

SHORT TAKES

Biker collides with Oram's car, dies

Dhenkanal: A motorcyclist was killed and BJP MP Jual Oram suffered injury Saturday in a collision between the latter's vehicle and a two-wheeler in Dhenkanal district, police said. The accident took place at Rekula Chhak in Kamakhyanager. "The MP's driver was arrested and his car seized," Kamakhyanager Police Station Inspector In-Charge Sarat Kumar Mahalik said while identifying the deceased as Sarbeswar Choudhury.

3 girl students die in Nayagarh accident | P5

Bopanna triumphs

Melbourne: Rohan Bopanna became only the third Indian to win a men's doubles Grand Slam title, taking the Australian Open crown with partner Matthew Ebden following a commanding win over Simone Bolelli and Andrea Pavanetti, here Saturday. In a high-quality game of tennis, second seeded Bopanna and Ebden won 7-6(0) 7-5 in the final that lasted one hour and 39 minutes. **P12**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'm trying to find out when you'll switch sides. Let me ask the media

Naveen dedicates SAMALEI to people



HERITAGE BOOST: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurates the historic SAMALEI project at the Maa Samaleswari shrine in Sambalpur, Saturday **OP PHOTO**

Amid chanting of hymns, the Chief Minister inaugurated the historic transformation project at Maa Samaleswari temple in Sambalpur under 5T initiative

PNN & AGENCIES

Sambalpur, Jan 27: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday inaugurated and dedicated to people the historic Samaleswari Temple Area Management and Local Economy Initiatives (SAMALEI) project, aimed at transforming the precincts of Maa Samaleswari temple - one of the most revered shrines in western Odisha - at a grand ceremony in Sambalpur amid chanting of hymns and a string of cultural programmes. The 16th-century shrine, an important Shakti Peeth on the banks of river Mahanadi, has undergone transformation on over 39 acres of its peripheral area under the ₹200-crore project. Patnaik unveiled the SAMALEI

project after offering prayers at Maa Samaleswari temple in the presence of dignitaries, temple priests and servitors. The Chief Minister also joined the yagna. In a video message to the people, the CM said Odisha will always remember those who volunteered to sacrifice their land for the SAMALEI project. He also said that the SAMALEI project would help boost tourism and local economy in the western region of the state. Naveen said the project could be completed with the blessings of Maa Samaleswari despite the obstacles created due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The work for the project started in February 2021. Amenities such as a boarding house for pilgrims, a park, a

cafeteria, new Trust Board office and a museum have come up under the project which is a part of the 5T initiative of the state government. The Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation Limited, which implemented the Heritage Corridor Project in Puri, was also assigned the transformation work under the SAMALEI project. Earlier Friday, hundreds of women participated in the Kalash Shobha Yatra. The water brought in pitchers during the yatra was used for the holy bath of the deity. Worth mentioning here that Saturday's programme at Maa Samaleswari temple came 10 days after the grand opening of the Srimandir Parikrama Prakaipa. **MORE P3**

Ancient lake sediments found on Mars

REUTERS

Los Angeles, Jan 27: NASA's rover Perseverance has gathered data confirming the existence of ancient lake sediments deposited by water that once filled a giant basin on Mars called Jerezo Crater, according to a study. The findings from ground-penetrating radar observations conducted by the robotic rover substantiate previous orbital

imagery and other data leading scientists to theorise that portions of Mars were once covered in water and may have harbored microbial life. The research, led by teams from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Oslo, was published in *Science Advances*, Friday. It was based on subsurface scans taken by the rover over several months of 2022 as it made its way across the Martian sur-



face from the crater floor onto an adjacent expanse of braided, sedimentary-like features resembling, from orbit, the river

deltas found on Earth. Soundings from the rover's RIMFAX radar instrument allowed scientists to peer underground to get a cross-sectional view of rock layers 65 feet deep, 'almost like looking at a road cut,' said UCLA planetary scientist David Paige. The findings reinforced what previous studies have long suggested - that cold, arid, lifeless Mars was once warm, wet and perhaps habitable.

Nitish likely to resign today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna/New Delhi, Jan 27: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was Saturday poised to dump the Mahagathbandhan he had joined less than 18 months ago and deal a body blow to the Opposition bloc INDIA, with a source close to him saying that the JD(U) president was likely to resign Sunday. The source, who requested anonymity, told PTI that Kumar was "likely to address a meeting of JD(U) legislators around 10 am

Sunday before going to Raj Bhavan to submit his resignation" and formation of a new government, with the BJP's support, was "expected by the evening". "Offices, including the Governor's secretariat, have been ordered to remain open Sunday in view of the likelihood of hectic activities", said the source, even as Kumar's imminent return to the BJP-led NDA fold made a rattled RJD hold a meeting of its leaders to take stock of the situation and chalk out a future course of action.

KALINGA SUPER CUP 2024

FINAL

ODISHA FC

VS

EAST BENGAL FC

7:30 PM | 28 JANUARY 2024

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FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your ability to let go things will reflect in your personal as well as your professional life. Today could be a significant day for you, and Ganesh advises you not to forget your special abilities. Make good use of them so that others too can benefit.

TAURUS
This day you will be prone to be stubborn and uncompromising in your business and professional dealings and thereby inviting unnecessary problems. Ganesh urges you to guard against this tendency and conduct yourself cordially and amiably with your colleagues and clients. The day will turn out well for executives and administrators.

GEMINI
You need to break free from the shackles of your daily routine. Trying to finish all your tasks as per your schedule will give rise to unnecessary worry. To manage your time creatively is the best way to beat the stress. Talking to your elders is a good way to calm your shot nerves, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Your social prestige will go up. People will praise your personality traits and try to emulate you. You will be a role model, too. Ganesh feels that this will be highly profitable day for you.

LEO
You will try to take up new projects to the best of your abilities today. You will be able to successfully tackle all your tasks today. You will face a little instability in your personal relationships, but will be able to solve all issues successfully, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Today you will feel monetarily much stronger than you have ever felt, says Ganesh. You will realise the need to make monetary arrangements for some unforeseen financial instability that may occur in the future. Your leadership qualities will be appreciated by people around you.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today you will use your mental competency to complete all your work on time. You may not give complete attention to your family as you will be spending time in the office or at work. Your extraordinary intelligence will be showcased at work today. Ganesh says do not forget your family which has played a huge role in your success.

SCORPIO
Be vigilant; keep your eyes and ears open for all the events happening around you, says Ganesh. Your intuition is trying to tell you something, trust it. Think and act positively, the rest would fall in place.

SAGITTARIUS
Keeping all the work aside, you may be painting the town red today. Falling in love is exciting, isn't it? However, for all those who are already in a relationship, Ganesh shows a red signal. Avoid arguments with your loved one, He suggests. Impress 'the special one' with a bouquet of red roses and make up for all the petty fights during the day.

CAPRICORN
Opportunities don't knock on the door twice. Today, you'll answer the door and utilise the opportunity to the most, predicts Ganesh. Positive results will be visible and you'll stand a chance to overtake your competitors. Even if the competition is fierce and opponents try everything to pull you down, you'll not let them win the battle. Socially, you will be very popular today.

AQUARIUS
You have changed your approach towards life from materialism to mysticism. Your friends and family members are pleasantly surprised to see this change. Later on the day, you may plan to visit a temple or other religious places, foresees Ganesh. You are on the right track, keep on going, you'll find the solace you have been seeking.

