



International Conclave on urban transformation

Decentralised | Inclusive | Community-led

18th-20th January 2024 | Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

a 5T initiative

Virtual Inauguration by
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha
Shri Naveen Patnaik
at 11:00 am on 18th January 2024



Local Innovation: Global Inspiration

- Dedication of Odisha Urban Academy
- Launching of Odisha Urban Inclusive Sanitation Policy 2024
- Panel Discussion on transformational themes with eminent urban practitioners across the states and countries
- Showcasing Odisha Models to Global audience
- Felicitation of Community Champions
- Fostering Partnership

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FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Think positive today and watch the world around you changing. Regardless of how difficult things may seem, Ganesha advises you to take it without getting upset. If you set your mind to something, you can do it. You have the Midas touch today, so it is a good time to introduce a new strategy.

TAURUS
Ganesha urges you to be prepared for setbacks and disappointments today. Your efforts may end in being a waste of precious time and energy. The results you get are likely to be far below your expectations. Falling short of your target is likely to weigh you down with stress and anxiety.

GEMINI
You will be in a state of heightened sensitivity today. Therefore you need to curb down on your emotions. You will be able to successfully express your feelings to someone, and your feelings will play a vital part in your life, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Ganesha suggests you not to be sentimental or hasty. Try to handle things deftly in stead of dodging bad episodes or turning a blind eye to them. You will give priority to domestic and private life in stead of career or business aspects.

LEO
You will feel more emotional today and share your feelings with your friends and near ones. For those who are searching for a life-partner, this might be the time when you will get hitched. You will develop a new perspective on some issues in the office. Your day will be different than normal, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Ganesha predicts that you will be rewarded today for all the good work done earlier. You will prefer to manage things in your own way, rather than taking orders from others. However, Ganesha advises you not to throw your weight around, but to stay calm and composed.

LIBRA
Nothing comes for free – keep this in mind as you may have to pay your dues for the success you desire today, especially if it is a new project that you have undertaken. Be prepared to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in your endeavours. Spare money can be used to purchase new assets that may pay dividends in the future.

SCORPIO
In all probability, your mood is extremely hawkish today. Your belligerence may even put off Lady Luck for the time being. Ganesha advises you to stay away from confrontations and troubles of any kind. The evening, however, promises to be relaxing.

SAGITTARIUS
Lady luck is all smiles for you today, predicts Ganesha. Suddenly, you feel like multi-tasking and becoming a jack of all. This is likely to keep you busy, almost throughout the day. If need be, your colleagues and peers will lend a helping hand.

CAPRICORN
You are in hot water, but do not lose hope during these turbulent times. Maintain a calm head over your shoulders and deal with the problems, guides Ganesha. Also, do not jump to conclusions or be argumentative with the people around you, as you may end up being at the losing end.

AQUARIUS
You will not need a reason to party today. Be it the news of a friend getting married or you buying a new car, you are in a mood to celebrate life like anything! Apart from this, you will have a smooth sailing through out the day, foresees Ganesha. If you are a businessman or a professional, you will move one step closer to your target.

PISCES
A day of mixed fortunes awaits you, where taking risks could prove to be your undoing, or provide you with handsome returns, says Ganesha. This is because you could come out on top by treading cautiously, but uncalculated risks will probably throw your calculations out of gear. Your success rate is unlikely to be too high; hence it may be a tough day for you.



'I WAS TOLD, I WON'T HAVE A CAREER DUE TO MY HEIGHT'

Actress Nicole Kidman, who stands at 5ft 11, confessed she was bullied as a child for her height and called names such as 'Stalky.' "I was told, 'You won't have a career. You're too tall,'" she told Radio Times magazine, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

DUA LIPA ON IMPACT OF BREAK-UPS IN LIFE

Singer Dua Lipa has talked about the influences of love splits in her life. "I've had break-ups in my life where I felt like the only kind of break-up you could have was when things just ended really badly. Things ending in a nice way was such a new thing... it taught me a lot."



30 plays in 30 dists on Lord celebrate Parikrama project

Bhubaneswar: January 17, 2024 will be etched in the memory of many for a very long time as Srimandir Parikrama Pralapa or Srimandir Heritage Corridor Project, one of the most ambitious projects in the cultural history of Odisha, was opened for public by the Chief Minister with chanting of 'Jay Jagannath' reverberating in the air.

While spiritual programmes were held in every nook and cranny of the state to celebrate the occasion, the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture in collaboration with its district wings took a unique initiative to make the occasion memorable.

Under this programme, 30 different Odia plays, based on the Jagannath culture, tradition and history, were performed in 30 districts exactly at 7 pm

across the state. The plays staged were – *Brahma Bishad Bisambada* by Natyam (Angul), *Mausi Ma* by Bidyakanak Srujanusthan (Bhadrak), *Jagabandhu He Jagannath* by Srasta (Balasore), *Bhakta Salabega* by Bhumika (Bolangir), *Sannare Jagannath* by Samaleswari Sangh (Bargarh), *Darubrahma* by Boudh Cultural Association (Boudh), *Sri Ranga Charan Tale* by Annapurna Theatre (Cuttack), *Darubrahma* by Baramanda Kalakar Sangh (Deogarh), *Debadasi* by Alternative Rhythm Theatre (Dhenkanal), *Bhabara Thakura* by Creative Arts at Paralakhemundi (Gajapati), *Deba Nartaki* by Odisha Sanskritika Sansad at Bherampur (Ganjam), *Bhinna Eka Debadasi* by Banani Kala Sangam at Phulbani



A scene from *Nilakandaruru Nilachala* by Koraput Cultural Society

(Kandhamal), *Klanta Gajapati* by Lokakabi Natyacharya Balakrushna Smruti Parishad (Jagatsinghpur), *Samarpana* by Rangabhumi (Jajpur), *Patali Jagannath* by Srujani (Jharsuguda), *Kaibarta Raghunath* by Kasendara Cultural Centre (Keonjhar), *Kanchi Kaberi* by Gopal Das Smaraki Kalamandir (Kendrapara), *Nilakandaruru Nilachala* by Koraput Cultural Society (Koraput), *Chakanayana* by Rudrakhya Production at Bhawanipatna (Kalahandi), *Patali Sriketra* by Mig Kala Parisad (Malkangiri), *Darudian* by Arpan

(Mayurbhanj), *Patitapabana Bana Au Kete Belaku* by Chamatkar (Nayagarh), *Hrudaya Pathagami* by Gyanodaya (Nuapada), *Daru Debata* by Tridhara Natyasangh (Nabarangpur), *Atibadi Raghunath* by Sriketra Natyashala (Puri), *Madhaba Sandhane* by Royal Challengers Cultural Association (Rayagada), *Mahari* by Swara (Sambalpur), *Laxmi Purana* by Trendy Akademi (Subarnapur), *Bhakta Karmabai* by Swosti Jhankar (Sundargarh) and *Karabarta Raghunath* by Taruna Kalakar Sangh (Khurda). PNN

Mukteswar Dance Festival gets off to a colourful start



Bhubaneswar: The three-day Mukteswar Dance Festival, organised by Odia Language, Literature & Culture Department in association with Odisha Sangeeta Natak Akademi (OSNA) featuring eminent dancers from across the country having their Odissi in Solo, Duet and Group format, got off to an enchanting start with the unspoilt and magnificent 10th century Mukteswar Temple on the backdrop.

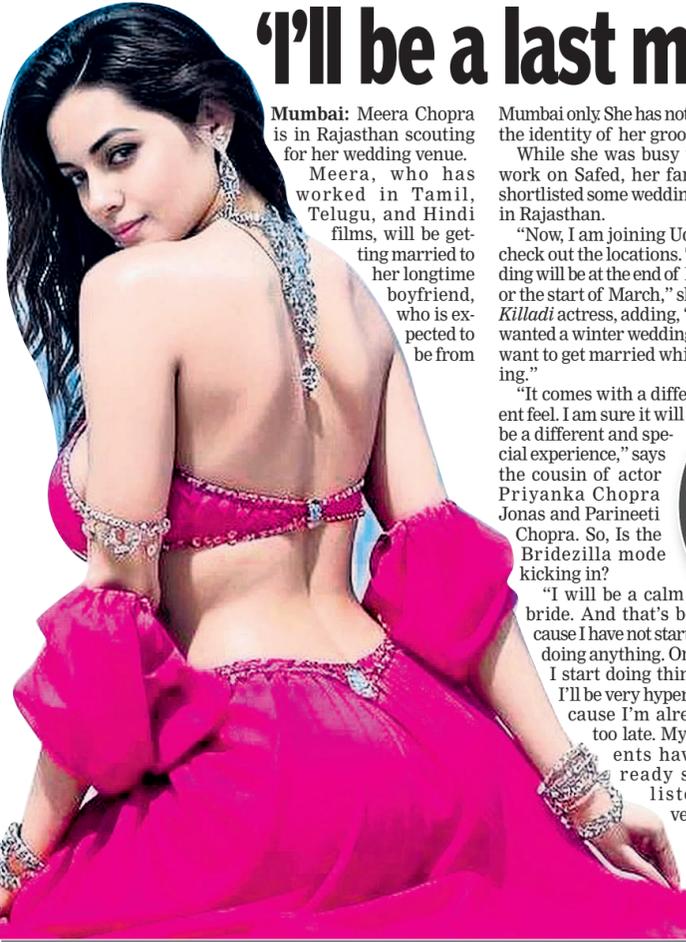
The evening's programme started in the presence of several luminaries that included Science and Technology Minister Ashok Kumar Jena, Culture Department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Sujata R Karthikeyan, Director Dilip Routrai, OSNA President Guru Aruna Mohanty, and Secretary Prabodh Rath.

The Shaivite shrine was filled with spiritual fervour with the soulful recitation of Shiva

Vandana - *Shree Rudrastakam - Namamisha Mishan Nirbana Rupam* invoking the blessing of the Lord Shiva by Pradeep Kumar Das & Group. Second programme was Solo Odissi dance recital by internationally acclaimed Odissi danseuse Kavita Dwibedi from New Delhi.

She presented *Abhisapta Ketaki* based on Lord Shiva. In duet the talented dancers Shobha Bisht and Deepika Bisht from New Delhi started with an invocatory piece Lord Shiva Natraj. The dance was choreographed by Guru Madhavi Mudgal followed by *Abhinaya Basanta* written by poet Kalidas. Their last presentation was Pallavi set to Rag-Gundakeri and Tal-Tripata.

The concluding item of this evening was a Group Odissi presentation by the students of Nrityantar from Bangalore led by Madhulita Mohapatra. Their first presentation was Iswari followed by Malhar Pallavi. PNN



'I'll be a last minute bride'

Mumbai: Meera Chopra is in Rajasthan scouting for her wedding venue. Meera, who has worked in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi films, will be getting married to her longtime boyfriend, who is expected to be from

Mumbai only. She has not revealed the identity of her groom to be. While she was busy with her work on *Safed*, her family has shortlisted some wedding venues in Rajasthan. "Now, I am joining Udaipur to check out the locations. The wedding will be at the end of February or the start of March," shares the *Killadi* actress, adding, "I always wanted a winter wedding. I didn't want to get married while sweating."

"It comes with a different feel. I am sure it will be a different and special experience," says the cousin of actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Parineeti Chopra. So, is the *Bridezilla* mode kicking in?

"I will be a calm bride. And that's because I have not started doing anything. Once I start doing things, I'll be very hyper because I'm already too late. My parents have already short-listed the venues,

and I will finalise it. As soon as it is done, I will be in that mode. I am more of a last minute bride," she ends with a laugh.

AGENCIES

Ananya lists traits one can adopt from Aditya

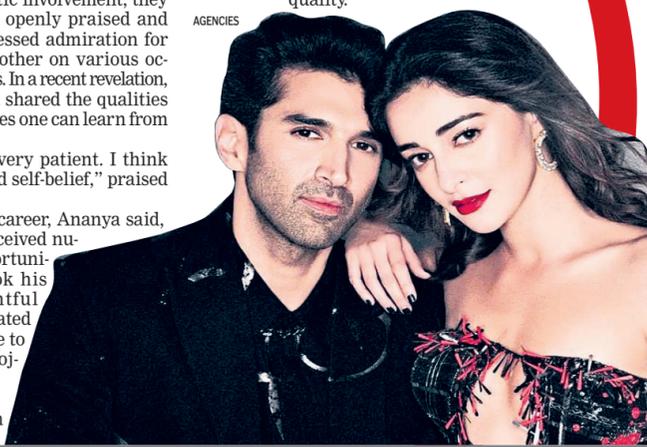
Mumbai: Amidst the acclaim for her stellar performance in the newly released film *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, Ananya Panday has been making waves in the public eye due to her rumoured relationship with Aditya Roy Kapur. While the duo hasn't officially confirmed their romantic involvement, they have openly praised and expressed admiration for each other on various occasions. In a recent revelation, Ananya shared the qualities she believes one can learn from Aditya.

"He has been very patient. I think patience, perseverance, and self-belief," praised the *Liger* actress. Reflecting on Aditya's career, Ananya said, "After *Aashiqui 2*, he received numerous offers and opportunities. However, he took his time, made thoughtful choices, and dedicated attention and love to each of his projects."

Ananya went on

to highlight Aditya's approach to his work, noting that he is not the type of actor who juggles multiple projects simultaneously or fills up his calendar just for the sake of it. She expressed, "So, I think he really believes in himself very strongly, and that's really a nice quality."

