

**Cinematic triumph**  
Actor Alia Bhatt receives the Honorary Entertainment Makers Award at the Joy Awards in Riyadh

LEISURE | P2

**Ukraine attacks Donetsk**  
25 people die and 20 get injured after Ukrainian forces shell the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL | P10

**FPIs offload equities**  
Foreign investors have adopted a cautious approach this month, offloading equities worth ₹13,000 crore in the first three weeks

BUSINESS | P11

**Heart-break again**  
Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty lose in doubles final of India Open, their 2nd successive loss in two weeks

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# ALL ROADS LEAD TO AYODHYA

Over 7,000 people are on the list of invitees. But there are others, not on the list, heading to Ayodhya in their unique ways -- walking, cycling and even skating -- covering long distances amid bone-chilling cold to witness the historic event

AGENCIES

**Ayodhya, Jan 21:** All roads lead to holy city Ayodhya as the much-awaited consecration event at Ram temple will be held Monday in a grand ceremony and the shrine will be opened to the public a day later. Temple trust member Anil Mishra and his wife Usha have been performing the rituals leading up to the event as 'Pradhyan Yajman' (main hosts).

The 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony will begin at 12.20pm and is expected to end by 1pm with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the rituals. The Prime Minister will then address a gathering of more than 7,000 people, including seers and prominent personalities, at the venue.

According to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, Ram Lalla idol was bathed Sunday with 114 pitchers filled with 'aushadhuyukt' (medicated) water and sacred water brought from various pilgrimage sites.

"The idol was kept in 'Madhyadhivas' today. 'Ratri Jagran Adhivas' will start today itself. The old idol of Ram Lalla is being worshipped in the



**DIVINE ABODE:** Under-construction Ram temple decorated with flowers on the eve of its consecration ceremony, in Ayodhya, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

'Yajnashala'. The rituals are being performed with flowers from many places, including Chennai and Pune," a trust member said.

"Today, temple trust member Anil Mishra along with his family, VHP chief RN Singh and others are performing the rituals. The consecration ritual started from the Sarayu river January 16 and will be completed

Monday afternoon on 'Abhijeet Muhurta'," he added. Mishra, 63, is one of the 15 members of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust that was formed in 2020 to oversee the construction of the temple. 14 couples will be the 'yajmans' for the 'Pran Pratishtha'.

A few invitees arrived in Ayodhya Sunday while others

are expected to arrive Monday morning. Lakhs of people are expected to watch the event live on TV and online platforms as the Centre has announced a half-day off January 22 and many others followed suit.

As authorities made final preparations in Ayodhya, considered the birthplace of Lord Ram, temples across the nation

and abroad have announced special festivities on the occasion. From Washington DC to Paris to Sydney, these events are either being organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or Hindu diaspora groups in 60 countries.

Ayodhya is bedecked with flowers as recordings of 'Ram dhun' played from loudspeakers Sunday and townsfolk dressed as Lord

Ram, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman paraded the streets followed by delirious devotees and news camera crew. Ceremonial gates depicting 'Jai Shri Ram' in floral patterns and illumination add to the aura of the city which has undergone a massive infrastructural growth after the 2019 Supreme Court verdict on the issue.

MORE P8

## AIIMS ROLLS BACK DECISION TO SHUT AFTER BACKLASH

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here will remain open Monday, reversing its earlier decision to shut OPD services till 2:30pm on the occasion of the consecration ceremony at the Ayodhya Ram temple. The development came after the AIIMS authorities faced severe backlash from several corners of the society.

"In continuation of the Office Memorandum dated January 20, all clinical services including the Outpatient Services (OPD) shall remain open to prevent any inconvenience to patients and to facilitate patient care services," a fresh office memorandum issued by AIIMS said Sunday.

Later in the day, the Lady Hardinge Medical College too announced that all services, including OPD and emergency, will be functional throughout Monday.

On Saturday, an official memorandum by AIIMS, Delhi, had noted that the government has declared a half-day holiday January 22 because of the Ram temple consecration ceremony.

"It is notified for information of all the employees that the Institute will remain half day closed till 14.30pm January 22. All Chiefs of Centres, Heads of the Departments, Units and Branch Officers are requested to bring this to the notice of all staff working under them," it had stated. The memorandum had also said that critical and emergency services would be functional.

## 3 die as truck runs over motorcycle in Bhadrak

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, Jan 21:** Three persons were killed when the two-wheeler they were travelling on was crushed by a speeding truck in front of the Hi-Tech Engineering College on NH-16 near Ranital under Bhadrak rural police station limits in this district, Sunday afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Jitu Pradhan, 21, Bapi Pradhan, 19, and Shankuru Pradhan, 20. All three were residents of Bhatpada village under Tihidi police limits.

According to sources, the deceased were going to Soro in

neighbouring Balasore district to attend the 10th-day funeral rites of an acquaintance when the accident happened.

The speeding truck hit them from the rear and ran over them. While one person died on the spot, two others were rushed to the district headquarters hospital here. However, doctors pronounced them 'dead on arrival'.

Police said that efforts are on to locate the truck and the driver who fled the scene immediately after the accident occurred. A case has also been registered in this regard. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, police added.

## 'Indian plane not involved in crash'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 21:** A more than 40-year-old small aircraft carrying six people that crashed in a rural Afghanistan province was not an Indian aircraft and only did refuelling at the Gaya airport Saturday en route from a Thailand airport to Moscow, officials said Sunday.

The Morocco-registered Dassault Falcon (DF-10) plane, operating as an air ambulance, was flying from Utapao airport in Thailand to Moscow.

Amid reports that it was an Indian plane that was involved in the crash, the Civil Aviation Ministry Sunday said the aircraft did not belong to any Indian carrier.



The unfortunate plane crash that has just occurred in Afghanistan is neither an Indian Scheduled Aircraft nor a Non-Scheduled (NSOP) Charter aircraft. It is a Moroccan-registered small aircraft. More details are awaited, the ministry said in a post on X at 1.07pm.

An official said that the plane departed the Gaya airport after

refuelling at 4.02pm Saturday. There were six passengers onboard, including a female patient, the official added.

The crash happened Saturday in a mountainous area near Zebak district in Badakhshan province, news agency AP said in a report quoting regional spokesman Zabihullah Amiri.

Zebak is some 250 kilometres northeast of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, a rural, mountainous area, home to only several thousand people, it added.

Citing Russian civil aviation authorities, the report said the plane went missing with four crew members and two passengers, and it stopped communicating and disappeared from radar screens.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Forget 26th, focus on 22nd instead

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	26.0°C	23.2°C
Min Temp	19.1°C	17.0°C
Humidity	77%	92%
Rainfall	Nil	1.2 mm

**FORECAST**

FOG/MIST IN THE MORNING

## Philippine Prez draws ire for taking helicopter ride to Coldplay concert

AGENCIES

**Manila, Jan 21:** The Philippines' music-loving President Ferdinand Marcos Jr drew flak on social media for his use of a presidential helicopter to bypass Manila's horrendous traffic, ranked as the world's worst, to attend a concert by British rock band Coldplay in a province north of the capital.

The Philippine Arena, the world's largest indoor arena, saw an influx of 40,000 concert-goers resulting in "unforeseen traffic complications along the route", the Presidential Security Group said in a statement.

The traffic situation posed a security threat to Marcos who attended the Friday night concert with his wife, prompting the use of the presidential chopper, it added.

The concert venue is about 30 km north of Manila, but con-



certgoers usually have to leave their homes at least three hours before the event starts, especially if a very popular artist is performing. Some posted online saying that they had to leave by noon for a concert that was not scheduled to start till at least 7pm.

That fact did not slip past Coldplay frontman Chris Martin. "We've seen some traffic, but I think you're No. 1 in the world,"

he said in between songs. "So, thank you, thank you for making the effort to pull through all of that b\*\*\*t to be here," he said.

However, that was not the case for Marcos. Netizens were quick to point out that one person who did not have to put in much effort to get to the concert was the president.

Social media users criticised the use of taxpayer money by

Marcos, the son and namesake of the late strongman president whose rule ended nearly four decades ago in a historic "people power" revolution.

"Using official resources, like the presidential chopper, for personal and non-official activities is generally considered an abuse of power or misuse of government resources," Facebook user James Patrick Aristorenas said in a post Saturday.

"We paid for the use of the chopper, fuel and security, who knows even for the tickets for everyone," Facebook user Arvine Concepcion said.

Most have vented their frustrations over how awful traffic is around metropolitan Manila - a sprawling metropolis of 16 cities densely packed with over 13 million people - and how President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and his government seem oblivious to it.

## SHORT TAKES

### Palestinian death toll in Gaza tops 25K

**Rafah (Gaza Strip):** The Palestinian death toll from the war between Israel and Hamas has soared past 25,000, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said Sunday, while the Israeli government appeared far from achieving its goals of crushing the militant group and freeing more than 100 hostages. The level of death, destruction and displacement from the war already is without precedent in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet Israeli officials say the fighting is likely to continue for several more months.



More P10

### Kharge to visit Odisha in January end

**Bhubaneswar:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge will visit Odisha at the end of this month and address a mega rally in state capital Bhubaneswar, a senior party leader said Sunday. Preparations have already started and the venue of the rally will be finalised in two days, state Congress president Sarat Pattanayak said. During the visit, Kharge will hold a series of meetings with senior state leaders, district and block presidents, and booth presidents, senior Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati said.



### Rahul heckled during Nyay Yatra in Assam

**Nagaon (Assam):** The Congress Sunday alleged that its leaders were "attacked" during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra by BJP supporters, with Rahul Gandhi, who was heckled by a crowd chanting "Jai Shri Ram" and "Modi, Modi" slogans, asserting that his party is neither scared of the prime minister nor the Assam chief minister. As political temperatures soared in the state on the eve of the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, the opposition party alleged that its leaders were targeted at the behest of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.



More P9

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# leisure



## BRITNEY: FOOD IS MY WEAKNESS

Pop icon Britney Spears considers food to be her weakness. The 43-year-old singer-songwriter has spoken about her passion for food in a new Instagram post, where she wrote, "Food is my weakness. I will admit it." She also reflected on her food history, admitting that she's always been a passionate eater, reports *Female First UK*.

## MARILYN MONROE'S LA HOME SPARED FROM DEMOLITION

The late actress Marilyn Monroe's former home, where she was found dead, has been rescued from demolition for the near future after a permit was approved in September. The actress bought the 1929-built Spanish-style hacienda in Los Angeles just six months before she was found dead in August 1962, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
You will be keen on carefully protecting your private affairs, particularly your relationships. Ganesh predicts exciting things for you today. You also make a final attempt at completing some work that you have been postponing.

**TAURUS**  
Today you are likely to remain in an uncertain, indecisive frame of mind. You could, early in the morning, have an irresistible urge to take a holiday and go off on a long vacation with your friends and family members. After contacting everyone and getting them interested, you could have a change of mind and decide to get back to office and attend to the work, in hand. Strange, but true!

**GEMINI**  
It is not too bright a day for reaping the rewards of your hard work. A deeply buried desire as well as your sentimental nature will be the cause for some mood swings today. You will be subject to mental stress on account of this. You need to improve your viewpoint on certain matters, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Business rivals will try to wipe out your prestige, but will fail. Bold people can steer clear of hurdles and you are bold. So with Ganesh's grace you will be successful. People will praise your honesty and generosity.

**LEO**  
You need to be extremely wary in the morning, because there are chances that a major confrontation with someone very close to you may occur. In the afternoon, your good fortune will bring you the solutions to most of your current issues.

**VIRGO**  
Like a goose mother, you will be intensely over-protective and will desire to be in seclusion. Matters of the heart will come to fruition faster than you could have imagined. Ganesh says you will at last overcome your tendency for procrastination, and it will be a fulfilling day.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says this is a time for a new romantic relationship to develop. Due to that you will be extremely happy and joyous today. Small issues cropping up will sully your good mood today. Your happy go lucky attitude will come to the fore and you will be able to put aside all the issues and worries and move ahead in life.

**SCORPIO**  
You are the man who keeps his promises and that's rare. Besides fulfilling your seniors' expectations at work, you also manage to fulfil the desires of your family. Work while you work and play while you play, a neat line between the two will result into a happy life, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Immersed in a pool of thoughts, you are busy in the mood of introspection today. Besides this, you are on a creative high and may think of giving your lovely abode, a makeover. Doing up the interiors will take up most of your time.

**CAPRICORN**  
You are performing a tightrope walk and Ganesh congratulates you for right-ly balancing the your personal and professional life both. Your hands will be full with assignments, projects, and domestic demands, and multitasking is the only way to handle everything together.

**AQUARIUS**  
The day begins on a dull note which may disturb and disappoint you. But, all is not wrong as you will receive some unexpected good news by the end of the first half of the day. It may become difficult for you to complete the work before deadlines and maintain the quality of output both, predicts Ganesh, so learn the art of time management.

**PISCES**  
You will receive social acclaim today. Your intellectual and philanthropic nature will be the cause of your elevated social status. For those in search of love, now is the time when they will finally settle down with the person of their dreams. All your desires will come true today.