PISCES
You are striving hard to influence your destiny. You are not going to kneel down without a fight against heavy odds. With persistent efforts you will succeed in achieving your goals. While victory is a given, hard work will be necessary. In brief, today will be a challenging day for you, says Ganesh.



DREW CATFISHED ON DATING APP

Actress Drew Barrymore was deceived on a dating app. The 48-year-old actress has been single since 2016. So, she tried her luck on the dating app and was left unsure what to make of the situation when it turned out the man was actually a musician and not a footballer she was thinking.

ROSAMUND: ACTING IS THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD

Gone Girl star Rosamund Pike believes she has the 'best job in the world.' The London-born 45-year-old told *OK! Magazine*, "It was like having a recipe for life, being an actor."



Kriti navigating uncharted waters

Mumbai: After a string of standout performances including *Mimi* which won her a National Award, Kriti Sanon is once again proving her mettle by stepping into uncharted territory. Her upcoming film *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* sees the talented actress take on a groundbreaking role – that of a robot named Sifra. In doing so, Kriti not only pioneers a unique character but also becomes the first female actor in the Hindi film industry to portray a robot on the silver screen.

One notable aspect of Kriti's performance is her ability to seamlessly execute the finer nuances of a robotic persona. She showcases her dexterity by effortlessly cooking with two hands, acting a lifeless demeanor, emoting with a straight mechanical face, bending backward and several other moments that maintain the authenticity of a robot. All these only go to showcase her commitment to pushing boundaries and embracing the challenges that come with por-

traying a character as unique as a robot. In an industry where female actors often find themselves confined to stereotypical roles, Kriti's choice to play a robot speaks volumes about her versatility. It is refreshing to see an Indian actress taking on a character that breaks away from the conventional narratives, and Kriti's portrayal of Sifra is a testament to her commitment to diversifying her repertoire, which was also evident when she chose to play a surrogate mother this early in her career with *Mimi*.



Mrunal leaves netizens upset

Mumbai: After ruling TV industry for years, Mrunal Thakur forayed into movies to take the big screen by storm.

The actress has been making headlines for some shocking revelations she made during her latest interview. Speaking to an entertainment portal, when Mrunal was asked if she would work in Hindi romantic movies,

she said, "I don't know, I am not popular enough to get a love story yet. I am just tired of proving to filmmakers now. I just want it to happen organically, I am done asking them." Mrunal's statement has angered social media users, and here's what they have to say. A user commented on the video, "I was surprised when I found out Mrunal was not that popular in B-Wood. Her roles in *Sita Ramam* and *Hi Nanna* were truly exceptional." Another said, "Good for her. The biased people in Bollywood will actively try to sideline her, like they do to all talented non-nepos. Her roles in Telugu have been amazing." A third one wrote, "Mrunal is going to be a superstar in Telugu and Tamil. There's just no way that she doesn't. She's given two back to back brilliant performances and hits in Telugu cinema and that too love stories. There are too many gangs in Bollywood that will prevent her from ascending to the top," read another comment.

IFFB: Day 6 witnesses screening of 6 movies

Bhubaneswar: Saturday was the sixth day of the ongoing 13th Indian Film Festival of Bhubaneswar (IFFB), here at Odissi Research Centre.

The weekend of the event, organised by Film Society Bhubaneswar (FSB), began with the screening of two short films, *A Lullaby for Yellow Roses* by Rahul Roye and *Nothing Grows Under the Pine Trees* by Sachin Rana. The first film tells the story of a migrant working-class couple who, after losing their child to an ill-fated destiny, seeks friends in each other. *Nothing Grows Under the Pine Trees* is the story of a family beginning to fix a marriage for one of two daughters as one rejoices while the



FSB president Subrat Beura and Tiwa film director Bobby Sharma Baruah(R) during an interactive session

other suffocates under the weight of a society divided by rigid caste lines. The day continued with the screening of a Tiwa film, *Sikaisal* by Bobby Sharma Baruah, that criticises the 'babu' culture among government officials, followed by *Family* by Don Palathara and *Jhilli* by Ishaan Ghose. The Malayalam film *Family* is a story where religion, custom, and abuse collide, while *Jhilli*, a 93-minute Bengali film, explores the life of a worker in Calcutta's biggest dumpyard. Day's last movie was *The Water Station* by Abhishek Majumdar. It is an adaptation inspired by Japanese playwright Ota Shogo's childhood experiences of walking long distances with refugees as his family migrated from China to Japan.

Dev Patel new action hero on the block

Mumbai: Inspired by the legend of Lord Hanuman, Hollywood studio Universal Pictures' *Monkey Man* is set in Mumbai.

The movie features Dev Patel as a man on a quest for vengeance against the corrupt leaders who murdered his mother and continue to systemically victimise the poor and powerless.

The actor plays Kid, an anonymous young man who ekes out a meagre living in an underground fight club where, night after night, wearing a gorilla mask, he is beaten bloody by more popular fighters for cash.

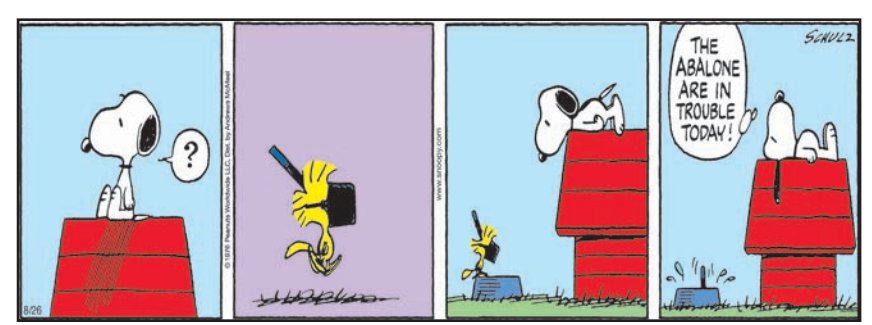
"After years of suppressed rage, Kid discovers a way to infiltrate the enclave of the city's sinister elite. As his childhood trauma boils over, his mysteriously scarred hands unleash an explosive campaign of retribution to settle the score with the men who took everything from him," the official logline read.

The film also stars popular Indian actors Sobhita Dhulipala, Vipin Sharma, Ashwini Kalsekar, Adithi Kalkunte, Sikandar Kher, Pitobash and Makarand Deshpande, along with Sharlto Copley. The trailer portrays the *Lion* actor in an action avatar.

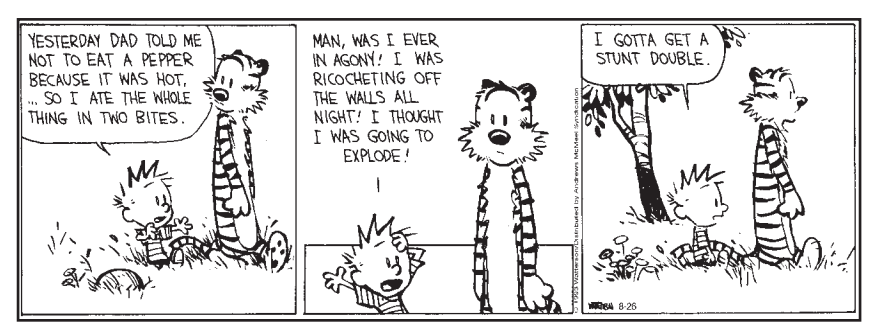
It sees him fighting in a ring, engaging in hand-to-hand combat with Kher and also taking on multiple criminals in a style reminiscent of Keanu Reeves' retired assassin from *John Wick* movies. Patel, a co-producer of the movie, has developed it from his original story. He wrote the screenplay along with Paul Angunawela and John Collee.