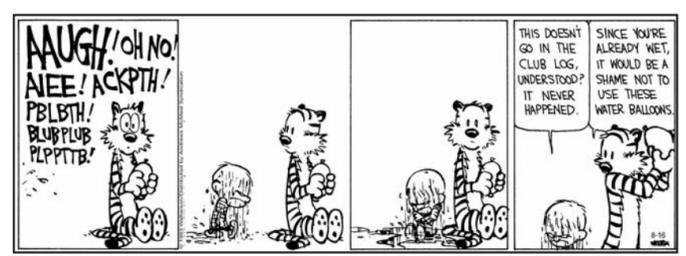
AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

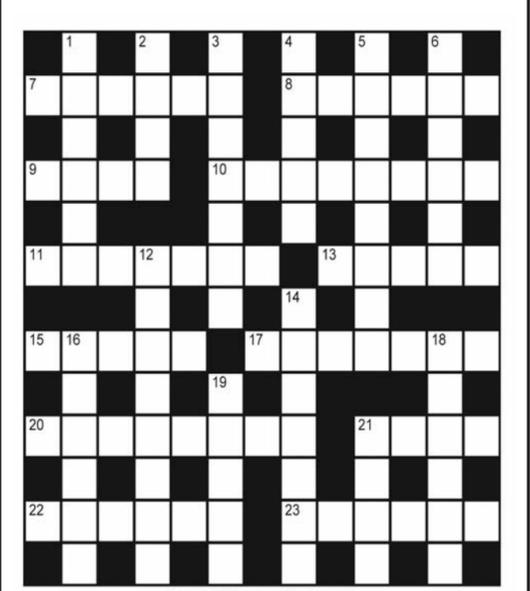


BREVITY



FUN post

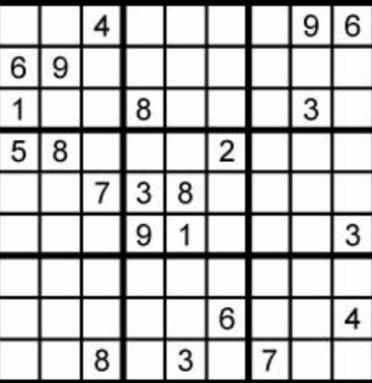
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Exemption
 - 8 Kind of doll
 - 9 Surrounded by
 - 10 Umps call (4,4)
 - 11 Symbol of purity
 - 13 Rocket type
 - 15 Religious text
 - 17 Guilt feelings
 - 20 Reject
 - 21 Primary
 - 22 Rabbit teaser
 - 23 Strange or unusual
- Down**
- 1 Superhero
 - 2 Zealous
 - 3 Get ready
 - 4 For the birds?
 - 5 Mexican chapeau
 - 6 Cricketer
 - 12 Type of school
 - 14 Wander aimlessly
 - 16 Steamy spots
 - 18 Heart
 - 19 Words to remember
 - 21 Drop anchor

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.

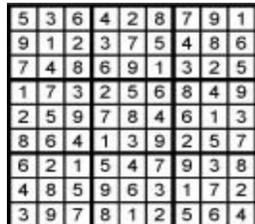


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Syrup racket busted

Commissionerate Police busts interstate racket involved in illegal cough syrup trading and seized 1,680 bottles measuring 168 litres

DOWNTOWN | P2

No united Korea: Kim

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un says his country would no longer pursue reconciliation with South and calls for rewriting the Constitution

INTERNATIONAL | P8

Markets in free-fall

Equities post their worst session in 19 months Wednesday, led by a slide in top private lender HDFC Bank after its quarterly results

BUSINESS | P9

Djokovic advances

Defending champion Novak Djokovic secures a testy second-round win over Alexei Popyrin at the Australian Open

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 288 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | THURSDAY JANUARY 18 | 2024

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March around Lord made easy

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE DUE TO THE BLESSINGS OF LORD JAGANNATH

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER



NEW BEGINNING: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa in presence of Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb and 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian in Puri, Wednesday

PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, Jan 17: A golden chapter was added to the Srimandir history Wednesday when Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the ₹800-crore heritage corridor project, mooted in 2019, to provide unobstructed and expansive pathways around the 12th century shrine, enabling devotees to experience a seamless perambulation of the temple.

The Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa was officially unveiled by Patnaik in presence of Gajapati Maharaja of Puri Dibyasingha Deb and representatives of about 90 temples, including the Pashupatinath Temple in Nepal, Mahakaleswar Temple in Ujjain, Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Kashi, Jagannath temples in Dubai, Australia and United Kingdom, and thousands of devotees.

“The project has been possible due to the blessings of Lord Jagannath,” Naveen said. He felicitated daily labourers, gardeners, masons, JCB drivers, Pattachitra artists, stone carvers and helpers involved in the project.

The project includes parking areas, a new bridge and a road to ease pilgrim movement, a pilgrimage centre, restroom facilities, cloakrooms, toilets and other amenities for devotees in and around the Srimandir.

After inaugurating the project, Patnaik walked barefoot along with Puri's titular king and other dignitaries in a procession around the temple. However, Puri Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati was absent at the mega event as he was busy at the Gangasagar Mela in

AS IT HAPPENED

- AUG 16, 2019:** Odisha Cabinet chaired by CM Naveen Patnaik decides to develop Srimandir periphery and create a security zone around the 12th century shrine by demolishing all structures within its 75-metre radius
- AUG 23:** CM makes emotional appeal to Puri residents to make sacrifice for the sake of shrine's security
- SEPT 2:** CM announces special relief and rehabilitation package for displaced residents and traders
- OCT 19:** State govt prepares design for the project and state Cabinet clears ₹331.38 crore (initial allocation) for it
- FEB 15, 2021:** Temple Managing Committee finalises the architectural design of project
- NOV 24:** CM lays foundation stone for the ambitious project

West Bengal for pre-scheduled rituals, said Matruprasad Mishra, PRO of Govardhan Peeth.

Taking to X, Governor Raghuraj Das said, “He is the Lord of thought and devotion. The inauguration of the Parikrama project of Mahaprabhu Sri Jagannath's temple is a grand moment. I pray before Lord Jagannath for happiness and prosperity of everyone.”

The entire programme was live telecast in panchayats, blocks and districts. Yajnas were also organised at several places.

As soon as the corridor project opened, devotees went around the Parikrama project and thanked the government for making the arrangements.

SHORT TAKES

₹2.70cr penalty on MIAL, 3 airlines

New Delhi: Aviation regulators Bureau of Civil Aviation Security and Directorate General of Civil Aviation Wednesday slapped penalties totalling ₹2.70 crore on IndiGo, Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL), Air India and SpiceJet for various violations. Days after a video of IndiGo passengers having food on the Mumbai airport tarmac was widely shared, the BCAS slapped ₹1.20 crore fine on the airline and ₹60 lakh on MIAL, while DGCA imposed ₹30 lakh fine on the operator. **P7**

Ex-CM Gamang rejoins Congress

New Delhi: Former Odisha Chief Minister Giridhar Gamang Wednesday joined the Congress along with his wife and son almost nine years after he quit the party. “Congress is the only party in the country that does principled politics,” said the former nine-time MP from Koraput. **P2**

Adani raises stake in IANS for full control

New Delhi: Billionaire Gautam Adani's group has raised its stake in IANS India Pvt Ltd to take full control of the news agency. Adani Group had last month picked up a 50.50% stake in IANS and now it has raised the shareholding to 76% with voting rights and to 99.26% without voting rights. **P9**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, it is not some airline crew going to Ayodhya. They are media persons

Red-faced Pakistan recalls envoy to Iran

AGENCIES

Islamabad, Jan 17: Pakistan Wednesday recalled its ambassador to Iran and suspended all high-level planned bilateral visits in the coming days, hours after Tehran launched an unprecedented missile and drone strikes on what it said were terrorist bases of a Sunni militant group in the restive Balochistan province.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch in a statement read out to the media also said that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan who is currently visiting Iran may not return to Islamabad for the time being. Pakistan also reserves the right to retaliate to the provocation by Iran, she said.

Two bases of Balochi militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan were targeted by missiles and drones Tuesday, Iranian state media reported, a day after Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards

attacked targets in Iraq and Syria with missiles.

“We have also informed them (Iran) that Pakistan has decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, now on a visit to Iran, may not return for the time being. We have also decided to suspend all high-level visits which were ongoing or were planned between Pakistan and Iran in coming days,” Baloch said.

She said that last night's “unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran is a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations”.

“This illegal act is completely unacceptable and has no justification whatsoever. Pakistan reserves the right to respond to this illegal act. The responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran,” Baloch said, adding that Pakistan has conveyed this message to the Iranian Government.

5th arrest in mule bank accounts case

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Police has arrested one more person in the interstate mule bank account scam case, taking the total number of arrests to five, officials said.

The accused, identified as Sourav Maity, 30, from West Medinipur district in West Bengal, was arrested January 15 and is being brought to Odisha on transit remand. Police said he was produced before the court of CJM Barasat, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

The four others arrested in the case are: Sk Hapizul and Sk Jahangir from Balasore, Sk Jamiruddin from West Medinipur, and Samim Islam from Murshidabad in West Bengal.

“This racket primarily operates in the tri-junction area of Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, especially in the districts of Balasore, Mayurbhanj, East and West Medinipur, East



The gang members used to entice poor villagers to open bank accounts for ₹2,000 per account and sell them to scammers and other criminals for ₹15,000 to ₹20,000

and West Singhbhum, and Saraikela,” police said.

“This racket was run by Sk Jamiruddin, who employed around 10-15 people to open bank accounts,” the STF said.

These individuals visited interior areas of the districts, tar-

getting mainly poor villagers and enticing them to open bank accounts. The villagers were usually offered ₹2,000 per account in exchange for their documents and the opening of bank accounts, police said.

In turn, the gang sold these bank accounts, along with the connected mobile numbers, to various cyber, cyber-financial, sextortion scammers, and other criminals based in Kolkata and other parts of India. The STF mentioned that they also utilised social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram channels to sell the mule bank accounts.

The mule bank accounts were sold for ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 each, and approximately 5,000 accounts have been sold on different platforms so far.

“It has also come to our attention that the scammers frequently change the bank accounts. Generally, they abandon the accounts once it reaches a transaction of ₹1 lakh,” the STF said.

Japan gang's lone woman, a master of finger cutting

BORN TO A RIGOROUS FAMILY OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, NISHIMURA HAD A TROUBLED CHILDHOOD

SHE RECALLS HER LIFE WITH AN AUTHORITARIAN FATHER WHO USED TO DISCIPLINE HER WITH A BAMBOO STICK

AGENCIES

Oxford, England, Jan 17: Nishimura Mako, a petite woman in her late 50s with flowing hair and a delicate face, is no traditional Japanese lady. Tattooed up to her neck and hands with her little finger missing, Nishimura is the only woman member of Japan's notorious criminal syndicate ‘Yakuza’ and is specialised in finger chopping – a norm for

the new members of the gang.

Typically a woman involved with Yakuza might be an ‘anesan’, a boss' wife who takes care of young affiliates and mediates between them and her husband. Wives and partners of the members support the group in a peripheral way. Some get involved to the extent that they manage Yakuza-owned clubs or deal drugs.

When interviewed by a researcher, Nishimura said when she became a member of Yakuza at 20, she took up both roles. But she went one step further – Nishimura is the only woman who has ever partaken in the sakazuki ceremony of ex-joining sake cups. This is the ritual that confirms formal affiliation with a Yakuza group.

Born into a rigorous family of government officials, Nishimura's childhood was strict. Her memories revolve around her authori-



PIC: THECONVERSATION.COM

tarian father and the bamboo stick he used to discipline her. During high school, she felt the urge to escape from her family and she befriended unruly peers – and eventually biker gangs (b sozoku) who taught her how to fight.

This rebellious streak led her to a young Yakuza member, who took her under his wing and showed her how to collect protection money, solve disputes, en-

gaging in blackmail and scout girls for prostitution. However, her life took a turn one night when she received a call: her friend was in a fight and needed help. She ran to the rescue and using a club she turned the scene into a blood-bath. This caught the attention of the boss of the local Yakuza group, who called her to his office. She told the researcher that she remembers his words to this day:

“Even if you're a woman, you must become a Yakuza”.

By this time, she had been to juvenile detention centres several times, and her family had ceased their efforts to save her. She accepted the boss' invitation and started living the rigorous life of a Yakuza trainee.

She underwent the ‘sakazuki’ ceremony dressed in a male ‘kimono’, and swore her life to the path of Yakuza. As an affiliate, she ran prostitution and drugs businesses, collected debts and mediated disputes between rival groups. When she cut off her own little finger to apologise for a collective mistake in a ritual known as yubitsume, she realised she had a knack for it. Members who could not go through with the amputation themselves would ask Nishimura to do it for them, earning her the nickname of “master of finger cutting”.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	71500.76 ↓ 1628.01
NIFTY	21572.00 ↓ 460.30
DOLLAR	83.17 ↑ ₹0.01
EURO	90.49 ↓ ₹0.04
GOLD	₹61,820 ↓ ₹195
SILVER	₹71,528 ↓ ₹565

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.7°C	26.4°C
Min Temp	19.2°C	18.5°C
Humidity	87%	82%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
Light to moderate rain/thundershower

Police nab duo with 168 litres illegal cough syrup



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: The Commissionerate Police here, Wednesday, claimed to have busted an inter-state racket allegedly involved in trading illegal cough syrup, and seized 1,680 bottles of 168 litre total volume.

The arrested individuals, Jagannath Jena and Anil Kumar Nayak, both residents of Salia Sahi, allegedly sourced the consignment from Kolkata and sold it in retail at different areas of the state illegally, said an official at the Nayapalli police station.

Speaking to reporters ACP Zone V, Gautam Kishan, said the Nayapalli police received a tip-off early Wednesday morning stating that two individuals were waiting to receive a consignment of contraband near Koustuv College square. Following this, a team led by Nayapalli IIC Satyaranjan Pradhan laid a trap in the vicinity. When the duo received the parcel, that contained the cough syrup bottles, from a bus that came from Kolkata, the waiting police party zeroed in on them. When the duo failed to furnish the required documents, the police took them into custody, the ACP added.

An officer, privy to the investigation, said a drug inspector has been asked to send samples of the seized cough syrup bottles to a lab to ascertain the composition. The results of the test will

The Section 21 (b) in the NDPS Act, 1985 mandates the individual in possession of commercial quantity of drugs, would attract a rigorous imprisonment of jail term extending 10 years along with a fine amount ranging up to 1 lakh rupees

Under 'Operation White Spider' by the Commissionerate Police last year, around 1.22 kg brown sugar and 18 quintal 92.91 kg Marijuana were seized. Moreover, the drug enforcement operation led to arrest of 293 peddlers in 133 cases

help obtain more details about the origin of the cough syrups, as in if those were manufactured in an authorised lab or illicitly made, the officer added.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the cough syrups were procured from third-parties and were later sold at higher prices than its actual cost. The medicinal drug, which is usually not available over the counter, is traded in the sly for intoxication purposes.

The Nayapalli police has booked the accused under Section 21 (b) of NDPS act, and produced them before a local court Wednesday for remand.

It may be recalled that in May last year, the Commissionerate Police had busted a cough syrup smuggling syndicate having links with cartels in Himachal Pradesh, Ahmedabad and Kolkata.

Jagannath Jena and Anil Kumar Nayak, both residents of Salia Sahi, allegedly sourced the consignment from Kolkata and sold it in retail at different areas of state

Man's body found hanging in forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koksara, Jan 17: The decomposed body of a person was found hanging at Sahajakhol forest under Koksara police station limits in Kalahandi district Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Gouranga Pujari, 50, a resident of Bankimunda village under Behera panchayat. Gouranga had been reportedly missing since January 8 and his family members lodged a missing complaint at Koksara police station.

As per reports, some villagers had been to the Sahajakhol forest Wednesday, where they saw a decomposed body was hanging from a tree. They immediately informed Ampani Police who reached the spot and recovered the body. The post-mortem of the body was conducted in the presence of Majistrate Mohan Charan Jena at the hospital. "The deceased had gone to his in-laws' house and the circumstances that led to his death, will be confirmed after getting the post-mortem report," an ASI said.



