

Ananya's introspection

Ananya Panday wants to delete all social media apps from her phone as they, she says, affect mental health

LEISURE | P2

Families seek action

Relatives of Israelis held hostage by Hamas in Gaza, storm a parliamentary meeting in Jerusalem demanding action

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Merger called off

Sony Group Corp says Monday it is calling off a \$10 billion merger of its India unit with Zee Entertainment

BUSINESS | P11

India in tough group

India men's hockey team are drawn in a tough pool alongside squads like Belgium, Australia and Argentina at Paris 2024

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Kohli to miss 1st 2 Tests against England



New Delhi: Virat Kohli has pulled out of the first two Tests against England due to personal reasons which 'demand his presence and undivided attention', the BCCI said Monday in a release. England are scheduled to play a five-Test series in India beginning Thursday in Hyderabad. The BCCI will name a replacement for the star batter soon and officials added that Kohli has discussed his decision with skipper Rohit Sharma and the team management. "Virat has spoken to captain Rohit Sharma, the team management and the selectors and has emphasised that while representing the country has always been his top priority, certain personal situations demand his presence and undivided attention," the release said.

8 dead, 39 missing in China landslide

Beijing: At least eight people have been killed and 39 others are still missing after a landslide struck southwest China's mountainous Yunnan province Monday. Maximum damage was suffered by Liangshui village of Zhaotong city, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The 47 victims are from 18 different households, rescue officials informed and added 500 residents from the village have been rescued. They also said that the survival chances of those who are missing are slim. However, efforts are on to locate and rescue them, the officials informed.

Mystery shrouds couple's death

Loisingha: Mystery shrouds the deaths of a couple whose bodies were found Monday morning from Patara jungle near Kudopali village under Agalpur police limits in Bolangir district. The deceased were identified as Khirod Bariha, 36, and his wife Tarini Bariha, 27, residents of the same village. They had gone missing from home, Sunday evening. The matter came to the fore after family members spotted the bodies and informed the police. Local villagers said Khirod's body was hanging from a neem tree, while Tarini's body was lying on the ground. On being informed, Agalpur police officials rushed to the spot and sent the bodies for post-mortem and launched a probe. When contacted, SDO Tophan Bag said the reason behind the death of the couple can only be ascertained after the post-mortem report comes.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



WEATHER

BBSR	CTC
Max Temp 25.4°C	24.0°C
Min Temp 17.2°C	16.9°C
Humidity 94%	86%
Rainfall Nil	Nil

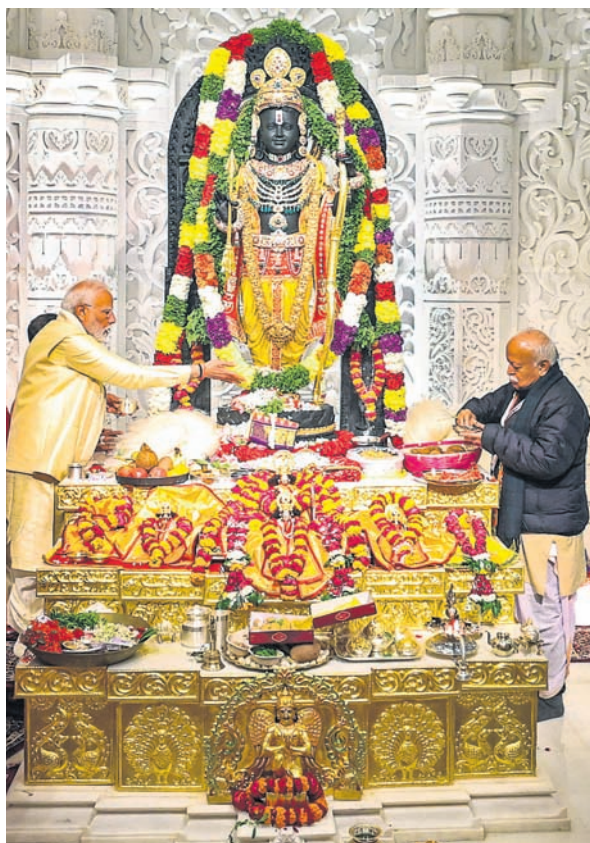
FORECAST
Light to moderate rain/thundershower

RAM RETURNS HOME

The battle for the resurrection of the Ram Temple started in 1858 with Mahant Raghuraj Das filing a plea in Faizabad district court, seeking permission to build a canopy outside the disputed structure, but it was rejected. Then Dec 6, 1992, kar sewaks demolished the Babri Masjid. Since then the battle raged in various courts regarding the establishment of the Ram Temple. It finally ended Monday with the consecration of Ram Lalla idol

AGENCIES

Ayodhya, Jan 22: The new Ram Lalla idol was consecrated at the Ayodhya temple Monday, an event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and watched by lakhs of people on television at their homes and in temples across the country. Army helicopters showered flower petals on the newly-constructed Ram Janmabhoomi temple as the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony took place — a seminal occasion in India's political and religious history. At that moment, celebrations broke out in many parts of Uttar Pradesh and across various cities in India. "Our Ram has come home," Modi said in his address which followed the consecration. The function also marked the inauguration of the temple. It is expected to open Tuesday to the public. "The extraordinary moment of the consecration of Shri Ram Lalla's life in Ayodhya Dham is going to leave everyone emotional. It is my great pleasure



(Left): Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RSS chief Mohan Bagwat during the consecration ceremony Monday; Invitees outside the Ram temple in Ayodhya during the event

to be a part of this divine programme. Hail Siya Ram!" Modi had tweeted earlier. Modi performed a series of rituals at the temple, with the 'pran pratishtha' taking place during the 84-second 'abhijeet muhurta'. At the end of the rituals, the PM prostrated himself before the idol, which depicts the child Ram. The ceremony took place in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. A total of 14 Yajmans conducted the consecration rituals. Leaving the sanctum sancto-

rum, the PM moved to another location to address a gathering of about 8,000, which included seers, people linked to Ram Janmabhoomi movement and celebrities from fields like entertainment, sports and industry. The PM ended his 11-day fast the day he undertook ahead of the ceremony by accepting 'charnamrit' offered by temple trust treasurer Govind Dev Giri. "After a long wait for ages, our Ram has arrived," Modi stated. The Prime Minister said he could still feel the divine vibrations he experienced during the consecration ceremony inside the sanc-

Ram is India's faith... it is not fire, it is energy, Ram is India's glory, India's influence, Ram is a symbol of peace, patience, mutual harmony and amity in the Indian society. Ram Lalla will not live in a tent, but a magnificent temple

NARENDRA MODI
There are some feelings in my heart that I cannot find words to express. Everyone is emotional and happy. On this historic moment, every city and village in the country has

YOGI ADITYANATH

Modi said. "People will remember this date, this moment even after thousands of years from now.

It is Ram's supreme blessings that we are witnessing it," Modi told the select gathering. The new idol depicts Ram at the age of five, and was carved from black stone by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj. It was draped in a yellow dhoti, and adorned with stone-studded jewellery and flowers in shades of red, yellow and purple. The Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir has been constructed in the traditional Nagara style. Its east-west length is 380 feet, width 250 feet and height 161 feet. It is supported by 392 pillars and has 44 doors.

11 Bilkis convicts back in jail

SPRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Godhra, Jan 22: All 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case have surrendered at the Godhra sub jail in Gujarat's Panchmahal district in keeping with the deadline set by the Supreme Court. They surrendered before jail authorities late Sunday night, local Crime Branch inspector NL Desai said. "They (convicts) reached the jail before midnight of January 21, which was the deadline set for them to surrender. They arrived a few minutes before midnight," Desai said. The top court annulled January 8 the remission granted by the Gujarat government to the 11 convicts in the case while slamming the state for being 'complicit' with an accused and abusing its dis-



cretion. It had ordered the convicts, who were released prematurely on Independence Day in 2022, to go back to jail within two weeks. The apex court Friday rejected pleas of the convicts for grant of more time to surrender. The 11 convicts are Bakabhai Vohania, Bipin Chandra Joshi,

Kesarbhai Vohania, Govind Nai, Jaswant Nai, Mitesh Bhatt, Pradeep Mordhiya, Radheshyam Shah, Rajubhai Soni, Ramesh Chandana and Shailesh Bhatt. Bilkis was 21 years old and five months pregnant when she was gang-raped. Her three-year-old daughter was murdered.

₹40-K cr EV boost for state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: The Odisha government Monday approved 14 proposals including the JSW Group's plan to set up electric vehicles and component manufacturing units in Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur districts at an investment of ₹40,000 crore, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said. The proposals were approved at the Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. "The Cabinet approved a special incentive package for JSW Group's ambitious EV and component manufacturing projects at Naraj in Cuttack and Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district," chief secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena told reporters. "The entire project, once completed will generate 11,000 employment opportunities

and usher in a new era of industrial growth," Jena added. The JSW Group has proposed to set up an EV and EV battery manufacturing project at Naraj. The company is also planning to set up an original equipment manufacturing (OEM) plant for EVs and components in the same facility in two phases, Jena informed. He added that initially the group is planning to invest ₹25,000 crore and in the first phase where 4,000 job opportunities will be created. Similarly, the company is planning to set up an EV component manufacturing complex consisting of a copper smelter along with a lithium smelter at Paradip. In this phase, JSW is planning to invest ₹15,000 crore, generating employment for more than 7,000 people, informed Jena. **MORE P3**

17 DISTRICTS GET NEW COLLECTORS

POST NEWS NETWORK

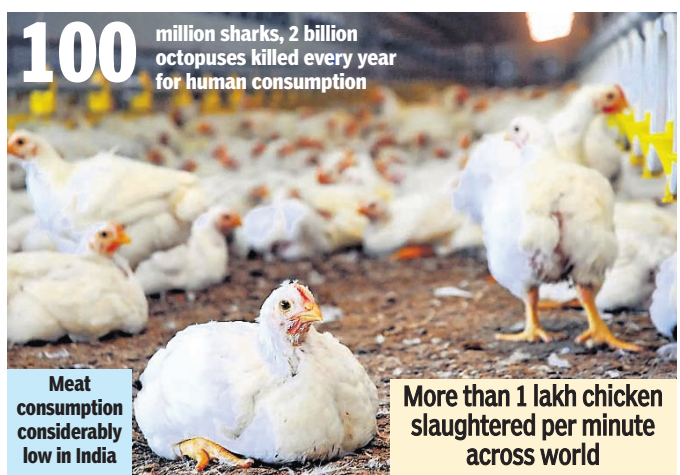
Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: In a major bureaucratic reshuffle carried out Monday, the state government appointed Puri Collector Samarth Verma as the additional chief administrator of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA). A notification to this effect was issued by the General Administration & Public Grievance department here. Ranjan Kumar Das, who is currently serving as the chief administrator of SJTA, was transferred and appointed as revenue divisional commissioner (Central Division), Cuttack. A total of 17 districts got new collectors as per the notification issued. Bolangir Collector Chanchal Rana is the new Khurda Collector. He replaces K Sudarshan Chakravarthy who has been appointed director at Minor Minerals department. Former state election commission secretary Bijay Kumar Dash has been appointed as the Collector of Puri district. Keonjhar Collector Ashish Thakur is the new Collector and Magistrate of Mayurbhanj district. Thakur replaces IAS officer Vineet Bharadwaj, who has been appointed Collector of Cuttack district. Angul Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain has been appointed as Commissioner of Cuttack Municipal Corporation. His place has been taken by Md Abdaal Akhtar, the former district collector of Koraput. Swadha Dev Singh, the Rayagada Collector has been appointed as Nayagarh Collector while Kendrapara Collector Amrit Raturai has been appointed as the new Labour Commissioner while Malkangiri Collector Vishal Singh was has been appointed as Keonjhar Collector.

Humans eat 100bn animals annually

THE DESIRE FOR EXOTIC FOOD AS WELL AS STAPLE DIETS LEADING TO THE SLAUGHTER OF OTHER LIVING SPECIES

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 22: There is always a huge uproar whenever a human being is killed by an animal or a reptile. The government in all countries, the police and other agencies swing into action whenever there is a tiger or shark attack. Amid all this, one would be surprised to know how many animals are slaughtered annually for human consumption. As per a report in *The Economist*, the figure is a staggering 100 billion. Thankfully, flesh or meat consumption in India has reduced substantially in the last decade, with more and more people turning vegetarian. The highest consumption of meat takes place in China and it is quite natural keeping in mind the population.



100 million sharks, 2 billion octopuses killed every year for human consumption

Meat consumption considerably low in India

More than 1 lakh chicken slaughtered per minute across world

The farm animals are the worst sufferers with chickens, pigs and sheep being the staple diets of human beings. According to the report, 205 million chickens are killed every day for human consumption, a staggering 1,40,000 chickens die every minute for various delicacies that we so crave to have. The other animals that are on top of the human taste buds

are sardines (14 billion annually), shrimps (three billion every year), duck (2.9 billion) and goose (2.1 billion). It will be hard to believe, but two billion octopuses and 100 million sharks are eaten every year as people try out exotic food stuff. Nearly 1.5 billion pigs are killed to feed the growing appetite for pork, bacon, ham and sausages — a number that has tripled in the last 50 years, the report states. The 'World Economic Forum' (WEF) in a recent report has stated that the major surge in demand of meat and fish products come from countries where the economy is booming. China has become the world's highest consumer of meat followed by Germany. The 'WEF' said in the report that consumption of meat has dipped considerably in the

US as well some eastern European countries. India, despite being ahead of China in terms of population, still consumes a tiny fraction of the world's meat. Even though 70 per cent of the Indian population is non-vegetarian, they consume only a meagre amount of the meat sold worldwide. That is because of their love for fish. Also with the red meat (beef-eating population decreasing drastically in India in the last decade, the overall consumption of meat has gone down. However, the staggering number of chickens is because of the fact that poultry has replaced pork at dinner tables as it is less expensive. From just 12 per cent, the share of chicken, duck, goose, turkey and fowl has increased to one-third of all the meat eaten worldwide.

leisure



NAOMI BAFFLED BY ABILITY TO CONCEIVE DURING SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

Actress Naomi Watts doesn't know how she got pregnant after being told she was menopausal in her 30s. The actress was trying to get pregnant years ago with her former partner actor Liev Schreiber when tests revealed she was almost menopausal.

SOFIA VERGARA: I DON'T NEED A MAN

Hollywood star Sofia Vergara, who has split from Joe Manganiello, says she doesn't 'need' a man. The Hollywood star, who was married to Joe between 2015 and 2023, told *HELLO!* magazine: "I don't feel as though I need a man. I want one, but I don't need one."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today will be as agreeable as any day can be. You are satisfied with what you have, says Ganesh. Besides, you have already planned on what you desire and are moving towards it. A date of romantic nature may turn out to be interesting or it may lead to a controversy; you have to decide on it.

TAURUS
You can expect a pleasant, comfortable day at the office, today, so says Ganesh. You will be carrying out your work cheerfully and effortlessly. You could, later in the evening, have a strong urge to go out for dinner with your family and friends.

GEMINI
You face a hectic and demanding day today. You will spend your entire day wondering how best to channelise your energy and enthusiasm. You may be prone to extreme mood swings as well. Meditative techniques should help you keep your mind calm, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will tend to try new recipes at home. Family members will take advantage and enjoy it. You will indulge in pastimes. Arrival of guests will bring in an air of festivity and happiness, says Ganesh.

LEO
You will be filled with extraordinary self-confidence and will be able to take on huge risks. Sports persons will be able to make a lot of progress in their fields. You will square off against any obstacles in your way using your entire might. While it is a good day for you, keep a curb on your speculations, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Take a little break today, and spend some time looking within. At your office there may be some bitter confrontations, so Ganesh advises you to be very careful and try to prevent things from getting too difficult. In matters of love, a new romance may develop.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today you will try to be adept in your favorite subject. Today you will be buying antique artistic things too. If there are any legal proceedings going on then the results will be in your favor. You shall be a success in everything that you touch today. Your artistic streak will come to the fore today and you will develop an interest in the fine arts

SCORPIO
A series of events at work front may keep you busy throughout the day. You may be unable to manage the clutter and confusion created by too many things at the same time. However, you emerge a fighter because of your power of resilience.

SAGITTARIUS
You are caught in a whirlpool of emotions, predicts Ganesh. You may come across many ups and downs today. However, nothing seems to deter you from your determination and dedication towards work.

CAPRICORN
By and large, your life today will be dull. But, there isn't something unfavourable or negative about it, assures Ganesh, as the planetary movements signal a change, probably a positive one, happening in the near future. So, keep your chin up and get ready for a better tomorrow.

AQUARIUS
You are armed with good communication skills, and like always, it will come to your aide today, too. There is one problem though. You are not clear about your emotions and it may make your arms blunt, foresees Ganesh. Make sure that you are able to identify your feelings and don't make any disastrous decisions based on that confusion.

PISCES
Your energy and enthusiasm will know no bounds today, as everything seems to fall into place, seemingly on its own. You will blaze a new trail at the work-place. Certain tough calls may leave you off-balance momentarily, but you will come out of it with flying colours.

AJIT NATYA MAHOTSAV: DAY III



Artistes of Sampark, a Rourkela-based theatre troupe, presented Odia play *Samanta Chandrasekhar* Monday, on the third evening of ongoing National Theatre Festival organised by Abhinaya Jagruti Institute of Theatre (AJIT) at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar. Written and directed by Bhaskar Mohapatra, the play was based on the life and works of Odisha-born astronomer and mathematician Samanta Chandrasekhar Mahapatra, aka Pathani Samanta, who measured the distance from the Earth to the Sun with a bamboo pipe and traditional instruments.