PEANUTS



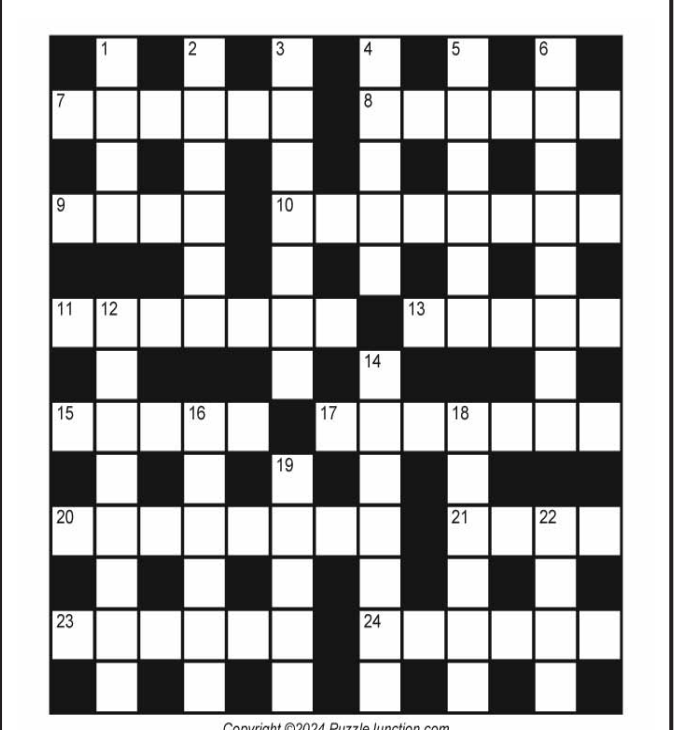
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



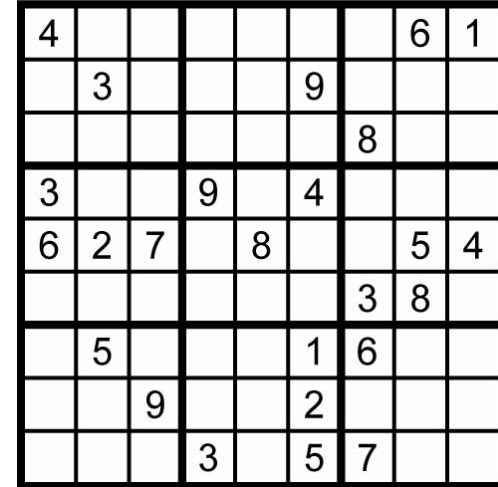
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Accolade
 - 8 Scribble
 - 9 Dugout, for one
 - 10 Leeway
 - 11 Light yellow
 - 13 Reef material
 - 15 Stringed instrument
 - 17 Squander (away)
 - 20 Turnabout is (4,4) (idiom)
 - 21 Hazard
 - 23 Golf shot
 - 24 Justification
 - 5 Vichyssoise ingredient
 - 6 Military action
 - 12 Bill of fare (1,2,5)
 - 14 Swiss cheese
 - 16 Mouselike jumping rodent
 - 18 Kind of sauce
 - 19 Swift
 - 22 Presently
- Down**
- 1 Toy that does tricks (2-2)
 - 2 Derrière
 - 3 Addiction
 - 4 Cherish

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

CHEETAH CACHE
HARRERS A LUNCH
ARRERS LUNCH
REACT LTA
MATCH ELATION
E N C
TYMPAN PIRATE
U E O N
SEDATED FEVER
S D E L I I
O I L E R S T I R R U P
C A R S C U E
K A R M A A R T I S A N

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Makeover to draw huge crowd

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 27: With Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurating the ₹200-crore Samaleswari Temple Area Management and Local Economy Initiatives (SAMALEI) Prakalpa, Saturday, the temple trust board has pinned hopes of a staggering increase in daily footfall of the devotees that may cross 20,000 on normal days.

According to sources, hundreds of devotees from the entire western Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand through the shrine for darshan of Maa Samaleswari every day. On days when special pujas are scheduled, the shrine sees footfall of over 5,000. However, the temple trust board is now anticipating a daily footfall of over 20,000 on normal days and 50,000 to 1 lakh on special days. The huge footfall of devotees will not only give further push to the tourism industry of western Odisha, it will also boost the

local economy. The redevelopment of the shrine is expected to help augment the earnings of artisans, artists and weavers through opening up of new opportunities.

CM felicitates Padma awardees
Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, on the occasion of public dedication of SAMALEI Prakalpa, felicitated seven Padma awardees who have contributed to the promotion and propagation of language, culture and heritage of western Odisha.

Poet Haladhar Nag, singer Jitendra Haripal, artisan Chaturbhuj Meher, singer Krishna Patel, composer Mitrabhanu Gountia, painter Kailash Chandra Meher and lyricist Binod Pasayat, all Padma Shri awardees, were honoured by Patnaik.



Realising the role of other artisans, artists and labourers who had put their

heart and soul to the successful transformation of Samaleswari temple, the Chief Minister rewarded and encouraged them. The personalities who were felicitated include Lingaraj Maharana, Sisir Sahu, Sarang

Meher, Somnath Sahu, Nirmal Maharana, Harihar Pradhan, Shubha Charan Behera and Santosh. Patnaik also made rounds of the Mission Shakti Cafeteria and lauded the efforts of the SHG women.

Mutt seer lauds CM's efforts

The CM felicitated Hrusikesh Das, the seer of Gopalji mutt on the occasion. Das expressed his happiness over the mega transformational initiative and thanked the CM for redeveloping the mutt without hampering its glory. Das was delighted to see his suggestions about arrangements for Goshala and guest houses for saints on mutt premises taking shape. He appreciated the arrangements made by the government for seamless darshan of the deity and the devotional ambience created in and around the shrine.

Meanwhile, 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian, MLA Snehangini Chhuria and others offered prayers at the shrine.



The view of 350-metre long and 25-metre wide Mahanadi riverfront is quite captivating. A 31-metre long robust platform has been built to perform Arati rituals. A 37-metre long and 6-metre high foot over-bridge connecting the Mahanadi Arati ghat with the 16th century shrine is a new addition under the historic SAMALEI project.

Developmental works have also been carried out on 6 acres of land on the temple premises. These include a 'Bhoga Mandap', restrooms for priests, cloak room, room for partaking prasad, Bhoga sale centre, tourist information centre and a cafeteria serving traditional Sambalpur dishes. A Parikrma corridor has been built over 1-km area outside the temple premises. Khondalite stone has been extensively used in all constructions. A parking lot for 200 four-wheelers and 20 buses will add to the convenience of motorists visiting the important Shakti Peeth. The CM went around the temple and watched all the newly built projects. He also expressed pleasure over the renovated pond, clock tower, Parikrma corridor and the enchanting Mahanadi riverfront.

