. The proposal for widening of the road has cropped up in view of the massive park that is in the final phase of completion at Koelnagar. The park is being set up at a cost of over ₹32 crore on 34 acre land on the bank of Koel river. This is part of the Smart City project. The dwellers had earlier met Labour Minister and Rourkela MLA Sarada Nayak. Sources close to Nayak informed that after listening to them patiently he declined to interfere in the affair as it belonged to Tarai's con-

stituency. However, he assured them that he would look into it. Meanwhile, when asked about the issue, Tarai reportedly said, "What can I do? RSP has served the notice for its own land."

Leopard hide seized; 2 arrested

Bhubaneswar: Forest officials arrested two persons and seized a leopard skin from them, officials said Thursday. The accused have been identified as Mukesh Manahira (31) of Bolangir and Dibya Sankar Bagarty (21) of Boudh, they said. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Forest officials from Bolangir and Boudh forest divisions conducted a raid at Kotagaon in Bolangir district January 9 and arrested the duo, Bolangir divisional forest officer (DFO) Nitish Kumar said. Following interrogation, a leopard skin was recovered from a haystack at Kantamal area in Boudh district, he said. A case has been registered against the two under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, he added.

5 of 2 families injured in acid attacks during clash

Nuapada: Five people, including a woman, were injured in acid attacks Thursday during a clash between two families over business rivalry in Nuapada district, police said. A couple from a goldsmith family and three members of another family in the same business were injured in the acid attacks that took place at Duajhar village in Khariar area, an officer said. As both families are in the same business in the small village, it was suspected that the clash erupted due to business rivalry, he said. As the clash escalated, members of both families threw acid, which is used to clean gold ornaments, on each other, said Pradeep Kumar Dharua, IIC, Khariar Police Station. All the injured were first admitted to Khariar Hospital. Three of them were later shifted to the district headquarters hospital at Nuapada as their condition deteriorated, he said. Two cases have been registered based on the complaints lodged by each family and the investigation is underway, the IIC said.

POTTERS HAVE A FIELD DAY AS DEMAND ROCKETES FOR DIYAS



Demand of clay diyas has skyrocketed in view of the Ram Temple consecration celebrations January 22

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 11: Residents of the potters' colony here at Tilka Nagar near Bondamunda are having a good time these days with the prospect of earning a good sum as the demand of 'diyas' has rocketed ahead of the grand Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya January 22. The potters are sup-

plying clay lamps for the upcoming celebrations to nearby areas and beyond the state's border. The diyas are being sent as far as Keonjhar, Barbil and Jharsuguda districts in Odisha, while buyers are also coming from places like Simdega, Manoharpur and other nearby areas across the border in Jharkhand. "We have been receiving orders from distant places and they are coming here almost every day to pick their goods," said Rameswar Prajapati, one of the potters here. There are over 15 potter families here in Tilka Nagar and all the families are busy making diyas for the

celebrations ahead. Another potter said, "It is a difficult task for all of us to cater to the demand as Saraswati Puja will be just around the corner after the Ram Temple celebrations. In the meanwhile, we are receiving orders for diyas from various places. I have brought a few more artisans from Bihar so that it will be easier for me to tackle the increased demand." On a daily basis, these potters prepare diyas, flower pots, chullah and other products from clay. But, nowadays making diyas is their mainstay. "For the Ram Mandir, the orders for diyas have gone up. More than seven to eight thousand diyas are sold on a daily basis for local consumption," said another potter Raghur. As per a rough estimate, the daily supply has gone up manifold. "I think more than 70,000 diyas are being supplied every day and this will continue till January 22," said Jayram Pandit aka Prajapati, who is the main potter behind the making of what is being touted as the biggest clay diya of the world for the upcoming consecration fete. The grand diya has been ordered by one Smile Foundation. The top circumference of the diya is 12 feet, the height is 5.5 feet and it can contain up to 6,000 litres of ghee.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No.: MCSW-Shell Rep-23-24-28
Name of Work: HEAVY SHELL REPAIR OF ICF & LHB COACHES AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.
Approx. Cost: ₹ 3,02,53,262.64
EMD: ₹ 3,01,300/-
Completion of Period: 12 (Twelve) Months
Tender closing Date & Time: At 1100 hrs. on 27.01.2024
The Tender documents complete details available at www.ireps.gov.in
PR-972/O/23-24 Chief Workshop Manager, Mancheswar

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender No. 47-SBP-TRD-OT-2023-24
NAME OF WORK: AUGMENTATION OF TRACTION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM BY PROVIDING 2ND BAY EQUIPMENTS AT MANESWAR TRACTION SUB STATION (EXCLUDING THE SUPPLY OF POWER TRANSFORMER) OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx. Cost: ₹ 72,32,486.07, EMD: ₹ 1,44,700/-, Completion Period: 08 Months.
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1530 Hrs. on 29.01.2024.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), PR-967/O/23-24 Sambalpur

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Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Khorda Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrowers in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India, Khorda Branch for an amount mentioned below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
KHORDA BRANCH / 1) Borrower : M/s. Abhyant Automotives, Prop.: Mr. Pramod Kumar Pattanayak, 2) Borrowers: Mr. Pramod Kumar Pattanayak & Mrs. Sandhyarani Pattanayak, W/o.: Mr. Pramod Kumar Pattanayak, At: Plot No.: 62, Khata No.: 217, Dumduma, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar	₹ 21,53,301/- + interest & expenses thereon	16.10.2023 / 05.01.2024	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Plot No.: 62, Khata No.: 217, Area: Ac.0.054 Dec, Kissam: Gharabari, Mouza: Dumduma, City: Bhubaneswar, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar within the registration Sub-District: Bhubaneswar and Dist.: Khurda, in the name of Mr. Pramod Kumar Pattanayak, Bounded by North: Mr. Alekha Jena & Others, South: Road, East: Mrs. Nalini Pradhan, West: Vendors

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 12.01.2024
Authorised Officer, Bank of India

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“Genius discovers a system; average talent stereotypes it till it is shattered by fresh genius.”
SRI AUROBINDO



Climate Dilemma

The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai concluded with a carefully worded statement calling for the phase-out of fossil fuels, raising hopes that the international community might finally meet the targets set by the 2015 Paris climate agreement. But achieving these carbon-reduction goals will be difficult without immediate and decisive action by India, the world's third-largest greenhouse-gas (GHG) emitter.

India – which accounted for 7.6 per cent of global GHG emissions in 2022, compared to China's 30.7 per cent and the United States' 13.6 per cent – has set ambitious renewable-energy targets and taken a leading role in international climate talks. But while these efforts suggest that India is genuinely committed to moving away from fossil fuels, the country also faces political obstacles that could severely impede its ability to achieve crucial climate goals.

India has adopted a countercyclical approach to taxing petroleum-related products, reducing taxes when global prices increase and raising them when prices drop. European governments followed a more extreme strategy after gas prices spiked in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, providing subsidies of more than €650 billion (\$712 billion) between September 2021 and January 2023 to protect consumers from soaring energy costs.

In India, however, the effective carbon price was just €14 per ton in 2021. Moreover, electricity in India is heavily subsidised, with many households and farmers benefiting from free power or paying only a fraction of the actual cost. To offset this, industrial and commercial users are charged higher rates. Nevertheless, even with this arrangement, the government subsidises about 20 per cent of the cost of electricity production.

Given that electricity accounts for 34 per cent of India's total GHG emissions, reforming electricity pricing is crucial to meeting its emissions-reduction goals. But this will not be easy, as electricity prices are set not by one central authority, but by the country's 28 states and eight quasi-sovereign Union Territories. These 36 jurisdictions, each with its own policies and interests, represent the proverbial elephant in the room, complicating any effort to eliminate carbon subsidies.

Throughout India's post-Independence history, almost every state has subsidised electricity prices. Consequently, the expectation of free or cheap power has become deeply ingrained in the country's democratic politics. While heavy subsidisation has significantly expanded energy access, it also strains state governments' finances, impeding clean-energy investments. In agricultural regions, free electricity has contributed to the degradation and depletion of water resources. Moreover, reliance on coal for power generation causes severe pollution-related health problems and results in increased carbon emissions.

In Indian politics, which is increasingly prone to competitive populism between state governments, giving away free or cheaper power (along with cash transfers) is a stock currency of elected officials. The popularity of this approach has been evident in several recent elections, with parties promising electricity subsidies and following through after coming to power. Consequently, the price of power has steadily headed in the wrong direction: greater carbon subsidisation instead of greater taxation.

India's central government has tried to nudge state governments to rationalise electricity pricing, but with limited success. Likewise, measures, such as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) or emission reporting requirements, are unlikely to have a significant impact. Such measures, protectionist in effect, are primarily aimed at tradable goods and services, sectors that are not heavily subsidised in India and for which the government is trying to establish a cap-and-trade system. Crucially, mechanisms like the CBAM will have minimal effect on the pricing of non-industrial electricity consumption.

But the deeply rooted popularity of India's electricity subsidies and resistance to reform do not necessarily mean that efforts to reduce emissions, both within India and worldwide, must fail. While India has little chance of changing how electricity is priced, it can change how it is produced. Demand may be beyond influence, but by shifting the power grid from fossil fuels to renewables, the country can supply cheap power while still reducing carbon emissions.

For this transition to be economically feasible, renewable energy and storage must be cheaper. Despite their protectionist nature, industrial policies like US President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act could benefit developing countries like India. By lowering the costs of green-energy production and storage, such policies could make subsidised electricity less problematic from an emissions standpoint.

India's experience offers some important lessons for policymakers and economists. Unanimous and vigorous advocacy for carbon taxation can be misguided because it ignores country realities. Barring an unforeseen shock, India's 36 jurisdictions are unlikely to eliminate indirect carbon subsidies in electricity generation. It is crucial, therefore, to focus on identifying feasible solutions that could be developed and implemented within these political constraints. International financial support, for example, could significantly reduce the risks associated with renewable energy and storage projects in developing countries and make them more attractive for private investment.

What is clear is that simply invoking textbook solutions will get us nowhere. If the definition of insanity is repeatedly doing – or in this case evangelising for – the same thing and expecting a different result, this particular madness will endanger us all.

Arvind Subramanian is a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. Navneeraj Sharma is an energy economist. @PROJECT SYNDICATE



Arvind Subramanian & Navneeraj Sharma

While India has little chance of changing how electricity is priced, it can change how it is produced



Dhurjati Mukherjee

HIGH INTEREST RATES, FISCAL CONSOLIDATION AND SLOWING GLOBAL GROWTH ARE NOT QUITE FAVOURABLE

The economy is always a matter of debate and the new year has started with concerns expressed by members of Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee about volatile food prices. The vegetable price inflation has been manifesting since November and this is expected to continue in the months ahead. As Michael Patra, RBI Deputy Governor, rightly pointed out that food prices in India "are the underlying component of inflation" and this is expected to continue in 2024. Moreover, climate will remain a key influence on food production and inflation as El Niño conditions are expected to continue.

Another important factor is that debt has been increasing fast and the International Monetary Fund stated that it may reach "100% of debt to GDP ratio" by 2028. However, the Finance Ministry clarified that the roll-over risk is low for domestic debt and the exposure to volatility in exchanged rates tend to be on the lower side. Reports indicate that the government will have to either trim expenditure or target higher revenue for the current fiscal as the nominal GDP is estimated to grow slower. Moreover, the fiscal deficit may reach 6% of GDP. Also, high interest rates, fiscal consolidation and slowing global growth are not quite favourable.

Recently Trinamool Congress leader, Derek O'Brien, stated that "from 2014 to 2023, the price of rice has gone by 56%, wheat by 59%, milk by 61% and tur dal by 120%". According to him, 21 lakh workers from West Bengal have not received wages for the last two year under the MGNREGA. Around 150 farmers are committing suicide every day and India has 28 crore poor people, "the highest for any country". In spite of all this, optimistically speaking the overall economic signs are quite encouraging with the year-to-year data rise in the stock market estimated at over 18% while the increase from October may be around 14-15% and the growth momentum maintained.

FOCUS ECONOMY

PRIVATE CAPITAL LACKING



It is intriguing that in spite of incentives given by the present government, private investment has not picked up to the desired scales

Forecasts have been quite positive with the IMF prediction that India is expected to grow above 6% over the next five years, driven by strong investment, strong economic fundamentals, digitalisation-driven productivity gains despite widespread global uncertainty. The IMF, in its article IV consultation report observed a robust public capex agenda, which will support India's wide-ranging infrastructure needs, is expected to boost growth while crowding-in private investment and growth is projected at 6.3% in both FY24 and FY25.