Krushna Mohanty to represent Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Popular Odia poet Krushna Kumar Mohanty of *Shaymali Das* and *Rubi Ray* fame from Balasore will represent the state at the Multilingual Poets' Meet in Kolkata.

To be organised by Sahitya Akademi, the event, a part of the Kolkata International Book Fair, will be held January 25.

The poets of other Indian and foreign languages – Bangla, English, Assamese, Bhojपुरi, Maithili, Hindi, Urdu, Santali, Punjabi, and Nepali—have also been invited to recite their poems at the Meet.

For the uninitiated, Mohanty, with a literary journey spanning over four decades, had earlier taken part in Akademi's Travel Grant Seminar while his poems have been translated to other Indian languages and published in Akademi's magazine. PNN



IFFB-2024 opens with Karthik's Telugu actioner



Odia filmmaker Subas Das, critic Aditya Shrikrishna, Manipuri director Haobam Paban Kumar and Film Society Bhubaneswar president Subrat Beura at opening ceremony

Subas Das directorial *'Ekaa Ekaa'*, a 134-minute Odia movie starring Sidhant Mahapatra, was also screened at the event

Bhubaneswar: Film Society Bhubaneswar Monday returned with its 13th edition of the Indian Film Festival of Bhubaneswar (IFFB), a week-long event comprising screen-

ings of content-driven Indian movies, at the Odissi Research Centre, Bhubaneswar.

In the opening address, the President of the Film Society Bhubaneswar, Subrata Beura, welcomed the guests and audience to the event.

The festival kicked off with a special screening of the Tamil film *Jigarthanda Double X* by Karthik Subbaraj. The movie, set in the 1970s, delves into the challenges of artistic questions of filmmaking, structured around a ganglord wanting to

make a film and his travails.

Subas Das directorial Odia movie *Ekaa Ekaa*, starring Sidhant Mahapatra, was the next to follow. The 134-minute-long film explores the journey and struggle of a filmmaker.

The day continued following independent film screenings and conversations: two short films, *Shera* and *My Mother's Girlfriend* by director Arun Fulara. The former is about what happens when two relationships collide, while the latter revolves around Monu's obsession with sighting Shera, the elusive leopard living in the forest around his remote Himalayan village.

The IFFB's Mani Kaul Retrospective, featuring seven of his masterpieces, started with the screening of the Hindi film *Uski Roti*. The movie, set in a village, revolves around the story of a young wife waiting for her long-distance truck driver husband.

Over the course of the festival, there will be post-screening conversations with the directors Haobam Paban Kumar, Harshad Nalawade, Subas Das, Aman Sachdeva, Rajni Basumatary, Don Palathara, and Bobby Sharma Baruah. PNN

'Social media too hard for mental health'

Mumbai: Ananya Panday, who is reveling in the accolades she's getting for her latest film *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, recently shared that she wants to delete all social media platforms from her phone but simply can't do it.

During her conversation with an entertainment portal, she shared that she thinks about deleting all social media platforms from her phone on a daily basis, but just can't.

She even mentioned that she can't even switch her phone off for like five minutes.

Elaborating on reasons why she wants to delete the apps, the actress mentioned that social media is too hard for one's men-

tal health. Like people don't even know how much it affects them.

Ananya also highlighted that she has started muting, restricting and blocking so many pages on Instagram.

"Because your feed is like you are seeing some devastating news in some part of the world, and you scroll and you see your cute puppy and you don't know how to process, the attention spans are just so short and it's just so sad," she explained.

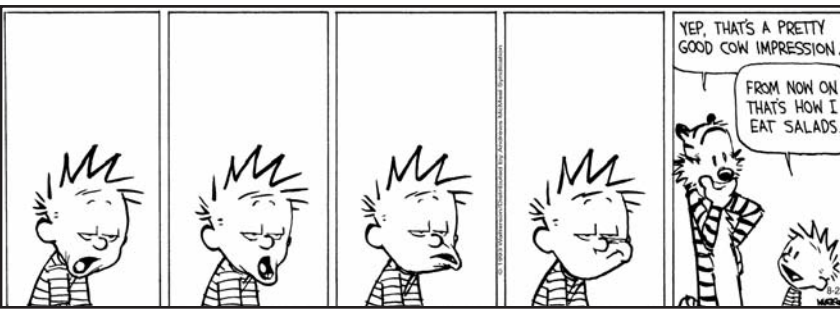
Ananya will soon be seen on OTT in a show called *Call Me Bae* which is backed by Karan Johar. AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

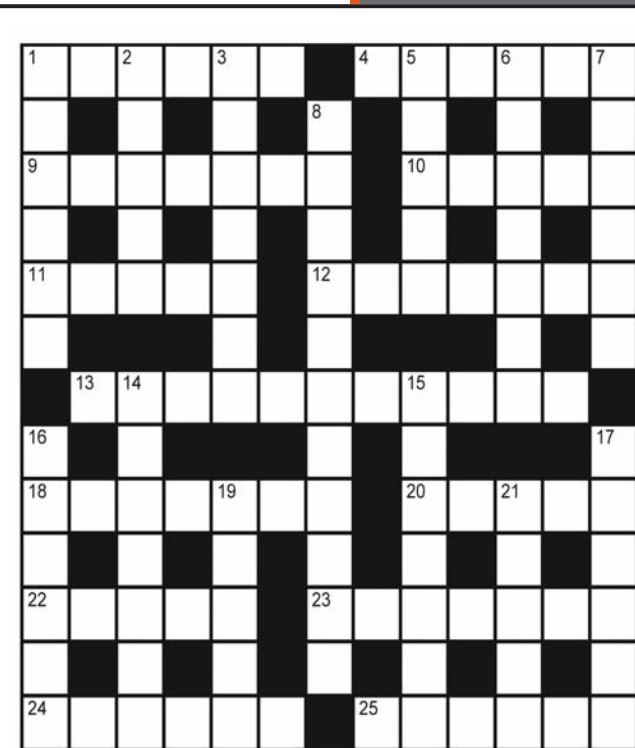


BREVITY



FUN post

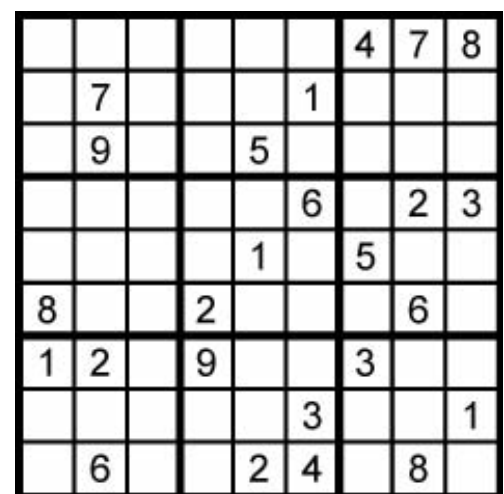
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Grief-stricken
 - 4 Accident
 - 9 Sub weapon
 - 10 Zodiac sign
 - 11 Leered
 - 12 Big cat
 - 13 Cabin in the woods, perhaps (6,5)
 - 18 Japanese dish
 - 20 Bird of prey
 - 22 Turning point
 - 23 Give forth
 - 24 Steering system
 - 25 Mashing tool
 - 6 Wheel covers
 - 7 Tartans
 - 8 Whiskey with a beer chaser
 - 14 Stoic
 - 15 Make like a surgeon
 - 16 Sot's state
 - 17 Tranquil
 - 19 Disentangle
 - 21 Behemoth

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

FILLIP TO HANDICRAFTS

Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts Minister Rita Sahu inaugurates 'Soura Murttika Udyogi Mela' at Town Hall in Puri, Monday



Naveen watches live telecast of Ram temple consecration



CM Naveen Patnaik along with 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian watch the event

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday watched the live telecast of the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, while people across the state celebrated the mega event.

Accompanied by 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian, the Chief Minister watched the livestreaming of

the event at his residence. "Witnessed the auspicious #RamMandirPranPrathista being held #Ayodhya. Delighted to see the nation coming together with religious fervour for the #PranPrathista," Patnaik said in a post on X.

"Hon'ble Governor extends his hearty wishes to everyone on the much awaited consecration of #ShriRamLala at Ayodhya. May the Lord bless all," Governor Odisha said in a

post on X. While VHP and other members of the Sangh Parivar held rallies, yajnas and programmes at different places, Odisha BJP leaders held a special programme at their state party headquarters to celebrate the occasion.

Special Pujas were held in all Hanuman temples across the state while saffron flags with Hanuman and Sri Ram photos were put up on roadsides. The rallies were held with participants chanting Jai Sri Ram. In many places sweets were distributed among devotees.

Some families decorated their houses with flowers, rangoli, lit earthen lamps and installed 'kalasa'.

As it was a half-day public holiday, many employees were seen celebrating the day by singing devotional songs.

In Bhubaneswar, people visited the Ram Temple, Hanuman Temple, and other shrines to offer prayers.



DIPPED IN DEVOTION: People in large numbers thronged Ram Mandir in Bhubaneswar, Monday, on the occasion of consecration of Ram Temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh

₹1,144cr boost to coffee plantation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: The state Cabinet, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Monday approved the Coffee Plantation for Sustainable Livelihood (CPSL) scheme with an outlay of ₹1,144 crore which will enhance coffee plantation area in Odisha from the present 10,000 acres to 1 lakh acres in the next 10 years.

The CPSL scheme will be implemented in Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Keonjhar and Gajapati districts. Under the scheme, Women SHGs will be involved in raising coffee nurseries, benefitting more than 50,000 farm families, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said.

He said of the ₹1,144 crore expenditure envisaged under the scheme from 2022-23 to 2026-27, ₹567 crore will be met through State Plan and ₹577 crore through convergence with other schemes. Beyond the initial period of five years, value addition and marketing aspects will also be included in the scheme.

Coffee has emerged as one of the most profitable commercial crops among farmers in the state due to its encour-



aging prospects on financial benefits and rebuilding of ecosystem. Odisha has a high potential for commercial coffee

cultivation due to its ideal agro-climatic conditions that can provide a viable alternative to traditional cropping patterns in tribal areas.

The CPSL scheme will be implemented by the Directorate of Soil Conservation and Watershed Development under Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Department. During implementation period, the Directorate will also collaborate with Coffee Board and others for productivity enhancement, capacity building, infrastructure and brand development, Jena said.

Biotechnology Directorate on the cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: A dedicated Directorate of Biotechnology will be set up in the state for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of various functions envisaged in the Odisha Biotechnology Policy 2024 which received Cabinet nod, Monday.

Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said under the new policy, biotechnology units will be provided capital investment subsidy on actual investment in plant and machinery. They will also be given financial assistance for obtaining quality certifications from recognised institutions during the policy period, he said.

The new policy aims at harnessing the potential of biotechnology towards sustainable socio-economic development and to boost the biotechnology ecosystem of the state, he added.

Pradhan opens CoE at IIM Sambalpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur, Jan 22: Union Minister for Education, Skill Development, and Entrepreneurship, Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the 'Rangavati Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Cultural and Sustainable Management' on the sidelines of the 9th PAN IIM World Management Conference (WMC) which began at IIM Sambalpur, Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Pradhan said, "The centre will prove to be a hub for preserving the cultural heritage of Odisha, including dances, soulful songs, nature worship, and the rich food culture. The primary focus of

the centre will be research on the art, literature, culture, and history of western Odisha, and a special emphasis on textiles."

In his address, Mahadeo Jaiswal, director, IIM Sambalpur highlighted the 3Ds disruptions - Digitalization, Decarbonization, and Democratization of business. He said, "The world is changing and the world is disrupting through these three Ds."

He also emphasised India's potential to lead the world in digital disruptions, citing initiatives such as UIDAI and UPI. He further said, "Before colonization, India had 32 per cent of the GDP of the world. Through innovation, sustainability and 3Ds, we can achieve it back."

7K-bed working women's hostel at Deras

The state Cabinet has approved a tender of ₹329 crore for the construction of a 6,952-bed working women's hostel at Seafood Park Deras in Khurda district.

It also approved amendment to the Odisha Government Land Settlement Rules, 1983 to reduce the conversion fee for conversion of leasehold land of Odisha State Housing Board (OSHB) and development authorities for residential purposes into freehold from the existing 10 per cent of

the prevailing market value of the land to three per cent of the valuation of land.

The state Cabinet has decided to grant a minimum pension in favour of 782 ex-village-level workers (VLWs), as a one-time measure, with additional ₹90cr budgetary expenditure for sanction of the arrears minimum pension, and ₹11.38 crore per annum for sanction of minimum pension as a special case.

The Odisha Procurement

Preference Policy for Micro and Small Manufacturing Enterprises 2023 has received Cabinet nod.

It will benefit Odisha small (and micro) manufacturing enterprises (OSMEs) and startups, whose turnover is not more than ₹50 crore per annum.

A proposal to extend licence granted to dealers to operate fair price shops for a period of six months - from April 2024 to September 2024 - also received the state Cabinet nod.

'Google boy' among 19 Bal Puraskar winners

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 22: A nine-year-old mountaineer, a young artificial intelligence (AI) scientist, a specially-abled painter and a 'Google boy' were among the 19 children who were conferred with the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 Monday.

President Droupadi Murmu presented the national awards to them for their exceptional achievements.

Among the winners is Aaditya Vijay Brahmane, 12, from Maharashtra, who was awarded posthumously for his extraordinary act of courage. He sacrificed his life to rescue his cousins Harsh and Shlok from drowning in a river while playing.

Aryan Singh, 17, from Rajasthan is another remarkable recipient of the award. Singh ingeniously developed an Agrobot, an AI-powered robot aimed at simplifying the lives of farmers by integrating cutting-edge technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT).

In Chhattisgarh, Armaan Ubhrani, also known as the 'Google boy', has earned the award for his outstanding prowess in mathematics and science.

At the tender age of six, Ubhrani has achieved numerous milestones, including becoming the youngest author of a book series and solving 100 multiplication sums, garnering recognition both nationally and internationally.



In the domain of art and culture, 8-year-old Anushka Pathak from Uttar Pradesh has established herself in 'Katha Vachan' (religious text narration). Following in her esteemed father's footsteps, Pathak has captivated audiences across 22 states with her performances, becoming a recognised figure in the spiritual realm.

Arijeet Banerjee, 13, from West Bengal, a prodigy in playing the traditional Pakhawaj, has made an indelible mark on the cultural landscape.

Despite facing severe cerebral palsy, 13-year-old Hetvi Kantibhai Khimsuriya from Gujarat has displayed extraordinary artistic abilities, creating 250 works of free-hand painting, receiving numerous awards, and selflessly donating her monthly disability pension to support differently abled children.

Ishaq Hamid, 12, from Jammu and Kashmir has become a maestro of Rabab and Matka, receiv-

ing accolades during various festivals and being honoured with the Bhai Mardana National Award in 2020.

Md Hussain, 16, from Bihar has excelled in handcrafted arts, winning accolades in state and national-level competitions, and even presenting his indigenous toys to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' programme.

Pendyala Laxmi Priya, 14, from Telangana is a Kuchipudi dancer, winning the Kala Utsav National Award 2023 in the classical dance category and holding titles like 'Laasyapriya'.

In the realm of innovation, 16-year-old Suhani Chauhan from

Delhi has developed 'SO-APT', a solar-powered agriculture vehicle, offering an impressive solution for sustainable farming.

Despite obstacles associated with Down syndrome, nine-year-old Amish Tiwari from Madhya Pradesh trekked Mount Everest base camp at the age of seven and received the Shresth Divyang Bal Puraskar in 2022 for his exceptional social service.

Similarly, 9-year-old Garima from Haryana, a visually impaired girl, is dedicated to providing education to underprivileged children through her initiative called 'Sakshar Pathshala'.

Jyotsna Aktar, 16, from Tripura challenges societal norms and actively fights against child marriage, advocating for education and empowering other girls in her community.

In the field of wildlife conservation, 15-year-old Saiyam Mazumder from Assam has become India's youngest snake rescuer and also cares for stray animals. Aaditya Yadav, 12, from Uttar Pradesh is being awarded for his sports achievements. As a specially-abled badminton player, Yadav has triumphed in numerous tournaments, including international championships, demonstrating resilience and excellence.

Charvi A, 9, from Karnataka, the Under-8 World Chess Champion, stands out among other awardees in the sports and games segment, securing multiple titles at both national and international levels.

State wants 4 'kumki' elephants to address man-animal conflict

ODISHA REQUESTS TAMIL NADU TO PROVIDE TRAINED ELEPHANTS FOR DEPLOYMENT IN CONFLICT-PRONE REGIONS

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP



What are 'kumki' elephants

'Kumki' elephants are trained captive Asian jumbos used in operations to trap and drive away wild elephants. Sometimes these elephants are used to rescue or to provide medical treatment to an injured or trapped wild elephant. They can also be deployed for forest patrolling.

elephants can also be deployed for forest patrolling and rescue operations."

Sahu commended Tamil Nadu government's initiative under which elephants are imparted 'kumki' training and utilised for wildlife conservation purposes. He said, "I would request you to provide us with four 'kumki' elephants for deployment in conflict prone areas of Odisha. These elephants will serve as invaluable assets to our

state's wildlife organisation, aiding our efforts to minimise conflicts and safeguard both human and wildlife interests."

Sahu also requested the Tamil Nadu Forest and Environment department to depute the mahouts taking care of those 'kumki' elephants for only initial handholding support to local mahouts so as to help them get acquainted with the 'kumki' elephants.