Captivating riverfront



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Students pour water on each other as they take a holy bath during a ceremony organised to resemble the annual month-long Hindu religious festival of Magh Mela, held during the Hindu month of Magh, in Ahmedabad



Tri-service bands perform during rehearsal for the upcoming Beating Retreat ceremony in New Delhi



A child forms angel wings as other children romp on a court blanketed with foam, during a summer activity in Tongoy, Chile



Russian President Vladimir Putin listens to rector of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University Alexander Fedorov as he looks at a scale model of the proposed campus at Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad, Russia



Revellers march during a traditional carnival to celebrate the departing winter and forthcoming spring in the village of Hamry, Czech Republic



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inspects the Guard of Honour during Prime Minister's NCC rally, at Cariappa Ground in New Delhi



Farmers gather before blocking a highway near Ableiges, north of Paris. Protesting farmers shut down long stretches of some of France's major motorways, using their tractors to block and slow traffic and squeeze the government ever more tightly to cede to their demands that growing and rearing food should be made easier and more lucrative



French President Emmanuel Macron with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during a visit to Dargah Nizamuddin Aulia in New Delhi

national

of the day quote

Digi Yatra is purely voluntary for air passengers and personnel at airports have been directed to collect data for the application only with the consent of passengers

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

Thousands of young men are queuing up in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, especially for jobs in war-torn Israel as replacements for Palestinian workers. Let us leave aside the ethical, moral and political issues that have gained significance in light of the interim judgment of the International Court of Justice. Does this not reflect the grim unemployment situation in our own country and does it not make a mockery of claims of a booming job-creating economy?

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

'Kheho Uttar Pradesh Centre' will be established in every block of the state on the lines of the 'Kheho India Centre' being established in every district by the Government of India

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

SHORT TAKES

J&K cops bust terror module

Srinagar: Police have busted a terror module operating from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by arresting five terrorist associates in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, officials said Saturday. "The Kupwara Police has busted a terror module by arresting five terrorist associates in Karnah area of the district and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition," a police official said. Acting on credible information, police arrested a suspect who was involved in smuggling of arms and ammunition sent to this side by two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) handlers based in PoK.

Army gets first woman Subedar

New Delhi: Havildar Preeti Rajak, who is a champion trap shooter, has become the first woman to hold the rank of Subedar in the Indian Army after she was promoted Sunday. Subedar Rajak joined the Army in the Corps of Military Police in December 2022. "In a proud moment for the Indian Army as well as women of the country, today Havildar Preeti Rajak, trap shooter, was promoted to the rank of Subedar," the Army said. "Subedar Preeti Rajak is now the first woman Subedar of the Indian Army. Her achievement is an extraordinary display of Nari Shakti," it said.



The Congress position is very very clear. The Congress party members are free to have their own religion and religious beliefs, and everyone's religion is respected by the party. So I go to temples to pray, and not to political events

SHASHI THAROOR | CONGRESS MP

CONGRESS LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN

The Congress Saturday launched a 'Donate for Nyay' crowdfunding campaign for the ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra under which people will get a Rahul Gandhi-signed letter or merchandise in return for their donation



AAP MLAs offered ₹25cr to quit party: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: AAP Saturday alleged that the BJP has offered ₹25 crore each to seven of its MLAs in Delhi to quit the party while also threatening to topple the Kejriwal government.

The Delhi BJP, however, rubbished the allegation and challenged AAP to name the MLAs and the people who allegedly contacted them with the offer. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) claimed that the recording of a person who contacted one of the party MLAs was available and which will be shown later.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal posted on X that seven of his party MLAs had been contacted by "them" and warned that the AAP convener would be arrested soon. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva hit back saying, "This shows how much politically desperate Kejriwal has become. This unfounded allegation by him is an attempt to keep himself politically alive. The allegation that the BJP wants to break away MLAs of the ruling AAP, having 62 out of 70 MLAs in Delhi, shows his mental bankruptcy."



THE DELHI BJP, HOWEVER, RUBBISHED THE ALLEGATION AND CHALLENGED AAP TO NAME THE MLAs AND THE PEOPLE WHO ALLEGEDLY CONTACTED THEM WITH THE OFFER

ACCORDING TO KEJRIWAL, THE CALLERS CLAIMED THEY WERE IN CONTACT WITH 21 AAP MLAs

According to Kejriwal, the callers claimed they were in contact with 21 AAP MLAs. The MLAs were allegedly promised ₹25 crore and a BJP ticket each to contest the elections after the toppling of the Delhi government, the AAP leader charged. Kejriwal added that all the seven AAP MLAs refused to quit the party.

He also claimed that attempts were being made to get him arrested in connection with the alleged liquor scam to bring down the AAP government in Delhi. Several conspiracies were hatched in the past nine years to topple the AAP government in Delhi but they all

failed, Kejriwal said. "God and the people always supported us. This time also these people will fail in their nefarious intentions," he said. In the long post on X, Kejriwal also said, "These people know our government has done so much work for the people of Delhi. Despite all the obstacles created by them, we have accomplished so much. The people of Delhi love AAP hugely. It is not in their power to defeat AAP in the elections. So they want to topple the government through the arrest on the pretext of a fake liquor scam." At a press conference here, Delhi minister Atishi alleged

Jarange ends fast as govt accepts demands

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Jarange had launched his fast at Vashi in Navi Mumbai, a satellite city of Mumbai, Friday, in the presence of thousands of his supporters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 27: Activist Manoj Jarange Saturday called off his indefinite fast for Maratha quota after the Maharashtra government accepted his demands, with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announcing that till Marathas get reservation, they will be given all the benefits enjoyed by the OBCs.

But a draft notification issued by the government following negotiations with Jarange, stating that blood relatives of a Maratha person, who has records to show that he belongs to the agrarian Kumbi community, would also be recognised as Kumbi, evoked criticism from senior minister Chhagan Bhumal who questioned the "backdoor entry" of Marathas into the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis tried to assuage concerns of the OBCs, stating that Marathas would not get Kumbi caste certificate without any proof. Jarange had launched his fast at Vashi in Navi Mumbai, a satellite city of Mumbai, Friday, in the presence of thousands of his supporters. He had set out on a protest march from his native Antarwari Sarati village in Jalna district last Saturday. The 40-year-old activist originally

planned to stage a hunger strike at Azad Maidan in South Mumbai from January 26.

On reaching Vashi on Friday morning, the 'morcha' made an overnight halt but Jarange warned that they would enter Mumbai on Saturday for their planned protest if their demands were not met. The government then came out with a draft notification which fulfilled one of Jarange's key demands. It said that all blood relatives of a Maratha person, whose Kumbi caste records have already been found, would also be recognised as Kumbi.

Kumbi, an agrarian community, falls in the OBC category, and Jarange, who is spearheading the agitation for reservation for the Marathas since last August, has been demanding Kumbi certificates for all Marathas.

In the morning, Jarange said he was withdrawing his agitation as the government had accepted all his demands. CM Shinde reached the protest venue around 10.45 am. Jarange accepted a glass of juice offered to him by the CM and ended his fast.

Speaking on the occasion, Shinde said, "Till the Marathas get reservation, they will get all the rights and benefits enjoyed by the OBCs." The Justice (retd) Sandeep Shinde committee, set up to find Kumbi records of Marathas, will be given extension, the CM said, adding, "camps have been set up to collect affidavits from the community members and committees have been formed at the taluka level to identify and verify Kumbi lineage of Marathas."