"Noting that India is one of the fastest growing economies globally, the directors called for continued appropriate policies to sustain economic stability and for further progress in key structural reforms to unleash India's significant potential," as per the report. Further it pointed out that India's economy showed robust growth over the past year though headline inflation has, on average, moderated although it remains volatile. But what is surprising is that whether high GDP growth can be considered the index of true development though urban-based economists are always found to glorify high rates of growth?

An important point that needs to be mentioned here is the lack of private investment and the economic strength is manifest only from public sector investment. It is intriguing that in

spite of various incentives given by the present government, private investment has not picked up to the desired scales and is much lower compared to other emerging economies of the world.

This apart, assessing economic growth is just not the incomes generated but the job potential of the investment made. In this connection, one may refer to the central bank's December round of consumer confidence which reveals that consumers lowered their expectations of employment and prices as they expected a change in the scenario. It is difficult to foresee or forecast any perceptible change unless there is a surge in investment by the private sector in 2024. There is also need to give a renewed thrust on manufacturing through a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the present government.

It cannot be denied that while attempts to strengthen the economy are in full swing, there is a need to analyse whether the benefits are reaching all segments of society. The moot question at this juncture is whether convictions along with the positive settings will encourage businesses to take risk and come out with substantial investments. It is well-known that the long-term weakness in India has largely been due to the shyness of the private sector; especially in manufacturing, though we see enough investments in safe sectors such as health and education. Even

after the pandemic, investment by the private sector has not picked up to the desired extent. Moreover, employment-oriented industries are more or less ignored by the corporate sector.

To attract private investment, one may suggest that areas in backward regions should be earmarked for private entities with necessary infrastructure to facilitate setting up of employment-oriented factories, which could not just open up job opportunities for the skilled youth but also help change the complexion of the area. This is indeed crucial for overall economic growth because unless the youth are gainfully employed, the concept of true development is lost.

The disturbing fact is that the focus of the economy is on the urban sector which, directly or indirectly, is benefiting the rich and the middle class. This resulted in consumption increase but most economists believe consumption demand has indeed been problematic with the top 40% of households going for excessive expenditure. This points to the fact that the lower 20% of the population is facing financial crisis due to stagnant income and is not in a position to increase even its basic consumption, that is, of healthy food. This can be viewed from the fact that agriculture grew at a mere 1.2% in the second quarter and full fiscal growth is likely to remain subdued as kharif production is estimated to fall and rabi crop faces stress.

In fact, an economic analysis of per capita allocation of resources would reveal that the rural sector has been grossly neglected. As suggested earlier, some of these areas could be transformed into industrial hubs for small-scale manufacturing or even tourist attraction centres. There needs to be a plan which should be prepared at the panchayat level and sent to the Centre via the state government for infrastructural support. Both objectives of backward area development and employment generation could be achieved through these initiatives. A fresh look is required.

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Blame game in West Asia

A blame game has been orchestrated by Iran to target Israel for allegedly playing a part in the terrorist attack in the city of Kerman, last week. Although the Islamic State (IS) terror group claimed responsibility for the attack, Iranian officials reject it and instead blame Israel for its complicity. Suicide bombers struck crowds gathered near the tomb of Revolutionary Guards General Qasem Soleimani to mark the fourth anniversary of his killing in Baghdad in a targeted US drone strike. The terrorist attack January 3 killed 89 people, which included many women and children, as well as at least a dozen Afghans, state television said.

A staunch enemy of the IS, Soleimani headed the Guards' foreign operations arm, the Quds Force, overseeing Iranian military operations across the Middle East. Though some Iranian officials have already hinted at Israel's involvement in the attack, journalists and active media members have also started bringing to the limelight the differences between the IS's latest statement and its previous ones to prove a

second party's complicity. The Tehran Times reported that the extremist group acknowledged responsibility for the assault more than 30 hours following the explosions. This departs from its usual pattern, as the group typically asserts its role in acts of terror immediately after their occurrence. Also, the IS generally precedes attacks with ominous posts on its social media platforms shortly before they unfold. Surprisingly, no such forewarning preceded the blasts in Kerman.

Historically, the IS has consistently referred to Iran as the 'land of Persians' or the 'state of Khorasan'. However, the latest communication from the terrorists explicitly uses the country's actual name: Iran. This shift has sparked suspicions regarding the origins of the statement, prompting questions about whether it might have been authored by an external entity and subsequently handed over to the group for dissemination on its social media platforms. Further the characteristics of the attack also raised suspicions about Israel's potential involvement, Iranian media pointed out. Despite the claim

from IS, Iranian officials have continued to accuse Iran's arch foes Israel and the US of complicity in the attack. Despite the US' diplomatic support and provision of weaponry used in Gaza, it has, thus far, displayed reluctance to escalate the conflict beyond Gaza. In fact, reports suggest the US has been pressuring Israel to halt its fruitless campaign by Jan-end.

Iranian media claims that recognising its inability to eliminate Hamas and its deteriorating international standing, Israel now views a regional war as necessary to permanently eliminate the so-called Axis of Resistance. From Israel's perspective, the opportunity to draw the US into a war with Iran and its allied groups may not arise again. This motive has led to a series of orchestrated attacks in recent weeks aimed at provoking Iran and triggering a full-scale regional conflict. The sequence began with the assassination of a top Iranian military advisor in Syria, followed by an attack targeting a Hamas leader in Beirut. While some analysts anticipated a similar assault on Iranian soil, the direct targeting of civilians was unforeseen.

Meanwhile, tensions remain heated on the Israel-Lebanese border: An Israeli strike on southern Lebanon Monday killed a top Hezbollah commander, the Iran-backed group said in a statement. Clashes between Hezbollah and the Israeli army have intensified since the war in started.

While it is still debatable who carried out the attack or on whose instructions, it is clear that any direct US entry in the region may escalate the Gaza conflict, besides bringing chaos to the region. So far, the US has rejected any suggestion that it or its ally Israel were behind the bombings, while Israel has not commented on it.

However, one should not pay heed to provocative statements by Israel against its other Arab neighbours and by Iran against Israel; the collective aim should be to get the Palestinian issue resolved, as per the aspersions of the Palestinian people and try to limit the war and stop its spread in the region, as any further confrontation or attacks may prove catastrophic for global peace.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior political commentator. @IANS



Asad Mirza

FROM ISRAEL'S PERSPECTIVE, THE OPPORTUNITY TO DRAW THE US INTO A WAR WITH IRAN AND ITS ALLIED GROUPS MAY NOT ARISE AGAIN

WISDOM CORNER

- “The best revenge is massive success.” **FRANK SINATRA**
- “See that the imagination of nature is far, far greater than the imagination of man.” **RICHARD P. FEYNMAN**
- “Expect the best. Prepare for the worst. Capitalize on what comes.” **ZIG ZIGLAR**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1932: Hattie Ophelia Caraway became the first woman elected to the US Senate.
- 1971: The groundbreaking television series 'All in the Family' debuted on CBS; the sitcom became known for its frank and satirical treatment of sensitive or important topics.
- 2010: Haiti severely damaged by earthquake. A magnitude-7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti, especially Port-au-Prince, killing more than 200,000 people and leaving more than 1,000,000 homeless.

Connectivity boost

Sir, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has inaugurated a new airport in Malkangiri district. The new airport is spread over an area of 283 acres developed for ₹70 crore. Initially, nine-seater aircraft will operate from the airport. This is the seventh functional airport in the state. In recent years, the state government has worked rapidly on making new airports in the state. These airports will enhance connectivity in the region. Good connectivity will bring avenues of business, tourism, and education. Further it will bring social and economic development for the local people that will transform their lives. Some of the airports are in Maoist regions. Good connectivity will also help the administration strengthen the law and order situation and eradicate Maoist elements. The New and developing aviation infrastructure of Odisha will give a chance for middle-class families to experience flight journeys. It will also help to boost the state's economy, tourism, and regional connectivity.

Deba Prasad Nayak, DHENKANAL

Stinging rebuke

Sir, The Supreme Court's decision in the Bilkis Bano case is a stinging rebuke to the Gujarat government's partisanship. The accused has been ordered by the court to surrender within two weeks. In addition, the Gujarat government has been severely chastised for misleading the court and usurping its rights. The Gujarat government on August 15, last year remitted the life sentences of eleven inmates who gangraped Bilkis Bano. This sparked widespread outrage in the country. During the hearing of Bilkis Bano's appeal, the Supreme Court declared that the Gujarat government lacked the authority to pardon the convicts since the case was decided in Maharashtra. During the Gujarat riots, eleven individuals raped her. She was five-month pregnant at that time. Seven members of her family, including her three-year-old daughter, were killed in front of her eyes. It's easy to imagine the psychological impact the episode must have had on Bilkis. The Gujarat government's decision was challenged from a variety of perspectives. Political motivations were also seen behind this, which became clear once the perpetrators were released. The perpetrators were greeted with garlands, as if they had not committed any horrific crime but had instead performed some heroic gesture.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

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

Ayodhya airport to follow 'drop-and-move' policy Jan 22

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 11: In view of the fact that the newly inaugurated Ayodhya airport will witness unprecedented rush January 22 when the Pran Pratishtha ceremony takes place at the Ram temple, concerned officials have decided to adopt the 'drop-and-move' policy.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) engineering in-charge and project director Ayodhya Airport Rajeev Kulshreshtha said, "We have completed all the civil and technical work inside the airport and only final touches are being given to the rest of work. However, on January 22 only about 100 flights (coming and going) would be accommodated. The airport is meticulously managing influx of these flights, mostly of VVIPs, by allocating tight time slots for both landing and take-off, necessitating efficient coordination to avoid congestion. It would be a drop and move affair for all the aircraft as we have limited parking facility in Ayodhya."

The Ayodhya airport is preparing to handle the January 22 rush on a war footing. Requests for more than 200 flights (char-



The Ayodhya airport is preparing to handle the January 22 rush on a war footing

Requests for more than 200 flights (chartered and private) have been received by the airport authorities but only about 110 can be accommodated on that day

tered and private) have been received by the airport authorities but only about 110 can be accommodated on that day.

A senior official of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said, "Ayodhya airport is gearing up to handle more than 100 flights (coming and going included) on January 22, with over 200 flight requests pouring in, comprising both chartered and private flights."

Director, Ayodhya airport Vinod Kumar said, "To handle the overflow, designated parking spaces in nearby airports such as Prayagraj, Kushinagar, Varanasi

and Gorakhpur are being utilized. All these aircraft have been given parking slots at different nearby airports like Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar and Prayagraj. This strategic approach aims to alleviate the pressure on Ayodhya airport, ensuring a smooth flow of air traffic."

An official of Air Traffic Control said on condition of anonymity, "Strict adherence to allocated time slots is crucial, as any delay in reaching the airport on time may lead to the cancellation of landing permission or, at least result, in extended wait time in airspace."

This comprehensive preparation reflects the airport's ability to manage the flight operations effectively, at the same time safeguarding operational efficiency and minimizing disruptions during this anticipated rush on January 22.

He said, "The airport has a 2,200 metres long and 45 metres wide runway which can handle landing and take-off of Airbus A320, ATR-72 and Bombardier private jets. In the second phase the airport would be opened for international flights with the expansion of the runway to 3,200 metres. For night landing, we

HSI urges citizens to report cockfighting



Large audiences attend cockfighting events where bets ranging from a few thousand to crores of rupees are placed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Jan 11: Ahead of Sankranti festival, Humane Society International (HSI) India, an animal protection organisation, has urged citizens to report cockfighting.

Cockfighting is widely prevalent in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu during Sankranti despite the ban and warnings by police. Crores change hands as people bet big on the cockfights, which were banned in 2018 on the orders of the Supreme Court.

In cockfights, two roosters, often fitted with razor-sharp curved blades on their spurs, are forced to fight each other to death. The fight ends with either one or both the roosters dying. The winning rooster inevitably dies from grievous injuries sustained during the fight, the HSI said.

HSI-India's Managing Director, Alokparna Sengupta said, "Engaging in cockfighting not only inflicts immense suffering on animals, it exploits people too. HSI-India urges every individual to dissuade others from indulging in this inhuman and unlawful activity and promptly inform the nearest police station of any cockfights being organised or conducted. This festive season, as we celebrate our harvest, let us prioritise compassion."