## Alia honoured in Saudi Arabia

**Mumbai:** Actress Alia Bhatt, who graced the prestigious Joy Awards held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was bestowed with the Honorary Entertainment Makers Award. She shared her deep affection for cinema and expressed gratitude towards the organisers for bringing diverse talents together. In her acceptance speech, she said, "It's a privilege to be here in this nation, the nation that is currently doing so much to unite us all and bring us all under one roof in the name of cinema. It doesn't happen very often when countless talents from the West and East come together under one roof

and celebrate each other. So thank you for making this happen." She also added, "It's truly an extraordinary night. I'm obsessed with movies, that's all I know. I've said this before, I think when I was born, and I came out on 'Lights, camera, action'. That's how much cinema means to me. If we are talking about joy, one of the greatest things in our lives is love. So tonight, when I go back home, I take back with me the love of the movies and the love that I felt here in Riyadh. So thank you so much, and here's to the magic of movies." AGENCIES



## Katrina on importance of being true to oneself

**Mumbai:** Actress Katrina Kaif, who is currently receiving acclaim for her performance in *Merry Christmas*, opens up about the importance of being true to oneself at different stages in life. Talking to a media agency, she said, "As an actor, a lot of it is about self-expression. So I wouldn't even call it freedom, I would like to call it confidence—the confidence that you feel are true for you." She highlights the inevitable changes that come with personal growth and experiences, asserting that the person one is in his/her 20s may not be the same in his/her 30s. Looking ahead, Kaif expressed her desire to

explore different facets of acting and would love to play a negative character. "You know, not just negative without reason, someone we know, this is the reason they become that way," she shares. In addition to negative roles, she expressed her excitement about the prospect of being featured in a period film. She emphasised that while her desires as an actor include specific roles, the ultimate decision is guided by the story and its narrative impact. AGENCIES



## Richa speaks on power of entertainment

**Mumbai:** Actress Richa Chadha has been selected to be part of a distinguished panel discussing Entertainment as Activists at the Sundance Film Festival. Speaking of this, the *Fukrey* actress said, "Entertainment has the power to shape perceptions and inspire change. As artists, it's our responsibility to use our voices to amplify important issues. I'm honoured to be part of the Sundance Film Festival panel, discussing how entertainers can be catalysts for meaningful activism. Let our stories not only entertain but also provoke thought and drive positive transformation." Known for speaking her mind, Chadha has been a vocal advocate for social change, addressing issues close to her heart and within the film industry. Richa, along with her husband and business partner Ali Fazal, is jetting off to Salt Lake City for the world premiere of their maiden production, *Girls Will Be Girls*, directed by Shuchi Talati. The film is the sole Indian feature selected for the World Drama Competition category at this year's Sundance Film Festival. IANS



A scene from Telugu play *Garadi* enacted at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Sunday on the second evening of the National Theatre Festival organised by City's prominent theatre troupe AJIT. Written by Jayaprakash and directed by V Trinadha Rao and D Hema Venkateswari, the play was presented by the artistes of Rasagina Samskruthika Seva Samstha of Vizianagaram (AP). For the unversed, students of eminent actor and director Ajit Das established the troupe AJIT decades ago to celebrate the birthday of their favourite Guru. The four-day event will conclude Tuesday.

### PEANUTS



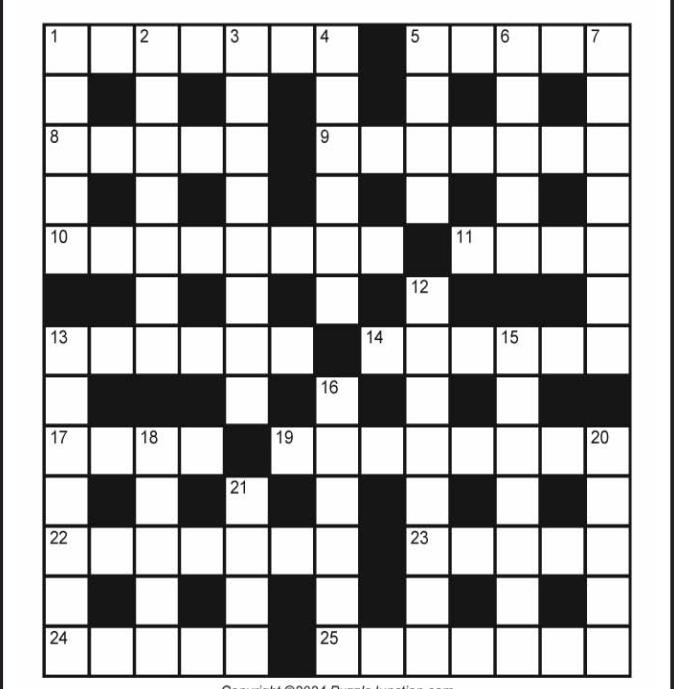
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Ladies' man
  - 5 Wizardry
  - 8 African antelope
  - 9 Unoriginal work
  - 10 Explosive compound
  - 11 Hero type
  - 13 Meagre
  - 14 Fingers
  - 17 Globes
  - 19 Temple of the gods
  - 22 Frenzied
  - 23 Sacrifice site
  - 24 Piquant
  - 25 Polliwog
  - 5 Mongrel
  - 6 Avarice
  - 7 Pampers
  - 12 Type of dog or pony
  - 13 Movies, TV, etc.
  - 15 Musical master
  - 16 Loud noise
  - 18 Zingers
  - 20 Audacity
  - 21 Just say no
- Down**
- 1 Common beet
  - 2 Postscripts
  - 3 Make the most of
  - 4 Scarcity

### 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.

3	6							9
1	9							8 2
			8					7
			4		5 3 6			
				9 1 4				8
9	1							6
	6			3				
		5 9 2						

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

E	X	P	A	N	D	S	O	C	T	E	T
W	A	O	E	B	A	A					
E	G	R	E	T	C	H	I	C	K	E	N
R	E	O	E	E	T						
S	A	X	R	E	D	L	E	T	T	E	R
C	I	E	Y	H	U						
R	E	E	K	E	D	R	E	E	E	M	
E	L	T	W	S	P						
J	E	L	L	Y	F	I	S	H	L	Y	E
E	E	N	A	U	A						
C	O	N	C	E	R	T	D	I	N	G	S
S	N	E	A	K	E	O	G	E			
T	S	N	E	A	K	R	A	W	D	E	A

**SUDOKU**

2	1	7	3	4	9	6	5	8
6	9	8	7	1	5	3	4	2
5	3	4	8	6	2	7	9	1
3	6	2	1	7	4	5	8	9
9	4	1	6	5	8	2	3	7
8	7	5	2	9	3	4	1	6
1	2	3	5	8	7	9	6	4
4	5	6	9	2	1	8	7	3
7	8	9	4	3	6	1	2	5

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः



ShriRamotsav



# अवधपुरी अति रुचिर बनाई...



**Maharishi Valmiki International Airport Ayodhya Dham**



**Ayodhya Dham Junction**



**Dharm Path**



**Bhakti Path**



**Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Path**



**Ram Path**



**Maharishi Arundhati Parking and Commercial Complex**



**Laxman Kunj Smart Vehicle Multi-Level Parking**



**Surya Kund Dwar**



**Guptar Ghat**





**"The construction of Ram Temple is an instrument to unite the country."  
- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister**



**Pran  
Pratishtha**  
(Consecration Ceremony)  
of  
**Prabhu Shri Ramlalla idol in  
Shri Ayodhya Dham,  
First among the Saptapuris**



In the august presence of

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister

**Anandiben Patel**  
Governor  
Uttar Pradesh

**Dr. Mohanrao Bhagwat**  
Sarsanghchalak, Rashtriya  
Swayamsevak Sangh

**Yogi Adityanath**  
Chief Minister  
Uttar Pradesh

**Mahant Nrityagopal Das**  
President, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi  
Teerth Kshetra Trust

and other dignitaries

Date : 22 January, 2024 | Time : 12:20 PM | Venue : Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, Shri Ayodhya Dham

**LIVE TELECAST**

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A God who cannot smile, could not have created this humorous universe.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Silent Killer

Realisation finally dawned on the Union Health Ministry when last week it made mandatory for doctors to list reasons for prescribing antibiotics or antimicrobial drugs to patients. "It is an urgent appeal to all doctors in medical colleges to mandatorily mention exact indication/reason/justification while prescribing antimicrobials," said an advisory from the Directorate General of Health Services. This is a crucial first step in a country where over-prescription by doctors and self-medication by unsuspecting patients is a norm. Just to avoid seeing the doctor, getting tested, spending a huge sum of money and taking rest for a few days, it is a tendency among most Indians to take over-the-counter antibiotics. From common cold to other non-serious conditions, antibiotics are overused and misused by millions, leading to a major health crisis - Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has described AMR as a silent pandemic that could cause about one crore deaths by the year 2050. AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites no longer respond to antimicrobial medicines. As a result of drug resistance, antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines become ineffective and infections become difficult or impossible to treat, increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness, disability and even death.

According to the WHO, AMR was directly responsible for an estimated 1.27 million deaths globally in 2019 and indirectly contributed to about 4.95 million casualties. The rise and dissemination of pathogens that are resistant to these antimicrobial drugs pose a significant challenge to our capacity to effectively tackle common infections and carry out critical procedures like cancer chemotherapy, caesarean sections, hip replacements, organ transplants, and various other surgeries. Furthermore, drug-resistant infections have adverse effects on the well-being of animals and plants, diminish agricultural productivity, and ultimately pose a threat to food security.

Apart from causing fatalities and impairments, AMR entails substantial financial implications. According to the World Bank, the impact of AMR could lead to an extra \$1 trillion in healthcare expenses by 2050. Additionally, it is projected that between 2030 and 2050, there could be annual gross domestic product (GDP) losses ranging from \$1 trillion to \$3.4 trillion under the impact of AMR.

The Health Ministry advisory has also asked pharmacists across the country to "stop over-the-counter sale of antibiotics and sell them only on prescription of a qualified doctor." It is not that the Health Ministry's notification was the first in this direction. There are already laws that mandate chemists to sell antimicrobials only when prescribed by the doctor. For instance, under the Drugs & Cosmetics Rules 1945, antibiotics are included in the list of drugs specified under Schedule H, which are required to be sold by retail on the prescription of a registered medical practitioner only. However, such rules are thrown to the winds by pharmacists.

In a country like India where a majority of people even today are just one medical bill away from poverty, arresting this growing trend of antibiotic overuse and misuse is a top priority. Our ill-equipped healthcare system simply remains incapable of bearing the burden of another crisis if the scenes at our hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic were any indication.

# BANDAUN BALROOP SOI RAMOO

FOCUS RAM TEMPLE CONSECRATION

Jasu Birah Sochahu Din Rati. Rahahu Nirantar Gun Gan Paati.. Raghukul Tilak Sujan Sukhdatta. Aayau Kusul Dev Muni Trata..

"Separated from the one, who dwells in my thoughts day and night and whose praises I sing - who else can it be but Raghukul Tilak, Lord Ram --- the dispenser of happiness to the good and the virtuous."

Centuries gone in waiting and our ancestors struggling endlessly, from one generation to the other, to redeem their pledge and seek fulfilment of their sentiments, the divine image of Lord Ram Raghu Nandan Raghav Ram Lala, - the soul of the Sanatan Sanskriti (our eternal cultural ethos) is going to be installed on the throne, in his magnificent newly built heavenly temple, his original place of birth in Awadh Puri (Ayodhya). The whole of India is awash in a wave of emotions of divine fervour on this historic and sacred occasion, which has come after a long hiatus of five hundred years. The eyes of the whole world are riveted today on Ayodhya which gives salvation to human beings from the cycle of birth and death. All paths are leading to Ram Janma Bhumi. All eyes are welled up with tears of joy and fulfilment. The name 'Ram' is on the tongue of every one. The entire nation is resonating with the name of Ram.



Yogi Adityanath

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SHRI RAM TEMPLE IN AYODHYA IS A SPIRITUAL EVENT OF CULTURAL AWAKENING OF INDIA

India had been longing for this day with baited breath and a quivering heart. Waiting for this day countless generations have passed from this earth to Saketdham, the abode of Lord Ram. Today, it is not only the consecration of the image of the child Ram Lala, but also a reaffirmation of people's devotion and faith in their deity. Having regained its lost pride, Ayodhya today is shining in its newfound splendour. Ecstatic over the combined victory of justice and truth, a new narrative is being scripted, consigning the bitter memories of the past into the background. This auspicious hour is causing an over flow of social harmony in all directions.

Shri Ram Janma Bhumi Mahayajna (battle for emancipation of the birthplace of Lord Ram) has not only been a severe test of our faith and belief in the Sanatana but also instrumental in awakening the collective consciousness of the nation. Possibly, Shri Ram Janma Bhumi is a unique example in the whole of the world of a nation, where the majority of the country has had to fight such a long battle, at several levels to reclaim the birthplace of its God and deity and build its own temple. Rising above the distinctions of caste and creed, thought, faith and worship, all sections of the people, including saints and seers, monks, Nagas, Nihangas (Sikhs), intelligentsia, political leaders, Vanvasis have dedicated themselves together to the cause of Lord Ram. Blessed by saints,



The whole of India is awash in a wave of emotions of divine fervour on this historic and sacred occasion, which has come after a long hiatus of five hundred years. The eyes of the whole world are riveted today on Ayodhya which gives salvation to human beings from the cycle of birth and death

social and cultural organizations, like the RSS and the VHP hit upon a common strategy to unite the people and achieve the desired objective.

What an irony that Ayodhya, which was called paradise and heaven on earth, remained accursed for centuries and was subjected to a well thought-out plan of denigration and vilification. The land where the concept of Ramrajya had emanated as the most ideal form of governance and social order, Ram was challenged to prove his own identity. A land where the name of Ram is the last resort, evidence was sought for Lord Ram's birthplace. Ram's life is an education in dignified human conduct and teaches us temperance and nobility. Imbued with such thoughts in the mind, the devotees of Lord Ram never gave up and persevered, never crossed the limits of decent behavior. Days, months, years, and centuries rolled by, but with every new dawn, the resolve of the devotees of Lord Ram gained only new strength. With the advent of this day, after waiting for centuries together, the whole of India and Ayodhya are rejoicing. Blessed is the current generation, which is witnessing the present Lord Ram celebrations and still more fortunate are the ones who have given up their all for Lord Ram and are steadfast still. Our heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji for his guidance towards the completion of this historic task.