LS polls: BJP appoints election in-charges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: The BJP Saturday appointed election in-charges and co-in-charges for 23 states and Union territories in view of the Lok Sabha polls this year.

BJP national general secretary Vinod Tawde has been made the election in-charge for Bihar, while BJP Rajya Sabha member and former Jharkhand unit chief Deepak Prakash will be the co-in-charge, according to a party statement. Tawde is the BJP's in-charge for political affairs in Bihar.

The BJP has appointed vice president Baijayant Jay Panda as the election in-charge for Uttar Pradesh and national general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam as that of Uttarakhnad. BJP national vice president and Rajya Sabha member Laxmikant Bajpai will be the election in-charge for Jharkhand, the statement said.

The appointments have been made by BJP president JP Nadda in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, it said. BJP Rajya Sabha member and former Tripura chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb has been made the election in-charge for Haryana. BJP leader Surendra Nagar will be the co-in-charge for elections in the state.

Former Bihar minister and BJP's in-charge for West Bengal Mangal Pandey has been appointed the election in-charge for the state. BJP leaders Amit Malviya and Asha Lakra will be the co-in-charges.

Nadda has appointed Mahendra Singh, an MLC in Uttar Pradesh, who has been a state minister in the past, as the BJP's election in-charge for Madhya Pradesh. Satish Upadhyay will be the co-in-charge for the state.



Artists take part in a procession during the 100th Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Natya Smmelan in Solapur

Kerala Govt gets Z+ cover after roadside standoff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram/Kollam, Jan 27: High drama played out in this Kerala district Saturday when state Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, facing SFI's black flag protest, got off his car, took on the agitating Left student wing members, sat on the roadside and hit out at the Chief Minister in what seemed to be yet another chapter in the Raj Bhavan vs the ruling LDF face-off.

Meanwhile, the Centre Saturday extended Z+ security cover to Khan, who lashed out at Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for "promoting lawlessness." A visibly irked Khan, on his way to Kottarakkara for an event,

got out of his car at Nilamel, took on the agitating members of the Students Federation of India and sat on the roadside demanding police action against the activists of the CPI-M-affiliated SFI for staging a black flag protest against him.

While the BJP threw its weight behind Khan, State General Education Minister V Sivankutty said that no Governor of any state in the country has behaved in this manner.

The Congress-led UDF on the other hand said that this was all part of the ongoing political drama of the state government and the Governor.

Accusing Vijayan of "promoting lawlessness in the state", Khan said, "as head of the state,



Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan stages a sit-in protest at a tea shop at Nilamel against the police's alleged failure in preventing black flag protests by the Students Federation of India (SFI), in Kollam district, Saturday

lawlessness shall not be tolerated". The Governor also said that the "attacks" against him were being organised "to divert attention from the Left government's failures and provoke some drastic action (from him)".

"I am not going to oblige them," he said. The Governor also termed the SFI activists as "goondas" and "daily wagers" of the Marxist veteran and the Left party. "You go and show black flag, hit the car, come back and take your payment," he said.

After sitting there for over two hours, Khan left the place only after the police showed him a copy of the FIR registered against 17 SFI activists under non-bailable provisions of the law.

Navy responds as Houthis attack British tanker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: The Indian Navy Saturday contained a fire onboard a commercial oil tanker with 22 Indian crew in the Gulf of Aden while swiftly responding to a distress call from the vessel after it was struck by a missile on the key shipping route that witnessed similar strikes in the last few weeks.

Following the Mayday call from the Marshall Islands-flagged vessel MV Marlin Luanda Friday night, the Indian Navy deployed its guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam to assist the vessel. Navy spokesperson



Commander Vivek Madhwal said in New Delhi that after six hours of battling the fire, along with the crew of MV Marlin Luanda, the Indian Naval fire-fighting team has successfully brought the blaze under control.

The missile attack on the vessel reportedly by Iran-backed Houthi militants came amid increasing global concerns over the security situation in the Red Sea as well as the Gulf of Aden. The vessel is operated by UK-based Oceanix Services.

The Houthis have been targeting commercial vessels in the Red Sea and adjoining areas since November. "Responding to the distress call from MV Marlin Luanda, INS Visakhapatnam had proceeded to provide assistance. A US and French warship also responded to the distress call," Madhwal said.

SC 'takes charge' amid tussle between 2 HC judges

Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay had accused brother judge Soumen Sen of the division bench of pandering to the interests of West Bengal's ruling party to overrule his order for a CBI probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: Seeking to resolve a piquant judicial situation, the Supreme Court Saturday decided to "take charge" and stay all proceedings in a tussle between two benches of the Calcutta High Court over institution of a CBI investigation into alleged irregularities in issuance of caste certificates to candidates aspiring for reserved category seats.

A five-judge bench of the apex court chaired by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud sat on a holiday to address the dispute where a defiant judge overruled an

order of a division bench that had quashed his direction for a CBI probe and asked the central agency to go ahead with the investigation.

Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay had accused brother judge Soumen Sen of the division bench of pandering to the interests of West Bengal's ruling party to overrule his order for a CBI probe.

The apex court, in probably an unprecedented step, taken cognisance of the unpleasant situation on Friday, constituted a five-judge bench, and decided to hold a special sitting today to resolve the issue that under-



standably caused it great discomfiture. The Supreme Court stayed all proceedings before the Calcutta High Court and execution of the orders issued by the two benches.

"We will stay further proceedings. We are issuing notice to the State of West Bengal and the original petitioner before the HC. We will list the proceeding on Monday again. We

will stay all further proceedings in the writ petition and the Letters Patent Appeal and the implementation of the single bench order referring the investigation to CBI," the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai, Surya Kant and Aniruddha Bose, said.

The top court also allowed the West Bengal government to file separately a Special Leave Petition (SLP) against Justice Gangopadhyay's order for a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities. Justice Kant joined the proceedings through video conferencing as he was out of station.

Justice Gangopadhyay had overruled the decision of a division bench of Justices Soumen Sen and Uday Kumar Ganguly which had quashed his order of registering an FIR in the case. In the course of hearing Saturday, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, ap-

pearing for the West Bengal government, said the state intended to file an appeal against Justice Gangopadhyay's order for a CBI probe.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the CBI, submitted the order of the division bench lacked jurisdiction as it stayed Justice Gangopadhyay's order without even an appeal memo having been filed.