Large audiences attend cockfighting events where bets ranging from a few thousand to crores of rupees are placed. Organizers set up large arenas on open plots, sometimes in grounds of schools, to accommodate fight-rings and viewing seats.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 under Sections 11(1)(m)(ii) makes it an offence to incite animal fights. Organising, keeping, using, or acting in the management of any place for animal fighting or permitting or offering any place to be used for such a purpose is a cognizable offence under Section 11(1)(n) of the Act.

In addition to the cruelty inflicted on these birds, cockfighting events are intrinsically linked with gambling, and the arenas also serve as a focal point for various other illegal activities such as gambling and the sale of illicit liquor.

Cockfighting events use child labour and expose them to extreme violence against animals. The children are often made to deliver liquor from stalls at the animal fighting arenas. "They are also made to defeat and butcher the dead/dying birds. Such activities have profound implications on their physical and mental well-being. "It is also extremely dangerous for humans who are present at such illegal events. Last year, at two different places, two people succumbed to wounds caused by knives tied on the roosters. Several people are injured in the crowded arenas and fights that break out over the bets," the organisation said.

Google to develop digitisation agenda

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Jan 11: IT major Google will develop a digitisation agenda for Telangana in farming, education and health sectors.

Google Vice President Chandrasekhar Thota Thursday called on Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at the latter's residence. According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office, Chandrasekhar discussed with the Chief Minister about their investments in Telangana and expressed the desire to work together with the government.

The Google Vice President told the Chief Minister how Artificial Intelligence is transforming every sector. He said that they are excited to partner to develop a digitisation agenda for Telangana in the farming, education and health sector.



A truck carrying a 108-feet long incense stick for Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Temple on its way to the temple ahead of the consecration ceremony, in Ayodhya, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Telangana to formulate new electricity policy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Jan 11: The Telangana government has decided to bring a new electricity policy.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said a comprehensive policy will be formulated after a detailed study of the existing power policies of various states and after holding discussion with energy experts and debate in the Assembly.

At a review meeting on power, he ordered the officials to prepare plans to provide free electricity to the house up to 200 units through the Griha Jyoti scheme which is one of the six guarantees announced during the Assembly elections.

He also instructed the officials to prepare plans to increase power generation capacity in the government sector, study the possibilities of setting up more power companies, and

■ The Chief Minister asked officials to prevent misuse of electricity and increase the quality of power supply

■ The Chief Minister instructed the authorities to purchase power from the companies which are supplying at low prices in the open market

speed up the works at the new power generation plants which are under construction.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarama, Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and D. Sridhar Babu were also present at the meeting. The CM asked officials to prevent misuse of electricity and increase the quality of power supply. He also directed them to take strong and proactive measures to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity in the state. He made it clear that the government is committed to fulfill the promise of supplying 24-hour free power sup-

ply to the farmers. The CM discussed the issues of power consumption, supply of 24 hours uninterrupted power, power generation by the companies, measures for new power generation units, 200 units free power supply under the Griha Jyoti scheme with the officials and the ministers in detail. The officials briefed Revanth Reddy about the installed capacity of electricity generation in Telangana, power purchases from various power utilities, regular power consumption, performance of the discoms, and the financial situation.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to conduct a comprehensive study and submit a detailed report regarding the agreements entered by the electricity companies and the Electricity Regulatory Council (ERC) since 2014, contents of those agreements, prices for the purchase of power.

FIRE-FIGHTING OPERATIONS

UP to get remote-controlled robots

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 11: The Uttar Pradesh fire department is all set to use remote-controlled robots in fire-fighting operations.

Avinash Chandra, Director General of Police (DGP), UP Fire and Emergency Services, said, "Fire emergencies such as in chemical factories or places not easily accessible to humans will be dealt with by robots which will be completely remote controlled."

"Even though the system is in place in Delhi and Mumbai fire services, it will be the first in the state. It is available in the market and will soon be added into the UP Fire and Emergency Services fleet," he added.

"To start with, after purchase, it will be given to big cities with a number of industries and



chemical factories with greater chances of such fires. Later, we will induct more of them into our fire stations," the DG said.

According to the fire department officials, the robot has a wireless remote attached that allows it to regulate the water spray. These robots can

ascend stairs with ease thanks to a belt system akin to that of the army tanks. The front section of the robots houses the sensor and camera.

With its cameras, the robot can monitor many aspects of the fire site. This will make it simple to determine if someone is

stuck inside or not. The robot will have a pipe fastened to its back so that it may spray water everywhere and collect water from the tankers stationed outside. This reduces the time needed to put out the fire safely and quickly. It also comes with a ventilation fan which can be used to keep the machine cool.

Lucknow fire-fighters will also get high-tech equipment such as a multi articulated water tower, capable of move zig-zag like a snake through narrow lanes and rotating at 360 degrees, and rise to a height of 24 metres.

These devices can be controlled remotely, said chief fire officer, Lucknow, Mangesh Kumar, adding that recently a demonstration was held at Chowk station.

Lucknow sees tulips blooming in winter

AROUND 60 RED TULIPS HAVE FLOWERED IN THE GARDEN OF THE NBRI'S RESEARCH STATION AND BOTANISTS CLAIM THIS COULD BE FIRST TULIP BLOOM ACROSS GLOBE IN WINTER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 11: The National Botanical Research Institute's (NBRI) research station in Banthra, Lucknow, is a riot of colours these days.

Around 60 red tulips have flowered in the garden of the NBRI's research station and botanists claim this could be first tulip bloom across globe in winter. Tulips usually flower in the spring months of March and April, but the warm December in Lucknow this year has advanced their bloom, springing an off-season miracle in unlikely conditions - different soil and climate.

Three NBRI scientists are behind this unusual bloom - institute director Ajit Kumar



Shasany, garden in charge-cum-chief scientist SK Tiwari, and principal scientist Rakesh Chandra Nainwal. The trio toiled since October to nurture tulip bulbs, to ensure their healthy flowering in the challenging

weather and soil conditions.

"We began the journey of tulips acclimatisation (their growth in different climates, soil and other conditions) in October. We got tulip bulbs and to make the journey more challenging

we chose NBRI Banthra research station on the outskirts of Lucknow, in place of the institute's main campus in the heart of the state capital. Tulips grow best in well-drained soil but we decided to grow it on the clay soil in Banthra," said SK Tiwari, who has been curating NBRI's annual flower show for the past four decades.

Tiwari said, "We sowed bulbs of five tulip varieties comprising white, pink, yellow, orange and red. The 'red' variety, considered most difficult to grow, began to bloom. And now the flowers are bursting in full hues in the NBRI garden."

Explaining further, he said temperatures play the most crucial role in tulip's growth. "In the initial phase, the flower needs a

temperature of 15 to 18 degrees Celsius. In the second phase, which is the growing stage, it needs 2 to 10 degrees Celsius temperature, and for the third and final phase, temperature should be in the range of 15-20 degrees Celsius," he said.

NBRI director Ajit Kumar Shasany said, "Tulips bloom marks a new chapter in NBRI's efforts to diversify its floricultural research and introduce new ornamental crops in the region."

He said tulips are widely cultivated since they are vibrant and ornamental flowers. They are typically associated with temperate climate and require specific growing conditions, including cool temperatures and well-draining soil.

500 pre-fabricated toilets to be installed in Ayodhya

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Jan 11: The Uttar Pradesh government has unveiled a plan to boost religious tourism and improve sanitation along the Saryu Ghats in Ayodhya by installing 500 pre-fabricated toilets along the river bank.

The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) will oversee the implementation of the pre-fabricated toilets scheme, covering major ghats, just in time for the upcoming Makar Sankranti snan (holy dip) event on January 15.

The move follows Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive to develop Ayodhya as a religious tourism destination. The selection and operation of the 500 pre-fabricated toilets will involve an agency selection process, utilising the quality cost-based selection method.

Interested agencies must present working prototypes, emphasising cost-effectiveness. Out of the 500 toilet blocks, 450 will have Indian water closets (IWCs), including 10 designed for differently-abled individuals, while the remaining 40 will feature European water closets (EWCs). Control rooms, supported by a 24/7 toll-free helpline, will be established for user support.

Access to these toilets will be free for the public for at least 12 months, with the selected agency responsible for maintaining cleanliness, proper functionality, septic waste management, uninterrupted water supply, and the use of eco-friendly cleaning chemicals.

To enhance user experience, the toilets will have multi-lingual signage, including Hindi, English, Telugu, Gujarati and Marathi.



Artistes perform during a protest against austerity measures proposed by President Javier Milei's administration that include defunding cultural programmes, in Buenos Aires, Argentina

AP/PTI



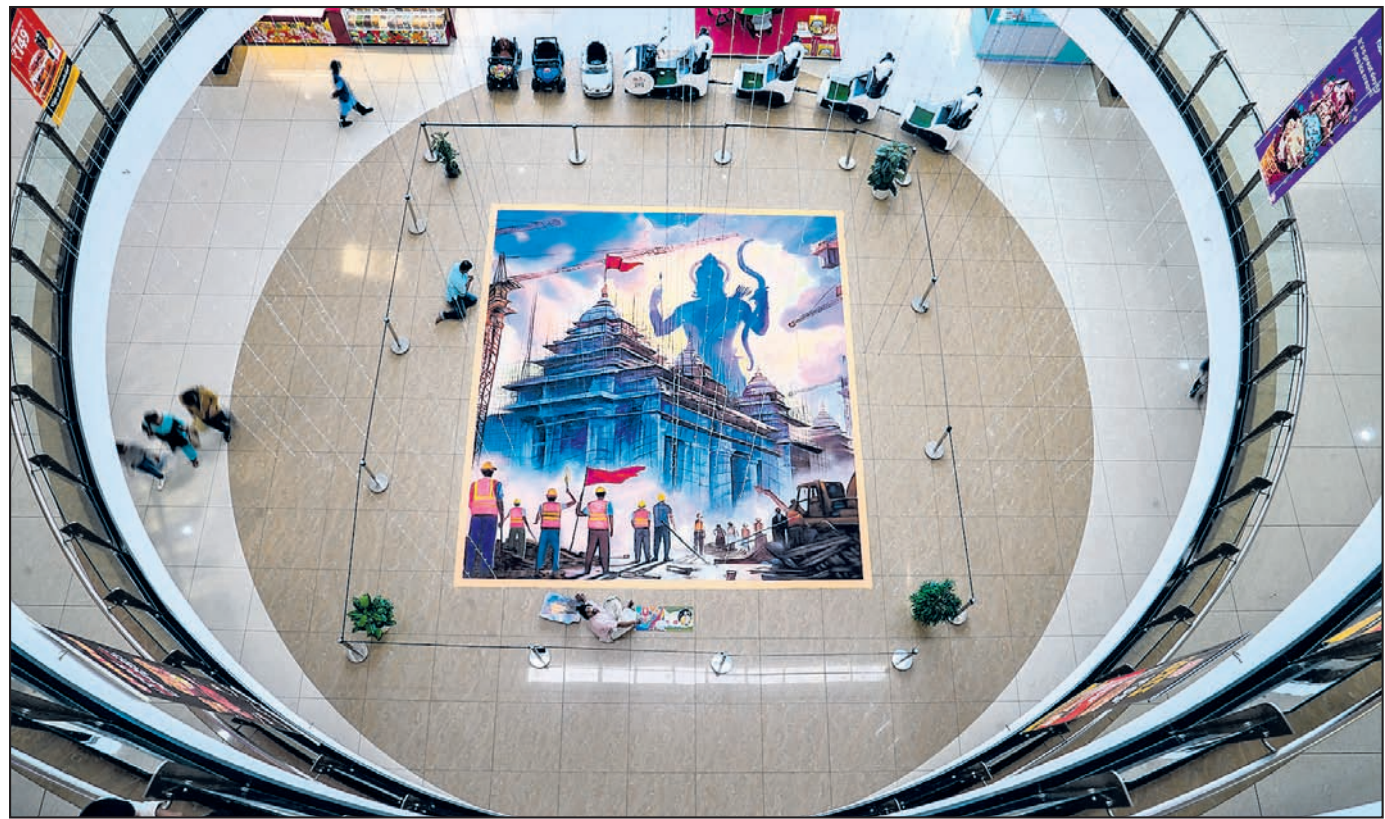
A migrant carries a girl as he walks in a caravan as an attempt to reach the US border, in Oaxaca state, Mexico

REUTERS



Visitors pose for a picture at a booth during FarmFest 2024 at Fa Hui Park, Mong Kok. FarmFest is the largest outdoor farmers' market in Hong Kong

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST



A large rangoli designed on the theme of Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Temple in Ayodhya, created by artist Akshay, at a mall in Bangalore, Karnataka

AP/PTI



Nomadic shepherds from Rajasthan with their herd during a winter day, on the outskirts of Gurugram, Haryana

PTI



Hikers take pictures at Lau Shui Heung Reservoir in Hong Kong. Located in Pat Sin Leng Country Park, the reservoir is colloquially called the "mirror of the sky" for its deep, reflective waters

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST



Tugboats pull a newly completed BYD's Ro-Ro Explorer No.1, a vehicles carrier vessel off the shipyard during the delivery in Yantai in east China's Shandong province. China's auto exports surged 63.7% in 2023 while sales at home, boosted by year-end incentives, rose 4.2%, an industry association said

AP/PTI

national

of the day quote

When slogans were raised at JNU, where was Congress then? The next day, Rahul Gandhi went to JNU and stood by the students, and said there would be no FIR. Are they not trying to break India?