This day of January 22, 2024, is a landmark of great joy in my personal life. Many old memories are coming alive in my mind. Perhaps it was the resolve to emancipate Ram Janma Bhumi that destiny chose to bring me in touch with my spiritual Guru and divine teacher Mahant Advaitnath Ji Maharaj. Today, on this holy occasion of

consecration of Shri Ram Lala image, my grand Guru, the late (bhahmalin) Mahant Shri Digvijaynath ji Maharaj and venerable Gurudev late Mahant Shri Avaidyanath Ji Maharaj besides other respected saints and seers - while not witnessing the present moment in their physical form, their souls surely must be feeling immensely blessed. I am fortunate that I am being witness to the fulfillment of that resolve to which my respected Gurus had remained committed all their lives.

Ever since the public announcement of the consecration of Ram Lala in Shri Ram Janma Bhumi Temple, every devout Sanatani has been waiting wistfully for this 22nd January Example of such spontaneous and widespread rejoicing among the people in India has not been witnessed anywhere in the last few centuries.

Seldom if ever, a ceremony of such magnanimity and magnitude has been held in the county anywhere with such a diversity of participants like Shavites, Vaishnavas, Shaktis, Ganpatyas, Sikhs, Bauddhas, Janis, Dashnamis, Shankar, Ramanandis, Ramanujas, Nimbarks, Madhvas, Bishnunamis, Ramsanehis, Ghisapanthis, Gharbdasis, Akalis, Nirankaris, Gaudiyas, Kabirpanthis, all Acharyas of Indian schools of spirituality, religions, sects and different modes of worship. Saints, representing more than 150 traditions, eminent Vanvasis, exceeding 50, Girivasis, Dwipvasi have never before assembled under one roof along with reputed scholars and persons from different disciplines like politics, science, industry, sports, arts, culture and literature. It is simply unprecedented. Today our illustrious Prime Minister will collectively represent the

sentiments of 140 people of India in this great spiritual festival.

It is for the first time in the history of India that people living in hills, forests, coastal areas, islands, etc. are taking part in an event of this kind together, at one single location. This is unparalleled. Today, the illustrious Prime Minister of India will represent collectively the sentiments of 140 crore people of our county in this festival. Today, a mini India will be seen emerging in Ayodhya Dham. On behalf of the 25 crore people of Uttar Pradesh, I welcome everyone present here on this sacred soil.

Meanwhile, Ayodhya Dham is all set to receive devotees of Ram, tourists, and research fellows from all over the world and all requisite arrangements are being made in conformity with the vision of the Prime Minister. An International Airport, redesigned spacious Railway Station, 4 to 6 lane road connectivity, helipad, convenient hotels, and guesthouses have been made available. While conserving old cultural values, the New Ayodhya will be fully equipped with all necessary urban requirements. Rejuvenation of all religious, ancient, and historic places within the periphery of Panchkosi, Chaudah Kosi, and Chaurasi Kosi Parikrama is progressing at a fast pace. This will lead to the conservation of culture, promotion of tourism, and creation of jobs.

The construction of the Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya is a spiritual event of cultural awakening of India. The consecration of Ram Lala's image is doubtlessly a historic moment of national pride. No one shall now be able to disrupt the traditional parikrama route. No bullets shall fly in the lanes of Ayodhya. The Saryu shall never again be crimson with blood. Ayodhya shall no more confront the curse of curfew. Instead there will be celebrations and the chanting of Lord Ram's name shall echo from all sides. The consecration of Ram Lala in Awadh Puri is the declaration of Ram Rajya in India - the dream of all people co-existing in harmony and abiding by their respective duties in keeping with the tenets of the Vedas is now materialising.

The image of 'Ram the Child' installed in Shri Ram Janma Bhumi Temple will continue to motivate the people and pave the way for observance of dharma by all devout Sanatanis in their daily life. My hearty congratulations to all on this holy hour of installation of Ram Lala's image. Our satisfaction is that the temple has come up where we had taken the oath to build it. The redemption of the pledge of our ancestors calls for a mighty congratulation to everyone. May Ram shower His blessing on all! May Lord Ram be my refuge for all time! Jai Shri Ram!

The writer is Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh.

## WISDOM CORNER

It is in the admission of ignorance and the admission of uncertainty that there is a hope for the continuous motion of human beings in some direction that doesn't get confined, permanently blocked, as it has so many times before in various periods in the history of man.  
RICHARD P. FEYENMAN

Every day we should hear at least one little song, read one good poem, see one exquisite picture, and, if possible, speak a few sensible words.  
JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

The discovery of truth is prevented more effectively, not by the false appearance things present and which mislead into error, nor directly by weakness of the reasoning powers, but by preconceived opinion, by prejudice.  
ARTHUR SCHOENHAEUER

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1901:** Queen Victoria—who reigned for more than 60 years, during which time the British Empire reached the apex of its power—died at age 81. The Victorian era was a period of industrial, political, scientific, and military change within the United Kingdom, and was marked by a great expansion of the British Empire.

**1905:** On what was later known as Bloody Sunday, Russian workers marching on St. Petersburg were fired on by Russian troops. Bloody Sunday caused grave consequences for the Tsarist autocracy governing Imperial Russia: the events in St. Petersburg provoked public outrage and a series of massive strikes that spread quickly to the industrial centres of the Russian Empire. The massacre on Bloody Sunday is considered to be the start of the active phase of the Revolution of 1905.

**1943:** World record for fastest temperature change. The fastest temperature change recorded in history occurred on this day in Spearfish, South Dakota. The temperature increased from -4°F (-20°C) to +45°F (+7°C) in the span of two minutes. The sudden change in temperatures caused glass windows to crack and windshields to instantly frost over. Extreme winter maxima in the district are remarkably warm given the latitude and altitude; on January 19, 1921 Spearfish reached a temperature of 79 °F (26 °C), the hottest January temperature in South Dakota on record.

**1973:** Roe v. Wade ruling. On this day in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court issued one of its most momentous decisions, ruling in Roe v. Wade that a Texas statute criminalizing abortion in most instances violated a woman's constitutional right of privacy. In June 2022, the Supreme Court overruled Roe and Casey in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization on the grounds that the substantive right to abortion was not "deeply rooted in this Nation's history or tradition", nor considered a right when the Due Process Clause was ratified in 1868, and was unknown in U.S. law until Roe.

**2006:** Evo Morales becomes Bolivia's first indigenous president. The left-wing politician has focused mainly on combating poverty and curbing the influence of transnational corporations.

## 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, opinions and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com



## OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Climate-resilient cities

Sir, India is a developing country. The country is rapidly expanding its infrastructure and other developmental projects. The number of cities is growing in India and the country is experiencing rapid urbanisation. Urbanisation is the process by which towns and cities are formed and become larger. The rapid urbanisation brings infrastructural development and clearing up greeneries which lead to serious global and local-level environmental problems. An increase in urban population, city expansion, and change in vegetation cover can pose serious threats to the environment. It is leading up to a rise in temperature and an increase in the frequency of natural calamities. It is observed from several studies that the warming of cities is more due to local activities. The warming is due to heat trapping by the concrete and asphalt materials used to build the city. The decreased evapotranspiration due to the replacement of natural surfaces with artificial impervious is also contributing to the warming of the environment. These unsustainable changes will have a disastrous impact on society. Building climate-resilient cities that will be sustainable and environmentally friendly is the need of the hour. To ensure the health, safety, and comfort of all, it is necessary to adopt specific science-driven planning for urbanisation.  
**Deba Prasad Nayak, DHENKANAL**

### Year of democracy

Sir, 2024 is going to be democracy's biggest and most remarkable year ever, as a host of nations, including India, go to polls with half the world's adults casting their votes. Never in the history will so many people have the opportunity to put a mark on a ballot in a single year. A democratic life in a free society means not just holding elections and political parties getting elected to form governments, but a true democracy requires a robust Opposition, a free and unrestrained Press, full rights and freedom for all citizens, full inclusion of minorities and women, an independent judiciary, a military and police force that serve the Constitution, and not the leaders, and a critical Parliament that will have constructive debates and Bills passed for the welfare of the people. Will elections in 2024 meet all these requirements and provide a glimmer of hope for a true democracy to prevail in nations across the world?  
**Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI**

### Middle East conflagration

Sir, Escalating tensions between Iran and Pakistan have unfolded through a series of missile strikes, amplifying concerns about potential far-reaching consequences. The tit-for-tat attacks have specifically targeted Baluch separatist groups, complicating diplomatic ties between the two nations. The situation has gained added complexity against the backdrop of broader unrest in the Middle East, with the assaults aligning in time with conflicts involving Israel and Hamas. The sequence of events began with Iran's missile strike on a Sunni militant group operating in Pakistan, a move met with swift condemnation. In response, Pakistan retaliated with precision strikes, underscoring the precarious nature of the bilateral relationship. The geopolitical landscape is further complicated as experts speculate on Iran's regional ambitions, adding an element of uncertainty to the unfolding situation. Amid these developments, the spectre of a wider regional conflict looms large. The exchange of missile strikes raises questions about the potential involvement of other regional actors and the risk of entanglement in a broader conflict. Global players are closely watching, recognising the implications of an escalation that could have repercussions beyond the immediate region. The synchronicity of these events with conflicts involving Israel and Hamas adds another layer of complexity. The interplay of various geopolitical factors underscores the volatility of the situation and the interconnectedness of conflicts in the Middle East. As the world monitors these developments with heightened concern, there is a pressing need for diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions. The potential for a wider regional conflict underscores the urgency for international intervention and mediation to prevent further destabilisation and protect the interests of neighbouring countries. The evolving situation demands a delicate balance between regional powers, emphasising the critical role of diplomacy and dialogue in navigating this complex geopolitical landscape.  
**Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH**

## LOL

### HELPING THE FATHER

A clergyman walking down a country lane sees a young farmer struggling to load hay back onto a cart after it had fallen off. "You look hot, my son," said the cleric. "Why don't you rest a moment, and I'll give you a hand." "No thanks," said the young man. "My father wouldn't like it." "Don't be silly," the minister said. "Everyone is entitled to a break. Come



and have a drink of water." Again the young man protested that his father would be upset. Losing his patience, the clergyman said, "Your father must be a real slave driver. Tell me where I can find him and I'll give him a piece of my mind!" "Well," replied the young farmer, "he's under the load of hay."



# ₹73L worth property of drug trafficker forfeited

Competent Authority and Administrator of NDPS Act, Kolkata approves forfeiture of seized property of the accused after hearing January 19



THEY HAD ALSO SEIZED THREE GUNS, SEVEN MAGAZINES, AT LEAST 43 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION AND ₹65.32 LAKH IN CASH FROM THE POSSESSION OF DAS

munition and ₹65.32 lakh in cash from the possession of Das.

The agency had registered a case against Das under the NDPS Act and launched a probe into the incident. The STF sleuths had also seized around ₹6.68 lakh and ₹1.64 lakh from two bank accounts of Das during the investigation.

During the process, the STF approached the Competent Authority and Administrator of NDPS Act, Kolkata, for forfeiture of the cash seized from Das' rented accommodation and his two bank accounts.

The competent authority has approved the forfeiture of the seized property of the accused after hearing both the parties January 19, said the official.

The Chapter V-A of the NDPS Act, 1985 (Sections A-Z) has provisions for forfeiture of ill-gotten property (illegally acquired property from narcotics business in the last six years).



POOR VISIBILITY: Commuters had a tough time as a thick blanket of fog engulfed Bhubaneswar reducing visibility on City roads and the highway, Sunday OP PHOTO

## CM dedicates IMS & SUM Hosp new campus

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Inaugurating the new campus of Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS) and SUM Hospital at Phulanakhara, located between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, Sunday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said that the hospital will help in meeting healthcare needs of people of the twin cities and the entire state.

The new hospital, which will initially have 750 beds, will increase its strength to 3,000 within two years. "It will have most of the departments and house cutting edge technologies, including facilities for advanced cancer care. The cancer care facilities will include radiation oncology, nuclear medicine and other ad-



vanced diagnostic equipment," said a staffer. The location of the hospital will greatly benefit patients as

they would be able to access it from anywhere. For convenience of patients, the new campus will have all necessary departments

such as general medicine, respiratory medicine, pediatrics, neonatology, critical care medicine, psychiatry, anesthesiology, general surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics and gynaecology, ophthalmology, ENT, pathology and microbiology.

Notably, IMS and SUM Hospital, part of the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University (SOA), has been functioning in the City for more than 18 years and also serves as a teaching hospital, admitting 250 students to the MBBS course every year.

Health Minister Niranjan Pujari, 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian, chairman and founder of SOA Manoranjan Nayak also attended the inauguration programme.

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** The Special Task Force (STF) of the state Crime Branch has forfeited ill-gotten property worth over ₹73 lakh of a drug trafficker in Odisha, an official in know of the development said, Sunday. Cash and bank deposits to the tune of ₹73.75 lakh of Shiba Prasad Das alias Shibu, a drug trafficker, of Mundia Sahi under

## Man held 2 years after killing wife

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** The twin city Commissionerate Police Sunday claimed to have arrested a man, who was on the run ever since killing his wife in October 2021.

ACP (Zone II) Girija Shankar Chakrabarty said Samarendra Biswal, who hails from Bhadrak district, has been taken into custody on charges of killing his wife, Nandita Sahoo, at their rented accommodation under Lingaraj police limits here October 9, 2021.

Nandita of Bhadrak, a mother of three children, had parted ways with her husband and tied the nuptial knot with Samarendra, who already had two kids from his first wife, at Kedargouri temple here a few years back, Chakrabarty said, adding that the couple used to stay at a rented accommodation at Kunjapatna under Lingaraj police limits.

The ACP said the couple started quarrelling over trivial issues after a few months of marriage.