"I am more concerned about passing of an order without an appeal memo or any impugned order in place. This court had under Article 141 prohibited the same. I am not here defending either a single judge or division bench order," Mehta said and sought permission for the CBI to file a note on the issue. "We will take this up on Monday. We have taken charge now," the bench said.

international



January 27 (Holocaust Day) calls out to us: Stay visible! Stay audible! Against antisemitism, against racism, against misanthropy — and for our democracy
OLAF SCHOLZ | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

ICON OF THE SEAS

The world's largest cruise ship, Royal Caribbean International's 'Icon of the Seas', is set for its maiden voyage Saturday, but environmental groups are concerned that the liquefied natural gas-powered vessel - and other giant cruise liners to follow - will leak harmful methane into the atmosphere



of the day quote

I can rest pretty darn assured we're not looking at war. North Korea just is not ready for it. It's not postured for it
SYDNEY SEILER | RETIRED INTELLIGENCE OFFICER FOR NORTH KOREA, US NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL



What needs to be done in Africa is to build cooperation and serious strategic relationships as equals, not predators
GIORGIA MELONI | PM, ITALY



We consider use of peaceful technologies as our given right. Such interventionist statements (France, Germany, Britain condemnation) will not make a dent in Iran's determination to advance in science and technology
NASSER KANAANI | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, IRAN



GAZA GENOCIDE

The landmark ruling by the World Court required Israel to prevent, punish any public incitements to commit genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and to preserve evidence related to any allegations of genocide there

REUTERS

The Hague, Jan 27: The World Court ordered Israel Friday to prevent acts of genocide against Palestinians and do more to help civilians, although it stopped short of ordering a ceasefire as requested by the plaintiff South Africa.

While the ruling denied Palestinian hopes of a binding order to halt the war in Gaza, it represented a legal setback for Israel, which had hoped to throw out a case brought under the genocide convention established in the ashes of the World War Two Holocaust that targeted European Jews.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) found there was a case to be heard about whether Palestinian rights were being denied in a war it said was causing grievous humanitarian harm. It also called for Palestinian armed groups to release hostages captured in the October 7 attacks on Israel that precipitated

Israel must stop: ICJ



led genocide in its offensive, begun after Hamas militants stormed into Israel killing 1,200 and kidnapping more than 240.

In reading out the decision, ICJ President Judge Joan Donoghue described the plight of Palestinians in Gaza, singling out harm to children and quoting detailed descriptions of the humanitarian emergency from UN officials.

This, she said, justified the court's decision to take emergency action to prevent irreparable harm. She also read out calls from Israeli officials for a harsh campaign, which she said justified the court's order to Israel to punish people guilty of incitement.

Israel called South Africa's allegations false and "grossly distorted". It says it has acted in self defence against a foe that attacked first, and goes to great lengths to protect civilians, blaming Hamas for operating among them, which the fighters deny.

South Africa called the court order a "decisive victory" for international rule of law and both it and the European Union said Israel must implement it immediately and in full.

The United States noted the ruling did not make a finding about genocide and said it aligned with the US view that Israel had the right to take action in accordance with international law to prevent any repeat of the October 7 attacks.

Palestinians sheltering in southern Gaza said they felt let down by the lack of a ceasefire order from the court, but also hopeful the ruling would bring accountability.

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SHORT TAKES

Cow killed for luck

Abidjan: Egyptian soccer officials have sacrificed a cow in a bid to bring the national team more luck at the Africa Cup of Nations. Team spokesman Mohamed Morad told The Associated Press on Friday the Egyptian Football Association killed the cow and distributed the meat to needy people in Cairo the day before. Egypt players reportedly sacrificed a calf during training before going on win the 2008 Africa Cup in Ghana.

Record immigrants

Washington: Arrests for illegal border crossings from Mexico reached an all-time high in December since monthly numbers have been released, authorities said Friday, exposing a growing vulnerability for President Joe Biden in his campaign for a second term. The Border Patrol tallied 249,785 arrests on the Mexican border in December, up 31 per cent from 191,112 in November and up 13 per cent from 222,018 in December 2022, the previous all-time high. Mexicans accounted for 56,236 arrests in December, while Venezuelans were second with 46,937, erasing much of the decline that followed the start of deportation flights to Venezuela in October.

PIO jailed for abuse

Singapore: An Indian-origin man was sentenced to 10 months in jail after he pleaded guilty of using criminal force to outrage the modesty of a woman and voluntarily causing hurt to another person with a dangerous weapon. Singaram Palianeapan, 61, followed a domestic worker into a lift where he molested the woman, keeping her trapped for nearly 90 seconds, according to a news report. Around a month later, while he was out on bail, Singaram punched a man at a bicycle shop three times with a metal chain wrapped around his fist. Four other similar charges were taken into consideration during sentencing by the court.

Pak seeks \$2bn loan

Islamabad: Cash-strapped Pakistan has sought financial assistance of \$2 billion from its close ally China for a year, according to a media report Saturday. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar, in a letter, has requested his Chinese Premier Li Qiang to roll over the debt as soon as the deposit time for the loan from China is completed March 23. Earlier this month, the UAE rolled over Pakistan's maturing loan of \$2 billion. Apart from the UAE, Saudi Arabia has deposited \$5 billion with the State Bank of Pakistan.

HIGH-LEVEL TALKS

China warns US not to support Taiwan freedom

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Jan 27: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan that Washington should stand by a commitment not to support independence for Taiwan, during their high-level talks in the Thai capital, the Chinese foreign ministry said Saturday.

Wang said Taiwan's recent election did not change the fact that the island is part of China and the biggest challenge in US-China relations is the issue of "Taiwan independence," according to a statement from the ministry.

US President Joe Biden has said he does not support Taiwanese independence, but US law requires a credible defense for Taiwan and for the US to treat all threats to the island as matters of "grave concern."

Wang also said both sides should use the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries this year as an opportunity to reflect on past experiences and treat each other as



equals, rather than adopting a condescending attitude.

Both sides should "be committed to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation, building a correct way for China and the US to interact," the statement quoted Wang as saying.

Wang and Sullivan met in Bangkok Friday and Saturday, with statements from both governments hailing their discussions as "candid, substantive and constructive."

The two previously met on the Mediterranean island nation of Malta and in Vienna last

year before a high-profile meeting between their country's presidents, Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, in November.

In a White House statement Saturday on the meeting, Sullivan stressed the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and in recent years has shown its displeasure at political activities in Taiwan by sending military planes and ships.

Earlier Saturday, Taiwan's defense ministry said China had sent more than 30 warplanes and a group of navy ships toward the island during a 24-hour period, including 13 warplanes that crossed the midline of the Taiwan Strait — an unofficial boundary that's considered a buffer between its territory and the mainland.

Apart from cross-strait issues, the officials also touched on other issues, including Russia's war against Ukraine, the Middle East, North Korea, the South China Sea, and Myanmar, the White House said.

Sullivan highlighted that although Washington and Beijing are in competition, both sides have to "prevent it from veering into conflict or confrontation," it added.

Both sides agreed that the two presidents would keep regular contact, provide strategic guidance on bilateral relations and promote exchanges between the U.S. and China in different areas and levels, the Chinese ministry said. Both sides will start a joint working group on anti-drug cooperation in the near future and hold the first meeting of the China-US dialogue mechanism on artificial intelligence this spring, it added.

MORE PAIN TO PALESTINIANS US, Italy halt UNRWA

UNRWA: In a new setback for stricken Palestinians, the United States said it was pausing funding to the UN aid agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) after Israel alleged that 12 UNRWA employees were involved in the Oct 7 attacks. UNRWA said it was urgently investigating and "any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror" would be held accountable. Meanwhile Italy has decided to suspend financing of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said Saturday. "The Italian government has suspended financing of the UNRWA after the atrocious attack on Israel October 7," Tajani posted on social media platform X, adding that some of Italy's allies had already taken the same decision.

South Africa called the court order a "decisive victory" for international rule of law and both it and the European Union said Israel must implement it immediately and in full.