J P NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

I am going to Ayodhya January 15. Our general secretary and UP in-charge Avinash Pande and senior leaders Pramod Tiwari and P L Punia will also visit Ayodhya. In all, around 100 Congressmen will go there

AJAY RAI | UP CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Modi and the Sangh Parivar have turned a religious programme into a party programme. This installation should have transcended the limits of religion, caste and creed and included all. Thereby they had insulted Shri Ram and 140 crore people

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

SHORT TAKES

Suspected Kuki militants kill four

Imphal: Suspected Kuki militants killed four villagers, including a father and his son, in Manipur's Churachandpur district, police said Thursday. A police official in Imphal said that the four villagers from Akasoi village in Bishnupur district who went to nearby forested areas of Churachandpur district Wednesday to collect firewood, were first kidnapped by the militants and then killed.

Tremors in Delhi, parts of north India

New Delhi: An earthquake of magnitude 6.1 struck Afghanistan Thursday with tremors rippling through parts of north India, the National Centre for Seismology said. The epicentre for the quake, which struck at 2.50 pm IST, was 241 kilometres north northeast of Kabul, it said. The quake triggered panic among people, with many in Delhi and the National Capital Region reporting shaking of furniture.

SC extends Malik's bail by six months

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday extended by six months the interim bail of former Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik in a money laundering case. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal extended the medical bail granted to Malik after Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Enforcement Directorate, said the probe agency has no objection to it. Last year October 12, the top court extended by three months the interim bail of Malik in the case. Malik had moved the top court against the Bombay High Court's July 13, 2023, order denying him bail on medical grounds in the case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

UP to have 5 more airports: Scindia

New Delhi/ Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh will have five more airports in the next one month that will take the total number of airports in the state to 19, Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said Thursday as he flagged off direct flight from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad. The Maharishi Valmiki International Airport in Ayodhya was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi December 30. Scindia said that 5 new airports will be inaugurated in UP in one month.



If the framers of the Indian Constitution did not mention the concept of 'One Nation, One Election', how have you arrived at the concept of 'One Nation, One Election'? Unless this basic enigma is sorted, it is difficult to arrive at any firm view on the catchy phrase

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

FAROOQ ABDULLAH SKIPS ED APPEARANCE

National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah did not appear before the Enforcement Directorate Thursday for questioning in a money laundering case, official sources said. The 86-year-old politician was called by the central agency at its Srinagar office in connection with an ED investigation into alleged irregularities in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA)



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panchayat-level weather forecast from next week, says IMD chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: In a significant expansion of its coverage, the India Meteorological Department will provide panchayat-level weather forecast from next week, particularly to help small farmers plan farming better and cut down climate-induced losses, its chief Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said Thursday.

The weather office will also launch the 'Har Har Mausam, Har Ghar Mausam' initiative and the National Framework for Climate Services Monday when it kicks off year-long celebrations to mark its 150th anniversary.

India's technological prowess has made it possible for the IMD to take its forecasting capability from the block to panchayat level, Mohapatra told PTI in an interview.

The aim is to connect with at least five farmers in every village across the country through the "Panchayat Mausam Seva" and provide them with all weather parameters such as maximum and minimum temperatures, humidity and wind speed, in addition to severe weather warnings.

This information will be available in 12 Indian languages, besides English and Hindi, he said. "The IMD is currently helping disseminate agriculture-related weather observations and forecasts at the block level. Now, we are moving a step further and reaching the panchayat level," Mohapatra said.

'Situation in Rajouri-Poonch matter of concern'

IT IS LEARNT THAT THE TERRORISTS OPERATING IN THE RAJOURI-POONCH AREA ARE VERY WELL-TRAINED IN CARRYING OUT TERROR ATTACKS AND AMBUSHES

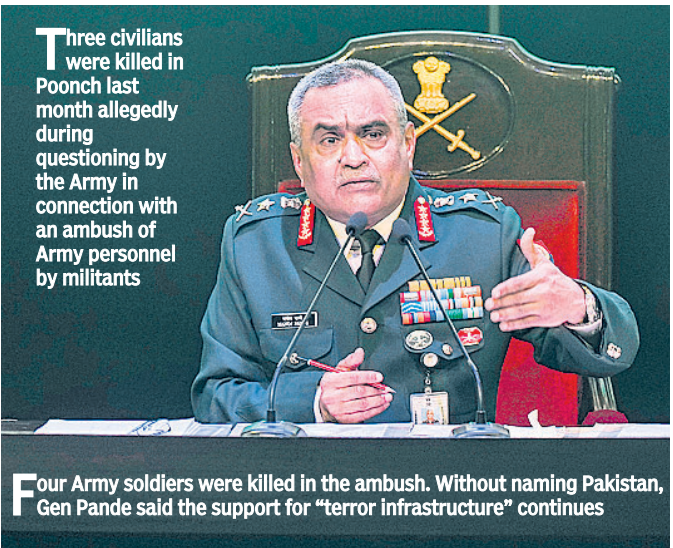
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: The situation in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri-Poonch region is a matter of "concern" and enhancing deployment of troops, boosting intelligence apparatus and reaching out to local people are part of measures being initiated to contain terrorist activities in the area, Chief of Army Staff Gen Manoj Pande said Thursday.

At a press conference, he also said he has conveyed an unambiguous message to the soldiers and commanders that there will be "zero tolerance" to human rights violations and they must operate in a professional manner.

Three civilians were killed in Poonch last month allegedly during questioning by the Army in connection with an ambush of Army personnel by militants. Four Army soldiers were killed in the ambush.

Without naming Pakistan, Gen Pande said the support for "terror infrastructure" continues. "The situation in Poonch-Rajouri has been an issue of concern to us," Gen Pande said.



Three civilians were killed in Poonch last month allegedly during questioning by the Army in connection with an ambush of Army personnel by militants

Four Army soldiers were killed in the ambush. Without naming Pakistan, Gen Pande said the support for "terror infrastructure" continues

It is learnt that the terrorists operating in the Rajouri-Poonch area are very well-trained in carrying out terror attacks and ambushes.

"Our counter-terror operation in those areas will continue in a relentless fashion so that normalcy returns to the area at the earliest," the Army Chief said. Asked about very well-trained terrorists carrying out the attacks, he said the Army is drawing "tactical lessons" from the adversary's modus operandi.

The Army Chief said his force is focusing on strengthening the human intelligence which includes synergising the Army's efforts with other agencies, adding having support of the locals is also "extremely crucial" in anti-terror operations.

"We have already taken follow up action," he said. The Chief of Army Staff said the Army is also looking at strength-

ening the ability to use technology to gather intelligence.

"We have enhanced our deployment and also reoriented some of the units," he said. At the same time he said the troops have been told to operate professionally. "My guidance to soldiers and commanders is unambiguous - in terms of respect for human rights, there will be zero tolerance for any actions on that account," he said.

"We have clearly laid out guidelines spelling out what you (Army personnel) must do and what you must not do in those areas and for the soldiers to be able to (operate) in a professional manner," Gen Pande said.

The Army Chief said there has been an increase in terrorist activities in Rajouri-Poonch region in the last five-six months.

"In the last five to six months, in Rajouri and Poonch, there has been an increase in terrorism. Terrorism in that area was

eradicated in 2003 and peace was there till 2017-18," he said.

"Because of the situation in the valley getting normal, this is one area, our adversaries have been active in, in terms of abetting terrorism, encouraging proxy tanzems in operating in this area," he said.

The Army Chief said 45 terrorists were killed in Jammu and Kashmir in the last three years.

In an oblique reference to the death of three civilians in Poonch, Gen Pande said the "affected village" has already been adopted by the Army.

"I visited the area following the incident. We engaged with the local community," he said.

The Chief of Army Staff said the ceasefire understanding with the Pakistan military along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir is holding though there have been continuous infiltration attempts. "which we have been able to successfully thwart through a robust counter-infiltration grid."

"In the IB (international border) sector; attempts to smuggle in narcotics, war-like stores through the means of drones continues. But we have an effective anti-drone system in place," he added.

In the hinterland of Jammu and Kashmir, Gen Pande said there was an overall drop in violence levels in 2023.

"However the area of Rajouri and Poonch did witness increased terrorist activities. The proxy tanzims operating in these areas continue to get support from across (the border). The support infrastructure for terrorist continues," he said in a statement.

Narrow escape for PDP chief Mehbooba



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Jan 11: Two persons, including a security personnel of PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, were injured Thursday as she had a narrow escape in a road accident at Sangam in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district, officials said.

The vehicle of the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister collided with a civilian car at Sangam, a police official said. Mufti, who was on her way to Khanabal to meet the victims of a fire incident, did not suffer any injuries. However, her driver and a member of her personal security sustained minor injuries, the official said.

Mufti's vehicle was badly damaged in the accident, but she went ahead with her scheduled visit in another car. A spokesperson of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) said Mufti was safe and did not suffer any injuries. Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti, who is also the media advisor to the PDP president, confirmed that her mother is safe.

"Ms Mufti's car met with a terrible accident enroute Anantnag today. Thanks to the grace of god she and her security officers escaped unhurt without any serious injuries," Iltija Mufti posted on X. National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah, while expressing relief that Mufti is safe, called for an inquiry to ascertain the cause of the accident.

Indore named 'cleanest' city for 7th time



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: Indore bagged the cleanest city of India title for the seventh time in a row while Surat came out a joint winner for the top rank in the Central government's annual cleanliness survey, the results of which were announced Thursday.

Navi Mumbai retained the third position in the 'Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023'. In the 'best-performing states' category, Maharashtra was named the cleanest state in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In the last annual survey, Madhya Pradesh bagged the cleanest state title. Three cities of West Bengal - Madhyamgram (444th rank), Kalyani (445th rank) and Haora (446th rank) - occupied the bottom rankings. Among the bottom three in the state category includes Rajasthan, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. According to the survey results, Maharashtra's Sasvad got the cleanest city award among 3,970 cities with less than one lakh population. Chhattisgarh's Patan and Lonavala in Maharashtra got the second and third positions respectively while Nagaland's Pungro city is ranked the

last in this category. Varanasi is the cleanest 'Ganga town', followed by Prayagraj, Bijnor, Haridwar, Kannauj, Patna, Rishikesh, Kanpur, Rajmahal and Sahanganj. Among the 88 Ganga towns, Chhapra is ranked the last.

In the category of cleanest cantonment boards, Madhya Pradesh's Mhow topped the chart while Deolali in Nashik and Ahmedabad were on other two spots.

President Droupadi Murmu gave away the awards to the winners at an event held here. Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri attended the event.

According to the data, 4,477 urban local bodies participated in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 and 12 core citizen responses were received. 92,720 municipal wards, 61 cantonment boards, 88 Ganga towns and 18,980 commercial areas participated in the survey. The government claims it to be the world's largest cleanliness survey.

Speaking at the event, Murmu said that the Swachh Survekshan conducted with wide participation is an important step towards raising the level of cleanliness. The President said that about one-third of India's population live in urban areas, adding that cleanliness of cities and towns is essential for their health and development.

Besides Indore and Surat, the list of top 10 cleanest cities with more than one lakh population includes Navi Mumbai, Greater Visakhapatnam, Bhopal, Vijayawada, New Delhi, Tirupati, Greater Hyderabad and Pune.

In the state category, Odisha is ranked fourth, followed by Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Karnataka, Goa, Haryana and Bihar.