SCINTILLATING PERFORMANCE: Artistes perform at a cultural programme organised by the district administration at Commissioners' Colony in Sambalpur to mark the inauguration of Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

'Cong only party doing principled politics'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: Former Odisha Chief Minister Giridhar Gamang Wednesday joined the Congress along with his wife and son almost nine years after he quit the party.

Congress is the only party in the country that does principled politics, said the former nine-time MP from Koraput who had joined the BJP in 2015 and switched to the BRS in January 2023.

Gamang asserted that he never left the Congress party's thoughts and ideology.

He along with his wife Hema Gamang and son Shishir Gamang and another BJP leader Sanjay Bhoi, also a former MP, formally joined the party at the AICC headquarters here in the presence of party treasurer Ajay Maken along with AICC in-charge for Odisha Ajoy Kumar.

Giridhar Gamang was elected



Website launched

New Delhi: The Congress launched a website and an email ID Wednesday, inviting suggestions from the public for its manifesto for this year's Lok Sabha polls. P Chidambaram, who heads the Manifesto Committee of the Congress, said the party is holding consultations and seeking suggestions from the public for the manifesto. He said the manifesto for the Lok Sabha election will be a 'people's manifesto'. "The present exercise is to receive suggestions from the members of the public. This will be a people's manifesto. So it is important to gather as many suggestions as possible in the few weeks available to us," Chidambaram said.

constituency in Odisha on the Congress ticket in 2009. "We are happy that today Giridhar Gamang, Hema

Gamang ji, Sanjay Bhoi ji and Shishir Gamang ji are rejoining the Congress Party family. These leaders have contributed significantly to the development of Orissa."

"Their return to Congress will strengthen the party and its ideology. On behalf of the Congress Party, we welcome all of them," Maken said after welcoming the leaders.

He also said that these leaders have played a crucial role in the development of Odisha and their return to the party will strengthen the state party unit and our ideology.

"Giridhar ji is popular not only in the tribal society but also in every community," Ajoy Kumar said. Gamang said only the Congress can give respect to its leaders.

"The Congress gave me a ticket 11 times, which no other party can do. I remained in another party, but only Congress can give respect," he said.

Brown sugar worth ₹80K seized; 2 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasure, Jan 17: Two persons, including a woman, were arrested in Balasure district after brown sugar worth around ₹80,000 was seized from their possession, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of policemen Tuesday night conducted a search operation in Adarbazar area in the Sahadevkhunta Police Station limits and seized the narcotics substance weighing 82.2 grams, a senior officer said.

Unaccounted cash of ₹14,800 was also seized from their possession, he said.

A case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and several sections of the IPC, the officer added.

FM varsity to hold int'l conference from Jan 19

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Jan 17: A two-day International conference on inclusive education is going to be held at Fakir Mohan University's Nuapadhi campus January 19 and 20.

The conference organised by the PG department of Education is being held under the supervision of the vice-chancellor Santosh Kumar Tripathy with an aim to increase the standard and prospective of educational institutions and the parameters of the widespread dissemination of education.

The theme of the conference is 'Navigating Inclusive Education: Bridging the Divide and Empowering Every Learner'. Experts from India, Nepal, United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Australia and Canada will attend the conference and deliver their talks on the subject.

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AFFIDAVIT

I Rajesh Agarwal, S/o. Late Radheshyam Agarwal, R/o. Plot No. C/1205, Sector-6, Abhinav Bidanasi, PS-Markatnagar, Cuttack-753014, Odisha, declare by this affidavit dt.13.10.2023 vide Paper No. 61AA 698964 that now onwards I shall be known as Rajesh Kumar Agarwal for all future purposes.

LOST

It is hereby published for public in general that original R.O.R. of 5th settlement khata No. 270/82 of Mouza Ulunda, PS- Sindhol (Ulunda) PS No-81 which Stand recorded in the name of Sibaram Nayak, S/o-Narayan Nayak is lost somewhere during the travelling of Sibaram Nayak and inspite of due search the same could not be traced out. The same fact has been reported in Ulunda Police on dt.12.01.2024. The same has been entered as GD No-13, Date-12.01.2024, if anybody has found the ROR, Please inform the same at Ulunda P.S. or contact in the following Ph.No.-9938723244.

Six members of dacoity gang held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 17: Uditnagar police here arrested six members of a dacoity gang during night patrolling when the accused were planning for a major heist at a jewellery store, late Tuesday night.

The accused were identified as Md Irshad, Rahul Gope, Rohit Nayak, Sonu Sahu, Raja Yadav and Suraj Mahato. Police also recovered three country made pistols, one toy pistol, six rounds of live cartridges, sharp-edged weapons, one iron rod, two blades and mobile phones from their possession.

The breakthrough came when a special team of Uditnagar police was conducting night patrolling. The team arrested the

six persons near the newly-developed DAV pond while other members of the gang managed to escape under the cover of darkness.

Hailing the police move, the residents said that pre-emptive drive launched by Rourkela police to build up pressure on the criminals and criminal activities is bringing good results here.

I PS Trainee, Sonal Parmar, while addressing the media-persons, said that for the upcoming general election the Rourkela Police have planned to undertake special drives against crimes and criminals and the arrest is a result of that.

The accused were planning to loot a jewellery store when a special team nabbed them during night patrolling, she said.

Tilkut tantalises Odias' taste buds

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 17: Tilkut, a Bihari sweet delicacy is catching the imagination of all in the Steel City as this special dessert is sold here especially during the Makar Sankranti festival.

"Earlier this sweetmeat used to be brought here from outside. However, for the last couple of years it is also being prepared here," said Harish Sinha, a businessman from Barbil, who was here to procure it for sale in Barbil. Similarly, many businessmen come here just before the Makar Sankranti from Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and even from Manoharpur in Jharkhand to buy the stuff.

Tilkut is a sweet dish prepared from the mixture of sesame or



til or rasi, jaggery/sugar and khoa. "The best and the costliest one is prepared by mixing khoa. A kg of Tilkut goes up to ₹550," said Prabhudayal, a businessman who deals in it.

When asked, he said, "During the season when the demand is high I sell around 5-6 tons of Tilkut." The unit price for one kilo of Tilkut, made by mixing jaggery or sugar, varies between ₹200-220, he informed.

The process of making Tilkut is very time-consuming and is prepared painstakingly as a

slight deviation will spoil everything including its taste and its crispy nature," said Praveen Kumar, a confectioner. The sugar and sesame are mixed to prepare it and then very slowly the two are mixed to create the perfect bonding. A traditional sweetmeat maker uses a particular wood to prepare it and then slowly bangs the mixture to create a condensed paste and gradually it becomes ready for consumption," said Kailash.

Earlier, this was being brought here from Gaya in Bihar. However, now the sweetmeat is prepared here. "This is most sought-after items among the Hindi speaking people but now Odias are also purchasing this for Makar celebration," Smita Hansda said.

VIDEO GAMERS RISK IRREVERSIBLE HEARING LOSS, TINNITUS

Video gamers worldwide might be at a higher risk of irreversible hearing loss or developing a persistent ringing, or tinnitus, in their ears, new research published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Public Health has found.

Such gamers are known to often expose themselves to high-intensity sound levels and for several hours at a stretch, and researchers have found that the sound levels often near, or exceed, permissible safe limits, which for children is 75 decibels for 40 hours a week.

The international research team, including researchers from the World Health Organization

(WHO) and the Medical University of South Carolina, US, reviewed 14 studies from 9 countries in North America, Europe, South East Asia, Asia and Australasia, that included more than 50,000 people in all.

The researchers said that 'relatively little' attention has been paid to the effects of video games, including e-sports, on hearing loss, even as headphones, earbuds, and music venues have been acknowledged as sources of potentially unsafe sound levels.

"The findings suggest that there may be a need to prioritise interventions, such as initiatives focused on education and awareness of the potential risks



of gaming, that can help promote safe listening among gamers," they wrote.

One of the research papers the team analysed estimated that there were more than 3 bil-

lion gamers worldwide in 2022, and six papers reported that video gaming prevalence among young people ranged from 20 to 68 per cent, they said.

In their analysis, the researchers found that of the five studies that evaluated associations between gaming and self-reported hearing loss or tinnitus, two linked the use of school students' gaming centre to more chances of severe tinnitus and high-frequency sound hearing loss in both ears.

Other studies in the overall analysis associated video gaming with higher odds of self-reported hearing loss severity and measured sound levels of five

video games through headphones attached to the gaming console - these averaged at 88.5, 87.6, 85.6 and 91.2 decibels (dB) for 4 separate shooter games, and 85.6 dB for a racing game.

For children, the ITU has defined the permissible noise exposure level as 75 decibels for 40 hours a week with a 3-dB exchange rate, which meant that the permissible exposure time halves with every 3 dB increase in noise level.

The children can therefore safely listen to an 83-decibel sound for around 6.5 hours, 86 dB for around 3.25 hours, 92 dB for 45 minutes, and 98 dB for only 12 minutes a week, the researchers explained.

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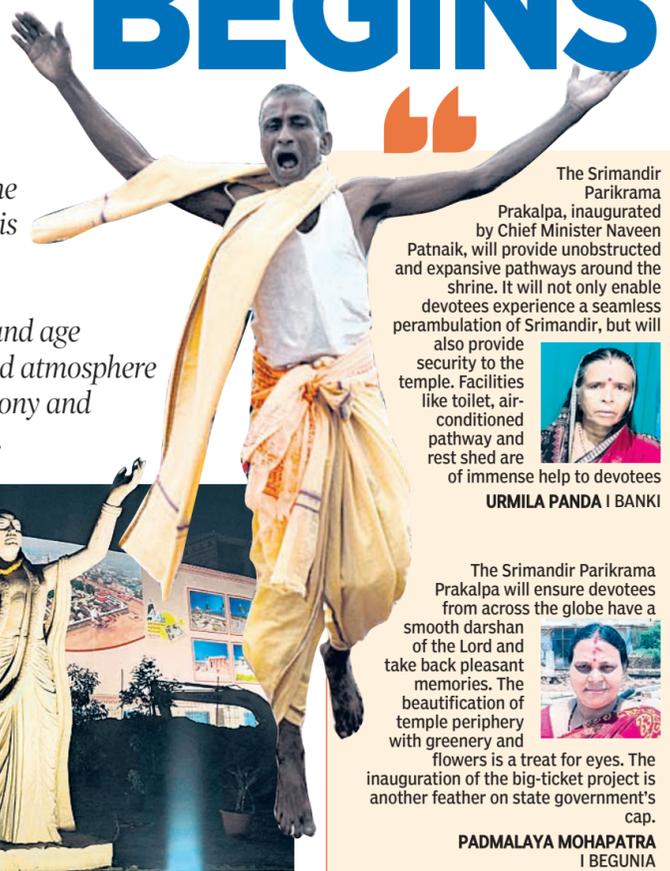
Parikrama Prakalpa

THURSDAY | JANUARY 18 | 2024 | BHUBANESWAR



PARIKRAMA BEGINS

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday dedicated the historic Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa to people amid chanting of sacred hymns in the presence of Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb, seers and priests from more than 90 temples across the country and abroad, as Odisha plunged into celebrations. The ambitious project, built at a cost of ₹800 crore, is poised to give Puri the recognition of a world heritage city with tastefully designed infra and world-class amenities for visitors of all classes and age groups. **Orissa POST** encapsulates the mood and atmosphere in the Pilgrim Town during the inaugural ceremony and events that followed the momentous occasion...



The Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa, inaugurated by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, will provide unobstructed and expansive pathways around the shrine. It will not only enable devotees experience a seamless perambulation of Srimandir, but will also provide security to the temple. Facilities like toilet, air-conditioned pathway and rest shed are of immense help to devotees



URNILA PANDA | BANKI

The Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa will ensure devotees from across the globe have a smooth darshan of the Lord and take back pleasant memories. The beautification of temple periphery with greenery and flowers is a treat for eyes. The inauguration of the big-ticket project is another feather on state government's cap.



PADMALAYA MOHAPATRA | BEGUNIA

Encroachments around Srimandir had taken the sheen off the temple besides narrowing the road. As a result, devotees were unable to witness the visual grandeur of the entire shrine. Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa will solve all the issues.



DAYANIDHI MEHER | SONEPUR

I was hearing about the project since long. It was a revelation to see the spectacle before my own eyes in Puri today. This is a moment of pride for every Odia and Jagannath lovers across the globe



PRABHASINI PANDA | NAYAGARH





World on Edge

Israel's devastating war in Gaza, Russia's bloody invasion of Ukraine, America's extraterritorial assassinations, and China's aggressive expansionism all point to one conclusion: the global system that emerged after World War II is giving way to a world without order. But while the upheaval is undeniable – and being compounded by a reshuffling of trade and investment flows, rapid technological advances, and profound demographic shifts – what will emerge from it remains an open question.

The coming transition could be illuminated or even accelerated by the outcome of key elections this year, when 4.2 billion people will be eligible to vote in 76 countries, making 2024 the biggest election year in history. Elections will be held in eight of the world's ten most populous countries (Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States) – and the European Union.

This year's raft of elections will serve as a gauge of the state of democracy globally. With autocracy on the rise, there is plenty of cause for concern. In fact, the new year kicked off with controversy-fueled elections in two democracies in the Global South: Bangladesh and Taiwan. In Bangladesh, the opposition boycotted the election altogether, calling it a sham, and as expected, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina secured a fourth consecutive term in office.

Bangladesh is not the only country where elections this year will bring no surprises. Russian President Vladimir Putin will undoubtedly be "elected" to another term. Assuming he completes it, he will have surpassed Soviet leader Josef Stalin as the longest-serving Russian ruler since Catherine the Great. In Pakistan, the election result is practically a moot point, since the military will ultimately remain in control.

But even true democracies are at risk of a rightward lurch in upcoming elections, continuing a trend seen in Finland (a freshly minted NATO member) and, most recently, in Argentina. While Poland bucked this trend, the upcoming European Parliament elections – the first since Brexit – appear likely to prolong it.

Right-wing politics can tilt the scales from peace to war. Consider Israel: though the catalyst of the war in Gaza was the horrific terrorist attack carried out by Hamas on October 7, the hardline policies pursued by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's far-right government – the most nationalist in Israel's history – undeniably set the stage for conflict.

But this is not always the case. In the US, President Joe Biden's national-security team largely comprises "liberal interventionists" – essentially, hawks on the left – whereas many on the right can be considered non-interventionists (or, as their critics call them, "isolationists").