"In light of urgency and magnitude of the human-elephant conflict issue in Odisha, I would request your prompt consideration of this proposal. Your support will significantly contribute to our ongoing conservation efforts and prove instrumental in mitigating wildlife conflicts in Odisha," said Sahu in his letter. Significantly, Odisha has recorded 57 deaths in human-elephant encounters from April to June last year.

13,500 youths get placement

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Around 13,500 youths were recruited during a job fair held at Phulbani in Kandhamal Sunday. Of the 13,500 youths, 3,500 were selected by companies operating in Odisha. The remaining job aspirants were chosen by firms operating across the country.

More than 20,000 youths from Kandhamal participated in the fair. Youths from 12 blocks of Kandhamal, three each of Boudh and Nayagarh besides two of Ganjam district participated.

At least 40 companies from Odisha and over 80 firms and industrial houses from other states took part in the job fair. The salaries ranged from ₹12,000 to ₹35,000. The candidates covered a broad educational spectrum, from standard fifth to post-graduation, B Tech, MBA, and Law graduates.

The job fair was jointly organised by Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and the district administration.

Candidates covered a broad educational spectrum, from standard fifth to post-graduation, B Tech, MBA, and Law graduates

Speaking on this occasion, Kandhamal MP Achyuta Samanta said that this is a small effort of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's goal towards empowering youth of the state through education and employment.

Samanta also thanked KIIT staff and the district administration for their cooperation in successfully organising the job fair. On this occasion, Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce president Lalit Gandhi said that compared to other states, the youths of Odisha are more skilled and efficient.

Among others, MLAs of Balliguda and Phulbani besides collector Ashish Iswar Patil and SP Suwendu Patra were present.



D-DAY AHEAD: NCC cadets perform during full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade held by Cuttack District Administration at Barabati Stadium, Monday

OP PHOTO

Odisha school gets top spot in Pipe Band category

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Droupadi Girls High School of Nishaposi, Mayurbhanj won the first prize, with a monetary reward of ₹21,000, in 'pipe band' category at the National School Band Competition jointly organised by the Defence and Education ministries at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi for the Republic Day celebrations, Monday.

School Education and Literacy department secretary Sanjay Kumar gave the cash prizes to winners along with trophies and certificates. The jury appointed

486 teams, comprising 12,857 students, participated in the state-level competitions, while 73 teams of 2,002 children took part at the zonal Level

by the Defence Ministry, which included members from each wing of the Armed Forces, selected the winners of the competition after culmination of the grand finale January 21 and 22.

In addition to performances from the participating teams,

NATIONAL SCHOOL BAND COMPETITION



there was a special performance by the Government Sardar Patel Senior Secondary School of Kalpeni, Lakshadweep.

The competition was organised at three levels, including the state and zonal, across all states and Union Territories (UTs) for all schools from all boards (CBSE, ICSE, KVS, NVS, and Sainik schools). A total of 486 teams, comprising 12,857 students, participated in the state-level competitions, while 73 teams of 2,002 children took part at the zonal level.

At the grand finale, 457 students from 15 states and Union Territories competed for the titles in each category.

Air quality monitoring station now at SOA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Taking a step forward in collaborating to counter climate change, Bronx Community College of City University of New York (CUNY) installed an automatic solar powered weather and air quality monitoring station at the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA) Deemed to be University here Monday.

The station will monitor weather and air quality within a five mile radius of SOA's Centre for Environment and Climate (CEC) located in the campus of the Institute of Technical Education and Research (ITER), faculty of engineering and technology of SOA.

The initiative has been funded by the US Consulate at Hyderabad and the principal investigators are Neal Phillip,



chairperson of Bronx Community College's department of Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Environmental Sciences and Paramita Sen of the same department.

The project also involves the Indian Initiative for Research and Education Collaboration of CUNY CREST Institute which was officially launched September 9, 2022. The weather station, part of the green ini-

tiative, runs on solar power, and was inaugurated by director of ITER Manas Kumar Mallick in the presence of Sarat Chandra Sahu, director of CEC.

Sahu said that the station will put the issue of climate and air quality at the forefront of sustainability discussions at the university and local circles. The data which will be generated continuously would be used by the faculty for climate research,

Climate change and air quality have become two of the most important factors affecting mankind and our effort is to work with Indian higher education institutions to make a difference

NEAL PHILLIP | BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

he said, adding it would also be incorporated into the curriculum. "The Indian Meteorological Department would also be encouraged to use the weather and air quality data generated by the station," he added.

"Climate change and air quality have become two of the most important factors affecting mankind and our effort is to work with Indian higher education institutions to make a difference," Phillip said.

DAV Odisha exhibits Ratha Jatra in Mumbai

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: To bring the story of Ratha Jatra to students and parents across the country, DAV Odisha presented an intricately crafted 9ft-high chariot at the DAV United Fest recently held in Mumbai.

The story of Ratha Jatra was visually narrated using the chariot, with different artefacts from Odisha depicting rituals of the festival that pulls lakhs of devotees every year to Srimandir and Puri.

"A divine ambience left thousands of visitors at the festival spell bound January 20 and 21 at DAV United Festival. While some visitors were awestruck, others were simply enthralled. The chariot, adorned with handmade paintings and carvings, amidst mantras and sound of ghantas, left students, alumni and their



families mesmerized," said a member of DAV Odisha.

The stall from Odisha also depicted exemplary achievements of DAV alumni in different professions. It also featured notes of blessings from the Puri Gajapati Maharaja, Chief Minister of Odisha and Union Minister of Education.

"Regional director KC Satapathy's unique thoughts could be made a reality with efforts from a team of principals and art teachers from different schools. The stall was widely appreciated by the DAV dignitaries and other distinguished visitors in the two-day festival," said the member.

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AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary, Bhubaneswar on dtd.22.12.2023, I, Jyoti Prava Mishra, W/o-Brojendra Kumar Panda, resident of C-3-101, Adinath Apartment, Tamando, Bhubaneswar, Khordha, Odisha, Pin-752054, declare that, I have changed my name from Jyotiprabha Mishra to Jyoti Prava Mishra. Both the names 'Jyotiprabha Mishra' & 'Jyoti Prava Mishra' stand for one and same person i.e. myself. Henceforth I shall be known as JYOTI PRAVA MISHRA.



BRAINSTORMING: Guests take part in a panel discussion on the theme 'Literature and Media' during Kalabhoomi Sahitya Utsav 2024 at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Monday

Dense fog likely for next 3 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Dense fog with light rain and thundershower are very likely to occur at one or two places over several districts of the state during the next three days, India Meteorological Department (IMD) regional centre in Bhubaneswar predicted Monday.

In its mid-day bulletin, the IMD said, "Minimum temperatures observed marked fall at one or two places over the districts of North interior Odisha, appreciable fall at a few places over the districts of North Coastal Odisha and no large change at elsewhere over the districts. They were appreciably below normal at one or two places, below normal at one or two places, markedly above normal at a few places, appreciably above normal at one or two places over the districts of Coastal Odisha and normal at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha."

2-day fest 'Karvaan' held at DPS Kalinga

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Delhi Public School (DPS) Kalinga organised a two-day fest, Karvaan 2024, here January 19 and 20.

The chief guests on this occasion were Lieutenant General Nrusingha Prasad Padhi (Retd.) and Director General, Fire and Emergency Service, Commandant General, Home Guards and Director, Civil Defense Sudhanshu Sarangi.

Cuttack Mayor Subhash Chandra Singh and 9 Airmen Selection Centre, Bhubaneswar Wing Commander Rajalakshmi Prithviraj were guests of honour.

Principal Anuradha Rakshit welcomed the guests and presented the annual report of the school. A number of programmes were held on this occasion including an orchestra 'Sursangam' and 'Kalinga Geet Mala', Oriental dances from the Far East, 'Devi' - a powerful portrayal of the strength of womanhood, 'Zameen se Falak Tak' - a tribute to sports



heroes and scientists and 'Ashoka' - a dance drama. The evening concluded with 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat', an amalgamation of Indian folk dances.

Addressing the gathering, Sarangi spoke about the health challenges in today's adolescents and the detrimental impact of social media impact on young kids. Pro Vice Chairperson Mala Mishra stressed on the importance of good education, mental and physical wellbeing of students and the significance of empathy and kindness. The guests released the school Souvenir 'Kalinga Footprints'.

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Climate change affecting arrival of migratory birds

The number of migratory birds visiting Mangalajodi in Chilika has drastically reduced this year



deplorable condition. The temperatures were quite high in summer last year while the rainfall also reduced during monsoon this year. As a result, water level has reduced in Mangalajodi this year. The decline in water level also affected the availability of food for the birds, he said.

Wildlife guide Lalit Mohan Panda, who participated in the bird census at Badakuda in Satapada, said that the latest cyclonic storm Michaung may have affected the migration of these birds.

Specific routes were allotted for the bird census but their boat failed to move due to decline in water level, he said.

While returning, the census personnel took out their binoculars and found that around 1.26 lakh birds had assembled at a short distance. Panda and other forest personnel said they had never before seen an assembly of such a large number of birds at that place. He said that the arrival of migratory bird will certainly decline if they do not find safe habitat and food to survive.

A bird watcher and architect Shakti Nanda said this year the onset of winter was delayed by three weeks due to climate change. The mercury went up very high in summer while rainfall in the state during the monsoon was inadequate. The state also witnessed unseasonal rainfall.

The migratory birds will shift to other places if they do not find a safe habitat and sufficient food for their survival. Nanda participated in the bird census at Arakhakuda in Satapada this year. However, his team surprisingly found 42,000 birds during the census at Arakhakuda which was not a wintering ground for the migratory birds earlier, he added.

However, an analysis of the bird census reports has given a mixed result. The number of migratory birds has reduced in some places but increased in some other places.

The Forest department is taking steps for the winged guests' security and trying to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to the migratory birds' arrival and stay, which in return also helps boost tourism in the state.

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The boatmen ferrying tourists to Mangalajodi are finding it difficult to tow their boats due to the declining water level in the lake. Madhu Behera, a tourist guide, said this is the first time that Mangalajodi is in such a

from Asian and European countries. Some other birds also fly in from other continents and return after a brief sojourn. These birds are forced to migrate due to adverse conditions of living arising out of extreme cold and snowfall in their areas.

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COLOURS OF DEVOTION: A girl paints a portrait of Lord Ram at a competition organised at Ayodhya Sarovar ghat of Mahanadi in Sambalpur to mark the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, Monday

Body of missing person found floating in river

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliapal, Jan 22: The body of a 45-year-old missing person, which was found floating in Subarnarekha river, was fished out near Bishnupur village under Baliapal block in Balasore district Monday.

The deceased was identified as Kalicharan Mandal, son of Harekrushna Mandal of Bishnupur village.



According to reports, Kalicharan was missing for the last two days. Even after a frantic search, his family members could not trace him. However, locals spotted his floating body in the Subarnarekha river Monday morning and informed the police.

On being informed, the fire brigade personnel reached the spot and retrieved the body from the river. Baliapal police then seized the body and sent it to Baliapal Community Health Centre (CHC) for post-mortem. Police after registering a case of unnatural death launched an investigation in this regard.

Forest official critically hurt in bear attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Thakurmunda, Jan 22: A Forest official sustained critical injuries in a bear attack at Satkosia forest range under Karamjani forest division in Mayurbhanj district, Monday.

The injured official was identified as Karmu Mohanta, a protection assistant posted at Mahuldiha forest section under Satkosia forest range. He sustained critical injuries on his waist and limbs.

The incident occurred when Mohanta accompanied a group of Forest officials to Dalki Matha jungle under Satkosia forest range. He was walking inside the jungle when a bear attacked and critically mauled him. He kicked the bear with all force following which the animal let him go and ran away. Forest personnel rescued and admitted him to the Thakurmunda community health centre where he is undergoing treatment.

Top SAIL officials put on suspension

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 22: In a strong move, the Ministry of Steel has put 26 officers working at several top positions in the corporate office of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) under suspension. The suspension includes two director-level officers while the rest are below board-level officials.

Ministry of Steel vide its letter dated January 19 has placed VS Chakravarty, Director (Commercial) and AK Tulsiani, Director (Finance) on suspension with immediate effect. Further, complying with the instructions from the Ministry, SAIL has

Couple killed in road accident

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khallikote, Jan 22: A couple died after a car hit their bike from rear at Narayani Square on National Highway-16 under this police limits in Ganjam district, Monday.

The deceased couple was identified as Jogi Pradhan, 56, and his wife Kabuli Pradhan, 50, of Aaitipur under the Khallikote police limits. The mishap occurred when they were returning from Kharibandha

village after attending to their newborn grandson.

The collision was so severe that the couple was thrown off their bike. On being informed, Bhejiput outpost police rushed them to the Khallikote community health centre (CHC) where a doctor pronounced them dead.

The car has been seized and its driver detained. The bodies were sent for post-mortem, Bhejiput police in-charge OIC Debashis Mishra said.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender No. 49-KUR-TRD-OT-2023-24
NAME OF WORK: EXECUTION OF OHE MODIFICATION WORK IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION OF 214 BAYS PLATFORM SHELTERS AT 08 STATIONS (ANGUL, DHENKANAL, TALCHER, TALCHER ROAD, MANCHESWAR, MERAMANDALI, LINGARAJ TEMPLE ROAD, KENDUJHARGARH) OF KHURDA ROAD (KUR) DIVISION UNDER AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME.
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Artists create miniature temples, Ram Lalla idols

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Jan 22: Artists in Berhampur have crafted miniature replicas of the Ayodhya Ram temple and Ram Lalla idol, using wood, chalks and stones. They took the initiative in view of the 'Pran Pratishtha' of the Ram Lalla idol at the Ayodhya temple Monday.

Satya Narayan Moharana, 40, who had earlier made a number of micro models, has made four small temples, similar to the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, and two Rama Lalla idols, using wood, stones and chalks. He crafted two wooden temples - one with 2cm height and 1cm width and another 4.5cm tall and 9mm wide.



Similarly, other temple models are made up of chalks (1.8cm and 7mm) and stones (2.8cm and 1.5cm). The miniature idol of Ram Lalla, made up of wood, is 4cm high and 1.8cm wide, Moharana said.

Satya, a trader, took about two days to make these replicas of the Ram temple. "I crafted these models as a token of love and devotion for Lord Ram," he added.

K Bijay Kumar Reddy, a 21-year-old B.Tech graduate, has made a 3-cm idol of Ram Lalla by using chalks and watercolour.

At least five chalks and some watercolour were used to make the miniature art piece, he said.

Dillip Kumar Maharana (20), another miniature artist, has created a Ram temple along with the idols of Lord Ram, Lakshman and Devi Sita and Lord Hanuman using wood.

Man sentenced to life in murder case

PNN & AGENCIES

Balasore, Jan 22: Additional District and Sessions Judge B Gautam Monday convicted a murder accused and sentenced him to life imprisonment along with a penalty of Rs 2,000. The court also ordered a six-month extension of rigorous imprisonment (RI) in case the convict failed to pay the penalty amount.

The convict identified as Madha Padhi, who was running an outlet of an Ayurvedic company, allegedly bludgeoned Rajesh Panda, a resident of Kudia village, on the intervening night of March 30 and 31 in 2022.

The deceased Panda was engaged as a supervisor in roadside drain construction under a contractor.

He had a serious altercation with the convict Padhi, and the latter hit the former's head with a heavy iron object, leading to his



instant death.

Although Panda was rushed to the district headquarters hospital, he was declared dead by the doctor.

The accused, Padhi, surrendered before the town police station later. He was tried under Section 302 of the IPC, and the court, after examining 19 witnesses and relevant exhibits, awarded the punishment, Special Public Prosecutor Arabinda Singh said.

CELEBRATION OF CONSECRRATION A VISUAL DELIGHT IN ROURKELA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 22: Celebration on the occasion of the Ram temple consecration in Ayodhya was an incredible visual delight for all here, Monday. The mood was set in the last couple of days as the Steel City geared up to cherish the homecoming of Ram.

Old Rourkela, the main business district of the city, wore a hue of saffron Monday as the preparation which was underway reached its rhythmic crescendo. "I am 70 and have never seen such a celebration even during Ram Navami, what I saw today," said one Ramsevak Gupta, who owns a shop there.

What was most noticeable is that the celebration was a sheer display of emotions and pure devotion. "Like the old song, it is 'Ramji ki sawari' in full flow without any problem," said a lady.

Over 50,000 people gathered on the



road and there was no chaos or disturbance. Everything was moving in clocklike precision with such a crowd converging over a stretch of two and half kilometre beginning from Bisra Chowk till Uditnagar here.

Bhandaras or food stalls distributed delicacies like jalebi, chana masala, puri and sabji, suji halwa, laddu, rasagola, mihidana, bundi,

oranges, and fruit juice to all. At every 30-40 feet distance there were stalls where even ladies joined in distributing foods.

Sound systems were blaring out Ram bhajans and drummers were beating to a particular cadence creating a different feeling. Adding to this, firecrackers were exploding almost every second.

All the stalls displayed huge photographs of Lord Ram. Large saffron flags were being carried out in processions and then erected at a spot.

The policemen posted near the sensitive Narla Road said, "It is all peaceful, we are just sitting here as there is no problem."

The celebration would conclude in the evening with Dev Deepavali. Around 6.30pm, the big clay diya will be lit at Hanuman Vatika. However, when the report was being filed, all roads to Hanuman Vatika were already overflowing with devotees and their vehicles.

बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र
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(For Immovable Property)
[Rule-8 (1)]

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The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/ Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Bank of Maharashtra for an amount stated below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

BRANCH/ Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors	Description of the Security Interest taken over possession	Liabilities due on the specified date as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession
Jharsuguda Branch Borrower / Co-Borrower/ Guarantor: (1) Mrs. Mira Kanjia, W/o-Mr. Bikram Kanjia (2) Mr. Bikram Kanjia, S/o-Subash Chandra Kanjia, Both are At: Buromal, Dharamshala, Buromal, Jharsuguda, Odisha-768201.	All those pieces and parcels of Equitable Mortgage of land & building lying at Village Jharsuguda, in the registration district Jharsuguda, Sub Dist- Jharsuguda, admeasuring 2178 Sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey Nos. Khata No. 1212/5051, Plot No. 4415/11878. Property Owned	₹ 45,23,054.50/- as on 14.06.2023 + interest and other charges there on	14.06.2023 / 18.01.2024
Jharsuguda Branch Borrower/Co-Borrower/Guarantor: (1) Mrs. Rupa Kumbhar, W/o-Lalit Kumbhar (2) Mr. Lalit Kumbhar, S/o-Mr. Murali Kumbhar, Both are At: Saraswati Sangit Vidyalaya, Buromal, Santi Nagar, Jharsuguda, Odisha-768201.	All those pieces and parcels of residential land & building situated being and lying at Village Unit No. 6, Jharsuguda, in the registration district Jharsuguda, Dist-Jharsuguda admeasuring 740.52 Sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey Nos./Khata No. 929/1792 (New Khata No. 929/2920), bounded as follows: East-Plot No. 3066 (P), West-3066 (P), North-Road, South-3066 (P).	₹ 14,08,223.03/- as on 25.07.2023 + interest and other charges there on	25.07.2023 / 18.01.2024
Jharsuguda Branch Borrower / Co-Borrower/ Guarantor: (1) Mr. Mohammed Fazil Azizi, (2) Mr. Mohammed Akil Azizi, Both are at: 21, Near Maszid, Mangal Bazar, Dist-Jharsuguda, Odisha-768201. (3) City Computer and Mobile, through its Pro.-Mr. Mohammed Fazil Azizi, Address: 21, Near Maszid, Mangal Bazar, Dist- Jharsuguda, Odisha-768201. (4) Mr. Mohammad Asif Azizi, Address: Tata Gali, Mangal bazar, Dist- Jharsuguda, Odisha-768201, (5) Mr. Anand Kumar Sharma, Address: Tiwari Dham, Jharsuguda, Dist- Jharsuguda, Odisha-768201.	All those pieces and parcels of Equitable Mortgage of residential land & building situated being and lying at village Unit No. 6, Jharsuguda in the registration district Jharsuguda, Dist-Jharsuguda admeasuring Ac. 0.90 dec. (3924 Sq.Ft) and bearing CTS/Survey Nos./Khata No. 929/3196, Plot No. 2812/4322 bounded are as follows: East-Land of Salik Ahmed, West-5 Ft Road, North-Road, South-Land of Madarsa, AsrofAzizi.	₹ 55,91,609.64/- as on 21.09.2023 + interest and other charges there on	21.09.2023 / 18.01.2024
Jharsuguda Branch Borrower/Co-Borrower/ Guarantor: (1) Mr. Puskar Karali, (2) Mrs. Khirabati Karali, Both are At: Nikitmal, Laikera, Jharsuguda, Odisha-768213.	All those pieces and parcels of Equitable Mortgage of land situated being and lying at Mouza-Ranglatikra, Khata No. 475/126, Plot No. 4775, At- Nikitmal, Tehsil-Jharsuguda, Dist-Jharsuguda, Sub Registrar-Jharsuguda, P.S.-Laikera admeasuring Ac 0.250 Dec., i.e. 1011.72 Square Meters. Bounded as follows: East-Road, West-4774 (P), North-Plot No. 4774, South-Plot No. 4776.	₹ 15,91,916.43/- as on 11.10.2023 + interest and other charges there on	11.10.2023 / 18.01.2024

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 18.01.2024 Sd/-Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

FOCUS MIDDLE EAST

ERBIL IN EYE OF STORM



Erbil, an ancient city dating back to 2300 BCE, has always been considered very important since the early 1900s by the great powers for watching the volatile regional politics in the South Caucasus region

alia said that Israeli intelligence agents were recruiting and training Iranian dissidents in clandestine bases located in Iraq's Kurdish region. This was reproduced by "Intelnews" in its issue dated January 11, 2012. A Baghdad source told the French daily that part of Israel's sabotage programme was against sensitive Iranian nuclear facilities, which included targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear experts.

On March 18, 2022, The Cradle, an online news magazine covering the geopolitics of West Asia, quoted Azad Jolla, of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) as saying that Mossad was using Erbil as the base for anti-Iranian operations. It said: "The comments of the Kurdish official occur in the wake of a precision missile strike by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on 13 March on a secret Mossad compound in Erbil, which left three Israeli officials dead and seven others severely wounded." It added that on 27 previous occasions Iran or the groups supporting Iran had "launched attacks on Erbil, ostensibly against Israeli targets."

The website also quoted Iraq's Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sad calling for an enquiry into Mossad's activities on March 14. This was after a claim in September 2021 that an Iranian counter-terrorist operation against a training centre had killed two US and Israeli operatives "who were involved in the assassination of Iran's Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani and Iraq's Deputy Commander of the Hashd al-Shaabi, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandes."

It also said: "The IRGC's attack on the Mossad training facility has sent shockwaves across the region, as Iraq does not allow Israeli nationals to visit the country and has strict laws, reinforced last year, that prohibit any Iraqi interaction with the State of Israel."

The writer is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat. Views are personal.

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Reja Shah's Persia and Feisal's Iraq-none of which had any tolerance for Kurdish autonomy." She said that the British, who created Iraq, toyed with the idea of having a separate administration for the Kurdish areas, recognising that the Kurds did not like being under Arab rule. "In the end, the British preferred to do nothing."

On June 20, 2004, Seymour Hersh wrote in the New Yorker ("Plan-B") that Israeli intelligence and military operatives were working in the Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria to provide training. Hersh said, "Israel feels particularly threatened by Iran, whose position in the region has been strengthened by the (Gulf) war." Israeli operatives included members of the Mossad, Israel's clandestine foreign-intelligence service, "who work undercover in Kurdistan as businessmen and, in some cases, do not carry Israeli passports."

On 20 September 2006 BBC released "News Night" which showed graphic evidence of Israeli operatives providing military training to Kurdish militia members. It said: "When the former Israeli special forces soldiers were sent to Iraq in 2004, they were told they would be disowned if they were discovered."

According to BBC, their role was to train two groups of Kurdish fighters: One to act as a security force for the new

Hawler International Airport (Erbil) and to train about 100 peshmerga or Kurdish fighters for "special assignments" through an Israeli consulting firm "Interop." Till 2003 its chairman was Danny Yatom, a former head of Mossad. Yatom had told BBC: "I was not aware of what was done in 2004 and 2005 because I cut all contacts with the company when I entered the Israeli parliament in 2003."

The programme aired video footage showing Israeli experts drilling members of Kurdish armed groups in shooting techniques and guerrilla tactics. The Israeli government denied having authorised any such training, while Iraqi Kurdish officials refused to comment on the report. But Israeli security experts told the BBC that it would be virtually impossible for their trainers to operate inside Iraqi Kurdistan "without the knowledge of the Kurdish authorities."

BBC also quoted Khaled Salih, a spokesman for the Kurdistan Regional Government: "These are not new allegations for us. Back in the sixties and seventies we were called 'The second Israel' in the region and we were supposed to be eliminated by Islamist nationalists and now Islamist groups."

On 9 January 2012 Le Figaro, the second most popular French newspaper carried a report "Iran defies America," which inter

Iranian air strikes earlier last week mainly in Northern Iraq are intensifying regional tensions. One of the three "retaliatory" missile strikes by Iran on January 15-16, 2024 was on Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan local government in Iraq. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced that the air strikes were for "the destruction of espionage headquarters and places of anti-Iranian terrorist groups." This resulted in the killing of Kurdish business magnate Peshraw Majeed Agha Dezaei and his infant daughter and the destruction of their palatial mansion. The Iraqi government and Kurdish sources have denied Dezaei's involvement in any intelligence activities.

Iran hit neighbours Iraq and Syria first and then Pakistan stirring up an already tense region. The focus of the missile strikes has been Erbil in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

America's CBS News said on January 16 that this was the second time since March 2022 that IRGC had directly hit Erbil, and "both times they used the same justification." In 2022, the home of another Kurdish businessman was targeted with eight ballistic missiles. "The New Arab," a well-known English language news website, said that it was aimed at showing the Kurds "their vulnerabilities" and forcing the Kurdistan Regional Government, particularly Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), to align with Iran's regional interests and priorities.

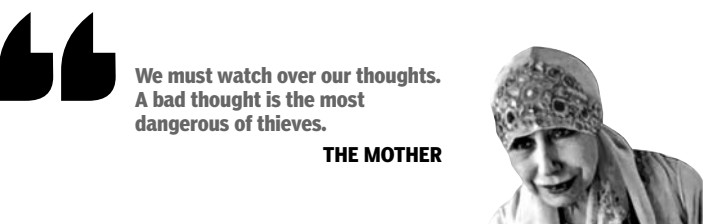
Erbil, an ancient city dating back to 2300 BCE, has always been considered very important since the early 1900s by the great powers for watching the volatile regional politics in the South Caucasus region. Consequently, it also became a "spy" centre like Beirut or Istanbul.

Margaret Macmillan, the legendary Oxford historian said the same thing in her "Paris 1919" (2001) that at the end of the First World War the big powers abandoned the Kurds to the mercy of "Ataturk's Turkey,



Vappala Balachandran

IRAN HIT NEIGHBOURS IRAQ AND SYRIA FIRST AND THEN PAKISTAN STIRRING UP AN ALREADY TENSE REGION



We must watch over our thoughts. A bad thought is the most dangerous of thieves.
THE MOTHER

Temple Trump Card

A great religious fervour is sweeping India over the consecration of the newly built Ram temple in Ayodhya. Even though the construction of the temple remains incomplete, the ruling BJP and its affiliates Sangh Parivar outfits turned the event on 22 January into a national celebration and the Centre gave its seal of approval to it by declaring it as a half day holiday in all Central offices.

India's stock market too was shut for the day, while millions of people witnessed the event on television screens as the Prime Minister joined priests to inaugurate the temple. The trust in charge of the temple had invited an estimated 7,000 people — politicians, leading industrialists, film and sports stars and other public figures — to be present for the event.

The mega program was scripted in a way that it serves as the start of the BJP's campaign for getting the PM re-elected for a third term in office in the coming Lok Sabha elections. This is the reason why the temple had been made ready for the inauguration with record speed, even ignoring the religious tradition that a temple cannot be consecrated when the construction is not complete. In fact, four Brahmins, the Shankaracharyas of the country, put a spoke in the grand plan by objecting to the opening, saying that consecrating an incomplete temple goes against Hindu scriptures. They publicly announced that they would not participate in the do. The trust of the temple, however, disregarded the objection and asserted there was nothing wrong in the ritual in a temple under construction.

The hurry itself tells all about the intent to make political capital of the religious frenzy for winning the Lok Sabha polls. The event was given the aura of a kind of national celebration almost akin to that of the country's Independence. The temple's history, spanning 5 centuries, is grounded in the final attack and demolition in 1992 of the 16th century Babri Masjid, built in 1528-29 AD by Mir Baqi. That single event has shaped the country's politics since and has resulted in cracking open deep religious fault lines in Indian society. Without mincing words, it can be stated that the Hindu-Moslem divide always existed on this sub continent. The Ram Janambhoomi issue has been kept alive for a long period as it has helped sustain many religious verging on politics figures, both financially and socially, for a very long time. Due to the political façade being maintained since Independence, 'secularism' had kept these embers burning but hidden. With the sudden eruption in 1992, the temple took center stage in Indian politics that resulted in, eventually, being one of the mainstays for the BJP to come to power and now to retain it.

A recapitulation of the sequence of events leading to the culmination of the temple inauguration would be in order. The temple is being built on a contentious piece of land in Ayodhya believed by Hindus to be the birthplace of Ram. But until the morning of 6 December, 1992, it was the Babri Masjid, a mosque built in 1528 and named after the Mughal king Babur, that stood at that place. A mob of Hindu nationalists pulled down the mosque, chanting religious slogans after decades of angry and at times violent campaigns by zealots. After years of being closed to the public, the Supreme Court in November 2019 ruled that the site must be handed over to a trust that would be specially set up to oversee the construction of a Hindu temple. A separate piece of land in Dhannipur village on the outskirts of Ayodhya was allocated to Moslems for a mosque that may serve as a replacement for the Babri Masjid. Its construction is yet to begin.

The saddest part of the tortuous legal process is that the apex court acknowledged that both the surreptitious and illegal manner in which idols were brought into the mosque in 1949 and the demolition of the mosque were crimes, yet it virtually exonerated the offenders and sanctified the offence by allowing the construction of a temple erasing the history of over 550 years.

Building the Ram temple at the spot where the Babri Masjid once stood has been one of the BJP's three foundational promises. The other two being the end of Jammu and Kashmir's semi-autonomous status enshrined in Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which was scrapped in 2019, and a uniform civil code for personal laws are the others. The consecration of the temple fulfilled that decades-long pledge and came just weeks before national elections.

The Ram temple movement has already paid rich dividends to the BJP's political fortunes. The party won just two seats out of 543 in the Lok Sabha in 1984. A little more than a decade later, in the first national elections after the Babri Masjid's demolition, it surged to become India's single-largest party, winning 161 seats. With the growing acceptance of the BJP's Hindoo nationalism, the BJP is now in an almost unsailable position under Modi's leadership.

The Opposition does not inspire much confidence among the electorate at the moment. It finds itself in a bind as criticism of the temple consecration ceremony further alienates it from the majority Hindoo population, whereas supporting it would give the BJP a virtual walkover in the elections.

However, politics and economy have been the worst affected in present day India. Governments, both at the Centre and in almost all States, are simply vying and competing with rivals with the strength of financial sops to the ever increasing population of poor. This is resulting in excessive taxation on the citizens. It is not just limited to direct taxes as individual Income Tax which is a pittance compared to invisible yet extremely high taxes as Goods & Services Tax (GST) and a plethora of Cess. Examples like Swachh Bharat, education cess and many others would come to mind of most citizens. While taxes are rising, incomes are not. There is no economic road map of the government worth its salt. Religion is, indeed, playing its role successfully of being the opium for the masses in present day New India.

WISDOM CORNER

- Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. **JEAN-PAUL SARTRE**
- Quiet minds cannot be perplexed or frightened but go on in fortune or misfortune at their own private pace, like a clock during a thunderstorm. **ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**
- Man as an individual is a genius. But men in the mass form the headless monster, a great, brutish idiot that goes where prodded. **CHARLIE CHAPLIN**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1556:** The deadliest earthquake on record kills some 830,000 people. The epicentre was in the Wei River Valley in Shaanxi Province, China.
- 1950:** Israel claims Jerusalem as its capital. Despite international protests, the Knesset passed a resolution stating that the divided city will be the country's capital.
- 1977:** The TV miniseries Roots, an adaptation of Alex Haley's best-selling novel, debuted; it became one of the most popular shows in the history of American television and galvanized attention on African American issues and history.
- 1986:** The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland inducted its first class, which included Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Elvis Presley.
- 1997:** The Age of Aquarius dawned, some astrologers believe, because for the first time since 1475 a number of planets, the Sun, and the Moon were aligned in a perfect six-pointed star in the first degrees of Aquarius.

SPECTRUM POVERTY

Relying on manipulated data

A very recent discussion paper released by Niti Aayog titled "Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2008-09", authored by member Ramesh Chandra and senior adviser Yogesh Suri, claimed that nearly 24.82 crore Indians have been lifted out of poverty over the last decade. The paper showed a decline from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), based on Alkire and Foster (AF) method, identifies people as poor based on universally acknowledged metric designed to assess acute poverty, providing a complimentary perspective to conventional monetary poverty measures.

Several economists have questioned the assessment based on the MPI as also the method of calculation. They contended that the MPI, which mainly measures possessions and access to certain services, is a poor and inaccurate method of estimating poverty, traditionally measured through household expenditures on certain goods and services. The projections of the report are based on the National Family

Health Survey (NFHS) for which data was collected before the pandemic. Based on the overall numbers, it concluded that Uttar Pradesh managed to get 5.9 crore out of poverty followed by 3.8 crore in Bihar, which is the home to the highest share in the country.

Recall that the last poverty estimation was done in 2011-12 by applying the Tendulkar methodology after price indexation and based on the last consumption pattern data from the NSSO survey. As per that estimate, 21.9% of the population were below poverty line in 2011-12. Meanwhile, it is indeed surprising that poverty reduction has been announced though the government has not released the Household Consumer Expenditure Survey report for 2017-18, citing high divergence between the survey findings and administrative data. Many economists pointed out that MPI is not used as a measure of poverty and deprivation. They maintained that the MPI simply shows the percentage of people unable to access facilities provided by the government.

Just on the heels of this report, the Oxfam came out with a more

revealing and judicious report. It came out with the startling revelation that ending poverty, the target for which is 2030 under the SDGs may not be possible for another 229 years. This has been in sharp contrast to the Niti Aayog report that predicted India is likely to achieve Sustainable Development Goals of "halving multidimensional poverty well before 2030."