OFFICE OF THE DEAN & PRINCIPAL
FAKIR MOHAN MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL, BALASORE
 At/PO-Remuna, Dist.- Balasore, Pin- 756019 (Odisha)
 E-mail: dean.fmmchb@gmail.com, Tel 06782 - 224901, Fax: 06782 - 224901
 No: 252 /D/FMCHB Date: 10.01.2024

TENDER CALL NOTICE
 No.E-734:- Sealed tenders are invited from the registered firms for supply of Books & Journals (Medical) for the financial year 2023-24 in two-bid system (Technical & Financial) so as to reach the office of the undersigned within Fifteen days from the date of publication of the advertisement till 5.00 P.M. The detailed tender paper, terms & conditions and list of medical Books and Journals can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of Rs. 2,000/- cash (non-refundable) at the accounts section. The details are also available in the website: www.baleswar.nic.in, www.dmetodisha.gov.in & www.blsmch.nic.in. Those who will download the tender documents from website should enclose a DD for Rs.2,000/- towards cost of tender paper in favour of Dean & Principal, F.M. Medical College & Hospital, Balasore payable at the CANARA BANK, BALASORE. The Books and Journals will be procured subject to availability of funds.
 Bidders applying for Books as well as for Journals should superscribe clearly over them and submit separate envelopes.
 The undersigned reserve the right to cancel of the tender in full or parts at any time without assigning any reason thereof.
 Sd./- Dean & Principal
 Fakir Mohan Medical College & Hospital
 Balasore
 OIPR-10134/11/0018/2324

BHIMA BHOI MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL (BBMCH), BALANGIR, ODISHA

Walk-In Interview for the Post of Junior Resident

Advertisement No. 341 / Dt. 11.01.2024

No. E-739:- Applications are invited from eligible Doctors for engagement in the Post of Junior Resident (JR, MBBS) to serve at BBMCH, Balangir for a period of 1 year which can be extended if required. The Application Form and detail instructions are available in our website www.bbmchbalangir.nic.in. The Walk-in-Interview is scheduled to be held on **20.01.2024 at 10 A.M.** in the Office of Dean & Principal, BBMCH, Balangir (First Floor, College Building).
 Sd./- Dean & Principal, BBMCH, Balangir
 OIPR-10141/11/0026/2324

REGULATED MARKET COMMITTEE, BARGARH

Invitation For Bids (IFB)
 Bid Identification No.04 of 2023-24
 TCN No.174/dated 09.01.2024

No.H-81:1. The ADM, Bargarh-cum-Chairman, RMC, Bargarh invites percentage rate bid in double cover system through ONLINE Mode for the civil works as detailed in the Detailed Tender Call Notice (DTCN) from the eligible class of contractors.

- Nos. of Work : 04 (Four) Nos.
- Cost of Tender Paper : Rs.10,000/-
- Class of Contractor : "A & Special" Class
- Date and Time of : 11.00 Hrs. of 12.01.2024 to available in website 17.00 Hrs. of 29.01.2024 and receipt of Bids:
- Date of Opening of Bid : 30.01.2024 at 11.00 Hrs.
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the State Government portal website : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

Sd./-
ADM Bargarh-cum-Chairman
 R.M.C., Bargarh
 OIPR-07041/11/0011/2324

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, L.I. DIVISION, NAYAGARH
 E-mail - eeolicnayangarh@gmail.com

e-Tender Notice

Bid Identification No.07 /23-24 OLIC (Nayagarh) Dt. 11.01.2024

No. CAD-3675- The Executive Engineer, Lift Irrigation Division, Nayagarh on behalf of Managing Director, Odisha Lift Irrigation Corporation Limited, Bhubaneswar invites Percentage Rate bids in single cover system in online mode on "Turnkey Basis" from reputed Firms/Contractors having H.T. Electrical License issued by ELBO & Civil License of appropriate class having register Joint Venture (Sub-Registrar/Magistrate Court) with the state PWD/Irrigation/PHED relevant license as mentioned.

1. Numbers of Packages	10 Nos.
2. Estimated Cost	Approximately Cost of Packages varies from Rs.14.70 lakh to Rs.24.00 lakh
3. Tender Paper Cost	As per DTCN
4. Date & time of availability of bid in portal	Dt.18.01.2024 from 10.00 hours to Dt.24.01.2024 upto 17.00 hours
5. Date & time of clarification upto	Dt. 22.01.2024 upto 17.00 hours
6. Date & time of opening of bid	Dt. 25.01.2024 at 11.00 hours

The bidders have to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender if any, can be seen in the said website.
 OIPR-32453/11/0012/2324 Sd./- EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.O-2201

O/o THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, CUTTACK
 Email Id: cutackr2nd@yahoo.co.in, Telephone/Fax No.(0671) 2445119

e-Procurement Notice for Building Works
 Bid Identification No.SECTC-II-21 of 2023-24, Dt.10.01.2024

- Number of the Work : 40 (Forty) numbers of Building for the year 2023-2024.
- Estimated Cost (Approx) : Rs.36.00 Lakh to Rs.38.00 Lakh
- Period of Completion : 06 (Six) Calendar Months
- Date & Time of Sale & Receipt of Bid document : From 18.01.2024 at 11.00 AM to: 31.01.2024 at 4.00 PM online
- Date & Time of Opening : 01.02.2024 at 11.30 AM of Bid
- Name and Address of Inviting Officer : Executive Engineer O/o the Superintending Engineer R.W. Division-II, Cuttack Nayabazar, Cuttack- 753004

Further details can be seen from the State Govt. portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>.
 OIPR-25095/11/0022/2324 Sd./- Executive Engineer R.W.Division-II, Cuttack

ODISHA LIFT IRRIGATION CORPORATION LIMITED (A Government of Odisha Undertaking)

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER L.I. DIVISION, ROURKELA
 e-mail ID-eeolicrourkela@gmail.com

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement Identification No.EEOLICRKL-12/2023-24, Dt.08.01.2024

01	Name of Work	Installation & Energisation of Mahulchapal of new LIP in Nuagaon Block of Sundargarh Dist. Under RIDF-XXIX grant.
02	Estimated Cost	Rs.29.28 lakhs.
03	Period of Completion	120 days
04	Date & Time of availability of Bid document in the Portal	From 10.00 Hrs. of 16.01.2024 to 17.00 Hrs. of 22.01.2024
05	Date & Time of opening of Bids	11.00 Hrs. of 24.01.2024
06	Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Executive Engineer, L.I.Division, Rourkela

**NB:- (i) GST @ 18% on tender paper cost may be deposited separately on reverse charges basis and deposited challan should be uploaded along with bid document. (ii) Contractors participate in the e-Tender with Registered Joint Venture at Sub-Register Office/First Class Magistrate/Executive Magistrate. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
 OIPR-32332/11/0005/2324 Sd./- Executive Engineer L.I.Division, Rourkela**

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BOLANGIR
 No.O-2172: **IFB IDENTIFICATION NO. EEBLGR-Online-18/2023-24**
 E-mail ID: eerw_bigr@yahoo.co.in

1. Name of Work	: Road Works
2. Total No. of Works	: 10 (Ten) Nos.
3. Approximate Estimated Cost	: Rs.12.61 Lakh to 42.03 Lakh
4. Time for Completion	: 1 (One) Calendar Month
5. Mode of Submission of Tender	: Tender should be submitted online in www.tendersodisha.gov.in
6. Other details are as follow	: As per TCN No.EEBLGR-Online-18/2023-24

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender
Executive Engineer, R.W.Division, Bolangir	EEBLGR-Online-18/2023-24	16.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	24.01.2024 upto 5.00 PM	25.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

* Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
 * Any Corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the above e tender website only.
 Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W.Division, Bolangir
 OIPR-25068/11/0029/2324

of the day quote

Israel has no intention of maintaining the occupation of Gaza or displacing civilians

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU
ISRAEL PM

We have no dialogue taking place with the TTP nor do we have the intent to hold talks with it which is responsible for several terror incidents in Pakistan

MUMTAZ ZAHRA BALOCH
PAKISTAN FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESPERSON

Holiday gatherings and the globally dominant JN.I variant fuelled the spread of Covid-19 across the world in December

TEODOS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS
HEAD OF WHO

SHORT TAKES

Hasina sworn in

Dhaka: Sheikh Hasina was Thursday sworn in as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the fifth term, days after her Awami League party won an overwhelming majority in the general elections boycotted by the main opposition BNP and its allies. President Mohammad Shahabuddin administered the oath of office to 76-year-old Hasina at a ceremony joined by politicians, foreign diplomats, civil society figures and senior civil and military officials. Following the Prime Minister, the new members of cabinet were sworn in by the President. Hasina's party won 223 seats in the 300-member Parliament.

70 arrested

Istanbul: Turkish police detained 70 suspects with ties to the militant Islamic State group in raids this week across the country, Turkiye's interior minister said Thursday. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced on social media that large amounts of money, digital material and receipts for hawala banking transactions were also discovered in the raids. Hawala is an informal money transfer system that is traditionally used in some parts of the Muslim world. A video accompanying Yerlikaya's post showed vehicles sweeping out of police stations and armed officers in military gear raiding addresses, followed by searches and arrests.

Rajnath's UK visit concludes

London: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh concluded his visit to the UK Thursday after a "warm meeting" with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and interacting with members of the Indian diaspora at a community reception. Singh called on Prime Minister Sunak at 10 Downing Street here Wednesday evening for discussions on a wide range of issues across bilateral defence and economic ties. He also gifted a Ram Darbar statue to Sunak, Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister, during the meeting also attended by UK National Security Adviser (NSA) Sir Tim Barrow.

Local leader of Imran's party killed

Peshawar: A local leader of the jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party was shot dead Thursday in Pakistan's restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, a day after an independent candidate contesting for the February 8 elections was killed in a similar incident. Shah Khalid, a local leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, was shot dead by motorcycle-borne unidentified assailants in the Swabi district of the province, Geo News reported.



The UK government will introduce new legislation to overturn the convictions of hundreds of post office managers who were wrongly convicted of theft and fraud

RISHI SUNAK | UK PM

GOOGLE LAYS OFF HUNDREDS

Google has laid off hundreds of employees working on its hardware, voice assistance and engineering teams as part of cost-cutting measures



Israel faces genocide charges

SOUTH AFRICAN LAWYERS SAID DURING THE OPENING ARGUMENTS THAT THE LATEST GAZA WAR IS PART OF A DECADES-LONG OPPRESSION OF THE PALESTINIANS BY ISRAEL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Hague (Netherlands), Jan 11: A continent away from the war in Gaza, South Africa accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians there and pleaded with the United Nations' top court Thursday to order an immediate halt to the country's military operation. Israel has vehemently denied the allegations.

South African lawyers said during the opening arguments that the latest Gaza war is part of a decades-long oppression of the Palestinians by Israel. The two-day hearing is the public side of a landmark case, one of the most significant to be heard in an international court and which goes to the heart of one of the world's most intractable conflicts.

South Africa is seeking binding preliminary orders to compel Israel to stop its military campaign in Gaza, in which more than 23,000 people have died, according to the health ministry which is run by Hamas. "Genocides are never declared



in advance, but this court has the benefit of the past 13 weeks of evidence that shows incontrovertibly a pattern of conduct and related intention that justifies as a plausible claim of genocidal acts," South African lawyer Adila Hassim told the judges and audience in the packed, ornate room of the Peace Palace in The Hague.

"Nothing will stop the suffering except an order from this court," she said. Israel, however, says it is battling a fierce enemy in the Gaza Strip that carried out the deadliest attack on its territory, killing more than 1,200 people, since its creation in 1948. Israel says it is following international law

and does its utmost to avoid harm to civilians. It blames Hamas for the high toll, saying its enemy embeds in residential areas.

South Africa turns a deaf ear to such arguments, insisting Israel committed genocide by design. "The scale of destruction in Gaza, the targeting of family homes and civilians, the war being a war on children, all make clear that genocidal intent is both understood and has been put into practice. The articulated intent is the destruction of Palestinian life," said lawyer Tembeka Ngcukaitobi.

"What state would admit to a genocidal intent? Yet the dis-

tinctive feature of this case has not been the silence as such, but the reiteration and repetition of genocidal speech throughout every sphere of the state in Israel," he said.

Ahead of the proceedings, hundreds of pro-Israeli protesters marched close to the courthouse with banners saying "Bring them home," referring to the hostages held by Hamas since it attacked Israel on October 7.

One of the Israeli protesters outside the court was Michael Nevy, 42, whose brother was kidnapped by Hamas. "People are talking about what Israel is doing, but Hamas is committing crime against humanity every day," he said.