Elections are not everything. Numerous dangerous trends in international relations have persisted across election cycles. Longstanding rules and norms – including non-intervention and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, and the prohibition of territorial conquest – have increasingly been flouted in recent years, often by those that preach adherence to them most loudly. The countries that made the rules – starting with the US – have proved all too willing to disregard them when their perceived interests are at stake.

Meanwhile, the influence of international institutions such as the United Nations is waning, as the Western countries that established them resist structural reforms that would better align global governance with current geopolitical realities. All of this is undermining the rules-based order that the West claims to be trying to preserve.

Other efforts to preserve the West's global supremacy have also proved counterproductive. For example, the routine use of sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy and the weaponisation of finance are encouraging non-Western states to pursue "de-dollarization" – an effort gaining momentum in oil markets – and parallel financial arrangements. On January 1, the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) expanded its membership to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Rifts between East and West, North and South, are widening.

As global tensions rise, countries are increasingly embracing protectionist and nationalist economic policies, raising the spectre of economic fragmentation and the emergence of rival trading blocs. This trend could not only impede economic growth and development but also threaten peace. Recall that a similar shift from multilateral trade toward trade within geopolitical blocs in the 1930s fuelled tensions that eventually contributed to World War II.

The risk of Chinese aggression against Taiwan appears particularly acute. The victory of the pro-sovereignty Lai Ching-te in the island's recent presidential election, together with mounting global turbulence and China's own economic slowdown, could lead Chinese President Xi Jinping to decide that China's window of opportunity to impose unification on Taiwan is closing fast.

Any way one looks at it, a major geopolitical reconfiguration is underway. The outcome will depend significantly on developments over the next year.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.



SRI AUROBINDO



Brahma Chellaney

The countries that made the rules – starting with the US – have proved all too willing to disregard them when their perceived interests are at stake



DK Giri

LET US NOT FORGET THAT MALDIVES POLITICS IS DIVIDED LIKE THAT OF ANY OTHER COUNTRY. ALL MALDIVIANS OR POLITICAL PARTIES ARE NOT AGAINST INDIA

Digital technology is a wonderful invention and social media is a powerful platform. But remember, EF Schumacher had propounded the concept of appropriate technology which is defined by judicious use of any technology by its consumers. In the India-Maldives relations, the recent unsavoury spat in the social media backed by a dose of hyper nationalism on both sides is a classic case of overuse if not crass abuse of social media. Unfortunately, both countries have perhaps unconsciously allowed the social media to influence negatively the bilateral relations. The fracas began with absolutely uncalled for reactions by three Maldivian ministers to snapshots posted by Prime Minister Modi of his trip to Lakshadweep. Of course, the Maldives government immediately suspended the ministers. Nevertheless, in reaction to the derogatory personal comments by Maldivian ministers on Indian PM, all hell broke loose on Indian social media. A fairly big travel agency EaseMyTrip CEO reacted by cancelling thousands of bookings by Indian tourists to Maldives. BJP IT cell unleashed its troll army to take on Maldives. It roped in its favourite acquiescent celebrities from sports and cinema – Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar, Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar – ironically the very people who holiday in Maldives.

The point is, was it necessary to disparage Maldives while promoting Lakshadweep and other holidays spots in India. The outburst of nationalism against a small neighbouring country, which has been friendly and dependent on India, was equally uncalled for. The patriotic cheerleaders and social media warriors are oblivious to two important elements in the recent episode. One is presenting Lakshadweep as an alternative to Maldives. There is no doubt that there are several wonderful, underused tourist spots in India. How to promote tourism to such areas is another discussion. It should be

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

STRAINED TIES



Beijing, in the pursuit of its policy of 'String of Pearls,' is penetrating into India's neighbourhood. New Delhi has to counter it with all its force - diplomatic, economic and strategic

noted that Lakshadweep is a small archipelago located in 32 sq km, quite small to absorb numerous footfalls. It has, as of now, very little connectivity. There is one daily 60-seater flight from Kochi to Agatti. Only two of five ferries sail between Kochi and Lakshadweep. There are barely 100 rooms across the island. Lakshadweep is certainly exquisite. But the question is whether the average Indian tourist always game for food and shopping will find much attraction.

The second issue is the comprehension of Maldivian politics, especially after the election of President Mohamed Muizzu having a pro-China tilt. Muizzu ran his campaign on an 'India Out' plank. A correct perception of the recent political developments in Maldives should help steady the India-Maldives bilateral relations. Let us not forget that Maldives politics is divided like that of any other country. All Maldivians or political parties are not against India. The Opposition parties are vigorously protesting the anti-India positioning by the present Maldivian government. In fact, there have been calls for a no-confidence motion against the ruling regime. Even a Maldivian tourism body wrote to their Indian counterparts, "We want you to know the bonds connecting our nations transcend politics. We consider our Indian counterparts as cherished brothers and sisters".

Maldives economy is run largely by its tourism. India is by far the largest source of tourism for Maldives. So, the panic, even if we discount the pro-Indian feeling in anti-Muizzu political segments, is understandable. In 2023, over two lakh tourists from India landed in Maldives that has around 5 lakh people. Even during the pandemic, 63,000 Indians visited Maldives. Muizzu asserted that Maldives can substitute Indian tourists by an increase in the flow of tourists from China. Apparently, he made a request to Chinese President Xi Jinping to send more tourists to his country.

Let us also remember that leadership in many countries in the Indo-Pacific is divided as pro or anti-China. Those who are anti-China seem to be pro-India and vice-versa. The countries that come to mind are Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and so on. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in an event in Nagpur reacted to journalists on the recent tension with Maldives. He also suggested that small countries try to leverage the big power rivalries. Admittedly, India has been doing so in case of former Soviet Union, now Russia and the US.

Indians should be conscious of the geopolitical dynamics that prompt regimes in countries to choose partners. New Delhi should focus on its tension and competition with China which are reflected in our relations

with our neighbours and other countries in the region. Beijing, in the pursuit of its policy of 'String of Pearls,' is penetrating into India's neighbourhood. New Delhi has to counter it with all its force - diplomatic, economic and strategic. This is a strategic choice imposed on India which it cannot forswear.

On repairing the current rupture in India-Maldives relations, both countries have to reflect and react. As a bigger country, India could be more tolerant by being a bit thick-skinned. Outsized reactions as were seen on social media should be avoided. Maldivians should realise that India has been their trusted ally and a provider of essential goods and services. India has helped Maldives on several crisis situations in addition to having multi-sectoral projects in the country. China may come with a bigger pot of money, but as other countries have realised, alliance with China is like a kiss of death. Beijing seduces countries with instant aid and draws them into a debt trap.

Geographically, Maldives is 700 km from the Indian coast and over 6000 km from China. New Delhi treats Maldives as an important part of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) Policy. A robust long-term relation with India will augur well for Maldives. Likewise, India would benefit from the strategic location of Maldives in the Indian Ocean.

To conclude, New Delhi should take urgent steps to repair the damage. The China angle in India's neighbourhood is not new. The situation has been similar in Nepal. But the regime change has retrieved it for India. Maldives could be no exception. India's foreign policy is more progressive than China's. Muizzu would have a change of mind or Maldives will have a change of regime. Indians should therefore react with caution and maturity.

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism. @INFA

SPECTRUM WORK-LIFE

From constant connectivity to unplugging



Shivaji Mohinta

PERIODIC UNPLUGGING HAS PROVEN BENEFITS IN TERMS OF HIGHER PERFORMANCE, INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY, AND LOWER ATTRITION RATES

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has become the norm for many global firms. While India issues a back-to-office directive, several sectors still lean heavily towards remote work. This shift significantly impacts employees' work patterns due to digital acceleration and continuous use of electronic devices. Real-time responsiveness has become the norm, leading to unwritten demands extending beyond regular job roles and working hours.

The consequences of constant connectivity are palpable, ranging from increased stress levels to diminished energy and productivity. Prolonged screen time, especially in back-to-back Zoom meetings, results in burnout and decreased overall well-being. Employees fear that declining calls or meetings after working hours might negatively impact their career growth, raising questions about how much they are really "connected" during screen presence.

Research indicates a surge in health-related issues due to increased digital connectivity. Poor eating habits, lack of physical ac-

tivity, hypertension, and strained relationships are some of the correlated effects. In his book, "Dying for a Paycheck," author Jeffrey Pfeffer highlights that job stress costs US employers more than \$300 billion annually, affecting productivity and profitability. In India, a high percentage of workers report severe stress levels due to relentless work demands, as a primary reason to select or deselect employers, but often not talked about openly.

Recognising this, modern, employee-centric organisations have initiated measures like Digital Detox or Unplugging Hours. Google, for instance, has implemented Detox Hours, encouraging employees not to send emails or schedule meetings to mitigate the adverse effects of constant connectivity. To transition from constant connectivity to unplugging, both employers and employees need to play their part.

Employer Empathy: Beyond health insurance, companies should address the root causes of stress. Implementing laptop-free days, mobile-free hours at office

and specifying no business communication timelines (e.g., 6 pm to 8 am) demonstrate genuine concern for employee well-being.

Response Time Expectations: Organisations should set clear expectations for responding to emails or calls after office hours, preferably within the next working day. This cultural shift must be led by top management.

Technology-Free Retreats: Encouraging periodic breaks from technology through organised retreats can rejuvenate employees and improve overall well-being.

Results-Focused Culture: Several organisations value productivity over strict working hours. Outcomes matter, and digital presence is not the sole indicator.

Employee Awareness: Constant use of cell phones and continuous response to emails contribute to chronic stress. Encouraging employees to disconnect from technology and reconnect with friends, nature, and loved ones is crucial for maintaining overall health.

Understanding What is Important: Distinguishing between urgent and important tasks, following time management principles,

and acting on what is essential at the right time can prevent crisis and reduce stress.

Right to Disconnect: Taking inspiration from countries like France, employers can consider policies that restrict communication after office hours, providing employees with the right to log out without repercussions. Although it has its limitations, the intent is positive, emphasising the need to respect boundaries in this digital age.

Compassionate workplaces that value employees as human capital need to invest in their complete well-being and promote that culture. Periodic unplugging has proven benefits in terms of higher performance, increased productivity, and lower attrition rates. The responsibility lies not only with employers but also with employees who must be aware of the importance of taking breaks, whether for a day or a few hours, to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The writer is a business consultant & certified NLP Life Coach.

WISDOM CORNER

- All of us, at certain moments of our lives, need to take advice and to receive help from other people. **ALEXIS CARREL**
- There is much pleasure to be gained from useless knowledge. **BERTRAND RUSSELL**
- There are three constants in life... change, choice and principles. **STEPHEN COVEY**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1871:** German Empire established. The German Empire, forged as a result of diplomacy rather than an outpouring of popular nationalist feeling, was founded this day in 1871 in the aftermath of three successful wars by the North German state of Prussia.
- 1912:** British explorer Robert Falcon Scott and four members of his expedition reached the South Pole, only to discover that Roald Amundsen had preceded them by a month; Scott and his men subsequently died trying to return to their base camp.
- 1958:** Willie O'Ree became the first Black athlete to play in a National Hockey League game when he debuted with the Boston Bruins against the Montreal Canadiens.
- 2002:** The civil war in Sierra Leone was officially declared over; more than 50,000 people were estimated to have died in the fighting and some 2,000,000 were displaced.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Consensus candidate

Sir, The name of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as INDIA bloc chairman came to the fore after there was dissent over Nitish Kumar's name though the latter himself "backed out" of the race. Kharge is famous for his pliability as well as amiability, and this should gel with many egoistic INDIA bloc leaders. Similarly, not having a rebellious streak in him can also be his trump card in days to come. One cannot straightaway say that the Dalit leader has never been known as a messiah of the community or a leader of the masses. He can be one in the future if he plays clever politics. Old age cannot be held against him especially in politics; at his age he is known to be more pumped up than many youngsters. Kharge's biggest asset, unlike many South Indian politicians, is his hold over Urdu and "Dakhni." By all accounts, Kharge will act as a facilitator to keep the rumblings within the INDIA bloc to a minimum.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Postal precision

Sir, PIN Code Week, celebrated annually from January 15 to January 21, underscores the significance of completing the often overlooked rectangular box containing the PIN Code on documents dispatched through the postal department. Shriram Bhikaji Velankar introduced the Postal Index Number (PIN) system in 1972 as a solution to address confusion arising from duplicate place names, linguistic variations, and diverse spellings in addresses. The PIN Code, comprising regional, sub-regional, district, and delivery office digits, serves to streamline mail sorting and guarantee precise delivery. Initially launched in 1974 with three regions—Bengal, Madras, and Bombay—the system expanded into eight zones post-Independence. Each PIN Code corresponds to a specific delivery post office, such as General Post Office (GPO), Head Office (HO), or Sub Office (SO), with distinct roles for urban and rural locations in the sorting and delivery process. This systematic approach not only minimises address-related complexities but also accelerates the overall delivery process, aligning with the initial vision of Shriram Bhikaji Velankar. The Pin Code system continues to play a pivotal role in facilitating efficient mail delivery and eliminating confusion in addressing across the country.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Kashmir suffers through a dry winter

EXPERTS POINT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Srinagar, Jan 17: A prolonged dry spell is sweeping across Kashmir during the harshest phase of winter, leaving many people sick and farmers worried about impending water shortages.

Daytime temperatures have been high for about a month now, sometimes at least 6 degrees Celsius above the norm, according to Indian meteorological officials. The daytime temperatures usually hover around 5 degrees Celsius during this harsh winter period.

Nights, however, continue to be freezing, and have become piercingly cold amid the dry weather.

Officials say the region witnessed about 80 per cent rain deficit in December, while there was no precipitation in January's first week. Most plains in Kashmir have not received any snow while the upper reaches saw less than usual. Weather officials warn that the dry weather conditions are likely to continue for at least another week.

Experts link the weather shifts in Kashmir with broader climate change and global warming and warn that it could have a cascading impact on the region's water



A Kashmiri ski instructor helps a young tourist to ski on a patch of snow in Gulmarg, northwest of Srinagar. There is hardly any snow at Asia's largest ski terrain in Gulmarg



Kashmiris offer special prayers known as 'Salatul Istisqa' in the compound of Jamia Masjid or Grand Mosque in Srinagar for respite from the prevailing dry weather conditions in the valley

resources and agriculture.

"We have witnessed in the last some years that the winter period has shortened due to global warming," said Mukhtar Ahmed, head of the Indian Meteorological Department's Kashmir office. "It is not good for this place or for that matter any place as it adversely impacts multiple sectors, be it hydroelectric power generation, tourism or agriculture."

Earlier this week, climate scientists confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year on record and projected that January will be so warm that a 12-month period will exceed the 1.5-degree Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) threshold for the first time.

Countries had set a goal of limiting global warming since pre-industrial times to 1.5 degrees at the 2015 Paris climate talks to avert the worst consequences of climate change.