If as per the government data there are only 15 crore poor people in India, then there is no justification for giving free ration to 80 crore people. Supriya Shrinat of the Congress pointed out that the Niti Aayog has measured poverty based on the government's flagship programmes, ignoring the standard parameters adopted the world over. Some economists and even the Congress are of the opinion that the government is compelled to rely on such manipulated data after its 10-year tenure because it has somewhat failed to solve the country's economic problems.

The 2023 report on food security and nutrition released by five UN agencies recently stated that 74.1% of Indians or 1043 billion people

were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021. Meanwhile, one may also refer to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) which ranked India as low as 111 among 125 countries though the government alleged that it was "an erroneous measure of hunger with serious methodological issues" that displayed a "malafide intent". Some experts pointed out that though the government has been bragging about its food aid programmes and challenged the GHI, but it is quite surprising that its own estimate of 813 million people needing food aid contradicts the government's contention.

Thus, the present estimation is not quite justified and does not reveal the true picture of the poor in India. The basics of decent livelihood which consists of nutritious food, potable water and a permanent shelter are possibly not available to at least 15% of the population. The government's attempt to bring forward concocted data may not be acceptable to the really educated sections though the aam janata can be swayed with such irrelevant findings.

INFA



Dhurjati Mukherjee

IF AS PER THE GOVERNMENT DATA THERE ARE ONLY 15 CRORE POOR PEOPLE IN INDIA, THEN THERE IS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR GIVING FREE RATION TO 80 CRORE PEOPLE

Padma honours

Sir, This refers to the Padma awards which are announced on the eve of January 26 every year. "Exceptional" and "distinguished" are the words used while decorating men and women with these awards. Indeed, civilians with memorable service to the country and mankind have found themselves honoured with the prestigious awards. It is also true that, of late, some hidden gems are discovered and honoured but such cases are only few and far between. The Padma selection committee is headed by the Cabinet Secretary and consists of Home Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary to the President and persons of eminence whose number is not specified. Though the NDA government scrapped the system of nomination by ministers, grumbings and rumblings remain. Moreover, once stipulated to be in the vicinity of 50 or so, now the total number of awards is fixed at "not more than 120."

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Japan on moon

Sir, Japan's robotic SLIM spacecraft touched down on the lunar surface in the morning of January 19, notching a huge success for the nation. It has become the fifth nation to land softly on the Earth's nearest neighbour. "First and foremost, landing was successful," Yamakawa Hiroshi, president of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), said during a post-landing press conference. Going forward, "We should be able to access the lunar surface," Hiroshi added. "I believe that there is a path opening to that now." The other countries in the moon-landing club are the Soviet Union and the United States, which made their first trips to the lunar surface during the Cold War space race; China, whose initial landing occurred in December 2013; and India, whose Chandrayaan-3 lander-rover duo touched down in August last year. But it wasn't all good news for SLIM: the probe's solar panels aren't generating electricity as planned on the lunar surface. JAXA officials said during the press briefing. If the problem isn't fixed soon, SLIM could go forever silent. Its battery can support operations on the moon for just a few hours.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Winter snow plays hooky with Himachal

FARMING, TOURISM AND WATER SECURITY BADLY IMPACTED BY SNOW-LESS WINTER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Jan 22: After an extremely wet southwest monsoon in Himachal Pradesh in 2023, when even the cold desert Lahaul-Spiti, the rain-shadow zone, had to face a deluge, this winter is witnessing a lack of precipitation across the state, turning the mountains brown due to the lack of a "blanket of snow".

Locals and meteorologists say this winter is harsh, like the previous ones with temperatures staying close to sub-zero, but there is departure from average precipitation, crucial for winter agriculture and horticulture crops.

The lack of snow, owing to the decrease in frequency and intensity of Western Disturbances (WDs), may also affect the runoff patterns during the summer by reducing the availability of water in streams and rivers, impacting farming and tourism.

Experts say there might be reduction in crop yield due to cold winds at the flowering stage.

Members of the hospitality industry say the long spell of snowless days have ruined the plans of tourists to holiday in the snow.

"Himachal Pradesh finds itself draped in shades of brown instead of the customary winter white," remarked a Shimla-based hotelier, DP Bhatia.

Also the number of forest fires, common during peak summer, has abnormally spiked this winter. There have been 2,050 incidents of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh between October 16, 2023 and January 16,



2024, as per the Forest Survey of India, compared to 296 incidents during this period in 2022-23.

As per IMD data till January 18, the state has seen the lowest precipitation in 123 years so far. The previous low was in 1966 when the precipitation was as low as 99.6 per cent, while it was 98.5 per cent in 2007, 92.4 per cent in 1902 and a low of 91.4 per cent in 1986.

As per the Met office, weather will remain mostly dry in the state till January 25. Dense to very dense fog along with cold wave and frost conditions are likely to continue at isolated places in hills and plains.

December 2023 was also almost snowless for most of the hill state. A majority of the key rivers - Chenab, Beas, Parvati, Baspa, Spiti, Ravi, Satluj and their tributaries originating from the Himalayas - depend upon the seasonal snow cover for their discharge.

Lack of snowfall and the warmest winter in Himachal Pradesh's cold desert will de-

plete glaciers faster.

As per a recent study by the Centre on Climate Change of the Himachal Pradesh Council for Science Technology and Environment (HIMCOSTE), the total area under snow cover in the state in 2018-19 was 20,210 sq km which was reduced to 20,064 sq km in 2019-20.

During the peak winter months, the snow cover area reduced gradually from February onwards.

According to HIMCOSTE data, more snow cover has been observed in the Satluj river basin during winter months (November to January) than the Beas and Ravi basins, whereas the Chenab basin has not shown much change in the area under snow cover during that period.

About one-third of the total geographical area of the state remains under thick snow cover during the winter. Solang, the premier ski destination just 13 km uphill from the tourist resort of Manali in the western Himalayas, is deserted without snow cover.

This is a major disappointment for local winter sports enthusiasts, whose livelihood depends upon tourists and skiers, as a snowless winter is creating financial pressures on them.

Solang slopes, which normally remain covered with a blanket of snow from late November to March end, have good potential like the Gulmarg and Auli slopes. "The impacts of climate change are visible here and it is a matter of concern for us. You see the slopes totally devoid of snow cover, a big disappointment for locals whose economy largely depends upon the skiers and tourists," Chuni Lal Thakur told IANS.

He said these ski slopes normally have more than three feet of snow by this time. Showing photos of snowscapes of yore, Thakur hopes the weather will oblige them with a good spell of snow and the skiers will be back on Solang slopes soon.

For a visibly-worried Ram Charan Negi, who grows peas and barley on his farm of 10 bighas in Lahaul Valley, it has been an almost snowless December-January.

"By mid-January we have at least four feet of snow. You can see brown mountain tops everywhere now. It is a matter of concern as snowfall ensures water security in these remote villages in the summer," he rues.

The yield of the disease-free, high quality pea and potato crop, grown in natural conditions over the Himalayan peaks, is expected to drop by 30-35 per cent in summer owing to scanty winter precipitation, say agriculture experts.

Delhi sees significant rise in young, women voters

Special focus was on enrolment of young voters in the 18 to 19 years age group

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: The final electoral roll of Delhi published Monday ahead of the Lok Sabha polls showed a significant 85 per cent rise in the number of young voters in the 18 to 19 years age group as well as improved registration of women voters.

As per the Special Summary Revision - 2024 completed with publication of the final electoral roll, the total number of electors (voters) stood at 1,47,18,119, including 79,86,572 males, 67,30,371 females and 1,176 third gender electors, stated a statement from the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Delhi.

The final electoral roll, 2024, showed a drop of over 58,182 voters as compared to the final roll of 2023. The total number of electors as per final electoral roll of 2023 was 1,47,76,301.

The number of male and female voters - 79,86,572 and 67,30,371 - in 2024 final roll also dropped as compared to 2023. The number of male and female voters as per final roll of 2023 were 80,38,676 and 67,36,470 respectively.

Under house to house verification, total 3,97,004 entries from the electoral roll were deleted which included 3,07,788 names of



permanently shifted electors, 56,773 dead electors and 32,443 multiple entries.

With special efforts made during the special summary revision exercise (qualifying date January 1, 2024), the gender ratio of the electors has improved by 5 points - from 838 to 843, demonstrating significant progress in efforts towards intensification of electoral inclusion of women, said CEO, Delhi, P Krishnamurthy.

"The final electoral roll published today shows a significant increase in the number of young electors in Delhi, demonstrating the commitment of young electors towards the electoral process," said Krishnamurthy.

Special focus was on enrolment of young voters in the 18 to 19 years age group. Total 67,930 young voters were added in the electoral rolls of Delhi during the special summary revision which means 26.7 per cent of the total addition of 2,54,470 names added during the revision were young voters, the statement said.

The enrolment of young electors in the 18 to 19 years age group has increased by 9.69 per cent as compared to final roll of last year and by 85.8 per cent during the special summary revision - 2024, it stated.

Prospective voters who are going to attain the age of 18 years with respect to the subsequent qualifying dates in the year 2024 - April 1, July 1 and October 1 - have also filed advance claim for inclusion of their names in the electoral roll which will be considered and decided in the respective quarter of the year with reference to the respective qualifying date, the statement said.

A total of 9,335 prospective voters applied for registration in the electoral rolls of Delhi during special summary revision, 2024, it said.

Krishnamurthy said in order to achieve good quality electoral roll, purification of electoral roll is also necessary as addition and deletion of names is a continuous process.

Delhi's winter peak power demand at all-time high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: The unrelenting cold conditions in Delhi pushed the city's peak winter power demand to its highest-ever level of 5,816 megawatts (MW) Monday morning, discom officials said.

The previous 'winter' records in Delhi were 5,798 MW January 19, 5,726 MW January 17 and 5,701 MW January 12. The discoms had estimated the peak power demand in Delhi to be 5,760 MW.

The power demand reached 5,816 MG at 10.52 am Monday.

This is the sixth time in January this year that Delhi's winter power demand has surpassed last year's peak of 5,526 MW recorded January 6, 2023, officials said.

A BSES spokesperson said the discoms of the company - BRPL and BYPL - met the peak power demand of 2,526 MW and 1,209 MW respectively on the day without any glitches.

The Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL)

met the highest winter peak power demand of 1,826 MW in its distribution area of North Delhi, a company spokesperson said.

So far this month, the peak power demand of Delhi has remained over 5,000 MW, barring one day, the officials said.

The BSES discoms are fully geared to ensure reliable power supply for its nearly 50 lakh consumers and around 2 crore residents during the winter months, its spokesperson said.

Apart from long-term agreements from power plants, over 2,000 MW of green power is playing a significant role in ensuring reliable power supply to consumers, the spokesperson said.

Advanced load forecasting through a mix of advanced statistical forecasting models using complex algorithms, combined with state-of-the-art weather forecasting solutions, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, helps BSES discoms meet the power demand of Delhi, he added.



Artists rehearse for the Republic Day performance, in New Delhi, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Delhi Cong protests against 'attack' on Nyay Yatra

New Delhi: Delhi Congress workers and leaders Monday held a dharna outside the party office to protest against the alleged attack on Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Assam. The protesters, led by Delhi Congress chief Arvinder Singh Lovely, carried placards and raised slogans. The Congress Sunday alleged that its leaders were "attacked" during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra by BJP supporters, with Gandhi, who was heckled by a crowd chanting slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" and "Modi, Modi," asserting that his party is neither scared of the Prime Minister nor the Assam Chief Minister. The Congress workers and leaders tried to gherao the BJP headquarters at Rouse Avenue but were stopped by police, officials said. Later, they sat on a dharna in front of the Congress office to register their protest against the 'misbehaviour' during the Nyay Yatra in Assam.

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Tender Reference No.UDLN-3/2023-24
No. 73/INAC, Dt. 20.01.2024

No. C-2405:1. Name of the Work: "Construction and Extension of Administrative Building with other Ancillary Structures Etc. inside Existing SeTP at Udala NAC".

2. Estimated Cost	: Rs.68.087 Lakh (including GST)
3. Period of Completion	: 6 Months
4. Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the portal	: From 10.00 AM of dt.22.01.2024.
5. Last date/time of received of Bids in portal	: Upto 5.00 P.M. of dt.06.02.2024
6. Date & Time of opening of Bid	: At 11.00 A.M. of dt.07.02.2024.
7. Name & Address of the Office Inviting Bid	: Executive Officer, NAC, Udala At/Po-Udala, Dist.Mayurbhanj -757041

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

Sd./- Executive Officer, Udala, NAC
OIPR-13162/11/0008/2324

e-Procurement Notice for Road Works Identification No. 12/SERW/BLS/2023-24

No. O-2271:1. Name of the Work: Roads. 2. Total No. of Works: 7 Nos. 3. Estimated Cost: Estimated Cost Rs.5.034 to Rs.54.934 Lakh. 4. Class of Contractor: 'D', 'C' & 'B' Class. 5. Time of Completion: 1 Month (One Calendar Month). 6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender Online for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Balasore
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Balasore	12/SERW/BLS/2023-24	25.01.2024 at 11.00 AM	02.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM	02.02.2024 upto 1.00 PM	03.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
R.W. Division, Balasore

OIPR-25108/11/0012/2324

Asia's biggest ice-skating rink cries for attention

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Jan 22: Surrounded by construction material and shanties, Asia's biggest natural ice-skating rink, a major tourist attraction of 'queen of hills' Shimla, is crying for attention.

The ice-skating rink, which featured in numerous Bollywood movies in the past, narrates a "tale of neglect and unsustainable development" as construction activities in its vicinity and global warming has taken its toll on the skating sessions, which have come down from 100-120 sessions every winter to 30-50 sessions, say old skaters.

It has been a part of numerous Bollywood movies and was visited by several top dignitaries, but now it presents a picture of "unsustainable development and utter neglect," they add.

"It is very unfortunate that the government is adamant on finishing the natural skating rink, rather than restoring it or making an all season indoor rink for the residents as well as tourists," says Shimla Hotel and Tourism Stakeholders Association president MK Seth.

This year, Shimla witnessed about 60 per cent tourist footfall, lowest in the last four decades on the New Year, which was on weekend, despite prediction of snow by the



weather department. It is high time that the government finds a way to promote tourism, and restoring the ice-skating rink is one of the initiatives that should be taken on priority, he told PTI.

A lift is being built outside the skating rink and construction material has been dumped at the site on the land of the sports department, said an old skater, Gurjot. The size of the rink has been reduced drastically due to the construction, he added.

Even more annoying is the fact that the land of the sports department is being used to dump muck, debris and construction material, said another skater Parth, and added that the proposed construction of a bus stand and a lift would undermine the ecology and micro-environment

of the area and jeopardise the rink's future.

The parking area of the rink has been converted into shanties which house dhabas, rickety eateries and stores. Skaters, including women ferrying young kids, have a hard time parking, disembarking and other allied logistics, says another teenage skater Prachi Sood.

"We have given the no objection certificate (NOC) for construction but all the formalities to be done under the bidding regulation code has to be done by the executing agency," Sports Director Sandeep told PTI.

Climate change has also taken its toll on ice skating at Shimla. The lowest number of six skating sessions was witnessed in 2017 while the maximum of 118 ses-

sions were held in 1997-98.

Absence of sports and other activities is one of the reasons why the youth is getting inclined towards drugs as there are not much options to keep them busy, members of the Shimla Ice Skating Club said, and informed that the detailed project report (DPR) of a Rs 40-crore project for all-weather ice-skating rink has been prepared.

The club members are worried that the shrinking season would take a toll over the winter attraction of the 'queen of hills' - ice skating - as the skating sessions, which used to start at the end of November, have already shifted to mid December.

Due to climate change, global warming, reckless felling of trees and haphazard construction in the vicinity of the rink and demolition of the Rivoli Theatre above the rink, which used to block direct sunlight, coupled with pollution caused by the bus stand adjacent to the rink, the temperatures have increased and the ice-skating session is shrinking.

Besides tourists, skating is considered as a leisure activity by a majority of the skaters and there is a craze among kids to enjoy the sport, but as they grow up, they take it up as a secondary activity.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives at the Ram Mandir for the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony in Ayodhya



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat being felicitated after the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya



Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar with actor Rajinikanth during the Ram Mandir 'Pran Pratishtha' Mahotsav in Ayodhya



Actors Alia Bhatt, Ranbir Kapoor, Vicky Kaushal, Katrina Kaif and Ayushmann Khurrana during the consecration ceremony at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya



Artists perform during the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya



Devotees participate in a procession on the occasion of Ayodhya Ram Mandir 'Pran Pratishtha' in Amritsar



Actor Nitish Bharadwaj, who played the role of Lord Krishna in BR Chopra's television series 'Mahabharat', after the Ram Mandir 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony in Ayodhya



A security personnel on guard during the Ram Mandir 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony



I don't believe in politicising religion ahead of elections. I am against such practice
MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

NewsClick's HR HEAD WITHDRAWS PLEA IN SC

NewsClick's human resources department head Amit Chakravarty Monday withdrew from the Supreme Court his petition against his arrest under the anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)



COUNTRY SOAKS IN RELIGIOUS FERVOUR

Since morning, people flocked to temples that were bedecked with flowers, lamps, flags and posters. In the evening, there was a Diwali-like atmosphere as diyas were lit outside homes, shops and business establishments



Decorations at Sadar Bazar Market on the day of the consecration ceremony of Ayodhya Ram Mandir, in Gurugram, Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: Hymns and songs about Lord Ram reverberated in temples, special prayers were held, processions taken out, rangolis made and bhandara events were held Monday as the country soaked in religious fervour on the occasion of the consecration ceremony at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

To coincide with the historic day, three babies were delivered by caesarean operation at a hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, a 42-year-old woman in Maharashtra's Thane city had a 'muhurat delivery' while a Muslim woman in Uttar Pradesh's Firozabad gave birth to a boy and named him Ram Rahim to signify Hindu-Muslim unity.