At a separate demonstration nearby, pro-Palestinians protesters waved flags saying: "End Israeli Apartheid Free Palestine" and chanting "Netanyahu criminal" and "Ceasefire now!"

The dispute strikes at the heart of Israel's national identity as a Jewish state created in the aftermath of the Nazi genocide in the Holocaust, during which 6 million Jews were murdered.

Iran seizes tanker involved in dispute



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Jan 11: Iran's navy seized an oil tanker Thursday in the Gulf of Oman that once was at the centre of a major crisis between Tehran and Washington, officials said, a seizure that further escalates tensions in the Mideast waterways.

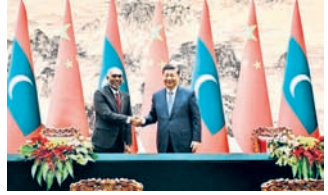
The vessel was once known as the Suez Rajan and had been involved in a yearlong dispute that ultimately saw the US Justice Department seize 1 million barrels of Iranian crude oil on it.

The seizure also comes after weeks of attacks by Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels on shipping in the Red Sea, including their largest barrage ever of drones and missiles launched late Tuesday. That has raised the risk of possible retaliatory strikes by US-led forces now patrolling the vital waterway, especially after a United Nations Security Council vote on Wednesday condemning the Houthis and as American and British officials warned of potential consequences over the attacks.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the seizure in a brief report late Thursday afternoon, hours after armed men boarded it. IRNA said the seizure came as the result of a court order, without elaborating.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, said Thursday's seizure began early in the morning, in the waters between Oman and Iran in an area transited by ships coming in and out of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes.

China opposes external influence in Maldives



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 11: China Thursday said that it "firmly opposes external interference" in the internal affairs of the Maldives and supports the island nation in upholding its sovereignty and independence as Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu concluded his maiden visit here amid a diplomatic row with India.

"The two sides agree to continue firmly supporting each other in safeguarding their respective core interests," said a joint statement issued at the end of Muizzu's talks with the top Chinese leaders.

"China firmly supports the Maldives in upholding its national sovereignty, independence and national dignity, respects and supports the Maldives' exploration of a development path that suits its national conditions, and firmly opposes external interference in the internal affairs of the Maldives," it said, without referring to any country.

The statement comes at a time when Maldives headed by Muizzu, who is regarded as a pro-China leader, was involved in a diplomatic row with India

"The two sides agree to continue firmly supporting each other in safeguarding their respective core interests," said a joint statement issued at the end of Muizzu's talks with the top Chinese leaders

According to the joint statement, Muizzu agreed to back Xi's doctrines, Global Security Initiative (GSI), which advocates for joint security, besides Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

over derogatory statements made by three Maldivian ministers against Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading to a spate of cancellation of reservations of Indian tourists to Maldives.

Muizzu suspended the ministers with a warning not to make such remarks. His visit to China is also marred by the release of a report by the EU Election Observation Mission of Maldives that said the ruling coalition of Progressive Party of Maldives and the People's National Congress deployed anti-India sentiments and attempted to spread disinformation in the 2023 presidential polls in which Muizzu won.

According to the joint statement, Muizzu agreed to back Xi's doctrines, Global Security Initiative (GSI), which advocates for joint security, besides Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).



Turkey's Defence Minister Yasar Guler, centre, Romania's Defence Minister Angel Tilva, left, and Bulgaria's Deputy Defence Minister Atanas Zapryanov pose for the media after signing the "Mine counter-measures task group Black Sea" (MCM BSG) joint agreement in Istanbul, Turkey, Thursday. Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania Thursday signed an agreement to jointly tackle rogue sea mines that have threatened Black Sea shipping since the start of the Ukraine war

Papua New Guinea declares state of emergency

REUTERS

Sydney, Jan 11: Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister declared a state of emergency Thursday, suspending government and police officials after 16 people were killed in rioting in the Pacific island nation.

A police and public sector protest Wednesday over a pay cut that officials blamed on an administrative glitch descended into lawlessness. Television

footage showed thousands of people in the streets of the capital Port Moresby, many of them carrying what appeared to be looted merchandise as black smoke billowed over the city.

Nine people were killed in the rioting in Port Moresby and seven were killed in Lae, in the north of the gold and copper-mining country, Australian state broadcaster ABC reported Thursday, citing police. Prime Minister James Marape



told a press conference he had suspended Papua New Guinea's chief of police and top bureaucrats in the finance and treasury

departments while the government conducts a review into the cause of the riots. "There was evidence of organised rioting that took place," he told reporters, adding that the review would ensure "we secure democracy, we secure rule of law."

Some 1,000 military personnel were on standby to ward off further unrest, he said. Violence in the capital subsided Thursday, with the government flying in extra police to maintain order.

How Taiwan is preparing for China invasion

Millions of people offline, banks knocked out and the world's most advanced semiconductor industry paralysed -- Taiwan's doomsday scenario includes not just invading Chinese troops but also a wave of attacks against its cyber infrastructure.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its territory, and the island's security planners run simulated worst-case scenarios constantly to prepare for the day Beijing decides to try and take over.

If China does invade, Taiwanese officials and cybersecurity experts say it will not limit its assaults to security forces and defence infrastructure, but effectively disconnect the island from the world.

Taiwan is facing a persistent threat from stealthy attackers who gain access to computer networks to "sit and wait within the victim's infrastructure," said Crystal Tu, a cybersecurity researcher at Taiwan's Institute of National Defense and Security Research.

They can be highly active during a time of conflict, Tu said, such as a "cyber operation aimed at the disruption of critical infrastructure -- including telecommunications, energy and finance sectors".

Cyberattacks against Taiwan have ramped up dramatically in the year leading up to the presidential election on Saturday, which China has described as a choice between war and peace for the island's 23 million people.

Taiwanese authorities have said government agencies face an estimated five million cyberattacks a day. And the cybersecurity firm Fortinet reported an 80 percent increase in cyber attacks in the first half of 2023 -- ranking Taiwan number one in Asia Pacific. "The cyber operation toward Taiwan never really stops," said Tu.

Some tactics used against Taiwanese infrastructure have been identified as techniques used by Chinese state-sponsored groups. Last year, Microsoft flagged the threat from a group



named Flax Typhoon that operates out of China and targets Taiwan. The US tech giant said Flax Typhoon "intends to perform espionage and maintain access" to various Taiwanese organisations for as long as possible.

Semiconductor hub

Cyberattackers have not only targeted Taiwan's government and defence organisations, but also hit its semiconductor in-

dustry. Taiwanese companies are crucial to the supply of chips, the lifeblood of the global economy.

Such is their importance that one former US official said last year that the United States would rather destroy this semiconductor infrastructure than let it fall to invading Chinese forces. Last year, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), which con-

trols more than half of the world's chip output, reported a data breach at one of its suppliers.

"Taiwan is an important target because it is at the top of the critical high-tech supply chain," said Fortinet's Jim Liu. "Geopolitics and (China-Taiwan) relations could inevitably increase cybersecurity incidents."

China has increased diplomatic and military pressure on the island since 2016, when Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party became Taiwan's president. She considers Taiwan an independent state and does not accept China's claim on the island -- views shared by Lai Ching-te, the DPP's presidential candidate.

Worst-case scenario

China's increasing aggression towards Taiwan, including simulated blockades of the island, has fuelled speculation among policymakers about Beijing's potential timeline -- and methods -- for an invasion. In the digital

realm, Taiwanese officials say China could go beyond cyberattacks and effectively cut off the island from the rest of the world.

"Because Taiwan is an island, all communication with the outside world relies on undersea cables," Taiwan's deputy digital minister Huai-jeen Lee said in a recent interview. "The worst-case scenario is all our undersea cables are cut off."

To prepare for that, Taiwan is looking to the sky. Deputy Digital Minister Lee said that Taiwan is working with two foreign satellite service providers to collaborate with the island's largest telecom company.

Satellite receivers will be placed in 700 spots across Taiwan "to test whether we can switch communication systems" during times of crisis, he said. "The first thing... is to maintain the stability of the government's command system and maintain the accuracy of the information provided" to civilians, he said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

of the day quote

India has a funding gap of \$10.1 trillion to meet its net zero commitment which has to be fulfilled by 2070 and GIFT City could help in bridging that gap

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

UPI has already become a digital public infrastructure. In fact it has to grow even further. I would say this is the best payments system in the world as of now and I wish it becomes the world leader in it

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

While more than 100 Indian institutions provide a semiconductor design curriculum, hardly any focus on semiconductor manufacturing and process technology. A significant global demand exists for manufacturing engineers and technicians

SAIJAY MEHROTRA | PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, MICRON TECHNOLOGY

RESULTS CORNER

TCS net rises 8.2%

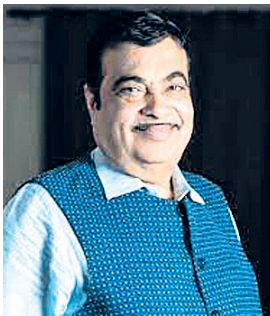
Mumbai: The country's largest software exporter Thursday reported an 8.2 per cent growth in net profit for the December quarter at Rs 11,735 crore. The company said its revenue for the reporting quarter grew 4 per cent to Rs 60,583 crore driven by strong double-digit growth in emerging markets, led by India. The topline growth was also led by energy, resources and utilities, manufacturing, and life sciences & healthcare, the company said in a statement. Operating margin improved by 50 bps to 25 per cent, the company said, while net margin stood at 19.4 per cent. The company's order book stood at \$8.1 billion, it said, adding net cash from operations stood at Rs 11,276 crore.

Infosys net drops

New Delhi: The country's second-largest IT services firm Infosys Thursday reported a lower-than-expected 7.3 per cent fall in net profit in the December quarter on sluggish demand from clients and cut its annual sales forecast. The company posted a net profit (attributable to shareholders) of Rs 6,106 crore compared to Rs 6,586 crore in the year-ago period, Infosys said in a regulatory filing. The company's consolidated revenue from operations increased 1.3 per cent to Rs 38,821 crore during the third quarter of the ongoing fiscal from Rs 38,318 crore a year ago. Infosys bagged deals worth \$3.2 billion, including a mega deal during the quarter, which included 71 per cent net new wins.

Tata Starbucks dips

New Delhi: Tata Starbucks has reported a net loss of Rs 24.97 crore from its operations in India for the financial year ended March 31, 2023, according to financial data accessed through business intelligence platform Tofler. However, its revenue from operations was at Rs 1,086.89 crore for the period, up 70 per cent helped by the addition of more cafes and expansion of the network in more cities in India. In India, Starbucks cafes are operated by Tata Starbucks Pvt Ltd. It is a 50:50 Joint Venture between Tata Consumer Product Ltd (TCPL) and Emerald City CV, a wholly-owned entity of Starbucks Corporation, USA. Tata Starbucks had reported a net loss of Rs 94.84 crore in FY22 and its revenue from operations was at Rs 636.11 crore.



We are looking at the auto sector to become Rs 25 lakh crore industry. We have to become the number one. Our mission, our target is to make the Indian automobile industry in the world the number one manufacturing hub

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

MSI PLANS EV EXPORTS SOON

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) plans to start exporting Electric Vehicles (EVs) from India this year after launching them in the country, a senior company official said Thursday. The company also expects to export lithium-ion battery cells and modules worth around Rs 750 crore this fiscal



Crypto poses risks to EMs

RBI will not emulate others on cryptocurrency regulations, stand remains unchanged

REUTERS

Mumbai, Jan 11: Cryptocurrencies can pose significant risks to emerging markets, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) chief said Thursday, cautioning that the central bank's stand on the issue remains unchanged despite wider acceptance in other countries.

"Our position, my position and the RBI's position on this (cryptocurrencies) remains unchanged irrespective of who does what," Shaktikanta Das said in response to a question about the US securities regulator approving the first US-listed exchange traded funds to track bitcoin, a move that could bolster the world's largest cryptocurrency and the broader crypto industry.

"For emerging market economies and for advanced economies also, travelling down that path will create huge risks which will be very difficult to contain going forward," Das added. He also said that emerging markets (EMs) and the world cannot afford to have a "crypto mania".

Cryptocurrencies have no underlying value and pose risks for macroeconomic and financial stability, the central bank chief has repeatedly said.

The remarks were in the con-



We are all familiar with the Tulip mania in the Netherlands that had led to an asset bubble in the past. I don't think emerging markets and the world can afford a crypto mania that could lead to similar outcomes

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

But I would like to say that they themselves have flagged risks in the product and advised people to be very careful," he added.