"On the fateful day, October 9, 2021, the couple picked up a quarrel. Soon, a mountain was made out of a molehill and an infuriated Samarendra strangled Nandita to death with her 'dupatta'," Chakrabarty pointed out.

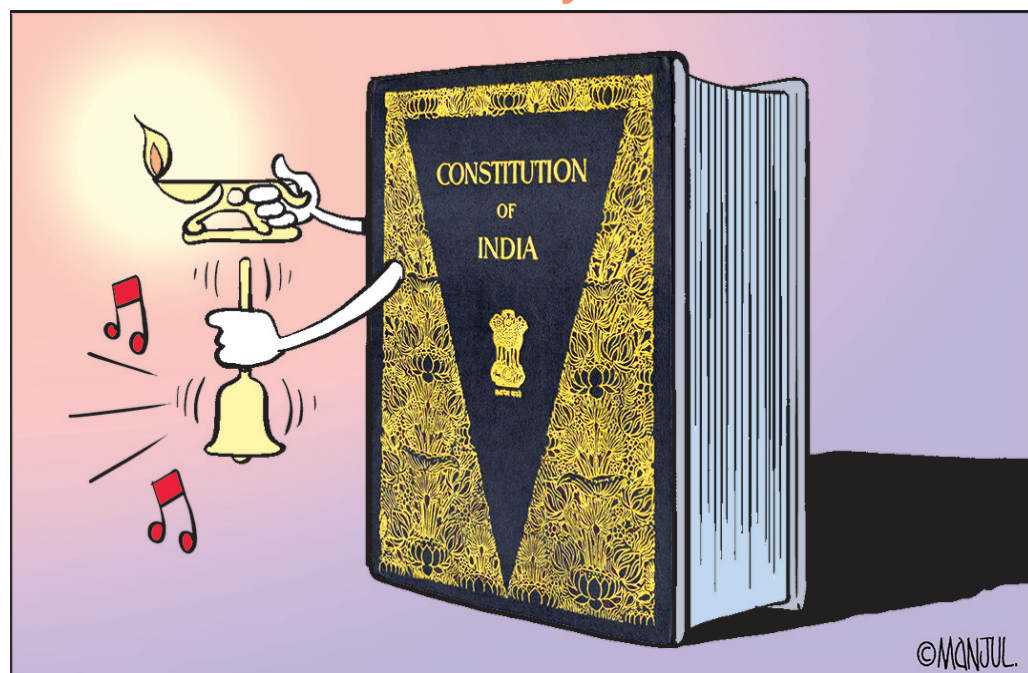
Nandita's son, Tapan, lodged a complaint with Lingaraj police, who registered a case and launched a probe October 10.

"Samarendra was on the run after the incident. We recently learned that he was residing in Kolkata and was about to visit Odisha. We sent a team to Bhadrak where he was nabbed," the ACP said.

## Septuagenarian killed in bear attack

**Papadhandi:** An elderly man died after he was mauled by a bear at Palpur village at Shirisi panchayat of this block in Nabarangpur district, Sunday. The deceased was identified as Samadu Amanatya, 71, in the village. He was admitted to the district headquarters hospital in Koraput where he succumbed during treatment. The incident occurred when the deceased had his dinner at home and visited his farmland to guard the crops, Saturday night. He was on his way to the farmland when a bear which had strayed into the area attacked him and mauled him critically. Hearing his screams, villagers rescued him and rushed him in an ambulance to the Papadhandi community health centre. There the doctors administered him primary treatment and shifted him to the district headquarters hospital in Nabarangpur. Later, he was again shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Koraput. He was undergoing treatment when he succumbed to his injuries in the hospital in the wee hours of Sunday.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Weather station at Bakul Library

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 21:** Science and Technology department principal secretary and Planning and Convergence special secretary Chithra Arumugam inaugurated a weather station at the Bakul Library in Satyanagar here Saturday.

The weather station was installed by the US Consulate General, Hyderabad in partnership with the Bronx Community College of City University of New York (CUNY) in the United States.

Chairperson of department of chemistry, earth sciences and environmental sciences at the Bronx Community College of CUNY Neal Phillip, along with Paramita Sen, installed the weather station at the library. Phillip informed young volunteers of Bakul about features of



the weather station and how it could be used.

Data from the weather station will be accessible to the public, to heighten awareness on the significance of climate data and climate change. "It will help monitor micro-climate parameters like temperature, air pollution levels, solar radiation, wind and precipitation among others in the city. This data will be available online for anyone, anywhere to access it," said a Bakul volunteer.

On the occasion, Salil Kader of the US Consulate said that they usually set up weather sta-

tions at universities, but because Bakul works with children and youths from diverse backgrounds, the weather station there has potential to educate a large number of young people.

Arumugam expressed her excitement over the fact that the weather station will contribute to developing a scientific temper in children and youths. She proposed to Bakul to help create 100 little projects on climate science around the weather station involving students of schools and colleges.

Sujit Mahapatra of Bakul Foundation informed that Bakul has already created a group of young climate enthusiasts, who are keen on using the weather station for active climate monitoring, and who would mentor school and college children on climate change with help of the weather station.

# MANASH PARISHAD SERVING LORD RAM FOR LAST 60 YEARS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Jan 21:** 'Manash Parishad', one of the oldest organisations in this town, has spent 60 years devoting time to spread the message of Lord Ram. The temple of Lord Ram inside the Hanuman Vatika complex here has always been a place for devotees of Lord Ram to throng in large numbers.

The 'Manash Parishad' offers rendition of 'Akhand Ramayan or Sundar Kand' if the devotees seek it. "We do it free of cost. We consider it our 'prarabdh' that we get the call to do this noble duty in honour of Lord Ram," said Rajkumar Shukla, secretary of Manash Parishad.

This year, with the inauguration of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, there is plenty of work to do for the organisation till January 22. This is no doubt, a very special



occasion for us. However, even without any special occasion our hands are more or less full. We have more than 100 requests annually to do puja in homes of devotees," informed president

of the organisation, Siyand Singh. "We offer our services with a radius of around 50 kilometres from Rourkela," he added.

The members of this organisation have come from differ-

ent walks of life 'but love and devotion towards Lord Ram have kept them together'. "We have been performing our duties for the last 60 years. The responsibility was handed over to us from our seniors. Now we are slowly entrusting the same responsibility to our juniors," Shukla pointed out.

Earlier memories of 'Manash Parishad' for city residents were the celebration of 'Ravan Podi', which was organised on Bijaya Dashami. However, differences between the Central Puja Committee and the Manash Parishad cropped up following which the latter stopped celebrating 'Ravan Podi'.

"We are happy that we are doing and we will continue doing that till our last breath, that offering devotion to Lord Ram," said Shukla. He added that the body organises chanting of

## Art teacher creates miniature Ram temple

**Bhubaneswar:** A 40-year-old teacher and miniature artist of the state has created a five-and-a-half-inch-long Ram temple of Ayodhya ahead of its consecration ceremony Monday. Eshwar Rao made the replica using paper, match stick and chalk. "The model is five-and-a-half inches high and two-and-a-half inches wide. A one-inch-tall figure of Lord Hanuman is also there in front of the temple. The figure is made up of chalk," Rao said. It took Rao, a devotee of Lord Hanuman, seven days to create the miniature temple. "These seven days were the best days in my life as I prayed to Lord Ram all along while making the temple," he said. Rao said he has created miniature art on various occasions, such as World Cup tournaments, Ganesh Puja and X-Mas. These miniatures do not fetch money for him. "I am satisfied when people want to see them. I learn my livelihood by working as an art teacher in a public school in Bhubaneswar," said Rao. An artist always gives more stress to self-satisfaction than earning money, said the teacher who started his career as an artist at the age of 19 years.

'Akhand Ramayana' on the first Saturday and Sunday of every New Year.

The present statues of Lord Ram, Sita, Laxman and Hanuman have been brought from Rajasthan. "On every Sunday of Savan, a community feast is organised. Anyone can take part in it. On the last Sunday

we celebrated 'Santh Tulsi Jayanti'," informed Shukla. For them, the Ram Navami remains the most important festival of the annual calendar.

"To celebrate the grand occasion January 22, uninterrupted rendition of Ramayana will take place round the clock," Shukla added.

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## What will happen to old Ram Lalla

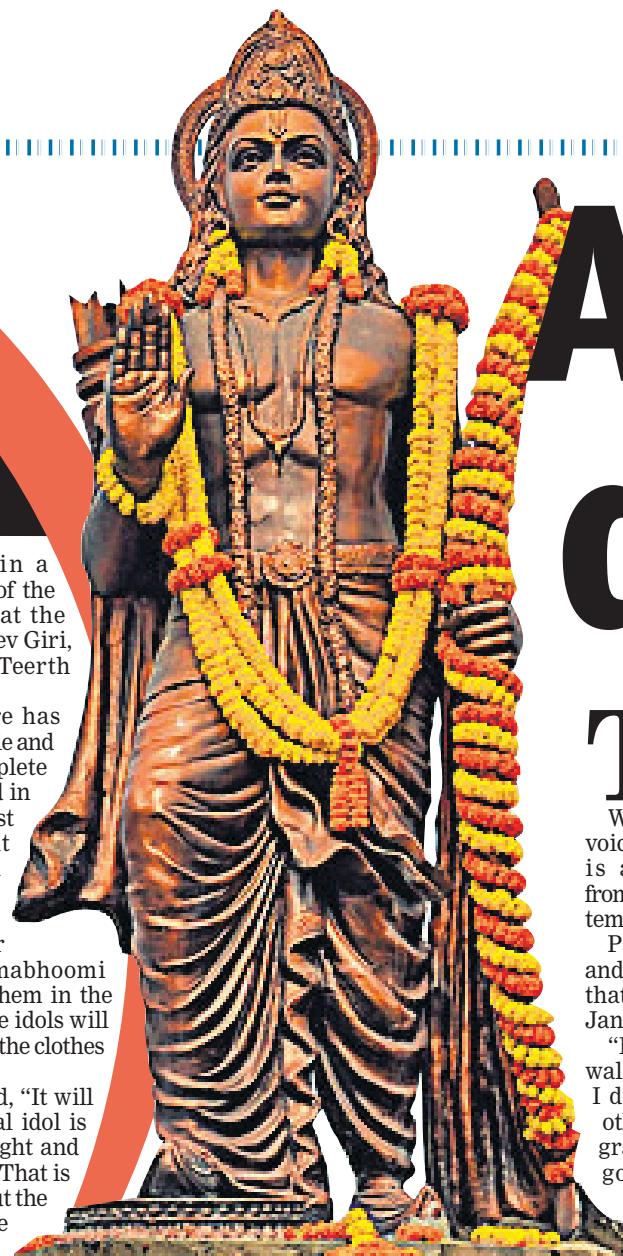
The old idol of Ram Lalla, kept in a makeshift shrine, will be placed in front of the new idol which will be consecrated at the temple in Ayodhya January 22, said Govind Dev Giri, the treasurer of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

He also said that more than ₹1,100 crore has so far been spent in constructing the Ram Temple and another ₹300 crore might be needed to complete the work. A 51-inch Ram Lalla idol was placed in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram temple last week. Three idols of Lord Ram were built from which the one sculpted by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj has been selected for "Pran Prathistha".

When asked what would happen to the other two idols, the treasurer of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust said, "We shall place them in the temple with all honour and respect. One of the idols will be kept with us since we will need it to measure the clothes and ornaments of Prabhu Shri Ram."

About the original Ram Lalla idol, Giri said, "It will be placed in front of Ram Lalla. The original idol is very important. It is five to six inches in height and cannot be seen from a distance of 25 to 30 feet. That is why we needed a bigger idol." When asked about the cost incurred in constructing the Ram temple he said, "More than ₹1,100 crore have been spent and it is likely that ₹300 crore more will be needed since the construction is not complete yet. One storey is completed and we are going to build one more storey."

On the selection of the Ram Lalla idol sculpted by Arun Yogiraj, Giri said, "It was very difficult for us to choose one idol out of three."



# Ayodhya all decked up

The residents of Ayodhya are awaiting their "tryst with divinity" January 22.

While talking to PTI, the voice of Pathak, whose house is around one kilometre from the newly-constructed Ram temple, choked with emotions. Pathak works in Lucknow and he had made up his mind that he would be in Ayodhya January 22.

"I was mentally prepared to walk down to Ayodhya in case I did not get any bus or any other vehicle. However, by the grace of Prabhu Shri Ram, I got a bus and I arrived in Ayodhya Friday itself," he said, and added that he is falling short of words

to express himself. "When the Babri mosque was razed, I was two years old. My mother used to take me to the Ram temple. Now, after January 22 ceremony, I will take my mother to the newly-constructed Ram temple," Pathak added.

Expressing happiness over the upcoming consecration ceremony, Ayodhya-based homoeopathy doctor Dr Indroneel Banerjee told PTI, "It is such a moment for the people of Ayodhya which can never be forgotten. The people here have waited for this day for the past few generations. Ayodhya has the potential to become the spiritual capital of the country. After being sidelined for years together, I think Ayodhya's time has come. Having been overlooked by successive governments, the people of Ayodhya have seen difficult days. Now, it is our time under the Sun

right now." Another resident, Prajwal Singh, said, "We are standing on the threshold of history. We are eager to be an integral part of the 'Pran Prathistha' celebrations of Ram Lalla. It is certainly a historic moment for us and for our generation, as we have seen our ancestors facing hardships. The tears, sweat and the sacrifices they have made are being reaped by us today."

Mahendra Shukla, a Samajwadi Party corporator, said all the people of Ayodhya are feeling happy. Everybody is going out of the way to help the visitors so that they do not face any problems here and go with pleasant memories, he added. Atul Kumar, a resident of

Naya Ghat area of Ayodhya, said January 22 is going to be a historic day not only for Ayodhya or Uttar Pradesh but also for the country, for the world and for the entire humanity.