Several states declared a holiday for schools, while government offices, other establishments and public sector banks remained closed for half a day. Some states declared a 'dry day' and asked shops selling non-vegetarian food items to remain closed till evening.

Since morning, people flocked to temples that were bedecked with flowers, lamps, flags and posters. In the evening, there was a Diwali-like atmosphere as diyas were lit outside homes, shops and business establishments.

In Kerala, rituals at the Triprayar Sree Ramaswamy temple in Thrissur district were performed from early morning. Situated on the banks of the Karuvannur or Theevra river, it is dedicated to Lord Ram. The temple is renowned for the Nalambalam yatra -

the deities are the four sons of King Dasaratha of Ramayana.

Saffron festoons, flags with the images of Ram, Hanuman, Sita and Lakshman and posters welcoming the arrival of Ram to his birth place dotted several nook and corner in Karnataka. There was a huge turnout of devotees at Ram and Hanuman temples, besides Lord Venkateshwara temples since morning.

Special prayers were held in Bangalore at Ramanjaneya Gudda temple, Pattabhirama Swamy Temple, Ram temple in Rajajinagar and Ramadevara Devasthanam at Malleswaram and Ram temple in Basavanagudi.

Prayers were also performed at several temples in Jammu and Kashmir, including the Shankaracharya temple in Srinagar, and the Hanuman temple on the banks of Jhelum river in Amirakadal area of the city. A havan was organised at the Sun temple at Mattan in Anantnag district to celebrate the consecration ceremony as the devotees prayed for return of complete normalcy in Kashmir.

Spiritual fever gripped Jharkhand with special prayers organised in more than 51,000 temples across the state. A massive rangoli of Lord Ram measuring 18,500 sqft was inaugurated by Union Tribal Affairs and Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda on the premises of Sri Laxmi Narayan Temple at Cable Town in Golmuri in Jamshedpur.

Women devotees in neighbouring Bihar sang 'kirtan' (devotional songs) at the Hanuman Mandir in Priyadarshi Nagar on Bailey Road in Patna since early morning while a procession was taken out from Sri Krishna

Pranami Temple with people carrying 'kalash' and the Ramayana on their heads.

All major intersections of Mathura, home to the Krishna Janmasthan Temple, were decorated and bhandara set up in many parts of the city. At the Radha-Krishna mandir inside the temple complex, the idols were given the appearance of Lord Ram and Sita.

In West Bengal, a grand procession featuring a tableau depicting Lord Ram offering obeisance to Goddess Durga was taken out from Baikuntha Nath Temple near Ganesh Talkies in Kolkata and it culminated at the over 80-year-old Ram temple on Chittaranjan Avenue.

Special prayers were organised in various places in Assam and people burst crackers as the consecration ceremony streamed live on various platforms. The state government declared a half-day holiday while schools, colleges and universities remained closed for the day. A 'dry day' was also declared and shops selling non-vegetarian food items remained closed till 4 pm.

Arunachal Pradesh also soaked in religious fervour. In capital Itanagar, markets were closed voluntarily and a large number of private schools also declared a holiday. LED screens were put up at various places and the ceremony at Ayodhya was live streamed.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav offered prayers at the temple in Orchha, which is also called as Chhoti Ayodhya, in Niwari district. Devotees believe that Lord Ram stays at Orchha during the day and goes to Ayodhya in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh at night.

In Delhi, the ruling AAP organised a series of events - from shobha yatras to bhandaras,



People light 'diyas' to celebrate the inauguration of Ayodhya's Ram Temple, at the Connaught Place in New Delhi, Monday

LUCKIEST PERSON ON EARTH: ARUN YOGIRAJ

Ayodhya: Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj, who chiselled the 'Ram Lalla' idol consecrated in the newly-constructed temple in Ayodhya, Monday, says he considers himself the luckiest person on the earth and believes that it's Lord Ram who chose him for the task. "I have always felt that Lord Ram has been shielding me and my family from all the bad times and I strongly believe that it is him, who chose me for the auspicious task," Yogiraj, who has received effusive praise for his work, said. A fifth-generation sculptor, he was among the invitees to the grand consecration ceremony here. "I spent sleepless nights working on the idol with precision but it was all worth it. I feel I am the luckiest person on the earth and today is the best day of my life," he said. "I learnt the art of sculpting from my father. He would have been very proud to see my idol here today," he added.

- a pilgrimage to the abodes of Lord Ram and his brothers Bharat, Lakshman and Shatrughan - and worshipping at all these temples on a single day in the Malayalam month of Karkidakam is considered auspicious, drawing many devotees.

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan offered prayers at the Ramadevi Temple in Vazhuthacaud in the state capital. The Sree Ramaswamy Temple at Ramapuram in Kottayam is also one of four temples where



Gratifying to witness celebratory moment marking reawakening of national pride all over. January 22 is etched in history as defining moment of 'tryst with divinity' in our civilisational trajectory

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

The way shown by Lord Ram, who is also called Maryada Purushottam Ram, should be followed. Those who follow 'Riti (custom), Niti (policy) and Maryada' (decorum) shown by Lord Ram are his true devotees

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF



On this auspicious day, I pay my respects to all those great men who kept this struggle and determination alive for centuries, endured many insults and tortures, but did not leave the path of religion



This is a revolutionary work happening. Everyone feels that a new era is beginning. This is a matter of great joy for all of us. We all are fortunate that we are getting the opportunity to witness the moment. Our Prime Minister has started a new era. And, he has the blessings of Lord Ram

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

'Sundar Kand' recitals to aartis - across the 70 assembly constituencies to mark the consecration ceremony. Religious events were organised across Rajasthan with bhajan, kirtan and Ramayan recitation performed in temples in many places. Processions were also taken out at different places, including Jaipur. In the state's Jaisalmer district, BSF soldiers recited Ramayana at Tanot Mata Temple located on the India-Pakistan border. In Himachal Pradesh, an 'Akhand Ramayan' recital was organised at a temple devoted to Lord Ram in Shimla.

Rahul stopped from visiting Assam shrine



Rahul Gandhi with party leaders and supporters sits in protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagaon/Morigaon(Assam), Jan 22: Rahul Gandhi's yatra was marked with high drama Monday as he was denied permission to visit the birthplace of Vaishnav saint Srimanta Sankardeva in Nagaon district, triggering a strong reaction from the Congress leader who asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi will now "decide who will visit a temple and when".

Rahul Gandhi's visit coincided with the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya. The Congress leader, who had left early in the morning for the birthplace of the 15th-century social reformer, was stopped at Haibargaon following which he along with other senior party leaders sat on a dharna. Gandhi also claimed that authorities didn't give him any reasons for stopping him.

"Will PM Modi now decide who will visit a temple and when?... We do not want to create any problems and simply want to pray at the temple," Rahul told the police authori-

ties and questioned why he was not being allowed to visit Sankardeva's birthplace.

"Probably, today only one person can go to the temple," he also said, an apparent reference to PM Modi's visit to the Ram temple consecration function in Ayodhya. Later, party MP Gaurav Gogoi and Batadrava MLA Sibamoni Bora visited the Satra and offered prayers, prompting Gandhi to attack the state government, saying: "This is strange as there is a law and order situation in the area but Gaurav Gogoi and all can go. Only Rahul Gandhi cannot go."

The Congress alleged that Prime Minister Modi exerted pressure on the Assam government to prevent Rahul Gandhi from visiting the birthplace of the iconic saint and paying his obeisance. Gandhi told reporters that he believed in the philosophy of Sankardeva as "we, like him, believe in bringing people together and not spreading hatred. He is like a guru to us and gives us direction. So I had thought when I came to Assam, I should offer my respects to him".

SC seeks response of Shinde, MLAs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: The Supreme Court Monday sought responses from Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other lawmakers of his group on a plea of the Uddhav Thackeray faction challenging Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar's order declaring the Shiv Sena bloc led by Shinde as the "real political party" after its split in June 2022.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Thackeray faction, and sought response of the chief minister and other MLAs within two weeks.

At the outset, the top court

SENA VS SENNA



said the plea can be heard by the Bombay High Court as well. The senior lawyers for the Thackeray faction, however, opposed the idea and said the top court is more equipped to handle the case.

"Your Lordships have to decide it. If we go to the high court, then it will be delayed further," Sibal said, adding the speaker's decision had come in pursuance of the direction of the top court.

The Supreme Court, which initially intended to grant Shinde and the MLAs of his bloc four weeks to submit their replies, later fixed the case after two weeks.

The Thackeray faction, in its plea filed through MLA Sunil Prabhu, has alleged that Shinde "unconstitutionally usurped power" and is heading an "unconstitutional government".

In his order passed January 10, Speaker Narwekar had also rejected the Thackeray faction's plea to disqualify 16 MLAs of the ruling camp, including Shinde.

Challenging the orders passed by the Speaker, the Thackeray faction has claimed they are "patently unlawful and perverse" and that instead of punishing the act of defection, they reward the defectors by holding that they comprise the real political party.

Battle over Ayodhya events in TN reaches top court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Chennai, Jan 22: The BJP vs ruling DMK battle over live telecast of the Ayodhya Ram temple consecration in Tamil Nadu shrines reached the Supreme Court Monday, with the apex court asking the authorities to act in accordance with the law and not based on any oral instructions.

In the Madras High Court, the state government submitted no permission was needed for related functions in private enclosures. While the HC held Bhakti towards God is only for peace and happiness and not to disturb the social equilibrium, this was cited by Chief Minister MK Stalin as the court's 'censure' of Saffron party people.

A war of words over 'ban' on live telecast and conducting other events like Bhajans and Annadhanam broke between the BJP leaders and Governor R N Ravi on the one side and Chief Minister Stalin and Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department Minister PK Sekar Babu on the other side.

Governor Ravi alleged that priests and staff of a Shri Ram temple here, under the control of the state government, faced 'repression' while the entire country celebrated the 'Pran Pratishtha' of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. The CM slammed the Governor for his 'repression' remark and the BJP as well for 'Ram temple politics.'

After the intervention of



courts, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Tamil Nadu BJP President K Annamalai, witnessed on large TV screens in temples, the Ayodhya Sri Ram mandir Pran Pratishtha.

A Supreme Court bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, while hearing

SNIPPETS

ED issues fresh summons to Jharkhand CM

Ranchi: The Enforcement Directorate has issued a fresh summons to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren and asked him to again record his statement in a money laundering case between January 27 and 31, official sources said Monday. The central agency recorded his statement for the first time in the case January 20 after investigators went to his official residence here. They recorded his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) during the about seven hours they spent at his home. Soren has been asked to join the investigation again between January 27 and 31, and a Enforcement Directorate team will go to his residence like the last time, the sources said. The recording of statement did not finish that day (January 20), and hence, the Chief Minister has been asked to join the probe again, they said.

India, Kyrgyzstan begin counter-terror exercise

New Delhi: Special forces of India and Kyrgyzstan Monday kick-started a 13-day exercise in Himachal Pradesh's Bakloh with a focus on combating terrorism and extremism. It is the 11th edition of India-Kyrgyzstan annual 'Khanjar' exercise. The Indian Army contingent comprised 20 personnel from the Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) while the Kyrgyz team with equal number of personnel is being represented by the Kyrgyz special forces' Scorpion brigade. "The aim of the exercise is to exchange experiences and best practices in counter terrorism and special forces operations in built-up area and mountainous terrain under Chapter VII of the UN Charter," the Indian Army said in a statement.

a plea seeking quashing of an "oral order" dated January 20 banning live telecast of the consecration ceremony at Ayodhya in temples across Tamil Nadu, said no one is bound to abide by the oral orders.

Both Sitharaman and Annamalai had alleged Sunday that public screening of Ayodhya event and related programmes like Bhajan was barred by authorities in the state.

The Saffron party alleged the DMK regime is 'anti-Hindu' and people would teach a fitting lesson to the ruling party in the Lok Sabha polls.

Annamalai, speaking to reporters in Chennai after watching the event live in Sri Venugopalaswamy temple at downtown Gopalpuram said the

ruling DMK regime created a situation for the BJP to pursue legal struggle to ensure performance of special pujas, other events and public screening of the Ayodhya ceremony.

The Venugopalaswamy shrine is located next to the residence of late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi.

Only after the courts orders, they were able to put up an LED screen and witness the ceremony at the Kancheepuram Kamakshi temple run by the Kanchi Sankara Math, she said adding the courts 'established the right' of Hindus.

Sitharaman asserted that if attempts to 'usurp' rights of Hindus were made, legal measures would be pursued and 'we don't pelt stones.'

international

of the day quote

If there are 100,000 or 200,000 Arabs in Gaza and not two million, the whole discourse about the day after will be different. The removal of around 90 percent of Gaza's residents would help achieve the goal



BEZALEL SMOTRICH | ISRAELI FINANCE MINISTER

We condemn the latest provocative action by Chinese coastguard against Filipino fishermen



JONATHAN MALAYA | FILIPINO WRITER

China is committed to upholding regional and international peace and stability, and supports Iran and Pakistan in continuing to bridge differences through dialogue and consultation



WANG WENBIN | CHINESE POLITICIAN

SHORT TAKES

Truck plunges into ravine, 18 killed

Kinshasa (Congo): A truck driving at high speed ran out of control and plunged into a ravine in southwestern Congo, killing 18 passengers on board and injuring more than a dozen others, police said. The truck was "filled with goods and carrying many passengers" on a major highway in the remote Kasangulu territory in Kongo Central district Sunday when it fell into the ravine, according to Kasangulu police commander Benjamin Banza.

Indian-origin Singaporean jailed

Singapore: An Indian-origin Singaporean was Monday sentenced to seven years and four months in jail for cheating 20 people of SGD 2.5 million (\$1.8 million). Murali Krishnan Naidu was earlier convicted of 17 counts of cheating linked to nine people and involving a sum of SGD 2.5 million over 2008-13. Another 43 charges, including those involving the remaining victims, were also considered during the sentencing during which Naidu made no restitution, *The Straits Times* reported.

Pak security forces kill seven militants

Quetta: Pakistan security forces killed seven militants in a shootout in the country's volatile southwest near the border with Afghanistan, the military said Monday. The military said the intelligence-based operation was conducted in Zhob district in southwestern Baluchistan province.

Rise in measles cases in England

London: UK health officials Monday urged millions of parents to book their children in for missed measles, mumps and rubella shots amid a sharp increase in the number of measles cases and the lowest vaccination rates in a decade. The National Health Service was launching a publicity campaign after figures showed there have been 216 confirmed measles cases and 103 probable cases in parts of England since October. Most cases were in children under 10 years old. The combined measles, mumps and rubella, or MMR, vaccine is offered in the UK in two doses to all children, first at 12 months old and then again at 3 years old.

5 killed in shooting

Colombo: Five persons were killed in a shooting incident Monday morning in Beliatta in Southern Province of Sri Lanka, police said. Police spokesman said the incident occurred near the Beliatta interchange on the Southern Expressway. Four people were killed on the spot, while another died upon admission to the hospital.



Today I am submitting to the Verkhovna Rada a key draft law that will allow the adoption of comprehensive legislative amendments and the introduction of multiple citizenship

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

STORM ISHA BATTERS UK, IRELAND

Two motorists were killed, tens of thousands of people were left without electricity and hundreds of trains were cancelled Monday after the latest winter storm lashed Britain and Ireland with heavy rain and wind gusts that topped 100 miles (160 km) an hour



Gaza hostage relatives burst into Israeli Parl

The relatives of hostages have accelerated their protests in recent days, demanding the government do more to get their loved ones released

AGENCIES

Jerusalem, Jan 22: Dozens of family members of hostages held by Hamas stormed a committee meeting in Israel's Parliament Monday, demanding a deal to win their loved ones' release, as European foreign ministers joined growing international calls for Israel to negotiate on the creation of a Palestinian state after the war.

The developments showed the increasing pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has dug in on both fronts. He has insisted to the Israeli public that pursuing the devastating offensive in Gaza is the only way to bring the hostages home.

At the same time, he has rejected the United States' vision for a postwar resolution, saying he will never allow a Palestinian state.

The dispute over Gaza's future — as the war rages with no end in sight — pits Israel against its top ally, the United States, as well as much of the international community. It also poses a major obstacle to any plans for postwar governance or reconstruction of the coastal territory, large parts of which have been left unlivable by Israeli bombardment.

In the most direct comments yet from Saudi Arabia, the kingdom's top diplomat said it will not normalise relations with Israel or contribute to Gaza's reconstruction without a credible path to a Palestinian state. Netanyahu has vowed to continue the of-

fensive until "complete victory" over Hamas and to return all remaining hostages after the Oct 7 rampage in southern Israel that triggered the war. In that attack, some 1,200 people were killed and Hamas and other militants abducted around 250 people. But more than three months into the war, Israelis are increasingly divided on the question of whether it's possible to do both.

Around 100 hostages were freed under a weeklong cease-fire deal in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. Around 130 remain captive, but a number have since been confirmed dead.

Hamas has said it will free more captives only in exchange for an end to the war and the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu has ruled out such an agreement.

Anger has been growing among hostages' families. Relatives of hostages, as well as other protesters, have set up a tent camp outside Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem and vowed to remain until a deal is reached to bring the rest of the captives home. Other protests have called for new elections.