INDIA'S E-RUPEE

RBI Governor Das highlighted the benefits of the central bank digital currencies, or e-rupee in India's case, and said the central bank is working on "programmability" of the e-rupee to enable cash transfers, such as targeted transfers to farmers.

The central bank also plans to start pilots for using the e-rupee in new segments in the wholesale space, he added.

In December, Indian banks disbursed some employee benefits through the digital rupee, helping the RBI meet its target of one million daily transactions by end-2023, three sources

GAME-CHANGER FOR CRYPTO MKT

The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Wednesday approved exchange-traded funds (ETFs) that track the price of bitcoin in a game-changer for the cryptocurrency industry which has been trying for more than a decade to launch such a product. For the crypto industry, a spot bitcoin ETF is a big win, boosting the legitimacy of the cryptocurrency industry and pushing bitcoin further into the mainstream. It also comes amid a broader tug-of-war between the crypto industry and SEC, which has been cracking down on the sector. When it comes to this particular battle, the industry can claim victory.

directly familiar with the development said last week.

The RBI and the National Payments Council of India are in talks with several countries for adoption of India's payments system Unified Payments Interface for cross-board transactions, the governor said Thursday.

Das also said the central bank is closely looking at model-based artificial intelligence lending by financial entities.

81% OF BUDGET TARGET Tax mop-up grows 19% to ₹14.70L-cr

Govt has budgeted to collect ₹18.23L-cr from direct taxes, 9.75% higher than ₹16.61L-cr mopped up last fiscal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: The net direct tax collection so far this fiscal rose 19.41 per cent to Rs 14.70 lakh crore, reaching about 81 per cent of the full-year target, the income tax department said Thursday.

The government has budgeted to collect Rs 18.23 lakh crore from direct taxes (personal income tax and corporate tax), 9.75 per cent higher than Rs 16.61 lakh crore mopped up last fiscal.

Direct Tax collection, net of refunds, stands at Rs 14.70 lakh crore which is 19.41 per cent higher than the net collection for the corresponding period of last year. This collection is 80.61 per cent of the total Budget Estimates of Direct Taxes for FY 2023-24, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said.

Refunds amounting to Rs 2.48



lakh crore have been issued during April 1, 2023 to January 10, 2024. On a gross basis, direct tax collection up to January 10, 2024 registered steady growth.

The gross collections are at Rs 17.18 lakh crore, 16.77 per cent higher than the gross collection for the corresponding period of last year.

The growth rate in gross Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and Personal Income Tax (PIT) is 8.32 per cent and 26.11 per cent respectively.

After adjustment of refunds, the net growth in CIT collections is 12.37 per cent and that in PIT collections is 27.26 per cent.

Commenting on the numbers, Deloitte India Partner Rohinton Sidhwa said it is the strongest indication that the economy is growing and measures to identify and increase reporting are yielding gains.

India's 1st integrated solar manufacturing plant unveiled in TN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: US-based First Solar said it has invested \$700 million in setting up India's first integrated solar manufacturing plant in Tamil Nadu that was inaugurated Thursday.

The facility, which has an annual capacity of 3.3 gigawatts (GW), is located in Tamil Nadu. It will produce the 'company's series 7' Photovoltaic (PV) solar modules for the Indian market.

The facility has provided a direct employment opportunity to around 1,000 people, according to a statement.

Tamil Nadu's Minister for Industries, Promotions and Commerce TRB Rajaa was the chief guest at the plant's inaugural ceremony that was also attended by the United States Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti and Chief Executive Officer of the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) Scott Nathan.

The factory sets a high bar for sustainability and advanced manufacturing and has created high-value jobs in the state.

Interim budget may peg FY25 fiscal deficit at 5.3%, says ICRA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 11: Rating agency ICRA expects the government to peg the fiscal deficit target at 5.3 per cent of GDP and keep disinvestment proceeds estimates to below Rs 50,000 crore in the interim budget for 2024-25.

The fiscal deficit, which is the indication of government borrowing to bridge the gap between total revenue and expenditure, is estimated at 6 per cent of GDP in the current financial year; a tad higher than 5.9 per cent projected in the Budget presented in February, last year.

However, the direct tax and Central GST collections are expected to exceed the Budget estimates for 2023-24 by Rs 1 lakh crore and Rs 10,000 crore, respectively, said 'ICRA's Interim Budget 2024-25 Expectations' report Thursday.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the interim budget February 1 in the Lok Sabha.

ICRA said it is expecting the



DISINVESTMENT MOP-UP BELOW ₹50,000 CRORE

Centre's capex to undershoot the Budget Estimate of Rs 10 lakh crore by Rs 75,000 crore, implying a robust year-on-year growth of 26 per cent.

This growth rate is, however, lower than the required growth as per Budget estimates of 35.9 per cent over last fiscal.

The capex has averaged at Rs 73,200 crore/month, lower than the required monthly average of Rs 83,400 crore to meet the budgeted target of Rs 10 lakh crore.

ICRA apprehends that the mo-

mentum of capex and execution of projects may slow down in early 2024 prior to the general elections, resulting in the FY24 capex target being missed.

On the disinvestment target, ICRA said given the uncertainties involved in market transactions, it will be prudent to set a moderate target of sub-Rs 50,000 crore for FY25, instead of a higher aim that may disrupt the budget math if there is a large shortfall in such receipts by the end of the fiscal.

In the current fiscal, the government has so far mopped up over Rs 10,000 crore from CPSE disinvestment, substantially below the Rs 51,000 crore estimated for the full fiscal.

The report further said the fiscal deficit in 2023-24 may not overshoot the budget estimates of Rs 17.9 lakh crore in absolute terms but as a percentage of GDP it will be a tad higher at 6 per cent because the size of nominal GDP in the fiscal is projected to be lower the budget calculations.

How a poll-packed '24 could swing world markets

REUTERS

London, Jan 11: Countries making up over 60% of the world's economic output and more than half of its population hold elections this year.

Markets face a ballot box bombshell, financial services group Morningstar says, adding prior experience of this kind of event risk shows big changes can cause sell-offs.

Here's a look at the elections that matter for markets, in roughly chronological order for the coming year.

TAIWAN

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is competing mainly with the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) for the presidency and legislature. A DPP win would be the third consecutive victory for a party China calls separatist, potentially fuelling Beijing's determination to control Taiwan. The KMT traditionally favours closer ties with China but denies being pro-Beijing.

Market risks

Taiwan is the main flashpoint in US-China tensions. Investors, fearing sharpened trade tariffs, have slashed China allocations.

A full-blown Chinese invasion of Taiwan, while seen as un-

likely in 2024, would be a potentially catastrophic risk to global markets, including potentially halting advanced chip-making and wiping \$1 trillion off annual global economic output, US officials said.

An unofficial maritime line of control separates China and Taiwan. China does not recognise the line, but neither side's aircraft nor battleships normally cross it.

EUROPE

November's shock win for Geert Wilders's Freedom Party in the Netherlands galvanized the Eurosceptic far-right. Its namesake leads Austria's polls. Portugal's Chega party's vote may double, though left parties lead there. Crucially, far-right parties eye gains in the European Union's legislature, vowing to toughen migration policy and soften green reforms.

Market risks

Italian stocks and bonds, Europe's top 2023 performers, may suffer if gains for eurosceptic parties are seen as weakening the commitment to European integration.

The EU raising joint debt to back the post-pandemic recovery has helped reduce the perceived riskiness of Italian debt.

With the EU parliament heav-



ily involved in legislation and electing the next head of the bloc's executive, watch the read-out on further support for Ukraine and climate policy.

RUSSIA

Vladimir Putin, who was handed the presidency by Boris Yeltsin on the last day of 1999, is certain to win another six years in power. Polling shows Putin enjoys approval ratings of above 80% in Russia. Opposition politicians say the election is a carefully stage-managed imitation of democracy.

Key market risk

In the campaign, Putin may reveal more of his thinking about

the war in Ukraine. Putin has warned the West any attempts to meddle in the election will be considered an act of aggression.

Western governments such as the United States and Japan are considering seizing Russian assets such as cash and government bonds held by its central bank overseas. Russia has said it will retaliate if that happens.

Russia's economy has been boosted by massive increases in defence spending on the war, though stubborn inflation fanned by a sharp rouble depreciation has forced interest rates higher.

INDIA

Narendra Modi is expected to

win a third term as prime minister leading the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in national elections. Investors turned cash out of China have turned to India.

Key market risk

Persistent inflation could hurt the BJP. Modi would need to form a coalition if it doesn't win an outright majority. Key commodity exporter India has roiled markets by restricting rice, wheat and sugar exports. A shift back to fiscal populism risks pushing up India's fiscal deficit which would need funding from potentially record high domestic market borrowing.

UNITED STATES

Donald Trump is predicted to win the Republican nomination in primaries in the coming months, setting the stage for a tight battle with Democrat incumbent Joe Biden - a rerun of the 2020 election that ended with a pro-Trump mob storming Congress in an attempt to block certification of Biden's victory.

Market risks

Markets shrugged off the violence that followed the election four years ago. But given the heated rhetoric on both sides this time around, a Trump-Biden rematch could still worry investors

over the risk of social unrest.

A bitter election could affect consumer sentiment as the world's biggest economy seeks to avert a recession from the lagged effects of aggressive interest rate rises.

The dollar could swing on election probabilities.

Stocks could be hurt by caution over US-China tensions if the parties harness the popularity of trade barriers, with analysts saying higher tariffs would fuel inflation, force up the dollar and hurt the yuan, euro and Mexican peso.

BRITAIN

The opposition Labour party under centre-left candidate Keir Starmer leads the ruling Conservatives in the polls.

Market risks

Pre-election, a stagnant economy and tight fiscal budget mean government bonds could be unsettled by any surprise spending promises. A March 6 budget might well contain new tax cuts.

Labour plans to loosen planning rules, in a risk for housebuilders and make targeted changes to tax rules which could hurt energy companies. It also wants closer relations with the European Union following Brexit, which could boost sterling.

Dube fashions India win



Axar Patel has something to laugh about after dismissing an Afghanistan batter; Shivam Dube raises his bat after completing his half century, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mohali, Jan 11: India's fringe players, led by Shivam Dube, made the opportunity count to set up a six-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first T20I of the three-match series here Thursday.

A lively 68-run partnership off 43 balls between the seasoned Mohammad Nabi (42, 27b, 2x4, 3x6) and youthful Azmatullah Omarzai (29) lifted Afghanistan to 158/5 after India dominated the powerplay.

The total posted was not enough in good batting conditions as India got home comfortably in 17.3 overs. Dube (60 n o, 40b, 5x4, 2x6), playing his first T20 since the Asian Games, and Tilak Varma (26) shared a 44-run stand off 29 balls to give Indian innings momentum after losing the openers inside four overs.

Rohit Sharma (0), returning to T20s after 14 months, and

Shubman Gill (23) got involved in an avoidable mix-up that limited the Indian skipper's stay to just two balls. The usually calm and cool Rohit did not hide his anger on this occasion as Gill did not pay heed to his call for a quick single.

Gill was not able to stay for long but Varma and Dube were able to take the innings forward and India did not look back from there on. Dube, who is seen as a back up to injury prone Hardik Pandya, ended the game in style with a straight six and four in the fine leg region. Jitesh Sharma (31, 20b, 5x4) also gave a good account of himself before Rinku Singh (16 n o) joined Dube in the middle and took the team home.

Earlier, a stroke-filled partnership between Nabi and Omarzai was just what Afghanistan needed after India reduced the visitors to 57/3 in 10 overs amid chilly conditions at the PCA Stadium.

Openers Rahamanullah Gurbaz (23) and skipper Ibrahim Zadran (25) could only find four boundaries in the powerplay. The start of the game was delayed by a few minutes as a flickering blue light around the sight-screen distracted Gurbaz.

Axar Patel, who ended up as the stand out bowler for India with figures of 2/23, had Gurbaz stumped with a fast and straight delivery after the opener slog swept him for a six.

Zadran was the next to depart as he smashed an innocuous ball from Dube straight to Rohit at cover. It was only the second ball of his opening spell. Rahmat Shah, making his T20 debut after playing 106 ODIs for Afghanistan, chopped on to stumps a flatter one from Axar.