Termining the ceremony as the "first phase of Ram rajya", Saurabh Mishra said, "After the 'Pran Prathistha' ceremony, the entire world is going to embrace Lord Ram. It will be soaked in devotion of Prabhu Shri Ram.

Echoing similar sentiments, Anvesh Mishra, who runs a guest house, said, "This is going to be the biggest event in the history of Ayodhya so far. Certainly, this will be a 'Tryst with Divinity' moment for me, for my family members and for entire Ayodhya residents. This is my luck that I am able to witness the history unfolding before my own eyes and that I am a resident of Ayodhya, where the special event is taking place. We are going to treasure this moment for the rest of our lives."

The much-awaited Ram temple consecration will be held here Monday in a grand ceremony with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the rituals, following which the shrine will be opened for the public a day later.

The 'Pran Prathistha' ceremony will begin at 12.20 pm and is expected to end by 1 pm. The Prime Minister will then address a gathering of more than 7,000 people, including seers and prominent personalities, at the venue. Lakhs of people are expected to watch the event live on TV and online platforms as the

The Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya Monday will be telecasted live on LED screens at 283 places in the holy city



BJP-ruled states and Odisha have declared a holiday while the central government has announced a half-day off. AGENCIES

## Multi-layer security cover

A multi-layer security cover is in place in Ayodhya for the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple, with 10,000 CCTV cameras and drones equipped with artificial intelligence keeping an eye on the movement of people and police personnel in plain clothes deployed at the venue.

From Dharam Path and Ram Path here, which are witnessing a huge influx of devotees, to bylanes of the Hanumangarhi area and Asharfi Bhavan road, policemen can be seen patrolling the streets. Uttar Pradesh Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) personnel had also conducted patrolling in Ayodhya Saturday.

"Ayodhya is now under the watchful eye of drones equipped with artificial intelligence, alongside the utilisation of anti-mine drones, as part of the concerted efforts to enhance security in the temple town," a senior police official said.

While AI-supported drones are conducting aerial surveillance across Ayodhya, anti-mine drones are simultaneously inspecting the ground for mines or explosives, he said. Operating at a height of

one metre above the ground, the anti-mine drones are equipped with advanced technology like spectrometer wavelength detection for detecting underground explosives, the official said.

Movable barriers with barbed wires attached to them can be spotted almost at every prominent crossing in the city, as policemen use them to regulate traffic especially during VVIP movements.

"The 'Pran Prathistha' ceremony, which will be held Monday, is going to be a historic event. For this, the Uttar Pradesh Police has made elaborate security arrangements and along with it, security has been ensured for every road along the entire red zone, yellow zone and Ayodhya district," Director General (DG), Law and Order, Prashant Kumar had recently said in a statement.

"For this, 10,000 CCTV cameras have been installed in the entire Ayodhya district. In some of these CCTV cameras, we are using AI-based technology so that we can maintain a strict vigil on commuters," the DG added.



Ram dhun rings in streets

## BREAK OF A NEW DAWN

### 50 instruments to play Mangal Dhvani

The Pran Prathistha ceremony of Lord Ram in Ayodhya will begin with 'Mangal Dhvani' (auspicious sound). More than 50 enchanting musical instruments from various states will be played for almost 2 hours to produce Mangal Dhvani. This grand musical programme will symbolise the unity of diverse traditions in honour of Lord Ram. It has been conceived by Yatindra Mishra, a renowned author, Ayodhya's cultural expert, and an artist. He has been supported in this work by Kendriya Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. Champat Rai, the Secretary-General of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, said that in Indian culture, Mangal Dhvani (auspicious sound) is composed to bring joy and to mark auspiciousness of an occasion and produced before the deity.

### Jain seers happy

Ayodhya is the "original land" of Jainism and the community is looking forward to the development of the holy city with the consecration of the Ram temple, Jain seers said. "There are 24 Tirthankaras in Jainism, out of which the first Tirthankara Lord Rishabhdev was born in Ayodhya. After him, four Tirthankaras were also born in Ayodhya," Ravindra Kirti Swami, Peethadheesh Digambar Jain Teerth, noted while speaking to PTI. The entire Jain society is happy over the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he added.

### VIPs to attend ceremony

The Uttar Pradesh government has provided a list of 300 dignitaries who will attend the Pran Prathistha ceremony and they have been accorded protocol offered to state guests. According to the government spokesman, about 150 VIPs would reach Ayodhya Sunday while the remaining ones would arrive Monday morning. "An escort vehicle along with security personnel and personal liaison officers would be provided to state guests. They have been accorded Z-category protocol. Those who are staying overnight would be housed in pre-identified hotels, tent cities, guest houses and suitable accommodations," the spokesman said.



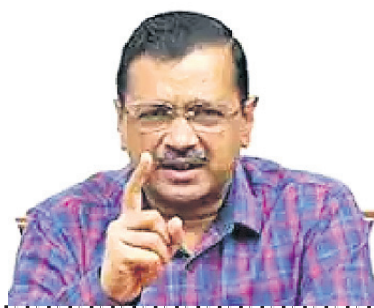
Devotees dancing at Hanuman Garhi Temple

Artistes dressed as Hindu deities ahead of the ceremony

PTI PHOTOS



# national



Lord Ram's administration is considered Ram Rajya. We are inspired by 'Ram Rajya' and try to run the government taking inspiration from it

## PRESIDENT MURMU WRITES TO PM MODI

In a two-page letter to Prime Minister Modi, President Droupadi Murmu said that "as you prepare yourself to go for 'Pran Pratishtha' of Prabhu Shri Ram's 'murti' (idol) at the new temple built at his birthplace in Ayodhya, I can only contemplate the unique civilisational journey that will be accomplished with each step taken by you in the hallowed precincts"



### of the day quote

Ayodhya means a city where there is no war, a place free from conflict. On this occasion, in the entire country, reconstruction of Ayodhya is the need of the hour and also the duty of all of us

Temples across the country are adorned with lights and decorations, creating a vibrant celebratory ambience. This historic occasion is the culmination of our aspirations and marks a significant milestone in our cultural and spiritual heritage

Today, when many economies in the world are declining, India is moving upwards because of its youths. There is no field in which Indian youths have not excelled, especially technology

## Rahul heckled during Nyay Yatra



Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Borah was assaulted while central leader Jairam Ramesh's car was targeted in Assam's Sonitpur district during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra Sunday

The party has demanded a judicial inquiry into the attack on Borah, alleging involvement of a BJP MLA and his supporters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagaon (Assam), Jan 21: The Congress Sunday alleged that its leaders were "attacked" during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra by BJP supporters, with Rahul Gandhi, who was heckled by a crowd chanting "Jai Shri Ram" and "Modi, Modi" slogans, asserting that his party is neither scared of the Prime Minister nor the Assam Chief Minister.

As political temperatures soared in the state on the eve of the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, the opposition party alleged that its leaders, including Gandhi, Jairam Ramesh and Assam unit chief Bhupen Kumar Borah, were targeted at the behest of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and hurdles were being created "every hour" for the Yatra which re-entered Assam from Arunachal Pradesh Sunday.

After a group of BJP workers chanted "Jai Shri Ram" and raised "Modi, Modi" slogans in front of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra bus in Nagaon, the Congress leader waved, gave flying kisses and stepped down to meet them but was quickly escorted back by the security personnel amid jostling.

"Our 'Mohabbat ki dukaan' (shop of love) is open for everyone. 'Judega Bharat, Jeetega Hindustan,'" Gandhi said in a post on X while sharing a video of the incident.

Gandhi later also said at a public meeting that "around 20-25 BJP workers carrying sticks came in front of our bus, and when I came out from the bus, they ran away".

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's vehicle was allegedly attacked and reporters accompanying the party's yatra were "manhandled" by unknown men in Sonitpur district, All India Congress Committee (AICC) communications coordinator Mahima Singh claimed.

According to Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) spokesperson Bedabrata Bora, a mob stopped Assam Pradesh Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah's car as he was driving to join the yatra's main entourage after a brief break and he was punched in the nose which led to bleeding, while another party worker suffered serious injuries and has been hospitalised.

"Our Sonitpur district president has already filed a police complaint," Bora said in a statement.

## India to send back 276 Myanmar soldiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, Jan 21: India will send back 276 Myanmar soldiers who fled to Mizoram last week following gunfights with an ethnic insurgent group, an official said Sunday. With this repatriation, which will continue for two days -- Monday and Tuesday, more than 600 Myanmar soldiers who fled to Mizoram will be sent back to their country, he said.

The 276 personnel will be airlifted by Myanmar air force planes from the Lengpui airport near Aizawl to Sittwe in the neighbouring country's Rakhine state, the Assam Rifles official told PTI.

They entered Bandukbanga village, located at the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh trijunction, in southernmost Mizoram's Lawngtlai district with arms and ammunition on 17 January and approached the Assam Rifles, she said. They were taken to the nearby Assam Rifles camp at Parva, and later the majority of them were shifted to Lunglei, she added.

## Bengal politics heats up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 21: Months before the Lok Sabha polls, the TMC and BJP in West Bengal will evaluate their political prowess Monday, aligning with the Ram temple consecration in Ayodhya, with Mamata Banerjee slated to lead an "all-faith" rally seeking to project a counter-narrative to BJP's hindutva politics.

The Bengal BJP, which has unsuccessfully demanded that the day be declared a holiday in the state, along with several other Hindu outfits, has planned several events and programmes across the state to celebrate the day, including setting up LED screens in various areas where the Ram temple inauguration will be telecast live. The opposition BJP has accused the TMC of trying to create distraction and divert attention from the historic Pran Pratishtha ceremony of Lord Ram through the "all-faith rally". The party also



- The much-awaited Ram temple consecration will be held in Ayodhya Monday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the rituals, following which the shrine will be opened for the public a day later
The TMC has announced to hold a mega all-faith harmony rally in the metropolis led by West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee
The party will also hold similar rallies in every block of the state

accused the state government of impeding programmes to celebrate the scheduled inauguration of the temple.

"The BJP is trying to vitiate the atmosphere of the country. Everybody loves Lord Ram. But the BJP mixes politics with religion, we are against this trend. And the all-faith rally by our party supremo is just a precursor to Republic Day celebrations," TMC MP Sougata Roy said. Echoing him, TMC minister Shashi Panja said the all-faith rally should not be viewed as a counter to any programme,

as projected by the BJP. "The all-faith rally is not aimed at countering any other programme. Allegations that the state government is trying to stop programmes by the BJP are baseless and untrue," she said. The BJP, however, felt that the TMC's rally was aimed at appeasing a particular community in the state.

Meanwhile, the BJP has set up a helpline to support individuals who might face problems while participating in any programmes related to the consecration of the Ram Mandir.

### SHORT TAKES

#### NIA arrests juvenile in terror attack case

Jammu: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested a juvenile in connection with the 2023 Dhangri terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district that claimed the lives of seven civilians. He is third accused to be arrested by the agency in the case. Thirteen people were also injured when terrorists struck Dangri village January 1 last year and opened indiscriminate fire. They also left behind an improvised explosive device (IED) which went off the next morning. The juvenile, who was already lodged at an observation home in Jammu district's RS Pura area in another case, was taken into custody by the NIA and presented before the Juvenile Justice Board in Rajouri for remand, a spokesperson of the agency said.

#### AAP to take out shobha yatras

New Delhi: Shobha yatras to bhandaras, Sundar Kand recitals to aartis, the AAP has planned a series of events across the 70 assembly constituencies of Delhi to mark the consecration ceremony at Ram temple in Ayodhya Monday. Addressing a press conference, AAP senior leader and MLA Dilip Pandey said that while the entire country is enthusiastically lined up to welcome Lord Ram, Delhi is not lagging behind.

#### Sex racket busted

Hyderabad: A sex racket being run from a Hyderabad hotel was busted and 16 women rescued from the flesh trade, police said Sunday. The Central Zone Task Force of the city police arrested S. Akhlesh alias Akhlesh Phailwan, the alleged kingpin who was running the racket from his hotel in Ramnagar area. Hotel's manager-cum-receptionist Ragupathi was also arrested along with four customers and two pimps.

#### Heroin seized

Diphu (Assam): Heroin worth over ₹2 crore was seized and two persons were arrested in Assam's Karbi Anglong district Sunday, police said. The drug was recovered after police intercepted a vehicle during routine checking at Dillai Tiniali area, they said. A total of 519.68 gm of heroin hidden in 45 soap boxes worth over ₹2 crore was seized, a police officer said. The soap boxes were concealed in a secret chamber in the rear of the vehicle, he said.

## 'No time to visit Manipur': Cong slams PM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: The Congress Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he greeted the people of Manipur on their statehood day, saying he has expressed his wishes through social media but "has not found time nor thought it necessary" to visit

Jairam Ramesh said violence persists and social harmony has been destroyed in Manipur, and alleged that the PM maintains his silence and refuses to meet political leaders and parties from the state

the state which has gone through so much pain and agony since May 3 last year.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also said violence persists and social harmony has been destroyed in the state, and alleged that the PM maintains his silence and refuses to meet political leaders and parties from the state.

In a post on X, Ramesh said, "The Prime Minister tweets on Manipur Statehood Day but has not found time nor thought it necessary to visit the state which has gone through so much pain and agony since May 3rd, 2023."

The Congress leader's attack came after Modi, in a post on X,

said, "On Manipur's Statehood Day, my best wishes to the people of the state. Manipur has made a strong contribution to India's progress."

The violence, which claimed over 180 lives, erupted May 3 last year after a Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts.

## MHA think tank issues advisory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: A police think tank that functions under the union home ministry has issued an advisory and alert against a variety of scams that take place on popular social media messaging platform WhatsApp leading to cyber crimes and financial frauds.