The United States noted the ruling did not make a finding about genocide and said it aligned with the US view that Israel had the right to take action in accordance with international law to prevent any repeat of the October 7 attacks.

Palestinians sheltering in southern Gaza said they felt let down by the lack of a ceasefire order from the court, but also hopeful the ruling would bring accountability.

INDIA MATTERS

India cooperating with Canada amid tensions: Trudeau aide

OTTAWA: India is cooperating with Canada and bilateral ties are improving after tensions spiked over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia, a top Canadian official told CTV in an interview published Friday. Diplomatic relations soured after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last year said Canada was "actively pursuing credible allegations" that Indian agents were potentially linked to the June 2023 murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen. India has denied any formal government role in Nijjar's murder. "I wouldn't describe them (the Indians) as not cooperating. I think we've made advancements in that relationship," Jody Thomas, Trudeau's national security adviser, told CTV. Canada has been pressing India to cooperate in its investigation of Nijjar's killing. Last November, US authorities said they had thwarted a plot to kill a Sikh separatist in the United States. "The information that they (the Americans) revealed supported our position and our assertions with India, and India is working with us... far more closely to resolve this," Thomas told CTV. Trudeau said in December he sensed a change in New Delhi's tone with Ottawa after the US case.

Except for Susta and Kalapani, no border issue with India: Nepal

KATHMANDU: The border dispute between Nepal and India can be sorted out in a "cordial manner through dialogue" instead of making it "a big political issue" between the two countries which share history and geography and are bound together by common culture, Foreign Minister N P Saud said Saturday. Saud was speaking as a chief guest at an interaction programme organised by the Nepal-Bharat Friendship Society here on the occasion of India's 75th Republic Day which was celebrated Friday. Ties between the two countries had come under severe strain after Kathmandu published a new political map in 2020 that showed three Indian territories -- Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh -- as part of Nepal. India reacted sharply, calling it a "unilateral act" and cautioned Kathmandu that such "artificial enlargement" of territorial claims would not be acceptable to it. In June 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' vowed to resolve the boundary dispute under the spirit of friendship during the latter's visit to India.

What happened at US' first nitrogen gas execution?

CRITICS WHO HAD WORRIED THE NEW EXECUTION METHOD WOULD BE CRUEL AND EXPERIMENTAL SAID SMITH'S FINAL MOMENTS THURSDAY NIGHT PROVED THEY WERE RIGHT. IT TOOK ABOUT 22 MINUTES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Atmore, Jan 27: As witnesses including five news reporters watched through a window, Kenneth Eugene Smith, who was convicted and sentenced to die in the 1988 murder for hire slaying of Elizabeth Sennett, convulsed on a gurney as Alabama carried out the nation's first execution using nitrogen gas.

Critics who had worried the new execution method would be cruel and experimental said Smith's final moments Thursday night proved they were right. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall, however, characterized it Friday as a "textbook" execution.

Here is an eyewitness account of how it unfolded. Times, unless otherwise noted, are according

to a clock on the execution chamber wall at the William C Holman Correctional Facility.

The curtains between the viewing room and the execution chamber opened at 7:53 pm. Smith, wearing a tan prison uniform, was already strapped to the gurney and draped in a white sheet.

A blue-rimmed respirator mask covered his face from forehead to chin. It had a clear face shield and plastic tubing that appeared to connect through an opening to the adjoining control room.

FINAL WORDS
The prison warden entered the chamber, read the death warrant setting his execution date and held a microphone for Smith to speak any final words. "Tonight Alabama causes



humanity to take a step backwards," Smith began. He moved his fingers to form an "I love you" sign to family members who were also present. "I'm leaving with love, peace and light... Love all of you."

The Sennett family watched from a viewing room that was separate from the one where members of the media and Smith's attorney were seated. **THE EXECUTION IS GREENLIGHTED**

Marshall, the attorney general, gave prison officials the approval to begin the execution at 7:56 pm. That was the final

confirmation from his office that there were no court orders preventing it from going forward.

A corrections officer in the chamber approached Smith and checked the side of the mask. The Rev Jeff Hood, Smith's spiritual advisor took a few steps toward Smith, touched him on the leg and they appeared to pray.

The Department of Corrections had required Hood

to sign a waiver agreeing to stay 3 feet away from Smith's gas mask in case the hose supplying the nitrogen came loose.

THRASHING AND GASPING BREATHS
Smith began to shake and writhe violently in thrashing spasms and seizure-like movements, at about 7:58 pm. The force of his movements caused the gurney to visibly move at least once. Smith's arms pulled against the straps holding him to the gurney. He lifted his head off the gurney and then fell back.

The shaking went on for at least two minutes. Hood repeatedly made the sign of the cross toward Smith. Smith's wife, who was watching, cried out.

Smith began to take a series of deep gasping breaths, his chest rising noticeably. His breathing was no longer visible at about 8:08 pm. The corrections officer who had checked the mask before walked over to Smith and looked at him.

THE EXECUTION ENDS
The curtains were closed to the viewing room at about 8:15 pm. Alabama Corrections Commissioner John Q Hamm told reporters afterward that the nitrogen gas flowed for approximately 15 minutes. The state attorney general's office declined Friday to discuss at what time the nitrogen gas began flowing, or at what time a monitor connected to Smith during the execution showed that his heart had stopped beating. State officials said Smith was pronounced dead at 8:25 pm. Chandler was one of five media witnesses for Smith's execution by nitrogen hypoxia. She has covered approximately 15 executions in Alabama over the last two decades, including the state's first lethal injection.



of the **day** quote

All payments, all interfaces with trade need to be automated so that everything is available with the click of a button



SANJAY MALHOTRA | REVENUE SECRETARY

The government is working on reforms in the Special Economic Zone domain so that movement of goods between domestic tariff area and SEZ space is carried out smoothly without affecting the competitiveness of goods in the export markets



SUNIL BARTH WAL | COMMERCE SECRETARY

With increasing footfalls in malls and physical stores, retail consumption is likely to increase, which in turn would spur higher demand for warehousing spaces



VIJAY GANESH | MD (INDUSTRIAL & LOGISTICS SERVICES), NOLLERS

Q3 RESULTS

IGL profit shines

New Delhi: Indraprastha Gas Ltd, India's leading CNG retailer, has reported a 41 per cent jump in third quarter net profit, as the firm recorded higher sales of CNG to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households and industries. The company clocked a net profit of ₹392.07 crore in October-December - the third quarter of current fiscal that started in April 2023 - compared to ₹278.26 crore in the same period in the previous year, it said in a statement. IGL operates city gas distribution (CGD) networks across 30 districts in 11 geographical areas across four states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan.

SBI Card profit up

New Delhi: SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd has reported an 8 per cent rise in net profit to ₹549 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023. The pure-play credit card company, promoted by SBI, had posted a net profit of ₹509 crore during the corresponding period of the previous financial year. Total income grew to ₹4,742 crore during the October-December period from ₹3,656 crore in the year-ago period, SBI Card said in a regulatory filing. Total operating cost increased by 23 per cent at ₹2,426 crore for the third quarter of FY24 from ₹1,974 crore in the previous fiscal, it said. Gross non-performing assets (NPA) rose to 2.64 per cent during the quarter under review as against 2.22 per cent a year ago. Net NPA too increased to 0.96 per cent from 0.80 per cent at the end of the December quarter of the previous financial year.