In Kashmir, the winter has historically been divided into

three parts. The first is Chillai Kalan, the coldest 40-day part of winter that begins in late December when temperatures drop considerably, leading to the freezing of bodies of water as well as water in pipes. The chances of snowfall are the highest in this phase and most areas, particularly the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall.

The harshest phase is followed by 20 days of Chillai Khord, or little winter, and 10 days of Chille Bachi, or baby winter.

Ahmed said timely snowfall is crucial to recharge the region's thousands of glaciers that subsequently sustain water resources for agriculture and horticulture, the mainstay of Kashmir's economy. Over the years, experts have warned of the environmental fragility of a region where villagers largely depend on glacial runoff for water.

Farmers, who depend on winter precipitation for their agricultural activities, are distressed. In the last few years, some farmers have converted their water-intensive paddy fields to fruit orchards due to water scarcity.

The huge temperature fluctuations have also manifested in a surge of health issues, particularly respiratory problems afflicting many residents. These challenges are exacerbated by power cuts, one of the region's longstanding crises despite vast hydroelectric potential, further disrupting daily life and intensifying the prevailing sense of gloom and winter stillness.

The unscheduled power outages, sometimes lasting 12 to 16 hours, have disrupted patient care for those with respiratory illnesses and affected businesses.

personnel of the CRPF have been

personnel of the CRPF have been deployed in important areas, the officials said. Several high-level meetings have been held in the capital city and districts to review security measures ahead of these two mega events during the past one week.

Additional DGP Anand Jain Monday directed all the intelligence agencies to generate intelligence in advance so that

Residents have long accused New Delhi of stifling their hydropower potential, as most power produced locally goes to various Indian states, leaving only 13% for Kashmir. In peak winter, the region purchases electricity at higher prices from India's northern grid to meet demand.

Kashmir's famed tourism sector is also affected. There is hardly any snow at Asia's largest ski terrain in Gulmarg where thousands of domestic and international tourists would usually visit to ski and sledge its stunning snowscape in winter.

Tens of thousands of mainly Indian visitors flock to Kashmir in winter months to witness the snow and visit its hill stations and the main city of Srinagar where wooden houseboats bobbing on the waters of the vast Dal Lake provide an enchanting stay.

Last Friday, thousands of Muslims in several parts of the region offered special congregational prayers seeking God's intervention in ending the dry spell. At Srinagar's Jamia Masjid, the region's biggest mosque, some worshippers, among the hundreds, cried as they prayed for rain and snowfall.

"We are facing distress and disease in this dry spell," said Bashir Ahmed, a local resident who participated in a prayer meeting in Srinagar. "Only Allah can take us out from this suffering."

Manipur's Moreh remains tense

Death toll in Moreh gunfight rises to 2, women block road to Imphal airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Jan 17: The death toll in the gunfight between state security forces and militants at Moreh in Manipur's Tengnoupal district rose to two after another security personnel was shot dead Wednesday evening, officials said.

The deceased has been identified as Takhellambam Saileshwore from Lamshang in Imphal West district, they said.

Earlier in the day during an ambush near Ima Kondong Lairembi Devi temple, 32-year-old Wangkhem Somorjit, a Manipur Police personnel, died after being hit by bullets. He succumbed to injuries during treatment at Key Location Point (KLP) of Assam Rifles. Two more Manipur Police personnel were injured in the exchange of fire between security forces and militants, officials added.

The militants had also fired RPG shells at the temporary command post damaging several vehicles parked in the vicinity.

Meanwhile, large number of women from Malom in Imphal

West district blocked the road to the airport in protest against the killing of the policemen in Moreh.

Spokesperson L Premchand of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) formed in connection with the killing of Somorjit told reporters that the body of the deceased personnel will not be accepted by the family members till the culprits are arrested and brought to justice.

Wearing traditional mourning dress, women sat on the middle of road to prevent all forms of vehicular movement on the route.

In another development, a large number of Meira Paibis from Imphal's main market of Khwairamband Keithel took out a rally demanding reinforcement of state forces at Moreh. They marched towards the CM's bungalow but were stopped by police.

Moreh has been experiencing regular exchanges of fire between security forces and militants over the past few days. The latest firing incident took place just 48 hours after the arrest of two suspects involved in the killing of a police officer by the state's forces.

Earlier this month, Singh had said there were high chances of involvement of foreign mercenaries from Myanmar in the gun and bomb attacks.

Tight security in Jammu ahead of R-Day, Ayodhya event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 17: Security has been beefed up in Jammu ahead of Republic Day and the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Security forces and the police have been put on alert across the Jammu region, including the Indo-Pakistan border, to ensure the deployment of fool-proof security in the region.

The security measures have been beefed up ahead of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony January 22 and also the Republic Day celebrations. Security setup has been put on alert, a senior officer said.

The security forces have intensified checking and frisking of vehicles and pedestrians in several parts of the city here as well as in other parts of the region, the officials said.

Jammu SSP Vinod Kumar led the review of the security on the ground, including checking points and nakas, today, they said.

Nakas and mobile vehicle checkpoints (MVCP) have been established at intersections in the city, its entry and exit points and roads leading in the capital city, they added.

The police and paramilitary

personnel of the CRPF have been

personnel of the CRPF have been deployed in important areas, the officials said. Several high-level meetings have been held in the capital city and districts to review security measures ahead of these two mega events during the past one week.

Additional DGP Anand Jain Monday directed all the intelligence agencies to generate intelligence in advance so that

anti-national and anti-social elements do not succeed in their nefarious designs in the Jammu region.

Proper coordination be maintained among all the intelligence agencies and security organisations in their respective areas of jurisdiction to foil the nefarious designs of anti-national elements and ensure smooth and incident-free conduct of national events, the ADGP said.

MANIPUR GOVT REQUESTS HELICOPTERS FROM MHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Jan 17: The Manipur government has requested the Ministry of Home Affairs for helicopters from Wednesday to meet emergency requirements in the wake of law and order situation in the border town of Moreh, an official said.

Commissioner Home T Ranjit Singh in a letter to Additional Secretary (Police II Division), Ministry of Home Affairs, said, "The law and order situation in the border town of Moreh has become a matter of serious concern as there has been continuous exchange of fire and this has resulted in the death of one IRB personnel this morning."

In view of the prevalent situation in Moreh, medical emergency may arise anytime, the letter stated.

The Manipur government has requested for helicopters from MHA for at least seven days as Moreh town witnessed heavy exchange of fire between security forces and suspected Kuki militants armed with sophisticated weapons at more than three different locations Wednesday morning.

Moreh is located 105 km from the state capital Imphal. Due to the volatile law and order situation in Tengnoupal district and threat of ambush from Kuki militants and highway blockade by tribal women, helicopter services have become the only convenient way for airlifting injured personnel.

Loktak lake in Manipur hit by illegal fishing, hunting



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Imphal, Jan 17: Even as Manipur is battling with protracted ethnic violence, the Loktak Development Authority (LDA) and the fishing community that is facing the impact of indiscriminate hunting of waterfowl and the illegal use of the electric shock method for fishing, has made an appeal to the public to emerge as responsible guardians of this invaluable natural resource.

Famous for its floating islands and picturesque landscape, Loktak Lake in Manipur's Bishnupur district is the largest freshwater body in northeast India.

Three of northeast India's most important ecosystems - Rudrasagar Lake in Tripura, Deepor Beel in Assam and Loktak Lake in Manipur are categorised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Held in February 1971 at Ramsar in Iran, the Ramsar Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources.

Loktak Development Authority (LDA) Chairman, Asni Kumar Singh, said that encompassing an area of about 26,000 hectares and being the state's fishery resource, the lake is not just a source of livelihood but a goddess to the people of Manipur and a mother to the fisher community. It is the cradle of Manipuri civilisation and culture.

Appealing to the communities dwelling around Loktak Lake, Asni Kumar Singh has asked them to discontinue the illegal use of the electric shock method of fishing and illicit hunting of waterfowl and endangered species of migratory birds by using firearms.

Emphasising the ecological, socio-economic, and cultural significance of Loktak Lake, Asni Kumar Singh high-

lighted its pivotal role as a cradle of Manipur's civilisation.

He stressed that this natural treasure isn't just a body of water but an integral part of the region's identity, woven intricately into the fabric of its existence.

Expressing grave concern about the adverse effects of illegal fishing and hunting on the fragile balance of the lake's ecosystem, the LDA Chairman sincerely urged the public to emerge as responsible guardians of this invaluable natural resource. His plea resonated with a call for collective environmental responsibility, urging citizens to understand that resorting to the use of electric shock in fishing and the illegal hunting of waterfowl not only poses a serious threat to the biodiversity of Loktak Lake but also violates established laws.

The Chairman underscored the importance of unified action and encouraged individuals to promptly report any instances of such illegal activities to the authorities.

Promising stringent action against offenders, he emphasised the consequences of such actions that not only harm the environment but also undermine the relentless efforts of the state government towards the conservation and preservation of Loktak Lake's natural heritage.

Significantly, the LDA chief's plea follows a fervent call by the All Loktak Lake Area Fishers Union, Manipur (ALLAFUM) to ban fishing with LED lights, an activity that compromises its conservation objectives.

Expressing concern over the dwindling fish populations impacting the livelihoods of Loktak fishers, the ALLAFUM secretary, Oinam Rajen Singh, condemned the recent trend of nocturnal fishing using LED lights. He said this practice not only leads to overfishing but also disrupts the feeding grounds of migratory water birds arriving between October and February annually.

The Manipur Loktak Lake (Protection) Act, 2006 was enacted by the Manipur Assembly with the objective of conservation and preservation of the lake. Under the Act, the lake is divided into three zones in which the core zone is prohibited from all kinds of activities which would affect its biodiversity and water quality.

Bank of India
Zonal Office : Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House,
Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar,
Mob.: 8337911737

E-AUCTION
SALE NOTICE
E-Auction Sale Notice under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-auction of the following properties for realization of the debts due to the Bank .

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrowers / Guarantors / Total Dues	Description of the Properties	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	PARADEEP BRANCH, Ph.8789569334 Borrower: Mr Jagendra Swain, Prop. of M/S Asian Trading Corporation, Guarantor: Mrs Sona Swain, W/o: Mr Jagendra Swain, both are residing at HIG-43, Housing Board Colony, Madhuban, Paradeep, Dist: Jagatsinghpur, Odisha-754142. Total Dues: Rs.66,93,991.87 + Interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid .	EQM of All the part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Khata No.9, Plot No.3(P), Area: 0.25 dec., KISSAM: Homestead, at Mouza: Sandhakuda, P.S.: Paradeep, SRO: Kujang, Tahasil: Kujang, Dist: Jagatsinghpur standing in the name of Mr Jagendra Swain, Bounded by: North- Govt Land, South- Road, East- Dr A K Lenka, West- Jitendra Chandra Swain .	Rs. 93,70,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) Rs. 9,37,000/- Rs. 12,00,000/-
2.	KHANDAGIRI BRANCH, Ph.9178286377 Borrower: Mr Jagannath Pattanaik, S/o: Late Bipra Charan Pattanaik, At: Plot No.248, Upper Sahi, Jagamara, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Pin- 751030 . Total Dues: Rs.7,35,393.24 as on 15.09.2023 + Interest, costs and expenses from 16.09.2023, less any part amount repaid .	EQM of Flat No.422, 4th Floor, Block B, Prabhujee Enclave, Khata No.253/106, Plot No.401, 410, 410/995, Area: 560 Sqft., KISSAM: Homestead, at Mouza: Kujimahal, P.S: Chandaka, SRO: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, standing in the name of Mr Jagannath Pattanaik, Bounded by: North- Open Space, South- Corridor, East- Open Space, West- Flat No.423	Rs. 12,39,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) Rs. 1,23,900/- Rs. 50,000/-
3.	KHANDAGIRI BRANCH, Ph.9178286377 Borrower: Mr Jagannath Pattanaik, S/o: Late Bipra Charan Pattanaik, At: Plot No.248, Upper Sahi, Jagamara, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Pin- 751030 . Total Dues: Rs.7,11,061.01 as on 15.09.2023 + Interest, costs and expenses from 16.09.2023, less any part amount repaid .	EQM of Flat No.105, 1st Floor, Block B, Prabhujee Enclave, Khata No.253/106, Plot No.401, 410, 410/995, Area: 560 Sqft., KISSAM: Homestead, at Mouza: Kujimahal, P.S: Chandaka, SRO: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, standing in the name of Mr Jagannath Pattanaik, Bounded by: North- Plot No.399 & 411, 412, South- Road, East- Plot No.405 & 406, West- Plot No.400 & Road .	Rs. 12,39,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) Rs. 1,23,900/- Rs. 50,000/-
4.	CHAKEISIANI BRANCH, Ph.8861961676 Borrower: Mrs Bandana Paikaray, W/o: Mr Prashant Sharma, Guarantor: Mr Prashant Sharma, S/o: Mr Upendra Sharma, both are residing at Block B2, Flat No.46, Hightech Plaza, Sunderpada, Bhubaneswar-751002 . Total Dues: Rs.31,50,222.22 as on 18.04.2023 + Interest, costs and expenses from 19.04.2023, less any part amount repaid .	EQM of Land & Building situated over Sub Plot No.4, Rev. Khata No.194, Rev. Plot No.63(P), Land Area: 0.36 dec., i.e. 1568.16 Sqft., KISSAM: Gharabari, at Mouza: Kantilo, P.S: Bhubaneswar Air Field, Thana No.53, SRO: Jatni, Tahasil: Jatni, Dist: Khurda along with a under construction RCC Building area 650 sqft standing in the name of Mrs Bandana Paikaray, Bounded by: North- Road left out from Plot No.63, South- Plot No.64, East- rest part of Plot No.63, West- rest part of Plot No.63 .	Rs.24,04,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) Rs. 2,40,400/- Rs. 50,000/-
5.	SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH, Ph. 7008636839 Borrower: Mr Rabindra Pradhan, S/o: Mr Balaram Pradhan, At: Badagola, P.O.: Siusa, P.S: Kakatpur, Dist: Puri, Pin- 752109 . Total Dues: Rs.52,94,493.76 as on 28.02.2023 + Interest, costs and expenses from 01.03.2023, less any part amount repaid .	EQM of Land & Building over Khata No.129, situated at Mouza: Badaola, Tahasil: Astaranga, Dist: Puri, Odisha, Total Area: Ac.0.096 dec. i.e. 4182 Sqft., KISSAM: Gharabari standing in the name of Mr Rabindra Pradhan, GF-1300 Sqft., FF- 1300 Sqft., PORTICO PLINTH AREA- 120 Sqft., Plot No.727, Land Area: Ac.0.026 dec., (Gharabari), Plot No.727, Land Area: Ac.0.01dec., (Gharabari), Plot No.728, Land Area: Ac.0.06 dec., (Gharabari) .	Rs. 39,22,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) Rs. 3,92,200/- Rs. 50,000/-
6.	SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH, Ph. 7008636839 Borrower: M/s Antariksh Gifts and Decor (OPC) Pvt Ltd., Director: Mr Subhankar Pattanaik, S/o: Mr Ramesh Chandra Pattanaik, Address-1: Plot No.EB-455, Badagada Brit Colony, P.S.: Badagada, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Pin- 751018, Address-2: House No.A2/203, Jagannath Warriors Residency, Madanpur, Kaimaita, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Odisha, Pin- 752024 . Total Dues: Rs.12,19,065/- as on 31.01.2023 + Interest, costs and expenses from 01.02.2023, less any part amount repaid .	All the part and parcel of the property situated at Plot No.867/1745, Sub Plot No. A, admeasuring Land Area: 0.034 dec. i.e 1500 Sqft., Khata No.393/278, Mouza: Pariapatpur, Tahasil: Baliaanta, P.S.: Baliaanta-51, Dist: Khrodha, Odisha, KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by: North- Sub Plot No.51, South- Sub Plot No.49, East- Road, West- Revenue Plot No.868 .	Rs. 9,00,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) Rs. 90,000/- Rs. 50,000/-

DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION
For Sl. No.1 to 3 : dt.09.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M with unlimited extension of 10(Ten) minutes each &
For Sl. No.4 to 6 : dt.26.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M with unlimited extension of 10(Ten) minutes each

Last date & time for submission of EMD & Documents - For Sl. No.1 to 3 : dt.08.02.2024 upto 4.00 P.M. & For Sl. No.4 to 6 : dt.23.02.2024 upto 4.00 P.M.