The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) has identified seven types of such frauds that includes tricking through missed calls, video calls, in the name of job offers and investment plans, impersonation, hijacking and screen share.

As part of the 'hijacking' scam, the eight page advisory-cum-alert said, the scammers take unauthorised access to the victim's WhatsApp (WA) account and request money from their

## ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION ED raids in Guj, Delhi locations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Jan 21: The Enforcement Directorate Sunday said it undertook searches in Gujarat and Delhi against some "key" conspirators who used to run an illegal racket of sending Indian citizens abroad using "bogus" visas and passports. The searches were carried out on January 19-20 at 22 locations in Ahmedabad, Surat and Mehsana in Gujarat and in Delhi. These were linked to "key conspirators" Bobby alias Bharatbhai Patel, Charanjit Singh and others in a case of aiding illegal foreign immigration, the agency said in a statement.

Patel was arrested in this case by the Gujarat Police in 2022 and was also involved in the Dingucha case that took place the same year, where an Indian family of four had frozen to death while attempting to illegally enter the US from Canada.

The ED case filed under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) stems from Gujarat Police FIRs registered against the accused under the IPC and the Passports Act for their alleged involvement in sending Indian citizens abroad illegally since 2015.

The accused "were taking huge consideration for sending Indian citizens abroad illegally on the basis of bogus or fabricated documents for getting visa of different countries with duplicate or bogus passports used as genuine by impersonating the passengers wrongly".

They used to collect ₹60-75 lakh from one passenger. ₹1-1.25 crore from every couple (husband and wife) and ₹1.25-1.75 crore if children accompanied their parents, it said.

## Ayodhya can set a template for tourism boost: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 21: The grand opening of Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 is a big religious event. It also comes with a large economic impact as India gets a new tourist spot which could attract 50 million plus tourists a year, foreign brokerage firm Jefferies said in a report.

A \$10 billion makeover (new airport, revamped railway station, township, improved road connectivity etc.) will likely drive a multiplier effect with new hotels and other economic activities. It can also set a template for infra driven growth

for tourism.

Ayodhya is a template for India's tourism boost, the report said \$10 billion makeover is now set from a sleepy town to a global religious and spiritual tourist hotspot. The new Ram temple comes up at the cost of \$225 million.

Tourism is projected to surge and increased economic and religious migration to Ayodhya, multiple sectors stand to benefit including hotels, airlines, hospitality, FMCG, travel ancillaries, cement, etc. Significant infra upgrade to facilitate Ayodhya tourism with



Phase 1 of a new airport at Ayodhya has become operational at the cost of \$175 million and can handle 1 million passengers. Additional domestic capacity and an international terminal

is expected by 2025 with a capacity to handle 6 million passengers. Railway station has been upgraded to double the capacity to 60,000 passengers/day. A 1,200 acre greenfield township

is being planned and road connectivity being beefed up as well. Tourism has big potential in India, the report said.

Tourism contributed \$194 billion to FY19 (pre-COVID) GDP and is expected to grow at an 8 per cent CAGR to \$443 billion by FY33. Tourism to GDP ratio in India at 6.8 per cent of GDP.

Religious tourism is big in India. Religious tourism is still the biggest segment of tourism in India. Several popular religious centres attract annual tourist traffic of 10-30 million despite the existing infrastructural bottlenecks.

And hence, the creation of a new religious tourist centre (Ayodhya) with improved connectivity and infrastructure can create a meaningfully large economic impact, the report said.

AYODHYA IS A TEMPLATE FOR INDIA'S TOURISM BOOST, THE REPORT SAID \$10 BILLION MAKEOVER IS NOW SET TO TRANSFORM THE ANCIENT CITY FROM A SLEEPY TOWN TO A GLOBAL RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL TOURIST HOTSPOT. THE NEW RAM TEMPLE COMES UP AT THE COST OF \$225 MILLION



# international

## of the day quote

We are in the middle of a war in this country. A country divided between those of us who love the United States of America and a fringe minority who hates this country and what we stand for

I mean, of course, we are very worried. I mean, you know, we are in a very difficult and dangerous time in the region, and that's why we are calling for de-escalation

The US-India relationship is very important and significant not only for the two countries but also for the global good

## SHORT TAKES

### Newspapers stolen

Denver: Nearly all the copies of a small-town Colorado newspaper were stolen from newspaper racks on the same day the Ouray County Plaindealer published a story about charges being filed over rapes alleged to have occurred at an underage drinking party at the police chief's house while the chief was asleep, the owner and publisher said Friday. Mike Wiggins vowed to get to the bottom of it, posting on Thursday on X, formerly Twitter: "If you hoped to silence or intimidate us, you failed miserably. We'll find out who did this. And another press run is imminent." The newspaper posted the story on social media and removed its website payroll so people could read about the felony sexual assault charges filed against three men, including a relative of the police chief, for actions that allegedly occurred at a May 2023 party in Ouray where drugs and alcohol were used, according to court records.

### Putin to visit NK

Seoul: Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his willingness to visit Pyongyang soon when he met with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui in Russia last week, North Korea's state news agency KCNA reported Sunday. Putin also thanked North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for his invitation to visit, KCNA said, citing North Korea's foreign minister's assistant office. It would be the Russian leader's first trip to North Korea in more than two decades. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday that Russia hoped a Putin visit to North Korea, at Kim's invitation, would take place "in the foreseeable future", but he said no date had yet been agreed.

### El Nino bakes Oz

Sydney: Large swaths of Australia sweltered again Sunday through a widening heatwave, with the national weather forecaster said raised the bushfire risk in an already high-risk fire season as the country endures an El Nino weather pattern. "Extreme" heatwave alerts, the highest danger rating, were in place for a second day for parts of Western Australia and were extended to South Australia, while areas of Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory were under "severe" warnings, the forecaster said. Australia's highest recorded temperature, 50.7 C, was logged at the Pilbara's Onslow Airport January 13, 2022.



A lack of fairness in conducting polls will lead to further instability and uncertainty

IMRAN KHAN | FORMER PM, PAKISTAN

### MOUNT MERAPI ERUPTS

Indonesia's Mount Merapi erupted Sunday, spreading searing gas clouds and avalanches of lava down its slopes as other active volcanoes flared up across the country, forcing the evacuation of thousands



## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

# 25K Gazans killed so far

PALESTINIAN DEATH TOLL IN GAZA SURPASSES 25,000 WITH NO END IN SIGHT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rafah, Jan 21: The Palestinian death toll from the war between Israel and Hamas has soared past 25,000, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said Sunday, while the Israeli government appeared far from achieving its goals of crushing the militant group and freeing more than 100 hostages.

The level of death, destruction and displacement from the war already is without precedent in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet Israeli officials say the fighting is likely to continue for several more months.

The slow progress and the plight of the hostages held in Gaza has divided ordinary Israelis and their leaders even as the offensive threatens to ignite a wider war involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen that support the Palestinians.

The United States, which has provided essential diplomatic and military support for the offensive, has had limited success in persuading Israel to adopt military tactics that put civilians at less risk and to facilitate the delivery of more humanitarian aid.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also has rejected US and international calls for postwar plans that would include a path to Palestinian statehood.

TOLL CLIMBS AMID BLISTERING OFFENSIVE

The war began with Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel October 7, during which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostages back to Gaza.

Israel responded with a blistering three-week air campaign and then a ground invasion into northern Gaza that laid waste to entire neighbourhoods. Ground operations are now focused on the southern city of Khan Younis and built-up refugee camps in

central Gaza dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

Israel continues to carry out airstrikes throughout the besieged territory, including areas in the south where it told civilians to seek refuge. Many Palestinians have ignored evacuation orders, saying nowhere feels safe.

Since the war started, a total of 25,105 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, while another 62,681 have been wounded, the Health Ministry reported Sunday.

The death toll included the 178 bodies brought to Gaza's hospitals since Saturday, Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said. Another 300 people were wounded in the past day, he said.

The overall toll is thought to be even higher because many casualties remain buried under the rubble from Israeli strikes or in areas where medics cannot reach them, Al-Qidra said. The Health Ministry does not

This is heartbreaking and utterly unacceptable. The Middle East is a tinder-box, we must do all we can to prevent conflict from igniting across the region

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

### Face of evil: Israeli protesters call for polls to oust PM

Thousands of people demonstrated in central Tel Aviv Saturday, calling for the return of hostages held in Gaza and early elections to oust Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Demonstrators marched through the city's Habima Square, a frequent protest site, with some carrying signs calling Netanyahu "the face of evil" and demanding "elections now".



neighbourhoods, often near homes, schools or mosques. The military says 195 of its soldiers have been killed since the start of the Gaza offensive.

The war has displaced some 85 per cent of Gaza's residents from their homes, with hundreds of thousands packing into UN-run shelters and tent camps in the southern part of the tiny coastal enclave.

UN officials say a quarter of the population of 2.3 million is starving as only a trickle of humanitarian aid reaches them because of the fighting and Israeli restrictions.

differentiate between civilians and combatants in its figures but says around two-thirds of the people killed in Gaza were women and minors.

The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, but its casualty figures from previous wars were largely consistent with those of UN agencies and even the Israeli military.

The Israeli military says it has killed around 9,000 militants, without providing evidence, and blames the high civilian death toll on Hamas because it positions fighters, tunnels and other militant infrastructure in dense

## Russian flight with six onboard crashes over Afghanistan

REUTERS

Kabul, Jan 21: A Russian-registered charter plane with six people on board disappeared from radar screens over Afghanistan a day earlier, Russian aviation authorities said Sunday, after Afghan police said they had received reports of a crash.

The plane was a charter ambulance flight travelling from Thailand's Utapao Airport in Pattaya to Moscow via India and Uzbekistan on a French-made Dassault Aviation Falcon 10 jet manufactured in 1978, Russian aviation authorities said in a statement.

About 25 minutes before the plane vanished from radar screens, the pilot warned that fuel was running low and that the plane would try to land at an airport in Tajikistan, Russian news outlet SHOT reported, citing an unnamed source.

The pilot then reported that one engine had stopped, and then that the second one had also stopped, SHOT reported.

India's civil aviation authority said the plane was not a scheduled commercial flight or an Indian chartered aircraft and that it awaited more details.

The flight was carrying out a private medical evacuation from Thailand's Pattaya, a popular tourist destination for Russians, to Moscow, Russian state-run TASS news agency reported.

## Minor dies after Maldives Prez denies approval to Indian plane

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: A 14-year-old Maldivian boy died Saturday amid allegations that President Mohammed Muizzu denied permission for the use of an Indian Dornier aircraft that could have potentially saved his life, local media reported.

A Dornier aircraft, produced by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and provided by India, has been used extensively in the island nation for humanitarian purposes.

The teen, battling a combination of a brain tumour and a stroke, saw his family desperately seeking an air ambulance to airlift him from the remote island of Wilmington in Gaaf Alif Villingili to Maldivian's capital Male, where advanced medical care awaited, the report said.

The tragedy began to unfold Wednesday night when the child suffered a stroke, prompting his family to request an aerial transfer to the capital. However, their distress calls went unanswered until Thursday morning, when the country's aviation authorities finally responded. The delay, reportedly lasting 16 crucial hours, sparked protests near the hospital in Gaaf Alif Villingili as the community voiced their anger over the delay.

The incident comes against the backdrop of strained diplomatic relations between India and Maldives.



The incident comes against the backdrop of strained diplomatic relations between India and Maldives

The diplomatic tension between India and the Maldives has spiked in recent months, particularly after President Mohammed Muizzu assumed office in November last year. The new president has indicated a shift in foreign policy, signaling closer ties with China and a departure from the previous "India first" approach.

Bilateral ties between the two countries took another hit when a tweet by a Maldives minister, accused India of targeting the nation and claimed that India faces challenges in competing with Maldives in beach tourism.

## 25 killed after Ukraine shells Donetsk

RUSSIA, WHICH LAUNCHED A FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO, HAS VOICED OUTRAGE WHEN UKRAINIAN ATTACKS HAVE KILLED CIVILIANS IN DONETSK AND OTHER AREAS

REUTERS

Moscow, Jan 21: Twenty-five people were killed and 20 injured after Ukrainian forces shelled the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, Denis Pushilin, the Russian-appointed head of the Donetsk region, said Sunday.

According to Alexei Kulemin, the city's Russian-installed mayor, Ukrainian forces shelled a busy area where shops and a market are located.

Reuters photographs and video taken at the scene showed crying people, some who said they had lost their relatives, and bodies lying on blood-soaked snow near one of the city's markets.

Pushilin said emergency services were working at the scene and that forensic specialists were trying to collect fragments of



### Fire erupts at Novatek Baltic Sea terminal

A fire broke out at a Baltic Sea terminal belonging to Novatek, Russia's largest liquefied natural gas producer, after a suspected Ukrainian drone attack, forcing the company to suspend some operations there. The Ust-Luga complex, located on the Gulf of Finland about 170 km (110 miles) west of St Petersburg, processes stable gas condensate into light and heavy naphtha, jet fuel, fuel oil and gasoil, according to Novatek's website. The port is used to ship processed products to international markets. The Interfax-Ukraine news agency, citing unnamed sources, said the fire was the result of a special operation carried out by Ukraine's security services.

The Ust-Luga Oil terminal in the Leningrad region is an important facility for the enemy. Fuel is refined there, which, among other things, is also supplied to Russian troops," it cited one source as saying. "A successful attack on such a terminal not only causes economic damage to the enemy, depriving the occupiers of the opportunity to earn money to wage war in Ukraine, but also significantly complicates the logistics of fuel for the Russian military."

the weapons used in the attack.

Donetsk is one of four Ukrainian regions which Russia claimed to have annexed last year in a move con-

demned as illegal by most countries at the United Nations General Assembly. Russia does not fully control any of the four regions.

# A century later Lenin only an afterthought in modern Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Jan 21: Not long after the 1924 death of the founder of the Soviet Union, a popular poet soothed and thrilled the grieving country with these words: "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live."