Afghanistan badly needed a move on and that came via the experience of Nabi and Omarzai, who had impressed with his all-round abilities in the ODI World Cup in India. Omarzai and Nabi

showed their teammates how to build a T20 innings. Both targeted Ravi Bishnoi and Mukesh Kumar in the middle overs.

Nabi's back-to-back sixes off Mukesh stood out in his quick-fire knock. He first made room to smash him over extra cover and waited still for the second ball to over mid-wicket.

Najibullah Zadran (19 n o) and Karim Janat (9 n o) took the total past 150. India dropped three catches in the biting cold of Mohali. Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal was unavailable for selection due to a sore right groin.

BRIEF SCORES

Afghanistan 158/5 (Mohammad Nabi 42, Azmatullah Omarzai 29, Ibrahim Zadran 25, Rahmanullah Gurbaz 23; Axar Patel 2/23, Mukesh Kumar 2/33, Shivam Dube 1/9) lost to India 159/4 (Shivam Dube 60 n o, Jitesh Sharma 31, Tilak Varma 26, Shubman Gill 23; Mujeeb Ur Rahman 2/21) by 6 wickets.



Juggernauts go down fighting

GUJARAT GIANTS EDGE PAST DEFENDING CHAMPIONS, TO FACE CHENNAI QUICK GUNS FOR ULTIMATE KHO KHO SEASON 2 TITLE



Players in action during the match; (inset) Gujarat Giants players celebrate their win

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Cuttack, Jan 11: Gujarat Giants marched into the final of Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2, overcoming defending champions Odisha Juggernauts 29-27 in the first semifinal at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here, Thursday.

Gujarat Giants will lock horns with Chennai Quick Guns, who defeated Telugu Yoddhas 31-29 in the second semifinal, in the final Saturday.

Gujarat Giants dominated the first innings as their opponents seemingly switched off. Odisha Juggernauts put in an improved show in the second half, but the nine-point advantage they conceded in the first proved too much to overcome. Suyash Gargate and Sanket Kadam were the pick of the attackers for Gujarat Giants with six points each.

Odisha Juggernauts made a nightmare start to the match. They not only lost their review for the first innings within a matter of minutes but conceded five dream run points to the first Gujarat Giants batch of Suyash Gargate, Deepak Madhav and Shubham Thorat. With one member of the next batch staying unconquered, Odisha Juggernauts led 10-5 after the first turn.

Giants attackers were rampant, not letting their opponents have a single dream run point. At the end of the first innings, their team had a nine-point advantage with the scores standing at 19-10 in their favour.

Odisha Juggernauts, though, came back strongly in Turn 3. They sent back the first two Gujarat Giants batches in just over four minutes. The likes of Dipesh More and Avinash Desai suddenly seemed infused with energy.

That seemed too little too late though as, despite an impressive comeback, Odisha Juggernauts went into the final turn with a slender five-point lead. The Gujarat Giants attackers overcame that with ease in the final turn.

The second semifinal saw Telugu Yoddhas seize an early advantage, but Chennai Quick Guns clawed their way back into the match with an impressive attacking performance in the final turn.

All eyes were on an in-form Ramji Kashyap going into Turn 1, but it was another big name player who grabbed all the attention. It was Telugu Yoddhas skipper Pratik Waikar, who scored a whopping 10 points.

Chennai Quick Guns' first batch — Ramji, Vijay Shinde and

Madan — earned the customary couple of dream run points. But that was all that the Telugu Yoddhas attackers led by Waikar allowed their opponents. At the end of the turn, Telugu Yoddhas had a 14-2 advantage.

Telugu Yoddhas consolidated the advantage in Turn 2 with their first batch of Waikar, Aditya Ganpule and Avdhut Patil staying on the mat for four minutes and seven seconds, and getting three dream run points. The first innings ended with the score at 17-14 in favour of Telugu Yoddhas.

Waikar continued his superb show in Turn 3, taking just four seconds to send back his first victim. The first Chennai Quick Guns batch lasted just two minutes and 11 seconds. That allowed Chennai Quick Guns' prime batch of Ramji, Shinde and Madan to come on the mat. They did their job, spending four minutes and 18 seconds on the mat and earning three dream run points. Telugu Yoddhas held a 29-17 lead going into the final turn.

The Chennai Quick Guns attackers however came to the party in Turn 4, sending back the first two Telugu Yoddhas batches in quick time and levelling the scores. And with Laxman Gawas sending back Avdhut Patil, the Chennai Quick Guns had the points they needed.

Rhythm 16th Indian shooter to fight for 2024 Paris medal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jakarta, Jan 11: Rhythm Sangwan Thursday became the 16th Indian shooter to secure a 2024 Paris quota place with a bronze medal in 25m sports pistol at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers, ensuring India will send its largest-ever shooting contingent to the global showpiece in July-August this year. India's previous largest squad contained 15 shooters at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Jakarta is turning out to be a happy hunting ground with three shooters — Esha Singh, Varun Tomar (both 10m air pistol) and now Rhythm — securing quota slots for the country so far.

The 20-year-old Rhythm, who hails from Haryana and was a part of the team that won the 25m sports pistol gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year along with Esha and Manu Bhaker, shot 28 in the final to settle for bronze.

But her third-position finish was enough to fetch a Paris quota for the country as the two Koreans, Yang Jiin (41) and Kim Yeji (32), who won gold and silver respectively were ineligible for Olympic quota spots.



This is Rhythm's third medal in the ongoing Asian Olympic Qualifiers after she finished third in 10m air pistol Monday with Esha clinching gold. She also won the 10m air pistol mixed team silver with Arjun Singh Cheema Tuesday.

An Olympic quota place had eluded Rhythm on Monday after Pakistan's Kishmala Talat had won the silver in 10m air pistol. But, on Thursday, Rhythm was happy she could get the monkey off her back.

Satwik-Chirag in quarters, Srikanth loses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Jan 11: India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty continued their impressive run to advance to the men's doubles quarterfinals but Kidambi Srikanth failed to cross the second round at Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here Thursday.

World No.2 Satwik and Chirag, who had a stellar run in 2023 with six titles, beat France's World No.36 Lucas Corvee and Roman Labar 21-11, 21-18 to set up a clash with China's World No.32 He Ji Ting and Ren Xiang Yu.

The Indian women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto, who claimed the Guwahati Masters super 100 title last month, shocked seventh seeded Japanese pair of Wakana Nagahara and Mayu Matsumoto 21-19, 13-21, 21-15 to inch closer in their effort to qualify for the Paris Olympics.

Srikanth, however, failed to rein in his errors and went down 13-21, 17-21 to Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus in the second round.

Satwik and Chirag, the Asian Games gold medalists, dished out an aggressive game to gallop to 11-2 lead at the break in the opening game. A seven-point burst



after resumption gave the French pair hope as they made it 12-14. But the Indian combination soon found their bearing to run away with the opening game after gathering the remaining seven points on the trot.

The Indians, however, wouldn't have been prepared for what came next as Corvee and Labar came out blazing on all cylinders to take an 11-4 cushion in the interval. From 4-11, Satwik and Chirag, however, made it 16-16 with Chirag and Satwik once

again scripting a remarkable recovery.

Earlier, a series of unforced errors and bad line judgements put Srikanth, World No.24, on the back foot as World No.20 Ka Long looked in fine fettle during the 38-minute men's singles match.

Srikanth had a promising start as he led 6-1 at one stage but his inconsistencies in execution once again came to the fore as Ka Long reeled off six straight points to turn the tables.

The Hong Kong player, who had come into the match after losing twice to the Indians in last two meetings, gained in confidence and another six-point burst put him in command as Srikanth crumbled.

In the second game, Srikanth looked to take more initiative initially and managed to eke out a slender 11-10 lead with a jump cross-court smash. But Ka Long quickly turned the tables again to lead before eventually sealing the match.

AMAN OVERCOMES CHINESE OPPONENT TO WIN GOLD MEDAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Zagreb, Jan 11: Indian wrestler Aman Sehrawat came up with a commanding performance to bag the gold medal in the Zagreb Open Ranking Series tournament, defeating China's World No.7 Wanhao Zou 10-0 here.

Sehrawat's victory by technical superiority Wednesday night came as a bright moment for the embattled Indian wrestling community, which has been grappling with a host of issues, including the suspension of the newly-elected federation by the sports ministry and protests by junior grapplers.

The Indian contingent is competing under the United World Wrestling (UWW) banner as the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) was suspended by the global body last year for not adhering to the time-line set for elections.

Asian Games silver and Commonwealth Games gold medalist freestyle grappler Deepak Punia could not make it to the 86kg medal round after he lost in his first bout to Kazakhstan's Azamat Dauletbekov. In the repechage round, he won one bout and lost the other to go out of contention for a medal.

MCFC come from behind to take full points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 11: Mumbai City FC (MCFC) came from a goal down to beat Gokulam Kerala 2-1 in their Group C match of the Kalinga Super Cup here Thursday. An off-colour and youngster-filled Mumbai City were made to struggle for the points and rely on a penalty to seal it in injury time.

Mumbai City settled into their groove early into the game at the Kalinga Stadium and were almost presented with a goal in the fourth minute of the game.

Abdenasser El Khayati shrugged off his marker on the left wing, before crossing the ball into the six-yard area, where Avilash Paul punched it into the path of Nathan Rodrigues. The youngster volleyed high.

Mumbai City's ability to keep the pressure also came with its



own caveats — that of an over-confidence seeping in. Gokulam made them pay for it in the 23rd minute, off a simple two pass counter attack.

Debutant Nikola Stojanovic played a long ball from his own half into the Mumbai box, where Aminou Bouba rose highest to head it towards goal. An error of

judgement by Phurba Lachenpa saw the ball bounce off the bar and straight into the path of Alex Sanchez, who accepted what will undoubtedly be his simplest chance this season. Gokulam had a shock lead.

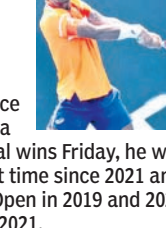
From their first corner of the game, in the 72nd minute Bouba almost doubled their lead, rising highest yet again and seeing his header bounce off the crossbar. That miss ended up hurting them barely four minutes later.

Played through brilliantly by El Khayati, the substitute Ayush Chhikara finished into the far corner from a sharp angle to draw MCFC level. Deep into the injury time a needless foul by Basith Ahmed Bhat on the edge of the box saw Gokulam concede a penalty. El Khayati made no mistake from the spot, sending Paul the wrong way to help Mumbai take all three points.

Nagal a win away from Oz Open main draw

Melbourne:

India's Sumit Nagal is just one match away from making the main draw of the Australian Open tennis tournament as he reached the final round of the qualifying tournament here Thursday. Nagal beat Australian Edward Winter, a wild card, in the second qualifying match 6-3, 6-2 that lasted one hour and four minutes at the KIA Arena. The 26-year-old Indian will face Alex Molcan of Slovakia in the final round on Friday for a place in the season-opening Grand Slam proper. If Nagal wins Friday, he will enter the main round of a Grand Slam event for the first time since 2021 and fourth overall. He made it to the main round of the US Open in 2019 and 2020, and then featured in the Australian Open main draw in 2021.



Real ruin Griezmann's record-breaking night



Riyadh (Saudi Arabia): Antoine Griezmann scored against Real Madrid in the semifinal of the Spanish Super Cup Wednesday to surpass Luis Aragones as Atletico Madrid's all-time top scorer with 174 goals. Griezmann scored the milestone goal with a low right-footed shot from outside the area in the 37th minute after using a nifty move to change direction and get past defenders. Atletico took the lead with a header by Mario Hermoso, but Real went ahead with Antonio Rudiger scoring in the 20th and Ferland Mendy in the 29th before Griezmann levelled the scores. An own-goal by Rudiger in the 78th put Atletico ahead again before Dani Carvajal equalised in the 85th to send the game into extra time. Another own-goal, this time by Stefan Savic, put Real ahead before Brahim Diaz sealed Real's victory.

Sports Odisha lose to Sethu FC

VASCO (GOA): Kaviya Pakkirisamy headed the ball into the net in the 50th minute to give Sethu FC full points over a struggling Sports Odisha in the Indian Women's League (IWL) here Thursday. Sethu FC now sit in the fourth position in the table, level on seven points with Gokulam Kerala, having played four matches. Sethu were expected to dominate the match, but surprisingly, Sports Odisha made things tough for the hosts. Sports Odisha, who previously suffered a 0-8 defeat against Gokulam, have only themselves to blame as they wasted a penalty that could have earned them their first point of the season. It was Rashmi, who steered the penalty wide of the post in the 60th minute.