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders For Sl. No.1 to 3 : on any working day before 08.02.2024 & For Sl. No.4 to 6 : on any working day before 23.02.2024 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

The Sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 .
This is also a 15days sale notice to the Sl. No.1 to 3 Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) and 30days sale notice to the Sl. No.4 to 6 Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s)of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date .
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in (1) <https://www.ibapi.in> (2) <https://www.mstccccommerce.com> (3) www.bankofindia.co.in

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 17.01.2024 Authorised Officer, Bank of India





A man tries to take control of a bull as he participates in the 'Jallikattu' event at Alanganallur in Madurai, Tamil Nadu

PTI



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with supporters during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, in Mokokchung district, Nagaland

PTI



Farm worker harvesting oysters in Lau Fau Shan. Oyster farming in Lau Fau Shan, which is included in Hong Kong's list of intangible cultural heritage, is a tradition that dates back 700 years

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST



A devotee takes a dip in the holy 'sarovar' (water tank) on the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, at Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab

PTI



Boys travel atop a car near the border with Egypt, as the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas continues

REUTERS



Ice swimmers take a cold water swim class into a manmade ice channel in Sweethope Loughs ahead of open water practice, in Harle, Northumberland, Britain

REUTERS



Police women personnel during rehearsals for the upcoming Republic Day Parade at the Kartavya Path in New Delhi

PTI

national



I want to visit for a darshan of Ram Lalla along with my wife and children. My parents are also longing for a darshan of Ram Lalla. I will go after the January 22 ceremony along with my wife, children and parents
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

ED QUESTIONS BHUPINDER HOODA

Former Haryana chief minister and senior Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda was Wednesday questioned by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case, official sources said. The agency recorded the statement of the 76-year-old under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said



of the day quote

Neither the Congress nor the BJP invites us to their programmes
AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

Ministry of External Affairs is making necessary interventions and our Navy is giving protection to Indian cargo vessels
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION MINISTER

Rahul Gandhi (yatra schedule) is coinciding with our welfare dates (dates on which forms are to be distributed for a new scheme). These dates were declared even before we knew he was coming
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

SHORT TAKES

ED arrests Sena (UBT) functionary

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday arrested Suraj Chavan, a Shiv Sena (UBT) functionary, in a money laundering case linked to the alleged irregularities in the distribution of 'khichdi' to migrants during the COVID-19 period, official sources said. Chavan was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) late evening after he was questioned at the agency's office here. He is expected to be produced before a local court here Thursday.

Amit Shah to visit Assam, Meghalaya

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will undertake a three-day visit to Assam and Meghalaya beginning January 18 during which he will attend the plenary session of the North Eastern Council, the passing out parade of Assam Police commandos and inaugurate a cyber security operational centre, sources said Wednesday. Shah will also take part in the 61st Raising Day celebrations of the Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) in Tezpur, Assam. After arriving in Shillong Thursday, the home minister will inaugurate a cyber security operational centre of the Assam Rifles on the premises of the paramilitary force's headquarters in the capital of Meghalaya.

Court sends Hizbul operative to jail

New Delhi: A Delhi court Wednesday sent suspected Hizbul Mujahideen operative Javaid Ahmad Matoo, allegedly involved in 11 terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, to 14-day judicial custody, while setting free another accused in the case for want of evidence. Duty Magistrate Isha Singh sent Matoo, 32, to jail till January 31 on an application moved by the Delhi Police, after he was produced before the court. Matoo, allegedly a highly indoctrinated terrorist carrying a reward of ₹10 lakh, was arrested from Delhi's Nizamuddin area. He was driving a stolen car when he was apprehended, police said.

SC reserves verdict on bail plea of Jain

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday reserved its verdict on the regular bail plea of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Satyendar Jain in a money laundering case. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mishra reserved its judgement after hearing the arguments of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Jain, and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, representing the Enforcement Directorate.

IndiGo, AI & SpiceJet penalised

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 17: Aviation regulators BCAS and DGCA Wednesday slapped penalties totalling ₹2.70 crore on IndiGo, Mumbai airport operator MIAL, Air India and SpiceJet for various violations.

Days after a video of IndiGo passengers having food on the Mumbai airport tarmac was widely shared, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has slapped fines of ₹1.20 crore on the airline and ₹60 lakh on MIAL, while DGCA has imposed a penalty of ₹30 lakh on the airport operator, according to separate orders.

Separately, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has slapped a penalty of ₹30 lakh each on Air India and SpiceJet for their failure to comply with the rostering of pilots for operating flights in low visibility conditions. The penal action comes more than two weeks after significant flight disruptions were witnessed at the Delhi airport due to dense fog that had resulted in low visibility conditions.

It is rare for the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and DGCA to impose huge penalties on airlines and an airport operator in a single day, and also comes against the backdrop of various measures taken in recent days to minimise fog-related disruptions at Delhi and other airports.

Govt cancels FCRA registration of Centre for Policy Research

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Union Home Ministry has cancelled the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) for allegedly misutilising foreign funds to affect India's economic interests, and aid protests and legal battles against development projects.

The public think-tank termed the government move "incomprehensible and disproportionate" and vowed to seek legal recourse against the decision.

When the FCRA registration of an organisation is cancelled or suspended, it is barred from receiving any funding from abroad or foreign donors.

The MHA action came nearly a year after it suspended the NGO's registration under the FCRA. Sources said the CPR was registered under the FCRA for carrying out "educational activities" but it used foreign funding for litigation activities.



SPICEJET PASSENGER GETS REFUND

New Delhi: In an unfortunate mid-air incident Tuesday, a SpiceJet passenger was stuck inside an aircraft lavatory for around an hour due to malfunctioning of the door lock. The incident occurred onboard the flight from Mumbai to Bengaluru Tuesday, and the airline is providing a full refund to the passenger, according to a SpiceJet spokesperson. An official said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is looking into the incident. The airline has apologised for the inconvenience caused to the passenger. Soon after landing at the Bengaluru airport, an engineer opened the lavatory door and the passenger came out. "Throughout the journey, our crew provided assistance and guidance to the passenger. Upon arrival, an engineer opened the lavatory door, and the passenger received immediate medical support," the spokesperson said in a statement Wednesday. The spokesperson also said the passenger is being provided a full refund.

On January 14, many passengers rushed out of an IndiGo aircraft at the Mumbai airport, sat on the tarmac, and some were also seen having food there as soon as their diverted Goa-Delhi flight landed after a long delay.

Both IndiGo and MIAL did not report the incident to BCAS, which issued show-cause notices to the two entities January 16. While penalising IndiGo, BCAS said the airline did not report the incident to it and failed to respond to the emergent situation in a responsible and efficient manner.

In the case of MIAL, BCAS said the operator did not report the incident to it and also submitted a false statement about the deployment of security officers to cordon off the area.

According to the regulator, there was no alternate arrangement for surveillance of the apron and runways, while security cameras were non-operative.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra draws huge crowds

In just two months, the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra has captivated India, drawing over 15 crore enthusiastic participants. This mammoth people's participation speaks volumes about the Yatra's impact to forge a unified path towards a thriving and inclusive India.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is a landmark initiative aimed at ensuring 100% saturation of government schemes across the nation. People's participation numbers increased dramatically after the campaign was launched in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana. While the Yatra had reached out to 2.06 crore people at the end of Week 4 December 13, 2023, the numbers swelled to 5 crores at the end of 5th week by December 22, 2023. Over the next four weeks, the Yatra drew 10 crore participants crossing the 15 crore milestone. As on 17th January the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra dashboard read 15.34 crore participants covering 2.21 lakh Gram Panchayats and



9,541 urban locations.

Jan Bhagidari
The Yatra embodies the spirit of "Jan Bhagidari" (public participation). Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it aims to reach every eligible individual with welfare schemes through IEC vans travelling across cities and villages.

Over 4 crore screened in health camps
As of January 17, over 4 Crore people have been screened in

health camps. There are over 38 Lakh registrations on My Bharat. More than 2 crore Ayushman Bharat health cards have been issued to ensure accessible healthcare for all. The Yatra has covered over two lakh Gram Panchayats. Over 11 Crore people have taken Sankalp towards building a developed India by 2047. The Yatra's impact is undeniable. Over 1 Lakh Gram Panchayats have achieved 100% saturation for Ayushman Cards, empowering millions with healthcare access.

Beyond statistics, a shared dream
The Yatra's true success lies in igniting a collective dream – a dream of an India where progress reaches every doorstep, where prosperity is shared by all, and where development translates into empowered lives. With each covered Gram Panchayat, each enrolled beneficiary, and each pledge taken, the Yatra takes India a step closer to making this dream a reality.

India tops global indoor air pollution chart: Study

MOREOVER, ON THE LIST OF CITIES WITH HIGHEST AVERAGE ANNUAL PM2.5 LEVELS, NATIONAL CAPITAL DELHI WAS ON THE TOP AMONGST THE STUDIED CITIES, FOLLOWED BY BEIJING, SHANGHAI, SHENZHEN AND BUSAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: India has topped a global indoor air pollution chart with the highest average annual PM2.5 levels followed by China, Turkey, UAE and South Korea, according to a study.

Moreover, on the list of cities with highest average annual PM2.5 levels, national capital Delhi was on the top amongst the studied cities, followed by Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Busan, a Dyson statement said.

The Dyson Global Connected Air Quality Data project analyses more than half a trillion data points, to understand user behaviours and compare indoor and outdoor air quality.

The national sample size for India is 37,013 connected Dyson air purifiers.

"India recorded the highest average annual PM2.5 levels, followed by China, Turkey, UAE, and South Korea, while in terms of indoor average VOCs, India ranked 7th among the top 10," said the report for which the data were collected from Dyson Purifiers connected to its app. It



further said: "Moreover, Delhi topped the list of PM2.5 levels, amongst the studied cities, with the highest indoor annual average PM2.5 levels of 69.29, followed by Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Busan."
PM (Particulate Matter) 2.5, which is a mixture of solid and liquid particles, is used for describing pollutant levels. PM 2.5 levels are fine particles that have a diameter less than 2.5 micrometers, more than 100 times thinner than a human hair and remain suspended in the air for longer durations and pose health risks as they can enter into the respiratory tract.
"The study reveals that air inside our homes can be significantly worse, particularly dur-

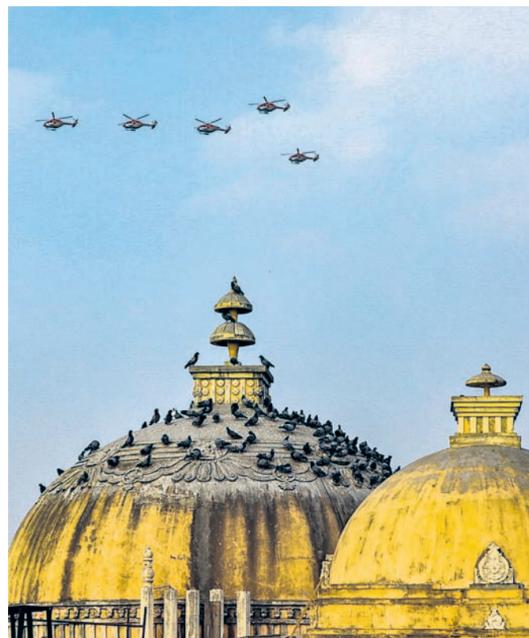
ing the winter season, with PM2.5 levels exceeding health standards set by WHO. Winter was, in general, the most polluted season across the markets – even in the southern hemisphere – where colder weather traps polluted air nearer to ground level," it said.

Pollution peaks in the winter season, especially in Delhi, with November and December being the most polluted months.

"Shockingly, the air inside homes during winter was found to be a staggering 15 per cent worse than outside, effectively trapping smoke within our walls," it said adding "In fact, across India, the indoor air gets 41 per cent dirtier during these months, and in Delhi, it's even worse at 48 per cent."

Unlike most places where the air is worst at night, in India, the most polluted time inside was between 7 am and midday.

Pollution peaks in the winter season, especially in Delhi, with November and December being the most polluted months



'Sarang' aerobatic team of the Indian Air Force during rehearsal for the Wings India 2024 in Hyderabad, Telangana
PTI PHOTO

Ensure no hate speech at Raja Singh rallies, says SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Supreme Court Wednesday directed the District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police of Maharashtra's Yavatmal and Chhattisgarh's Raipur to ensure no hate speeches are made at rallies being held by Hindu Janajagruti Samiti and Telangana BJP legislator T Raja Singh over the next one week in their respective jurisdictions.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, however, refused to stay the rallies, saying the parties the applicant has voiced apprehensions about are not before the court.

It advised the DMs and SPs of the two districts to install CCTV cameras at the venue of the proposed rallies with recording facility so that those making hate speeches can be identified, in case they deliver one. The court asked the authorities to be cautious and ensure there is no incitement to violence.

"We accordingly direct the District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police of Yavatmal, Maharashtra and Raipur, Chhattisgarh to take notice of the allegations and take appropriate steps as required. If necessary and deemed appropriate, police will install CCTV cameras with recording facilities so that perpetrators can be identified, if anything happens," the bench said in its order.