Dozens of family members of the hostages stormed into a gathering of the Knesset's finance committee Monday, holding up signs and yelling, "You won't sit here while they are dying there!"

Israel's offensive has killed at least 25,295 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded more than 60,000, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.



Revelers parade during a pre-carnival street party rehearsal of the "Orquestra Voadora" block or Flying Orchestra in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

MUSK VISITS AUSCHWITZ

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Krakow, Jan 22: Elon Musk, who has been accused of allowing antisemitic messages on his social media platform, X, visited the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp Monday.

Musk's visit at the most notorious site of the horrors of the Holocaust came before a scheduled appearance later Monday at a conference on antisemitism organised by the European Jewish Association in the nearby Polish city of Krakow.

The billionaire has faced accusations from the Anti-Defamation League, a prominent Jewish civil rights organisation, and others of tolerating antisemitic messages on the platform, formerly known as Twitter, since purchasing it in 2022. He sparked an outcry in November, including from the White House, when he responded on X to a user who accused Jews of hating white people and professing indifference to antisemitism by posting, "You have said the actual truth."

Poland PM visits Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, Jan 22: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk arrived in Ukraine's capital Monday for talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on how Poland can keep supporting the country's almost two-year war with Russia and resolve a dispute between the neighbouring nations over grain shipments and trucking.

Tusk, who returned to power in Poland last month and is keen to show that a change in government won't bring a change in Ukraine policy, was also due to meet with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal.

His visit took place the day after Moscow-installed officials in eastern Ukraine reported that Ukrainian shelling killed at least 27 people on the outskirts of a Russian-occupied city.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the shelling outside Donetsk a "monstrous terrorist act", and the Russia-backed local authorities declared a day of mourning. The Ukrainian military, however, denied it had anything to do with the attack. It was



Polish PM Donald Tusk and his Ukrainian counterpart Denys Shmyhal visit the Memory Wall of Fallen Defenders of Ukraine

There are some conflicts of interest, we know it well and we will talk about them, but not only in the spirit of friendship, which is obvious, but with the attitude to solve these problems as soon as possible, not to maintain or multiply them

DONALD TUSK | POLISH PM

not immediately possible to verify either side's claims. Ukraine's allies have in recent weeks sought

to reassure the country that they are committed to its long-term defense against the Kremlin's forces amid concerns that Western support could be sagging.

Located on NATO's eastern flank, Poland has been one of Ukraine's strongest allies in its fight to defeat Russia. The government in Warsaw has provided weapons and humanitarian aid, and opened its borders to Ukrainian refugees since Moscow's troops invaded Ukraine February 24, 2022.

SNIPPETS

Iran 'directly involved' in Houthi ship attacks: US Navy's Mideast chief

Jerusalem: Iran is "very directly involved" in ship attacks that Yemen's Houthi rebels have carried out during Israel's war against Hamas, the US Navy's top Mideast commander told The Associated Press Monday. Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the Navy's 5th Fleet, stopped short of saying Tehran directed individual attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. However, Cooper acknowledged that attacks associated with Iran have expanded from previously threatening just the Persian Gulf and its Strait of Hormuz into waters across the wider Middle East.

Rep. Nancy Mace backs Trump

Charleston (US): Donald Trump has picked up another endorsement from Nikki Haley's home state of South Carolina, with Rep. Nancy Mace backing the former president in this year's GOP presidential primary. Mace had stayed out of the 2024 Republican primary as two fellow South Carolinians — Haley and Sen. Tim Scott — entered the race last year. Mace told The Associated Press Monday, that she was backing Trump over Haley, who lives in her congressional district and supported her in 2022 against a Trump-backed challenger.

Jamaica adopts domestic violence laws

San Juan (Puerto Rico): Jamaica adopted Monday stronger domestic violence laws Monday as the government aims to better protect victims on the island where people are reluctant to report such cases to authorities. Protection orders now include harassment and property damage, and the penalty for violating a protection order has increased from USD 65 to USD 6,450 and a potential sentence of up to one year in prison. All these amendments were included in a bill approved by Jamaica's Senate in late December.

PAK, IRAN RESTORE TIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Jan 22: Pakistan and Iran have "mutually agreed" to reinstate their ambassadors in each other's country, the Foreign Office (FO) said Monday, restoring bilateral ties downgraded following last week's tit-for-tat attacks on each other's territory.



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian will also visit the country January 29 at the invitation of cash-strapped Pakistan's Foreign Minister Jalil

Abbas Jilani, the FO said in a statement. Tensions escalated between Islamabad and Tehran after Pakistan conducted "precision military strikes" against what it called "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province that killed 9 people in the wee hours Thursday.

The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks last Tuesday on two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan's unruly Balochistan province.

No normalisation of Israel ties without Palestine state: Saudi

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jerusalem, Jan 22: Saudi Arabia's top diplomat said the kingdom will not normalise relations with Israel or contribute to Gaza's reconstruction without a credible path to a Palestinian state — a nonstarter for Israel's government.

Prince Faisal bin Farhan's remarks in an interview with CNN broadcast late Sunday were some of the most direct yet from Saudi officials.

Taliban enforcing curbs on single Afghan women: UN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Islamabad, Jan 22: The Taliban are restricting Afghan women's access to work, travel and healthcare if they are unmarried or don't have a male guardian, according to a UN report published Monday.

In one incident, officials from the Vice and Virtue Ministry advised a woman to get married if she wanted to keep her job at a healthcare facility, saying it was inappropriate for an unwed woman to work.

The Taliban have barred women from most areas of public life and stopped girls from going to school beyond the sixth grade as part of harsh measures they imposed after taking power in 2021, despite initially promising more moderate rule.

They have also shut down beauty parlours and started enforcing a dress code, arresting



women who don't comply with their interpretation of hijab, or Islamic headscarf. In May 2022, the Taliban issued a decree calling for women to only show their eyes and recommending they wear the head-to-toe burqa, similar to restrictions during the Taliban's previous rule between 1996 and 2001.

In its latest quarterly report, covering October to December last year, the UN mission in Afghanistan said the Taliban are cracking down on Afghan women who are single or don't have a male guardian, or mahram, accompanying them.

In May 2022, the Taliban issued a decree calling for women to only show their eyes and recommending they wear the head-to-toe burqa, similar to restrictions during the Taliban's previous rule between 1996 and 2001

There are no official laws about male guardianship in Afghanistan, but the Taliban have said women cannot move around or travel a certain distance without a man who is related to her by blood or marriage.

Three female health care workers were detained last October because they were going to work without a mahram. They were released after their families signed a written guarantee that they would not repeat the act, the report said. In Paktia province, the Vice and Virtue Ministry

has stopped women without mahrams from accessing health facilities since December. It visits health facilities in the province to ensure compliance.

The ministry, which serves as the Taliban's morality police, is also enforcing hijab and mahram requirements when women visit public places, offices and education institutes through checkpoints and inspections.

In December, in Kandahar province, ministry officials visited a bus terminal to ensure women were not travelling long distances without mahrams and instructed bus drivers not to permit women to board without one, said the UN.

Women have also been arrested for buying contraception, which the Taliban has not officially banned. Nobody from the Vice and Virtue Ministry was immediately available for comment on the UN report.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — who faces mounting domestic pressure over the plight of Israeli hostages, including an angry protest inside a parliamentary committee meeting Monday — has rejected Palestinian statehood and described plans for open-ended military control over Gaza.

The dispute over Gaza's future — as the war rages with no end in sight — pits Israel against its top ally, the United States, as well as much of the international community, and poses a major obstacle to any plans for postwar governance or reconstruction of the impoverished coastal enclave that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians.

of the day quote

The comprehensive vision for 2047 includes a substantial shift towards electric vehicles across various segments, supported by tax incentives, Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, and the mandatory provision of charging infrastructure

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH | SECRETARY, DPIIT

We are planning to commence electric vehicle production at Sanand with Nexon EV from April

SHAILESH CHANDRA | MD, TATA MOTORS PASSENGER VEHICLES

Big players like Apple, using facilities in SEZs, benefit greatly from this, exporting large volumes without paying import duties on components

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

SHORT TAKES

Lockton enters Indian market

New Delhi: US-based independent insurance brokerage Lockton Monday announced its entry into the Indian market. With over 135 offices worldwide, Lockton's entry in the country is subject to regulatory approval. This will meet India's growing demand for risk consulting and management services, the company said. The statement further said Sandeep Dadia has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer, India, and a member of the Lockton Asia leadership team. Dadia aims to fully harness the company's global expertise and local knowledge, while maintaining its impressive 97 per cent client retention rate, it added. Lockton is the world's largest independent insurance brokerage.

Air India begins A350 plane ops

Mumbai: Private carrier Air India Monday commenced the commercial operations of its first wide-body A350 aircraft with a flight taking off for Chennai from the Mumbai airport. The 316-seater A350-900 aircraft has a three-class cabin configuration with 28 private business suites with full-flat beds, 24 premium economy and 264 economy seats. "Air India flight AI-589 took off from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Monday for Chennai, with a full-capacity load of passengers," the airline said in a statement. The aircraft will initially fly on domestic routes -- Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai -- for crew familiarisation and regulatory compliance.



The allocation for infrastructure, women centric schemes is expected to go up in the 2024-25 interim budget

SANJAY KUMAR | PARTNER, DELOITTE INDIA

HERO VIDA V1 PRO CUTS PRICE

Hero MotoCorp is offering huge discounts up to ₹24,000 on its Vida V1 Pro electric scooter. After the discount, the effective price of V1 Pro comes down to just ₹1.25 lakh. The electric scooter has top speed of 80 kmph and range of 110 km



SERIOUS SETBACK

Sony junks Zee merger

India's entertainment behemoth plan goes awry as Sony ends \$10bn deal to merge assets with Zee



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: Sony Group Corp Monday said it is calling off a \$10 billion merger of its India unit with Zee Entertainment, following a stalemate over who will lead the merged entity.

The entertainment giant sent a termination notice to Zee on the deal, which was announced more than two years back, and is seeking \$90 million as break-up fees for violating the terms of the merger pact and "invoking arbitration".

In a stock exchange filing on the issue, Zee on its part denied all claims made by Sony and said it is exploring legal remedies. "Zee has displayed utmost commitment towards the merger by undertaking several permanent and irreversible steps, resulting in one time and recurring costs for Zee," it said.

A standoff over leadership is said to be the reason for the deal being called off. Sony had resisted demand by Zee chief executive Punit Goenka, who was investigated by market regulator SEBI over fraud allegations, to stay on after the merger.

The deal would have created an entertainment conglomerate with more than 70 Indian TV channels, popular Bollywood studios and an extensive film library to take on global power-

houses Netflix and Amazon. "Sony Pictures Networks India Pvt Ltd (now known as Culver Max Entertainment Limited), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sony Group Corporation, today issued a notice terminating the definitive agreements entered into by SPNI and Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. Relating to the merger of ZEEL with and into SPNI, which was previously announced on December 22, 2021," the Japanese firm said in a statement.

The definitive agreements provided for the merger to close within 24 months. On expiry of such a period, the deadline was extended by a month. "The merger did not close by the end date as, among other things, the closing conditions to the merger were not satisfied by then," the filing said.

Sony said it was "extremely disappointed that the conditions to the merger were not satisfied" by the deadline, which had been set as January 21. The company added that it "re-

mained committed to growing our presence" in India.

ZEE DENIES CHARGES
In a stock exchange filing, Zee said it had also received a demand from Sony for a \$90 million termination fee over "alleged breaches" of the terms of the deal.

"The company categorically denies all claims and assertions" by Sony and is evaluating all options, Zee said in the filing adding it "will take all the necessary steps to protect the long-term interests of all its stakeholders, including by taking appropriate legal action".

Zee said it had taken "all efforts and steps" in line with the merger agreement and had consistently worked towards implementation of the deal.

The Indian firm had seen a decline in financial performance with profits declining due to rising streaming costs and falling advertising revenue. Zee's four-year agreement with

The deal was seen as crucial for both companies for survival in the world's fastest-growing large economy

houses Netflix and Amazon.

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Domestic coal-based power output rises 7%

COAL IMPORT BY POWER PLANTS DECLINES 40.66% IN APRIL-DEC AS LOCAL PRODUCTION RISES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: Domestic coal-based power generation increased 7.14 per cent to 872 billion units (BU) in the April-December period of the current fiscal.

The rise in domestic coal-based electricity generation reflects an ample supply of coal to meet the growing energy demand in the country, the coal ministry said in a statement.

Domestic coal-based power generation was 813.9 BU in the year-ago period, it said.

In the country, power is generated from conventional sources -- thermal, nuclear and hydro-- and renewable sources -- wind, solar, biomass etc. Thermal power producers use coal as the main fuel to run the units and the dry fuel con-

tributes to more than 70 per cent of the total electricity generation.

Coal-based power generation in the country registered a growth of around 10.13 per cent during April-December period of FY'24, as compared to the corresponding period of previous year while overall power generation grew 6.71 per cent during the same period, the ministry statement said.

Coal imports for blending dropped by 40.66 per cent to 17.08 MT during April-December period of current fiscal from 28.78 MT in the corresponding period of previous year, despite the rising power demand.

"It showcases the nation's commitment to self-reliance in coal production and minimising overall coal imports," it said.

Coal-based power generation has played a significant role in meeting India's energy demands. The country is experiencing a substantial increase in power demand, driven by a combination of factors like industrial growth, technological advancements, population growth, and economic development.



Q3 RESULTS

Colgate-Palmolive profit up 35.7%

New Delhi: FMCG major Colgate-Palmolive India Ltd Monday posted a 35.71 per cent increase in net profit to ₹330.11 crore for the December quarter mainly led by a double-digit growth in the toothpaste segment. The oral hygiene product maker had posted a net profit of ₹243.24 crore in the year-ago period, Colgate-Palmolive India Ltd (CPIL) said in a regulatory filing. Its sales were up 8.21 per cent to ₹1,386.41 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal. It was at ₹1,281.21 crore in the corresponding period a year ago. CPIL's total expenses were ₹970.14 crore, marginally down during the quarter. CPIL's total income in the quarter under review was at ₹1,413.54 crore, up 8.6 per cent.



Cipla profit rises 32% to ₹1,068cr

New Delhi: Pharmaceuticals firm Cipla Ltd Monday reported a 32.25 per cent rise in consolidated profit to ₹1,068.41 crore in the third quarter ended December 2023. The company had posted a consolidated profit of ₹807.83 crore in the year-ago period, Cipla Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operation in the quarter under review was ₹6,603.81 crore, up 13.66 per cent. It was ₹5,810.09 crore in the corresponding period a year ago. In the December quarter, its total expenses were 8.78 per cent higher at ₹5,119.81 crore as against ₹4,706.47 crore in the October-December quarter last fiscal, the company said.

Karur Vysya Bank net surges 42.56%

Chennai: Private sector Karur Vysya Bank has reported a 42.56 per cent jump on its net profit for the October-December 2023 quarter to ₹412 crore, the lender said Monday. The Tamil Nadu-based bank had reported a net profit of ₹289 crore during the corresponding quarter of previous year. For the nine month period ended December 31, 2023 the net profit surged by 49.61 per cent to ₹1,149 crore, from ₹768 crore registered during the corresponding period of last year.



FROM FY17 TO FY23

States' loan guarantee triples

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 22: The total loan guarantees extended by 17 major states to their entities have more than tripled to ₹9.4 lakh crore by FY23 from ₹3 lakh crore in FY17, says a report.

While guarantees are contingent liabilities, they may pose a risk to states' fiscal health if a substantial proportion of the stock needs to be serviced by them, warranting robust guarantee monitoring and prudent extension of guarantees in the future so that the financial system as a whole remains resilient.

States often sanction and issue on behalf of their various enterprises, cooperative institutions, and urban local bodies guarantees in favour of their lenders which are generally banks or other financial institutions.

The total loan guarantees extended by the 17 major states to their entities have more than tripled to ₹9.4 lakh crore as of FY23 from ₹3 lakh crore in FY17. This is equivalent to the entire



increase in such guarantees of these states during FY2017-22, IcrA Ratings chief economist Aditi Nayar said in the report.

In fact, such guarantees have been steadily increasing over the years, from ₹3 lakh crore in FY17 to ₹7.7 lakh crore in FY21 and to ₹9 lakh crore in FY22.

The states excluded from the report are the Northeastern states and other hilly states along with Goa.

The RBI guidelines include tighter rules for ascertaining guarantee ceiling by a state than is being currently implemented by most states as well as assigning risk weights to guarantees, in addition to enhanced monitoring.

The guidelines also state that guarantees should not be extended for external commercial borrowings, the amount guaranteed should be limited to 80 per cent of the loan, etc.

Moreover, the guarantees should not be used for obtaining finance through state-owned entities, which substitutes budgetary resources of the states.

According to Nayar, this is in line with the change in guidelines on off-budget debt issued by the Centre in FY23 and she feels that together, these two will nudge states to become more selective while extending guarantees to their entities.

ASSEMBLY UNIT

Hero MotoCorp to set up factory in Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: Hero MotoCorp Monday said it will set up a facility for assembling products in Nepal in partnership with CG Motors, its newly appointed distributor in the country.

The facility will be located in Nawalpur district and have a capacity of 75,000 units per annum, the country's largest two-wheeler maker said in a statement.

Operations will begin in March 2024, it added.

Hero MotoCorp forayed into Nepal in 2014. Over the years, the company has established itself as a leading player in the country.

"With their vast expertise and diversified business knowledge, Chaudhary Group (CG) will provide an enormous fillip to our operations here," Hero MotoCorp Head-Global Business Sanjay Bhan said.