A century later, the once-omnipresent image of Vladimir Lenin is largely an afterthought in modern Russia, despite those famous lines by revolutionary writer Vladimir Mayakovsky.

The goateed face with its intense glare that once seemed unavoidable still stares out from statues, but many of those have been the targets of pranksters and vandals. The one at St Petersburg's Finland Station commemorating his return from exile was hit by a bomb that left a huge hole in his posterior. Many streets and localities that bore his name have been rechristened.



The ideology that Lenin championed and spread over a vast territory is something of a sideshow in modern Russia. The Communist Party, although the largest opposition grouping in parliament, holds only 16 per cent of the seats, overwhelmed by President Vladimir Putin's political power-base, United Russia.

Lenin died January 21, 1924, at age 53, severely weakened by three strokes. Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov talks as if Lenin still was in charge: "100 years since the day when his big and kind heart stopped, the second century of Lenin's immortality begins," he said.

The Red Square mausoleum where Vladimir Lenin's embalmed corpse lies in an open sarcophagus is no longer a near-mandatory pilgrimage but a site of macabre kitsch, open only 15 hours a week. It draws far fewer visitors than the Moscow Zoo

Lenin turned out to be completely superfluous and unnecessary in modern Russia

KONSTANTIN MOROZOV | HISTORIAN, RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Putin himself appears inclined to keep Lenin at arm's length, even aiming some darts at him.

In a speech three days before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Putin dismissed its sovereign status as an illegitimate holdover from Lenin's era, when it was a separate republic within the Soviet Union.

"As a result of Bolshevik policy, Soviet Ukraine arose, which even today can with good reason be called Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Ukraine. He is the author and the architect," Putin said.

In a speech a year earlier, Putin said that allowing Ukraine and other republics the nominal right to secede had planted "the most dangerous time bomb".

Whatever objections to those policies, Putin also is clearly aware of the emotional hold that Lenin retains for many Russians, and he does not support initiatives that arise periodically to remove the body from the mausoleum.

"I believe it should be left as it is, at least for as long as there are those, and there are quite a

few people, who link their lives, their fates as well as certain achievements ... Of the Soviet era with that," he said in 2019.

Such links may persist for decades. A 2022 opinion survey by state-run polling agency VTsIOM found that 29 per cent of Russians believed Lenin's influence would fade so much that in 50 years he would be remembered only by historians. But that response was only 10 percentage points lower than one to the same question a decade earlier, suggesting Lenin remains important.

Lenin's hold on Russia's heart is still strong enough that three years ago, the Union of Russian Architects succumbed to a public outcry and cancelled a competition soliciting suggestions for how the Red Square mausoleum could be repurposed. That competition did not even specifically call for the removal of Lenin's body.





The hybrid is actually a fossil fuel vehicle which is being presented as an EV because it uses a motor and a minuscule battery pack. Essentially it uses fossil fuel as the energy source

NEW ENERGY GIGA COMPLEX BY RIL

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) will commission a new energy giga complex in Gujarat in the second half of 2024, the company said.



of the day quote

The Union Government needs to formulate a comprehensive policy on EV parts, ensuring transparency and establishing a level playing field within the industry

We in corporate India are excited to partner with governments and companies across the globe to promote Gender Equality and strengthen Women Leadership

Our revenue will easily cross ₹550 crore this financial year and may touch ₹575 crore. We expect demand to sustain in 2024 and beyond

FPIs TURN CAUTIOUS

Foreign investors pull out ₹13K-cr from Indian stocks in January so far

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: Foreign investors have adopted a cautious approach this month, offloading domestic equities worth ₹13,000 crore in the first three weeks owing to high valuations of Indian stocks and surging US bond yields.

In contrast, foreign investors are bullish on the debt market and injected ₹15,647 crore in the debt market during the period under review, data with the depositories showed.

According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made a net withdrawal of ₹13,047 crore in Indian equities this month (till January 19).

They pulled out over ₹24,000 crore from equities during January 17-19. Before this, FPIs made a net investment of ₹66,134 crore in December and ₹9,000 crore in November.

"There are two main reasons why FPIs turned sellers. One, the US bond yield started rising with the 10-year yield rising from the recent level of 3.9 per cent to 4.15 per cent triggering capital outflows from emerging markets."

"Second, since the valuations in India are high, FPIs used the excuse of less-than-expected re-



FPIs started the New Year with a cautious approach opting to book profits in the Indian equity markets as key stock indices touched all-time high levels

HIMANSHU SRIVASTAVA | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR (MANAGER RESEARCH), MORNINGSTAR INVESTMENT RESEARCH

Overall, the total FPI flows for 2023 stood at ₹1.71 lakh crore in equities and ₹68,663 crore in the debt markets. Together, they infused ₹2.4 lakh crore into the capital market

sults from HDFC Bank to press massive sales too," he added.

The extensive selling by FPIs could be attributed to offloading their stake in HDFC Bank given its disappointing quarterly results, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India said.

Moreover, uncertainty over the interest rate scenario also prompted them to stay on the sidelines and wait for further cues, before deciding to invest in emerging markets like India, he added.

Besides, FPIs were big sellers in other emerging markets such as Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong.

With regard to a bullish stance on debt markets, Kislay Upadhyay, smallcase manager and founder of FidelFolio Investments, said expectations of rate cuts in India have increased, long term debt bonds are

expected to gain disproportionately from any sudden drop in yield.

This came following a net investment of ₹18,302 crore in the debt market in December, ₹14,860 crore in November, and ₹6,381 crore in October, data showed.

The announcement by JP Morgan Chase & Co. in September that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June next year has influenced the inflow in the country's bond markets in the past few months.

In terms of sector, FPIs have been buying IT stocks this month after the management commentary following the Q3 results of IT managers indicated optimism of demand revival in the sector.

The flow in Indian equities came following a worst net outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore in 2022 on aggressive rate hikes by the central banks globally. Before the outflow, FPIs invested money in the last three years.

Goods, services exports see marginal rise in '23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Goods exports contracted by 4.71% to \$431.9bn. Services exports have risen by 7.88% to \$333.8bn. Merchandise imports dipped by 7% to \$667.73bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: The country's exports of goods and services rose marginally by 0.4 per cent to \$765.6 billion in 2023 despite global economic uncertainties, according to the commerce ministry data.

Sectors which helped keep India's exports afloat include electronics, pharmaceuticals, cotton yarn, fabrics and made-ups; ceramic products, meat, dairy and poultry products, fruits and vegetables and information technology.

Goods exports in the last calendar year, however, contracted by 4.71 per cent to \$431.9 billion while services exports are estimated to have risen by 7.88 per cent to \$333.8 billion, the data showed.

The merchandise imports also dipped by 7 per cent to \$667.73 billion last year as against \$720.2 billion in 2022.

The latest data for the services sector released by the RBI for November 2023. The data for December 2023 is an estimation by the ministry.

The main export destinations

for India are the US, the UAE, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, the UK and Germany.

Goods shipments are impacted due to the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas conflict and the Red Sea trade route crisis due to attacks by Yemen-based Houthis on cargo ships.

According to international trade experts, if these challenges are prolonged, it will have major implications on global trade.

Economic think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India's exports and imports have dipped by 2.6 per cent to \$1609 billion in 2023 compared to \$1651.9 billion in 2022.

The negative trade balance - the difference between exports and imports - decreased from \$141.3 billion in 2022 to \$75.2 billion in 2023.

The data for the current fiscal shows that the goods exports during April-December 2023 dipped by 5.7 per cent to \$317.12 billion. Imports contracted by 7.93 per cent to \$ 505.15 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$188.02 billion in the first three quarters as against \$212.34 billion in April-December 2022.

SHORT TAKES

Tata Motors to hike PV prices

New Delhi: Tata Motors Sunday said it will increase prices of its entire passenger vehicle range, including EVs, by an average of 0.7 per cent with effect from next month.

RO Systems to foray into US

New Delhi: Home-grown water purifier maker Kent RO System aims to enter the US market next fiscal and expand its appliances portfolio as it targets a ₹2,000 crore turnover in the next three years, its Chairman & Managing Director Mahesh Gupta said.

Lalchnd issues silver coin in homage to Lord Ram



BHUBANESWAR: To celebrate the opening of the majestic new Ram Mandir and the Pran Pratistha ceremony of Ram Lalla's idol in Ayodhya, Lalchnd, the biggest and most trusted jewellery house in Eastern India, has launched a special edition coin of Lord Ram.



Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Pankaj Chaudhary, Union Minister of State for Finance sanctioned loans worth ₹4,826 crore to 2,66,186 beneficiaries of Sambalpur, Deogarh, Dhenkanal and Angul districts.

SANCTIONS IGNORED

China makes Russia its biggest oil supplier

ACCELERATING DEMAND FROM CHINESE AND INDIAN REFINERS FOR THE DISCOUNTED OIL BOOSTED THE PRICE OF RUSSIAN ESPO CRUDE THROUGH 2023, PUSHING PAST G7'S \$60 A BARREL PRICE CAP

REUTERS

Beijing, Jan 21: Russia leapt to become China's top crude oil supplier in 2023, data showed Saturday, as the world's biggest crude importer defied Western sanctions to purchase vast quantities of discounted oil for its processing plants.

Russia shipped a record 107.02 million metric tons of crude oil to China last year, equivalent to 2.14 million barrels per day (bpd), the Chinese customs data showed, far more than other major oil exporters such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Imports from Saudi Arabia, previously China's largest supplier, fell 1.8% to 85.96 million tons, as the Middle East oil giant lost market share to cheaper Russian crude.

Shunned by many international buyers following Western sanctions over the Kremlin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russian crude oil traded at significant discounts to international benchmarks for much of last year amid a Western-imposed price cap. Accelerating demand from



Chinese and Indian refiners for the discounted oil boosted the price of Russian ESPO crude through 2023, pushing past the Group of Seven's \$60 a barrel price cap imposed in December 2022 as alternative shipping and insurance options to circumvent the sanctions proliferated.

ESPO crude shipments for December delivery were priced at a discount of around 50 cents to 20 cent per barrel to the ICE Brent benchmark, versus a \$1

premium for October delivery cargoes and a discount of \$8.50 for shipments delivered in March, according to trading sources.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia raised prices for its signature Arab Light from July, pushing some refiners to look for cheaper cargoes.

To support prices, Saudi Arabia and Russia, two of the world's top three oil producers, announced output and export cuts last year. Saudi Arabia is

rolling over output cuts of 1 million bpd this quarter, while Russia said it would deepen its cut in exports this year to 500,000 bpd from 300,000 bpd.

Chinese refiners use intermediary traders to handle the shipping and insurance of Russian crude to avoid violating the Western sanctions.

Buyers also use the waters off Malaysia as a trans-shipment point for sanctioned cargoes from Iran and Venezuela. Imports tagged as originating from Malaysia climbed 53.7% last year.

China reported no official shipments of Venezuelan crude in December despite an easing of US sanctions on Caracas in October following a deal between President Nicolas Maduro's administration and its political opposition.

Shipments to China from the US last year surged 81.1% last year despite geopolitical tensions between Beijing and Washington as US crude production increased.

China's overall crude imports for 2023 rose to a record of 563.99 million metric tons, equivalent to 11.28 million bpd.

Second day of 24th CII Enterprise Odisha 2024



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, Jan 21: The 24th CII Enterprise Odisha 2024 entered its second day at the Exhibition Ground, Jharsuguda, January 20, with an insightful discourse on propelling the prosperity of Odisha.

The discussions centred around leveraging the state's vast potential across different sectors to foster economic growth.

Distinguished speakers included Principal Secretary, Department of Industries, Government of Odisha, Hemant Sharma, IAS, IPICOL and IDCO MD, Bhupendra Singh Punia, and various district collectors.

During the session "Opportunities in Agriculture and Food Processing," speakers deliberated on the potential available to both farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. Remarkably, among all the

Power usage surges nearly 8% in Apr-Dec

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: Power consumption in the country witnessed an on-year rise of nearly 8 per cent to 1,221.15 billion units (BU) during the April-December period of this fiscal, indicating a surge in economic activities.

Power consumption in the country stood at 1,132.11 BU in April-December 2022-23. Industry experts said that around eight per cent growth in power consumption in the first nine months of this fiscal year shows a surge in economic activities.

Power consumption in the entire fiscal 2022-23 was 1,504.26 BU, higher than the 1,374.02 BU witnessed in the 2021-22 financial year.

The power ministry had estimated the country's electricity demand to touch 229 GW during summer in 2023. The demand did not reach the projected level in April-July due to unseasonal rain.

The peak demand, however, touched a new high of 224.1 GW in June before dropping to 209.03 GW in July 2023. Peak demand touched 238.82 GW in August. In September this fiscal year, it was at a record high of 243.27 GW.

The peak demand was 222.16 GW in October, 204.77 GW in November and 213.62GW in December 2023.



# Djokovic demolishes Mannarino

SERBIAN MAKES QUARTERFINALS IN MAJORS FOR 58TH TIME, TO MEET TAYLOR FRITZ

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 21: Novak Djokovic was ruthless in a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 win over Adrian Mannarino here Sunday, reaching the Australian Open quarterfinals and matching Roger Federer's all-time Grand Slam record. In a rare daytime appearance on Rod Laver Arena, the 10-time Australian Open champion hit 31 winners and raced to victory in an hour and 44 minutes to progress to the last eight for the 58th time at a Major, equalling Federer's record. Incidentally, this is the Serbian's 14th appearance at the quarters here, a feat which has only been matched by Rafa Nadal and John Newcombe.

Djokovic will next face 12th-seeded Taylor Fritz, who reached the Australian Open quarterfinals for the first time with a 7-6 (7-3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 win over Stefanos Tsitsipas, the runner-up here last year. Fritz have played Djokovic in the past eight times and have failed to win a single one of those matches.