It passed the order on an application moved in the pending plea of journalist Shaheen



Abdulla highlighting instances of hate speech at such events.

Abdulla said in his application that Hindu Janajagruti Samiti is scheduled to hold a rally in Yavatmal January 18 and voiced apprehension about hate speeches being made there. He said controversial BJP MLA from Telangana T Raja Singh is set to address rallies in Raipur, the Chhattisgarh capital, from January 19 to January 25. He feared hate speeches might be made at Singh's rallies, too.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal and lawyer Nizam Pasha, who appeared for Abdulla, contended during the hearing that no action was being taken against those promoting hate through their speeches.

"We have gone through the petition and there are certainly objectionable remarks which have been made. But some action has been taken and they (police) have lodged FIR," Justice Khanna said.

The bench said it cannot preempt a rally on a mere apprehension about the possibility of hate speeches being made there. It, however, said the court can take action if there is any incitement to violence as there are orders to this effect.

SNIPPETS

Jallikattu: Two gored to death in Tamil Nadu

Chennai: Two persons were gored to death by a bull during a Jallikattu event at Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu Wednesday. Among the two who succumbed to their injuries are an 11-year-old boy and a 30-year-old man. They were gored by an angry bull near the entry point of the venue. The two were rushed to the hospital immediately but their lives could not be saved. The Jallikattu events or bull taming are carried out during the Pongal celebrations in Tamil Nadu. Pongal is the biggest harvest festival of Tamil Nadu and marks the advent of a new Tamil year. Several big and small Jallikattu events are held in several districts of the state of Tamil Nadu with huge participation of people.

Fog reduces visibility in parts of north, northwest

New Delhi: Dense to very dense fog conditions prevailed over most parts of north and northwest India, reducing visibility below 50 metres at some places including in Punjab where a bus accident killed three police personnel. The IMD said dense to very dense fog and cold to severe cold day conditions are likely to continue to prevail over north India during next four-five days. The plains of northwest India are also likely to see cold wave to severe cold wave conditions during the next five days. The IMD said minimum temperatures Wednesday were below normal by one to three notches over many parts of northwest and adjoining east India. The minimum temperatures are in the range of 2-5 degrees Celsius in parts of Punjab and Haryana; in the range of 6-10 degrees Celsius in many parts of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, north Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and north Chhattisgarh.

Telangana Governor's 'X' account hacked

Hyderabad: The account of Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on social media platform 'X', was allegedly hacked, police said Wednesday. The 'X' account of the Governor was "hacked" three days ago and some messages were posted on it, after which Raj Bhavan officials lodged a complaint with the cyber crime unit of Hyderabad police. "Based on the complaint, a case was registered and the matter is being investigated," a senior police official told PTI. Meanwhile, BRS MLC K Kavitha today said her social media account experienced a "brief unauthorised access" and that she will lodge a complaint with the Cyber Police in this regard.

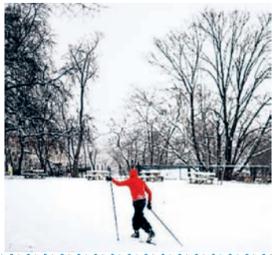
international



We need a war-fighting transformation of NATO
ROB BAUER | CHIEF OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, NATO

NY SNOW DROUGHT ENDS

Millions of Americans awoke Tuesday to snow, freezing rain and frigid temperatures as an Arctic blast gripped much of the United States, ending a nearly two-year "snow drought" in New York City and putting much of the West into a deep freeze



of the day quote

Now it is quite obvious, not only (Ukraine's) counter-offensive failed, but the initiative is completely in the hands of the Russian armed forces. If this continues, Ukrainian statehood may suffer an irreparable, very serious blow



VLADIMIR PUTIN | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

Our not promising to renounce the use of force is absolutely not targeted at Taiwan compatriots. We are targeting interference from external forces and the tiny number of Taiwan independence separatists and their separatist activities



CHEN BINHUA | SPOKESPERSON FOR TAIWAN AFFAIRS OFFICE, CHINA

Civilian casualties had been steadily decreasing in 2023 but the wave of attacks in late December and early January violently interrupted that trend



DANIELLE BELL | HEADS MONITORING MISSION, UN

SHORT TAKES

Mega aid to Ukraine

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron announced plans Tuesday to deliver more long-range cruise missiles as well as bombs to Ukraine and warned that a Russian victory would undermine the world order. "We cannot let Russia win and we must not do that," he said, adding that he will travel to Ukraine next month. Macron was speaking at a wide-ranging news conference where he addressed an array of domestic and international issues for more than two hours. He said France plans to deliver about 40 long-range missiles and "several hundred bombs that our Ukrainian friends are waiting for".

Thai blast kills 23

Bangkok: An explosion at a fireworks factory in central Thailand killed at least 23 people Wednesday, according to provincial officials. The death toll was announced by authorities with Suphan Buri province, where the blast occurred in mid-afternoon. The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said officials were working to secure the site and help affected people. The cause of the explosion is being investigated. The blast came less than a month before Chinese New Year in February, when demand for fireworks is strong.

SL arrests 18 Indians

Colombo: The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 18 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, an official statement said Wednesday, in the third such incident this month. The fishermen were arrested, and their two trawlers seized Tuesday off the coast of Mannar in the northeast, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a press release. The 18 apprehended fishermen were escorted to the Thalpadu Pier in Mannar and will be handed over to the Talaimannar Fisheries Inspector for further action, it said.

Bomb rocks Nigeria

Abuja: Three people died and 77 others were injured after a massive blast caused by explosives rocked more than 20 buildings in one of Nigeria's largest cities Tuesday night, authorities said Wednesday, as rescue workers dug through the rubble in search of those feared trapped. Residents in the southwestern state of Oyo's densely populated Ibadan city heard a loud blast at about 7:45 pm, causing panic as many fled their homes.

Koreas' ties at point of no return

NORTH KOREA ABOLISHES KEY RECONCILIATION AGENCIES WITH SOUTH AMID ESCALATING TENSIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Seoul, Jan 17: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country would no longer pursue reconciliation with South Korea and called for rewriting the North's constitution to eliminate the idea of shared statehood between the war-divided countries, state media said Tuesday.

The historic step to discard a decades-long pursuit of a peaceful unification, which was based on a sense of national homogeneity shared by both Koreas, comes amid heightened tensions where the pace of both Kim's weapons development and the South's military exercises with the US have intensified in a tit-for-tat.

Some experts say Kim could be aiming to diminish South Korea's voice in regional security matters and communicate more clearly that he would seek to deal directly with the US over the nuclear standoff.

Declaring the South as a permanent adversary, not as a potential partner for reconciliation, could also be part of efforts to improve the credibility of Kim's escalatory nuclear doctrine.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "concerned about what we're hearing, what we're seeing" in the cut in contacts, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. "For us, it's very clear that



diplomatic engagement remains the only possible path for sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula, for a complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula," he told reporters at UN headquarters in New York.

The North Korean steps come as Kim has been actively boosting his partnerships with Moscow and Beijing as he attempts to break out of diplomatic isolation and increase his leverage by joining a united front against Washington.

North Korea also abolished the key government agencies that had been tasked with managing relations with South Korea during a meeting of the country's rubber-stamp parliament Monday, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

The Supreme People's Assembly said the two Koreas are

locked in an "acute confrontation" and that it would be a serious mistake for the North to regard the South as a partner in diplomacy.

"The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, the National Economic Cooperation Bureau and the (Diamond Mountain) International Tourism Administration, tools which existed for (North-South) dialogue, negotiations and cooperation, are abolished," the assembly said in a statement.

During his speech, Kim blamed South Korea and the US for raising tensions in the region, citing their expanded joint military exercises, deployments of US strategic military assets, and their trilateral security cooperation with Japan as turning the Korean Peninsula into a dangerous war-risk zone, KCNA said.

It is the final conclusion drawn from the bitter history of the inter-Korean relations that we cannot go along the road of national restoration and reunification together

KIM JONG UN | LEADER, NORTH KOREA

Kim's comments show the anti-national and anti-historical nature of the government in Pyongyang. The North's fake peace tactic that threatened us to choose between war and peace no longer works

YOON SUK YEOL | PRESIDENT, SOUTH KOREA

'Rewrite North's constitution'

Kim said it has become impossible for the North to pursue reconciliation and a peaceful reunification with the South, which he described as "top-class stooges" of outside powers that are obsessed with confrontational maneuvers.

He called for the assembly to rewrite the North's constitution to define South Korea as the North's "primary foe and invariable principal enemy". The new constitution should spec-

Canada study permits to Indian students dipped due to dispute

REUTERS

Ottawa, Jan 17: The number of study permits Canada issued to Indian students fell sharply late last year after India ejected Canadian diplomats who would process the permits and fewer Indian students applied due to a diplomatic dispute over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in Canada, a top Canadian official told Reuters.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller added in an interview that he believes the number of study permits to Indians is unlikely to rebound soon. Diplomatic tensions erupted after Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in June said there was evidence connecting Indian government agents to the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia.

The tensions are likely to weigh on the numbers going forward, Miller said.

"Our relationship with India has really halved our ability to process a lot of applications



from India," Miller said.

Those factors led to an 86% drop in study permits issued to Indians in the fourth quarter of last year from the previous quarter, to 14,910 from 108,940, according to official data that have not been previously reported.

Indians have formed the largest group of international students in Canada in recent years, with more than 41% - or 225,835 - of all permits going to them in 2022.

International students are a cash cow for Canadian universities as they bring in about C\$22 billion (\$16.4 billion) annually and slowdown will be a blow to the institutions.

RECORD LOW BIRTH RATE

China's demographic worries heighten

World's second biggest economy's population drops for second year; plunges by 2.08mn in 2023

REUTERS

Hong Kong, Jan 17: China's population fell for a second consecutive year in 2023, as a record low birth rate and a wave of Covid-19 deaths when strict lockdowns ended accelerated a downturn that will have profound long-term effects on the economy's growth potential.

The National Bureau of Statistics said the total number of people in China dropped by 2.08 million, or 0.15%, to 1.409 billion in 2023.

That was well above the population decline of 850,000 in 2022, which had been the first since 1961 during the Great Famine of the Mao Zedong era.

China experienced a dramatic nationwide Covid surge early

last year after three years of tight screening and quarantine measures kept the virus largely contained until authorities abruptly lifted curbs in December 2022.

Total deaths last year rose 6.6% to 11.1 million, with the death rate reaching the highest level since 1974 during the Cultural Revolution.

New births fell 5.7% to 9.02 million and the birth rate was a record low 6.39 births per 1,000 people, down from a rate of 6.77 births in 2022.

Births in the country have been plummeting for decades as a result of the one-child policy implemented from 1980 to 2015 and its rapid urbanisation during that period. As with earlier economic booms in Japan and South Korea, large populations moved from China's rural farms into cities, where having children is more expensive.

Japan's birth rate was 6.3 per 1,000 people in 2022, while South Korea's rate was 4.9.

Further denting appetite for



baby-making in China in 2023, youth unemployment hit record highs, wages for many white-collar workers fell, and a crisis in the property sector, where more than two-thirds of household wealth is stored, intensified.

The fresh data adds to concerns that the world's second largest economy's growth prospects are diminishing due to fewer workers and consumers, while the rising costs of elderly care and retirement benefits put more strain on indebted local

governments. India surpassed China as the world's most populous nation last year, according to estimates by the United Nations, fuelling more debate over the merits of relocating some China-based supply chains to other markets, especially as geopolitical tensions rise between Beijing and Washington.

Long-term, UN experts see China's population shrinking by 109 million by 2050, more than triple the decline of their previous forecast in 2019.

POPULATION DROPS 0.15% YOY IN 2023
DEATH RATE AT HIGHEST SINCE 1974
TOTAL NEW BIRTHS DROP 5.7% TO 9.02MN
TOTAL DEATHS RISE 6.6% TO 11.1MN

War in Gaza has revived the 'axis of resistance'

The West sees Tehran as the mastermind behind this network, and there is no doubt that the axis of resistance reflects Iran's strategic outlook

January 12, the United Kingdom and the United States initiated military offensives against Houthi targets situated in Yemen. These strikes were carried out in response to the group's repeated attacks on commercial ships within the Red Sea, causing significant disruptions in global trade. As a result, the Houthis momentarily gained prominence as key members of a military coalition that has been increasingly active in the region since the assassination of Saleh al-Arouri and other Hamas leaders in Beirut January 2. The demise of these leaders led to Hezbollah's commander, Hassan Nasrallah, vowing revenge and asserting that the fight against Israel necessitated an unwavering 'axis of resistance.' Nasrallah's resolute words were swiftly incorporated into professionally produced videos and widely disseminated. Subsequently, the axis launched an offensive. Hezbollah relentlessly bombarded Israel's Meron air surveillance base with a barrage of 62 rockets, while the Iraq-based Islamic Resistance group employed drones to target US bases in Syria and Iraq, in addition to launching a long-range cruise missile at the Israeli city of Haifa. Simultaneously, the Houthis executed strikes in the



Red Sea, while Iran seized an oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman.

Although both Western and regional countries claim that they do not want the war in the Gaza Strip to become a regional conflagration, Iran, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other members of the axis are playing a very different game. They are patiently and methodically consolidating an alliance of forces across a regional battlefield. It started with Iran and Hezbollah, but it is rapidly evolving into something larger than its parts. Its other members include the Houthis in Yemen, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Shia militias in Iraq and Syria. The formation of this axis presents a direct

challenge to the regional order that the West has created and defended in the Middle East for decades. It also—as Iranian and Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea demonstrate—presents a threat to global trade and energy supplies.

Hamas's attack on Israel October 7 demonstrated the axis' capabilities and influence, which extend beyond the Palestinian territories to encompass Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran. The West sees Tehran as the mastermind behind this network, and there is no doubt that the axis of resistance reflects Iran's strategic outlook. Indeed, its Revolutionary Guards have provided the axis' members with lethal mil-

itary capabilities and coordinating support. But Tehran is not the puppet master, and the axis' coherence and regional role reflects far more than Iran's dictates.

Instead, the axis is bound together by a shared hatred of US and Israeli "colonialism." Hezbollah believes that Washington and Tel Aviv are meddling in Lebanon, and Hamas, the Houthis, and Iraq's Shia militias believe the same to be true in their territories.

The axis of resistance did not spring into life October 7. Rather, it was forged in the aftermath of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Its founder, the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, and its former commander, Qasem Soleimani, built the network on the back of Iran's close ties with Hezbollah, drawing on both Iran's and Hezbollah's experiences of fighting Iraq and Israel in the 1980s. From the outset, Soleimani sought to create a flexible network where each constituent part of the axis was self-sufficient. Although the training and munitions might come from Iran, each unit was expected to master and deploy tactics, technology, and weaponry.