In the near future, the company plans to further strengthen its operations across the country and introduce a slew of new products that will excite the market, he added.

"This partnership marks CG Motors' ambitious re-entry into the automotive market, leveraging Hero MotoCorp's renowned products and services," Chaudhary Group Managing Director Nirvana Chaudhary stated.

Hero MotoCorp sells models like Super Splendor, Glamour, HF Deluxe and Xpulse 200 motorcycles in Nepal. It also sells Destini 125, Maestro Edge, and Pleasure+ scooters in the market.

Technology industry of choice for Gen Z students: Report

MILLENNIALS AND GEN Zs CONSTITUTE AROUND 90% OF THE TECH WORKFORCE IN INDIA ENABLING HIGHER GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY AND DRIVING A SHIFT IN PREFERENCES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: The technology industry in India continues to draw Gen Z students with 77 per cent showing interest towards the sector, a report by Nasscom-Indeed said. "Learning and Growth and Culture and Ethics are the top cri-

teria for both Millennials and Gen Z when selecting an organisation, highlighting the employers' continued focus on skilling and upskilling to navigate the current work environment and develop their desired career paths," the Nasscom-Indeed Future of Work report 2024, which was released Monday, said.

"The technology industry in India continues to be the industry of choice for Gen Z students with 77 per cent showing interest towards the industry," it said.

The survey by Nasscom and Indeed involved 185 employers and over 2,500 individuals from current and future workforces.

As much as 84 per cent of organisations are exploring or are open to gig models, with startups and the Business Process Management (BPM) sector leading in hiring in this segment, it said.

For the future workforce, criteria for selecting an organisation remains similar, whereas



Generation Z refers to individuals born in late 1990s and the early 2010s

career progression, compensation, benefits, and learning opportunities are the primary factors that drive them to continue with an organisation, it said. The report examines the trans-

formative landscape across three pivotal pillars -- the future of jobs, workforce dynamics, and the evolving workspace.

The gig economy has profoundly transformed traditional job roles and organisational structures, leading to more diverse skills, increased resource allocation agility, dynamic team configurations, and updated role definitions.

The future of work will be defined by the dynamic balance between efficiency improvements from automation and the expansive potential of creativity unleashed by continuous innovation

SANGEETA GUPTA | SENIOR VP AND CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, NASSCOM

"The primary drivers for Gen Zs and Millennials opting for gig roles are flexible job locations and a focus on specialised skills. Organisations are capitalising on gig workers in areas such as software development, data annotation, and business analytics, tapping into the benefits of on-demand talent and specialised expertise," it said.

The report further revealed that as more and more organisations embrace new technologies,

there has been a rise in demand for specialist roles such as AI/ML scientist, quantum computing researcher, quantum AI developer, and blockchain specialist.

The report said among the most sought-after jobs, roles in data and analytics are in the lead, closely followed by positions that enhance customer experiences, automation, and efficiencies, particularly in AI and machine learning domains.

Expansion across Tier-II and III cities in India is gaining prominence as service-based organisations and global capability centres are looking to harness the untapped innovation potential concentrated in these emerging technology hubs, it added.

The report revealed that a majority of organisations are adopting a hybrid and flexible work approach, with office attendance guided by organisational needs and job profiles.

ALCARAZ SETS UP ZVEREV DATE

Axar likely choice for India on rank turner, feels Bhajji

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 22: Having got to play only eight Tests since making his debut against Australia in 2017 does make Kuldeep Yadav one of the unluckiest Indian cricketers in recent times.

And if the Indian team management under Rahul Dravid follow the "rank turner" template for the upcoming England series starting January 25, Kuldeep can be seen warming the bench at least in the initial stage of the five-match series.

India spin great Harbhajan Singh, who is known for his forthright opinions, feels that although in terms of skill and quality Kuldeep will be ahead of the Gujarat left-arm spinner, there is no better choice than Axar if pitches are diabolical in nature.

"Look, the way I look at it that when both R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja are in playing eleven and you are looking at a third specialist spinner, it should be Kuldeep.

"Because Kuldeep as a wrist-spinner will bring that variation. But I believe Axar's selection in Test matches is purely on his batting skills. At No.8 or 9, he can bat and that's what he brings to the table," Harbhajan, who is currently in Dubai, told PTI when asked about his preferred choice.

But the 'Turbanator' wanted to set the record straight. "While Axar brings his superior batting to the table (compared to Kuldeep), I don't see a logic why you need a superior batter at No.9 when his skill-sets are completely identical with that of Jadeja's. You are then taking the aspect of variation out of equation. So for me, ideally, Kuldeep should play," he reasoned.

The five Tests will be played in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Rajkot, Ranchi and Dharamsala.



Except for the last game on a track which is traditionally known to help pacers but of late has turned into a batting better, all the other four venues will offer significant help for Ashwin and Jadeja.

Axar's biggest plus point on rank turners is not trying to turn the deliveries and just landing it on spot allowing the pitch to do the rest. On crumbling surfaces, he bowls those under-cutters, where the ball skids after landing on its skin rather than seam.

The plus point for Kuldeep is his ability to extract turn and bounce. Being able to turn the ball back into right-handers and also take it away (left-arm wrist-spinner's googly) but there remains a possibility of being slightly slower through the air.

Harbhajan also explained the twin-fold reason why Axar will be first preference when the ball turns square. "If you look at our batting performances on rank turners, you would know that we haven't also done very well. Our batting also could struggle if there is excessive turn and hence you then want a longer tail and that's where Axar comes into effect with his batting.

"On turners, you won't need to turn or show variations to get wickets. When it comes to that discipline, Axar is fantastic at target hitting and hence he remains favourite," Harbhajan added.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 22: Carlos Alcaraz completed a Grand Slam set by reaching the Australian Open quarterfinals for the first time, setting up a showdown against Olympic champion Alexander Zverev.

The 20-year-old Wimbledon champion missed the season-opening major in 2023 because of injury but is more than making up for lost time. The No.2-seeded Alcaraz beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 in less than two hours Monday to open the night session on Rod Laver Arena.

He has dropped just one set en route to the last eight. Zverev is there for the third time but is coming off some long five-set wins, including a four-hour, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(7-3) fourth-round victory over No.19 Cameron Norrie. It was the 32nd five-set match so far at Melbourne Park, a tournament record in the Open era.

Their match on Margaret Court Arena was prolonged after being delayed briefly when a protester threw anti-war pamphlets onto the back of the court in the third set. The protester was escorted out by security.

No.3 Daniil Medvedev, a two-

time Australian Open runner-up, beat No.69-ranked Nuno Borges 6-3, 7-6(7-4), 5-7, 6-1 and will next face No.9 Hubert Hurkacz, who ended the run of French wild-card entry Arthur Cazaux 7-6(8-6), 7-6(7-3), 6-4.

While the highly-ranked players continue to advance in the men's draw, the seeded players keep toppling out on the women's side. And that has opened opportunities for Dayana Yastremska and Linda Noskova to advance to the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

Yastremska beat the 18th-seeded Victoria Azarenka 7-6(8-6), 6-4, a two-time Australian Open champion, and No.23-seeded Elina Svitolina had to retire after hurting her back when she was trailing Noskova 3-0. Anna Kalinskaya beat No.26 Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-2 in a later match.

Azarenka served for the first set twice and had two set points at 6-5 but couldn't convert them. Yastremska was down a break in the second but rallied to win six of the last seven games. There was no handshake, as is the convention between Ukrainian players and opponents from Russia and Belarus.

The first game of the Noskova-Svitolina match lasted 11 minutes and contained 20 points. Noskova broke serve and held for 2-0 before Svitolina had a timeout and received treatment on her lower back.

When she resumed, the Ukrainian's serve speed was well down and her movement appeared compromised. After being broken for a second time

and holding back tears, Svitolina shook Noskova's hand and retired.

The 19-year-old Noskova beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek in the third round and now is the youngest player to reach the Australian Open women's singles quarterfinals since 2008.

Medvedev had two match points at 5-4 in the third set but Borges forced a fourth, only to fade as the Russian pulled away for victory.

A brief delay

A protestor threw papers onto an Australian Open court and briefly delayed the fourth-round match between Olympic champion Alexander Zverev and Cameron Norrie of Britain Monday.

A person wearing a blue shirt, cap and face mask threw anti-war pamphlets from the stands onto the court behind the baseline during the sixth game of the third set on Margaret Court Arena.

Printed in black on the white pages was the message Free Palestine: "While you're watching tennis bombs are dropping on Gaza."

Ball kids gathered up the papers and the match continued after a short delay. Security escorted the protestor away. Tennis Australia said it was awaiting more information before com-

menting.

Bopanna-Ebden in quarters

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Aussie partner Matthew Ebden entered the men's doubles quarterfinals with an impressive 7-6, 7-6 victory over Wesley Koolhof of the Netherlands and Croatia's Nikola Mektic here Monday.

The 43-year-old Bopanna and his Aussie partner, who are seeded second in the draw, were broken early in both sets but showed themselves to be up to the task with some great returns against the 14th seeds. The Indo-Australian pair will now meet the sixth-seeded Argentine duo of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni.



2024 PARIS OLYMPICS India placed in tough Pool B in men's hockey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lausanne (Switzerland), Jan 22: Asian Games champions and Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists India have been placed in a tough Pool B in the men's hockey competition at this year's Paris Games.

Eight-time champions India, who clinched a historic bronze medal in Tokyo after a hiatus of 41 years, have been clubbed with reigning Olympic champions and World No.2 Belgium, mighty Australia, Rio Games gold medalist Argentina, New Zealand and Ireland.

The Indians are currently ranked third in the world, behind Belgium and the Netherlands. Pool A, meanwhile, consists of Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, France and South Africa.

The International Hockey Federation announced the pools of both men's and women's hockey competition after the completion of the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers Sunday.

In the women's competition in Paris, there will be no representation from India, who finished a creditable fourth in Tokyo, as they failed to qualify.



having finished fourth after losing to Japan 0-1 in the Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi Friday.

The participating teams have been allocated their respective pools on the basis of the FIH World Rankings as Sunday. The 12 teams per gender have qualified for the Olympic Games either as hosts, winner of their continental qualifier or top three finisher of their FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifier.

The top four teams from each pool in both men's and women's competitions will qualify for the quarterfinals. The Paris Olympics will be held from July 26 till August 11 and hockey competitions will start from July 27 and end August 9.

Odisha FC set up semifinal faceoff with MCFC

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 22: Odisha FC pulled off a thrilling 3-2 win in their last Group D encounter against FC Goa at the Kalinga Stadium here Monday to set up a semifinal faceoff with Mumbai City FC (MCFC).

It was all going well until 75th minute with the hosts Odisha FC leading the match 3-0, courtesy Ahmed Jahouh's opener and a brace by Mourtaqa Fall. However, Carlos Martinez struck twice for the Gaurs in the next 11 minutes to make Odisha camp a bit anxious. However, the Juggernauts held their ground and came out on top with full points.

The first half witnessed some close moments despite being ended goalless. The first chance went to the Gaurs as a decent Raynier ball in the ninth minute was aimed for Boris Singh, but Odisha keeper Lalthuammawia Ralte boldly dived to save it.

The very next minute, Odisha tried to cash in on the counter attack, but Goa custodian Dheeraj Singh was there for an easy save. Carl McHugh took a shot with his left foot in the 19th minute, but Ralte tipped it over for a corner. In the 22nd minute, Roy Krishna maneuvered past Noah to cut back the ball inside the box, but there was no one present to slot it home.

In the 40th minute, Diego



Odisha FC players acknowledge the support from the spectators after the match at Kalinga Stadium, Monday

Mauricio managed to slip through Isaka Ralte, but he was halted by Seriton Fernandes. On the counter, Raynier located Martinez, who was denied a goal by Ralte.

After the change of ends, it was completely different ball game from both the teams with all the five goals coming in 36 minutes. In the 51st minute, the hosts were awarded a penalty and Jahouh calmly slotted the past Dheeraj to break the deadlock.

In the 59th minute, Jahouh came into action again as his

ball to the near post almost resulted in a goal, but Carlos Delgado's header went wide.

Two minutes later, Odisha extended their lead when Jahouh's corner found Fall in the middle and the Senegalese leaped as high as possible to successfully place the ball into the back of the net to double the hosts' advantage.

Five minutes later, Fall found his second of the night. It was yet again Jahouh, whose free-kick was headed in by Fall to extend Odisha FC's lead to 3-0.

When everyone thought the match was over, FC Goa camp,

especially Martinez, had other plans. In the 75th minute, Martinez restored hope for the Gaurs, capitalising on a stumble from Fall and stylishly seizing the chance to pull one back.

Then in the 86th minute, the Gaurs were granted a free-kick just outside the Odisha FC box. Martinez stepped up and struck it cleanly. The ball took a deflection and went past Ralte to reduce the deficit for FC Goa. However, the Juggernauts held their nerves and overcame some nervy moments to seal a spot in the semifinals.

Surya captain of ICC T20 Team of the Year, 3 more Indians feature

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Jan 22: Flamboyant middle-order batter Suryakumar Yadav has been named the captain of the ICC men's T20I Team of the Year, which also includes three more Indians in opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, spinner Ravi Bishnoi and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh.

The ICC Team of the Year recognises 11 outstanding individuals who have impressed throughout the year with the bat, ball or their all-round exploits.

Suryakumar found a place in the side for a second straight year and is in the running for T20I men's Cricketer of the Year. The right-handed strokemaker from Mumbai had a solid 2023.

His first innings of just seven to start the year against Sri Lanka was a mere speed bump in another prolific year, as he made scores of 51 (36) and 112 not out (51) in the next two matches.

Consistent scoring in 20s to 40s continued, before an innings of 83 (44) against the West Indies in Providence proved his class. He ended the series against the West Indies with a knock of 61 (45) in Florida.

Surya also became India captain with Rohit Sharma taking a break in the back end of the year. He made half centuries against Australia and South Africa, before posting a 100 against the Proteas in Johannesburg.

Besides the Indian quartet, the 11-member team also has England's Phil Salt as Jaiswal's opening partner, West Indies' Nicholas Pooran as wicket-keeper, Mark Chapman of New Zealand, Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza, Uganda all-rounder Alpesh Ramjani, Ireland's Mark Adair and Richard Ngarava of Zimbabwe.

Among women, all-rounder Deepti Sharma is the lone Indian to find a place in the 11-member side to be led by Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu.

The women's side features four Australians - Beth Mooney (wk), Ellyse Perry, Ash Gardner and Megan Schutt, two from England in Nat Sciver-Brunt and Sophie Ecclestone, Laura Wolvaardt of South Africa, West Indies' Hayley Matthews and Amelia Kerr of New Zealand.

Samad steers J&K to win over Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Jan 22: Abdul Samad helped Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) overcome a tricky chase with an unbeaten 66, steering his team to a two-wicket win over Odisha in Ranji Trophy here at the DRIEMS Ground in Banki Monday.

It was the first win of the season for J&K after sharing points with Delhi and Himachal in their two home games marred by bad light in Elite Group D.

Resuming at 72/4, J&K needed another 77 runs for the win and they somehow managed to cross the line. IPL regular Samad stood like a rock as wickets kept falling at the other end. Odisha pacer Rajesh Mohanty completed his 10-wicket haul in the match taking his second fiver (5/61) in the first innings.

VAR helps Real Madrid seal win, Barca top Betis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Jan 22: Real Madrid needed help from VAR — a lot of help — to avoid an embarrassing setback at home against last-placed Almeria in the Spanish league Sunday.

Madrid got three favorable video reviews in the second half, then scored a winner nine minutes into stoppage time to rally to a 3-2 win over Almeria, the only team yet to win in the league this season.

The dramatic late win moved Madrid two points in front of Girona, which hosts relegation-threatened Sevilla later Sunday.

Barcelona moved back into third place with a 4-2 win over Real Betis, with substitute Joao Felix breaking the deadlock in the 90th minute and Ferran



Dani Carvajal celebrates wildly his goal against Almeria; (inset) Ferran Torres reacts after competing his hat-trick against Real Betis, Sunday

Torres completing his hat-trick in stoppage time. The Catalan club remain seven points behind Real.

Dani Carvajal scored Madrid's winner from close range after a

cross into the area, erupting the crowd at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium and sending the Almeria players into despair.

The goal came after three separate VAR decisions allowed

Madrid to stay in the game after trailing 0-2 in the first half. Madrid were awarded a penalty that made it 2-1, saw an Almeria goal disallowed that would have made it 3-1, and got the 2-2 equaliser after the goal had been initially disallowed by the referee.

Almeria coach Gaizka Garitano was sent off in the final minutes for complaining, and said it wasn't the first time this had happened to him at the Bernabeu.

Madrid were coming off a loss to Atletico Madrid in extra time in the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey Thursday. It was the fifth straight game in which Madrid conceded at least a goal. Opponents scored 10 times against Madrid in the team's last four matches in all competitions.

Almeria took a surprising

two-goal lead into halftime after Largie Ramazani scored from inside the area in the first minute and Edgar Gonzalez found the top corner with a long-range strike in the 43rd. Both goals came after mistakes by Madrid defender Nacho Fernandez.

TORRES' HAT-TRICK
Barcelona kept pace with Madrid despite squandering a two-goal lead after Torres' pair of first-half goals. Isco scored both goals for Betis, which dropped to ninth place. Manuel Pellegrini's team has only one win in its last eight matches in all competitions.

Barcelona haven't impressed recently but has still won six of its last seven matches. The setback was a 4-1 loss to Madrid in the final of the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia this month.