"I think I served well, the whole match, it kept me in it," said Fritz, after his first victory over a top 10 player at a Major. "And then at the very end when I really needed it, I feel like I just, I turned it up a level and started playing my absolute best tennis to finish it (the match)," he added.

Djokovic, who laboured in his first two rounds, said he is



**BASKING IN GLORY:** Novak Djokovic laps up the adulation at Melbourne Park after his win Sunday

AP PHOTO

slowly getting into his stride. "The first two sets were some of the best tennis I've played in a while," said Djokovic. "I played great from the first to the last point," he added.

The 35-year-old Mannarino had gone to five sets in all three of his previous rounds. After missing a breakpoint in the

opening game, he seldom threatened Djokovic.

The Frenchman avoided a so-called triple-bagel - only five Grand Slam matches in the Open era have been won 6-0, 6-0, 6-0 - but he was only postponing the inevitable.

Djokovic has admitted to feeling unwell in recent rounds but

said his health is improving. "Last couple of days has been really good," he said. "It's going in a positive direction, health-wise, tennis-wise."

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and US Open winner Coco Gauff cruised into the women's quarterfinals with commanding wins.

No. 2-ranked Sabalenka, who won her first Slam title here last year, beat Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-2. Gauff, who picked up her first Major at the US Open in September, beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2.

Anisimova had won four of their previous five meetings but she didn't have the answers this time to counter the power of the Belarusian, who hit 18 winners.

"I'm super happy with the level, happy to get this win, she's a tough opponent," Sabalenka said. "I love the atmosphere here, I love playing in front of you guys. Hopefully, we can get this thing one more time," the Belarusian added.

## AT A GLANCE

- Novak Djokovic bt Adrian Mannarino 6-0, 6-0, 6-3
- Taylor Fritz bt Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7-3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3
- Aryna Sabalenka bt Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-2
- Coco Gauff bt Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2
- Marta Kostyuk bt Maria Tomaseva 6-2, 6-1
- Jack Sinner bt Karen Kachanov 6-4, 7-5, 6-3

# SANIA CONFIRMS SPLIT WITH SHOAB

TENNIS STAR'S FAMILY CONFIRMS THAT THE TWO HAVE BEEN DIVORCED FOR A FEW MONTHS NOW

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 21: Sania Mirza's family confirmed Sunday that the Indian tennis icon and Shoaib Malik have separated. This development comes a day after the Pakistani cricketer announced his second marriage with actor Sana Javed. Meanwhile a section of the Pakistani media reported Sunday in Islamabad that Sania and Shoaib had split a few months back. It also said that Sania was fed up with the numerous affairs, Shoaib allegedly indulged in.

The Sania-Shoaib split marks the end of a high-profile union that had generated huge interest among

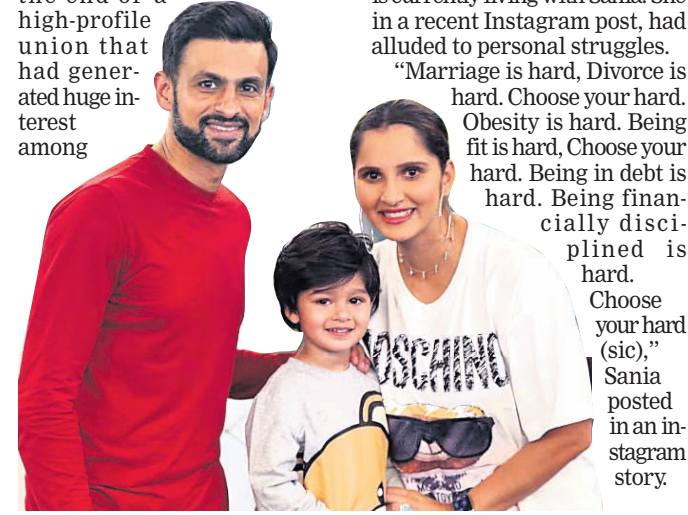
sports lovers from the two countries.

"Sania has always kept her personal life away from the public eye. However, today the need has arisen for her to share that Shoaib and she have been divorced for a few months now. She wishes Shoaib well for his new journey ahead!" read the statement issued by Sania's family.

"At this sensitive period of her life, we would like to request all fans and well-wishers to refrain from indulging in any speculation and to respect her need for privacy," the statement added.

The revelation comes amid long-standing rumours and speculation surrounding the strained relationship between Shoaib and Sania, who got married in April 2010 in the Indian player's hometown of Hyderabad. They have a five-year-old son, Izaan, who is currently living with Sania. She in a recent Instagram post, had alluded to personal struggles.

"Marriage is hard. Divorce is hard. Choose your hard. Obesity is hard. Being fit is hard. Choose your hard. Being in debt is hard. Being financially disciplined is hard. Choose your hard (sic)." Sania posted in an Instagram story.



Sania has always kept her personal life away from the public eye. However, now the time has come to say that she and Shoaib have been divorced for a few months now

MIRZA FAMILY

## SHORT TAKES

### Dahiya returns to mat with bronze

New Delhi: Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Ravi Kumar Dahiya, after missing entire 2023 season due to injuries, made a comeback by securing a bronze medal at the Henri Deglane Grand Prix wrestling tournament in Nice, France. Dahiya won the men's 61kg freestyle bronze medal bout 10-4 against Kairat Amirtayev of Kazakhstan. He defeated Julien Zinser of Germany in the round of 16 via technical superiority (13-2) followed by a 12-6 win over Zangar Kabylbekov of Kazakhstan in the quarterfinal. However, in the semifinals, Dahiya lost 3-6 to Arman Eloyan of France. The 26-year-old last competed on the international stage at the 2022 World Wrestling Championships. He suffered a serious knee injury in February 2023, and had to miss most of the year.

### Shooters shine in Kuwait skeet event

Kuwait City: Young Raiza Dhillon, who had secured a Paris Olympics quota for India, partnered with Gurjoat Khangura to clinch a bronze in the skeet mixed team event and pick up her third medal of the Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun competition here Sunday. The Indian pair outshot local favourites Abdullah Alrashidi and Eman Al Shama 41-39 in the second bronze medal match. The 19-year-old Raiza had won a silver and a Paris Olympic berth in the women's skeet individual event Saturday, as did Anantjeet Singh Naruka in men's skeet. Raiza had also won the women's skeet team gold.

### Mumbai in semis

Bhubaneswar: Mumbai City FC rode on Hmingthamawia's first half strike to defeat Chennaiyin FC 1-0 in a Group C match and enter the semifinals of the Kalinga Super Cup football tournament here Sunday. Hmingthamawia struck the all-important goal in the 24th minute. The highlight of the match however, was Mumbai City goalkeeper Phurba Tachenpa's outstanding performance. He made numerous saves to secure the win for his side. Mumbai City FC thus finished at the top of their group with nine points winning all their three games. They will face the winners of the game between Odisha FC and FC Goa for a place in the final.

## BROOK RULED OUT FOR TESTS AGAINST INDIA

ECB names Dan Lawrence as replacement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 21: England's Harry Brook will miss the five-match Test series against India as the middle-order batsman will return home with immediate effect because of personal reasons, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced Sunday. Dan Lawrence has been named as his replacement. The series begins Thursday in



Hyderabad with the England team arriving there Monday.

Brook had travelled to Abu Dhabi with the team for a preparatory camp ahead of the series. "Harry Brook is set to return home with immediate effect for personal reasons from the England men's Test tour of India. He will not be returning to India," the ECB statement read.

"The Brook family respectfully requests privacy during this time. In light of this, the ECB and the family kindly request the media and the public to respect their wish for privacy and refrain from intruding on their private space," the statement added.

Brook made his Test debut in 2022 against South Africa, while his last appearance in England whites was against Australia at the Oval in July 2023. The 24-year-old Yorkshire batter has so far played 12 Tests making 1,181 runs at an average of 61 with four hundreds and seven half centuries.

Brook's impressive effort had helped England clean sweep the series against Pakistan in late 2022. He was the player of the series after making 468 runs from five innings at an average of 93.60.

## Sandeep keeps Odisha in hunt



Odisha's Sandeep Patnaik raises his bat to acknowledge the applause after reaching his century Sunday

OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 21: An unbeaten century by Sandeep Patnaik (100 n o, 187b, 17x4) and some fine bowling by pacer Rajesh Mohanty (3/29) gave hosts Odisha some hope of winning their Group D Ranji Trophy game being played at the DRIEMS ground against Jammu and Kashmir. At stumps Sunday, the

third day of the four-day encounter, the visitors were 72 for the loss of four wickets still needing another 77 runs to win the match outright.

Earlier, Odisha who had conceded a first innings lead of 50 runs to J&K, scored 198 in their second innings. It was largely due to the efforts of Sandeep that Odisha managed to fight back and keep the game alive on

a pitch that is helping pacers.

Resuming at their overnight score of 126 for seven wickets, Odisha lost Suryakant Pradhan (27) and Rajesh early on. However, a 63-run partnership for the 10th wicket between Sandeep and Sunil Roul (6) took Odisha close to the 200-run mark. Not only did Sunil play 50 deliveries, he also helped Sandeep achieve the three-figure mark. It was a gritty effort by Sunil and it enabled the hosts to have some sort of total to defend.

In the second innings, the visitors were reduced to 39 for four, before Auqib Nabi (20 batting) and Abdul Samad (24 batting) steadied the ship and prevented any further loss of wickets.

Among the four J&K wickets to fall in the second innings, Rajesh took three and Sunil one. Both of them will have to get their act together quickly as the opposition needs just another 77 runs to take full points from the game. An outright win would certainly help Odisha's cause.

## BRIEF SCORES

Odisha 130 and 198 (Sandeep Patnaik 100 n o, Auqib Nabi 4/73); J&K 180 and 72 for 4 (Rajesh Mohanty 3/29). Match to continue.

## MUDULI KNOCK PROPS ODISHA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Odisha were bowled out Sunday for a paltry score of 126 in their first innings of the U-23 Col CK Nayudu Trophy match against Tripura being played at the Police ground in Agartala. In reply the hosts were 15 for the loss of one wicket at stumps.

Except for Biswa Bibhab Muduli who scored 58 (107b, 9x4) none of the other Odisha batters could get going against the Tripura bowling. There were no significant partnerships during the Odisha innings and had it not been for Muduli, they would have folded for a total less than 100.

Sandeep Sarkar (5 for 25 off 12 overs) bowled outstandingly for Tripura. He bowled with great discipline forcing the Odisha batters to commit errors. Sarkar was well-supported by Abhijit Debbarma (2/14). The two kept a tight leash on the Odisha batters.

On a pitch that is helping the pacers, Odisha hit back after folding for a low total. The lone Tripura wicket to fall on the day was picked up by Sambit Baral. However, the Odisha bowlers will have to be on the money when the game resumes Monday. This match is set for an outright result and the Odisha bowlers will have to restrict the opposition to a low total.

## CHIRAG, SATWIK FALTER AGAIN

2ND SUCCESSIVE LOSS IN FINAL IN 2 WEEKS FOR THE INDIAN DUO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 21: Home favourites Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty went down in a tense final against World Champions Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Sang Jae at the India Open, settling for their second successive runners-up finish here Sunday.

Satwik and Chirag, the Asian Games champions, lost 21-15, 11-21, 18-21 to Kang and Seo after the two pairs fought for 65 minutes in what was some breathtaking badminton at the KD Jadhav Indoor stadium here.

The Indian duo, who won the 2022 edition, had finished second best at the Malaysia Super 1000 last week as well.

Satwik and Chirag always had tough matches against their Korean rivals though they boasted a 4-1 head-to-head count in five meetings coming into the match with the latest being at the Malaysia Open last week.



**2ND BEST ONCE MORE:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (left) and Chirag Shetty pose with their medals and cheque after losing in the final, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

The Indian duo played some breath-taking rallies, displaying amazing reflexes as they

kept the Korean pair under the pump with some relentless hitting in the opening game.

Chirag dazzled in the front court with some brilliant net interceptions as the duo led 11-9 and soon jumped to 19-13 after the break before pocketing the game when the Koreans netted a shot.

However, in the second game, the Indian pair was definitely sloppy and committed a number of unforced errors to fall behind 1-5. The Koreans held on to the lead at the interval with the score reading 11-6. It soon became 15-5 and the Koreans closed down the game easily.

In the decider, the Koreans kept up a high tempo with Kang flying across the front court as they led 9-5. They never allowed Satwik and Chirag close the deficit hitting winners. The closest the Indians came was when they trailed 15-16 and 18-19.

The Koreans grabbed two championship points when Satwik sent one wide. It was all over when Chirag sent one to the net and fell on the floor.

## State swimmers steal show in junior meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 21: Odisha swimmers did themselves proud by winning a number of medals on the second and concluding day of the Khelo India Junior Women's swimming championships. The event which was conducted at the Aquatic Centre inside the Kalinga Stadium complex here ended Sunday.

Women swimmers from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha competed in 10 events. In 200 metres back-stroke Akankshya Naik (U-18) from Odisha bagged the first prize. In the 200 metres back-stroke event for the U-15 segment, Ridhima Pallavi Tiwari from Jharkhand

stood first while Arpita Seth from Odisha finished second. In the 100 metres breast-stroke for under-18 girls, Odisha's Mannata Mishra bagged the first prize. In the U-15 segment of the event Anchal Bag from Odisha left all the other competitors behind.

In the 400m freestyle (U-18), it was the turn of Vadra Satpathy to walk away with top honours. Compatriot Divyanka Divyajyoti Pradhan finished first in the 200 metres butterfly while Arpita Samal bagged the first position in the 200 metres butterfly event for the under-15 girls.

Pradip Kumar Padhee, president of Odisha State Swimming Association presided over the closing ceremony.