In its early days, the fledgling axis had the primary aim of defeating US plans for the occupation of Iraq. To that

end, Tehran and Hezbollah successfully created local militias that fought US troops. Then, after ISIS took control of large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014, similar militias were established to fight these militantly sectarian forces that threatened both the Assad regime in Syria and Shia control of Iraq. The Syrian civil war became a turning point for the axis as Iran, Hezbollah, and Shia militias in Iraq and Syria fought against their common enemy. In doing so, these countries and groups deepened their military and intelligence capabilities and honed the strategic logic of their alliance. It was during this time that Iran strengthened its ties with Yemen's Houthi rebels, folding them into the now burgeoning alliance, and adopting the banner of the axis of resistance.

The axis of resistance has been long in the making. The war in Gaza has given the network its greatest opportunity so far to unleash a military and communications assault upon the West. The only way to take the wind out of the axis' sails is to end the war in Gaza and negotiate a real and just settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Unless this is done, the axis will be a regional reality that the US will have to contend with for many years to come. AGENCIES

Uzbek test awaits India



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Al Rayyan (Qatar), Jan 17: After a gritty performance against formidable Australia, India face Uzbekistan in their second group match of the Asian Cup here Thursday, aiming to assert themselves better than what they managed in the opening game.

India lost to title-contenders Australia 0-2 in the opening match January 13 after denying the Socceroos any success for 50 minutes. The Australians were at their attacking best but Sunil Chhetri's men managed to avoid a bigger margin of defeat.

The defensive compactness, especially in the first half, would be something that the Indians would like to continue against the Uzbeks, who are a bit disappointed after playing out a 0-0 draw against Syria in their opening match.

Chhetri made the point that the

Central Asian side, ranked 68th in the world as against 102nd of India, would not be as menacing as the Australians, and his thoughts could be a pointer to his side's game-plan.

"Uzbekistan are not Australia, but they're a good side nonetheless. So, it will be a big challenge in this game too," said Chhetri who missed a scoring chance against Australia.

Chhetri had earlier conceded that Uzbekistan as well as Australia are of World Cup level but he and his team will not be too scared of the former, popularly known as 'White Wolves', after their fighting show against the Socceroos.

For sure, India will not sit back too deep against Uzbekistan. Instead, they would look to play their own game and press for counter-attacks with quick transition. The likes of Chhetri, Manvir Singh and other forwards could be looking for

chances which were almost nonexistent against the Australians.

Sandesh Jhingan will, as usual, be the key man in the deep defence. A true warrior on the pitch, Jhingan led a fine Indian defensive effort against Australia. He soldiered on with a bandaged forehead and stitched-up cuts above each eyebrow.

Uzbekistan are a side who have beaten the likes of China, Oman and Bolivia while drawing with Iran and Mexico in the past one year. They are currently at ninth spot among the Asian countries in the FIFA rankings.

Uzbekistan dominated against Syria but failed to find the target from around a dozen shots. Syria also got enough shots and that will encourage the Indians to try and score.

Historically, India and Uzbekistan have played eight times against each other with the Blue Tigers having won just one. Uzbekistan were the victors five

times while two matches had ended in draws. The last match between the two sides had also gone in favour of the Uzbeks who won 2-1 in the 2001 Merdeka Cup in Kuala Lumpur.

The 'White Wolves' have not lost to India in their six earlier meetings. They erased a 2-1 deficit with two goals in the final 13 minutes to win their only Asian Cup qualification round match 3-2 in 1999.

This will be Uzbekistan's eighth appearance in the AFC Asian Cup and they reached the knock-out round in each of the previous five editions (2004-2019), and the semifinals in 2011. They lost to Australia in the round of 16 in the last edition in 2019.

A win against the Uzbeks may be far-fetched but taking a point from the match is a possibility, just like the Syrians have done, and that could be valuable for India as far as knockout qualification is concerned.

India pip Afghans in thriller

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 17: Skipper Rohit Sharma donned the glittering cap of saviour thrice in the night, first with a situation-defying hundred in regulation time and then with two mini assaults to help India fight past a feisty Afghanistan in a dramatic double Super Over finish in the third and final T20I here Wednesday. The result meant that India won their final series before the T20 World Cup with a satisfying 3-0 margin.

Before Super Overs kicked in, Rohit (121 n o, 69b, 11x4, 8x6) and his perfect sidekick Rinku Singh (69 n o, 39b, 2x4, 6x6) shared 190 runs for a stellar unbeaten fifth-wicket stand as India came back from a flaky 22/4 to post a massive 212/4 after opting to bat first.

The Afghans started gamely through openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (50, 32b, 3x4, 4x6) and Ibrahim Zadran (50, 41b, 4x4, 1x6) as they added 93 runs in 11 overs, building a solid foundation for the chase.

Their departure saw spinners Washington Sundar (3/18) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/31) tightening things a bit but the experienced Gulbadin Naib (55 n o, 23b, 4x4, 4x6) played some twinkling shots to keep his side in the hunt. Naib knocked off 18 runs of the required 19 off the final over bowled by pacer Mukesh Kumar, dragging the match into a Super Over.

The visitors made 16/1 in the first Super Over bowled by Mukesh and India equalled the score with Rohit making 13, and it stretched the game to the second Super Over.

In this phase, India made 11 and Rohit made all those runs before getting run out. Afghanistan lost both Nabi and Gurbaz to Ravi Bishnoi signalling the end of a winding match.

Rohit remained the star of the night among all that commotion, also silencing those who doubted his suitability to be in India's T20 scheme of things. A strike-rate of 175 often will give the



Rohit Sharma became the player with most centuries (5) in T20Is, surpassing Glenn Maxwell and Suryakumar Yadav (4 tons each)

Rohit became the oldest player (36y 262d) from a Test-playing nation to score a century in T20Is, breaking Chris Gayle's (36y 117d) record

The 36 runs conceded by Karim Janat in the 20th over of India's innings against Rohit and Rinku are the joint most in an over in men's T20Is. Yuvraj Singh off Stuart Broad in 2007 and Kieron Pollard off Akila Danajaya in 2021 scored 36 runs off an over, with sixes off all six balls

BRIEF SCORES

India 212/4 (Rohit Sharma 121 n o, Rinku Singh 69 n o; Fareed Ahmad 3/20); **Afghanistan 212/6** (Gulbadin Naib 55 n o, Rahmanullah gurbaz 50, Ibrahim Zadran 50, Mohammad Nabi 34; Washington Sundar 3/18). **Match tied.**

Super Over 1: AFG 16/1; IND 16/1 (**Tied**). **Super Over 2:** IND 11/1; AFG 1/2. **India won.**

picture of manic hitting but his innings was anything but that.

His top-order colleagues' callousness while playing the pull shot meant that Rohit had to restrain himself in the initial part of his stay. Even Rinku displayed his destructive instincts judiciously and that gradually-building crescendo was the trademark of their alliance.

The Afghanistan spinners found a hint of grip from the surface, and Rohit had to bring out a rather rare shot from his arsenal, reverse sweep to unsettle opposition spinners. But once he felt that India had reached a safer shore, Rohit unleashed himself on the Afghans as 71 runs flowed from the next 28 balls he faced.

At the other end, Rinku had the simple job of keeping his end up and the left-hander did that job with maturity Rinku, though, vented his belligerence when the opportunity presented itself.

SHORT TAKES

Nishna in tied 4th



Mumbai: Amateur Nishna Patel fired a stunning 6-under 64 to climb to tied fourth position in the second leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour here Wednesday. Nishna, who had a disappointing first round of 77, is now 1-over as Hitaashee Bakshi (70) was in lead at 3-under 137 after 36 holes at the Bombay Presidency Golf Club. Hitaashee shot even par 70 after a first round 67, to remain at 3-under 137. She birdied three and had two bogeys. Hitaashee led by two shots over Amandeep Drall (68-71), while Ridhima Dilawari (68-72) was third at even par 130.

Unique feat

Dubai: England's Sue Redfern is set to become the first ICC-appointed female neutral umpire to stand in a bilateral series during the upcoming WT20I between Australia and South Africa. Redfern's appointment follows the ICC decision to appoint one neutral umpire for all ICC Women's Championship series as well as any T20I matches scheduled with them, ensuring some neutrality in running matches while also keeping in mind the long-term development of female umpires. Seven female neutral umpires will officiate across ICC Women's Championship series with match-day pay on par with those on the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires.

Rankings improved

Dubai: Riding on two excellent outings against Afghanistan in the ongoing series, India left-arm spinner Axar Patel Wednesday leaped to his career-best fifth place, while opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal rose to the sixth spot in the latest ICC men's T20I player rankings. Shivam Dube's successive unbeaten knocks of 60 and 63 had helped him shoot up from 265th to 58th. Shubman Gill moved up seven places to 60th while left-handed batsman Tilak Verma gained three places to joint-61st while left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh jumped four places to 21st spot.

Djoko challenges a heckler in testy win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 17: Defending champion Novak Djokovic challenged a heckler to "say that to my face" during the fourth set of a testy second-round win Wednesday over Alexei Popyrin at the Australian Open.

Before starting the fifth game of the fourth set, Djokovic walked back behind the baseline and engaged with a spectator, gesturing to him to come down and "say that to my face."

That match had been going for almost three hours by then, and Djokovic had dropped the second set and had to save set points in the third. After the outburst, he won three straight games to take the match away from the Aussie player en route to a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(7-4), 6-3 victory.

After clinching the match on a Popyrin error, he turned around to the crowd again and yelled, pumping his fist to celebrate.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, who lost the final here last year to Djokovic, also had a tough time against an Aussie on an adjacent court in the night session. Tsitsipas had match points in the fourth set and then had to save four set points to force a tiebreaker, which he clinched



in a 4-6, 7-6(8-6), 6-2, 7-6(7-4).

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and US Open winner Coco Gauff avoided the early Day 4 upsets in the women's draw to advance to the third round, along with 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva.

Three-time major finalist Ons Jabeur lost 6-0, 6-2 in 54 minutes to Andreeva in Wednesday's opening match on Rod Laver

Arena. Then, 2018 champion Caroline Wozniacki also lost to a young Russian on the No.3 show court.

Two other 16-year-old players lost their centre-court matches to highly-ranked players: No.10 Beatriz Haddad Maia accounted for Alina Korneeva 6-1, 6-2 and Sabalenka overpowered Brenda Fruhvirtova 6-3, 6-2 to open the night session.

Gauff extended her winning streak to nine matches at Grand Slams with a 7-6(7-2), 6-2 win over fellow American Caroline Dolehide. Gauff will next play another American, Alycia Parks, who reached the third round of a Grand Slam singles tournament for the first time with a 7-5, 6-4 win over 32nd-ranked Leylah Fernandez.

Amanda Anisimova continued her comeback from a seven-month mental health break with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Nadia Podoroska. She'll next play Paula Badosa, a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

On the men's side, fourth-seeded Jannick Sinner had a more routine 6-2, 6-2, 6-2 win over Jesper de Jong on Margaret Court Arena and No.5 Andrey Rublev beat Christopher Eubanks 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

Australia's highest-ranked player, No. 10 Alex de Minaur, accounted for Matteo Arnaldi 6-3, 6-0, 6-3. De Minaur will next play Flavio Cobolli, an Italian qualifier who beat Pavel Kotov 7-5, 6-3, 5-7, 6-2.

No.12-seeded Taylor Fritz progressed with US Open semifinalist Ben Shelton, the No. 16 seed, who had a 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 7-6(7-5) over local hope Chris O'Connell.

Super Cup: Odisha FC thrash Inter Kashi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 17: Odisha FC moved to the top of Group D in the Kalinga Super Cup with a comfortable 3-0 victory against Inter Kashi at the Kalinga Stadium, Wednesday. The Kalinga Warriors now need a draw in their next match against FC Goa January 22 to qualify for the next round.

Goals from Lalithathanga Khawlhring, who is known as Puitea (45th minute), Diego Mauricio (59th), and Isaka Ralte (78th) were on target for the hosts. Despite earning numerous corners, Odisha FC had to wait 45 minutes for the opener.

Jerry Lalrinzuala, who had been consistently delivering precise crosses, once again provided a perfect one. Inter Kashi custodian Arindam managed to punch it away but unfortunately, it landed right in front of Puitea. Seizing the opportunity, Puitea unleashed a powerful left-footed



shot to break the deadlock.

After the change of ends, Mauricio showcased his finishing prowess with an impressive strike from outside the box. Arindam could only watch as the ball found the back of the net.

In the 73rd minute, a splen-

did play unfolded as Krishna set up Mauricio, but Arindam denied latter to extend the lead. In the 75th minute, Anil Chawan received his second yellow card of the match, resulting in Inter Kashi being reduced to 10 men.

In the 78th minute, a dis-

play of one-touch football unfolded. Krishna delivered an inch-perfect pass, allowing Isak to break through, and the winger capitalised on the opportunity without making any mistakes and extending Odisha's lead to 3-0.

INDIA OPEN BADMINTON

Satwik-Chirag wins, Srikanth goes down



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 17: Celebrated Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the second round of the men's doubles event at India Open Super 750 tournament but an erratic Kidambi Srikanth bowed out after a straight-game loss to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu here Wednesday.

World No.2 Satwik and Chirag, who had finished runner-up at Malaysia Super 1000 last week in Kuala Lumpur, eked out a 21-15, 19-21, 21-16 win over Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee of Chinese Taipei.

Earlier, a flurry of brilliant shots was sandwiched between a series of unforced errors during the 17-minute opening round clash as Srikanth went down 22-24, 13-21 to World No.18 Lee.

Srikanth made a good start in the opening game, playing some fine strokes from the back court to keep his nose ahead. But Lee kept breathing down his neck and slowly came back to the groove and, following a tight battle, moved ahead from 17-17 to grab three game points.

Srikanth managed to claw back at 20-20 before taking a one-point lead, but then, sprayed a shot wide, as Lee sealed the game with a crisp drop in the end.

While he looked good in the first game, Srikanth fell behind 2-11 at the break after the change of ends. He recovered to 6-12, but the damage was already done as the gap was too big to be bridged by the Indian.

"I know I have been making unforced errors for sometimes and I am working on it," said Srikanth after the match. "I don't play safe, that's my game. I try to earn points. Hopefully, things will be better in next few tournaments."

"Parupalli (Kashyap) has a few things on his mind, so let's see. If I win a few tournaments, I will qualify for Olympics. I am not thinking about it as I just don't want to qualify only, I want to be a medal contender too."

Earlier, World No.20 Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa, who had won the Guwahati Masters Super 100 last December, went down fighting to World No.10 Thai pair of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda prajongjai 5-21, 21-18, 11-21 in their women's doubles opener.

Among other Indians, the men's pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Sai Pratheek, and women's duo of Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam went down in straight games to make an early exit from the tournament.