Yes Bank net rises

Mumbai: Yes Bank reported a net profit of ₹231 crore for the October-December quarter of 2023-24 Saturday. The city-headquartered private sector lender had reported a post tax net profit of ₹52 crore for the year-ago period, heavily impacted by money it had to set aside following the transfer of sour loans to an asset reconstruction company. In the preceding September quarter, the bank's net profit was ₹225 crore. Its core net interest income grew 2.3 per cent to ₹1,971 crore in the reporting quarter on the back of 11.8 per cent growth in advances and a 0.10 per cent narrowing in the net interest margin at 2.4 per cent. The non-interest income grew 12.1 per cent to ₹1,195 crore. Total net income grew by 5.8 per cent to ₹3,211 crore in the third quarter of FY24 against ₹3,036 crore in the year-ago period.

INDIA GETS FIRST AI UNICORN

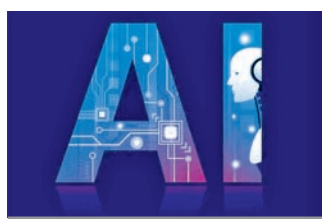
Ola's Krutrim becomes India's first AI firm to turn unicorn after \$50mn fundraise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: Ola group's AI firm Krutrim has raised \$50 million at a valuation of \$1 billion in a funding round led by Matrix Partners, the company said Friday.

This makes Krutrim the first artificial intelligence unicorn from India.

"Krutrim, India's own AI company focused on building the complete AI computing stack, announced the successful closure of its first round of funding. The funding round, led by prominent investors such as Matrix Partners India and oth-



ers, garnered an investment of \$50 million in equity at a valuation of \$1 billion," the company said. The funds raised will be instrumental in accelerating the company's mission to revolutionize the AI landscape, drive innovation, and expand its reach globally.

Krutrim unveiled its base

Every partner needs to collaborate to put India on course to becoming the third-largest economy by 2027-28, with a GDP surpassing \$5 trillion

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

power Krutrim's conversational AI assistant that claims to understand and speak multiple Indian languages fluently. Krutrim is a family of Large Language Models, including Krutrim base and Krutrim Pro which will have multimodal, larger knowledge capabilities, and many other technical advancements for inference. Krutrim last month announced that it will run an early access programme until January 2024 with a simple sign up page on the website. Additionally, Krutrim's open APIs (tool to embed it with apps) will open to all developers by February 2024.

The Indian Patent Office has granted a "record" 75,000 patents in the last 10 months and it reflects India's ability to innovate, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said. Interacting with innovators and entrepreneurs on the eve of the 75th Republic Day, the minister also said that 40,000 compliances have either been eliminated or simplified to ease the burden on entrepreneurs



Flipkart dominates e-commerce space

WITH 48% SHARE FLIPKART LEADS E-COMM MARKET WHILE MEESHO BECOMES FASTEST GROWING PLATFORM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: Walmart group firm Flipkart continues to dominate the e-commerce segment with 48 per cent market share while Softbank-backed Meesho has emerged as the fastest growing e-commerce platform in terms of user base in India, a latest report by AllianceBernstein said.

According to the report, Flipkart's user base grew 21 per cent year-on-year (YoY), Meesho accelerated at 32 per cent while Amazon lagged at 13 per cent user growth primarily due to relative premium offerings as compared to peers.

"As of FY23, Flipkart was the market leader, with a 48 per cent share in India e-commerce. Flipkart continues to grow faster than the industry.. Mobile and apparel to be the largest categories for Flipkart with around 50 per cent and 30 per cent mix. Flipkart is estimated to hold 48 per cent and 60 per cent market share in online smartphone and online fashion market respectively," the report said.

MEESHO MANIA

The report attributed growth in Meesho's market share primarily to its strategic focus Tier 2 and smaller cities due to its mass positioning, operating through a zero commission model.

"In the last 12 months, Meesho's order volume grew 43 per cent YoY with revenue growth at 54 per cent through healthy take rates, repeat customers are around 80 per cent," it said.

The report said that Meesho's around 80 per cent of the sellers are retail business owners and about 95 per cent of the selection on the platform is unbranded.

"Meesho is the fastest growing e-commerce platform in India with around 120 million average monthly active users (MAUs)," the report said.

EQUITY INFUSION

Budget support to oil firms cut

FinMin also deferred filling strategic oil reserves due to evolving trends in oil markets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

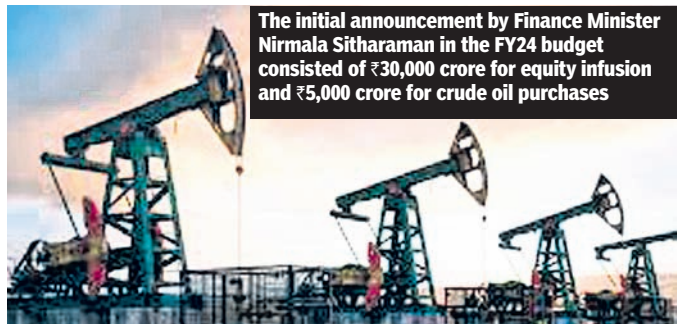
New Delhi, Jan 27: The government has halved the amount of equity infusion in state-owned fuel retailers to ₹15,000 crore for supporting their investments in energy transition projects, the finance ministry has said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had February 1 last year while presenting the annual Budget for 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024) announced equity infusion of ₹30,000 crore in Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to support the three state-owned firms' energy transition plans.

Alongside, she had also proposed ₹5,000 crore for buying crude oil to fill strategic underground storages at Mangalore in Karnataka and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh that India has built to guard against any supply disruptions. That plan has also been deferred in view of emerging trends in oil markets, the finance ministry said.

While other state-owned oil companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and GAIL (India) Ltd too have lined up billions of dollars of investment to achieve net zero carbon emissions, the equity support was limited to the three fuel retailers, who had suffered huge losses in 2022 when they held retail petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG) prices despite a spike in raw material (crude oil) prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The finance ministry in a post on X detailing the outcome of the budget announcements, in-



The initial announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the FY24 budget consisted of ₹30,000 crore for equity infusion and ₹5,000 crore for crude oil purchases

formed about the halving of equity support and deferring of filling strategic reserves.

"The Budget (for 2023-24) provides ₹35,000 crore for priority capital investments towards energy transition and net zero objectives, and energy security by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas," it said.

Of this, ₹30,000 crore was towards capital support to oil marketing companies IOC, BPCL and HPCL for green energy and net zero initiatives, and the remaining for purchase of crude oil for caverns at Mangalore and Visakhapatnam, it said.

"During the Expenditure Finance Committee meeting held on November 30, 2023, it was decided a maximum of ₹15,000 crore could be provided for equity infusion into OMCs in FY 2023-24," the finance ministry said without detailing the reasons for the decision.

Industry sources said the decision may be linked to a boost in profitability of the three firms in the current fiscal which has partly covered for the losses in the previous 2022-23 fiscal.

The board of IOC and BPCL had last year approved rights issues to raise up to ₹22,000 crore and ₹18,000 crore, respectively. The government was to partic-

ipate in the rights issue.

Sources said the two firms plan to halve the rights issue and complete them by March 31.

In case of HPCL, the government will not make any direct equity infusion as it had sold its majority stake in the company to ONGC in 2018. The infusion is likely to be through ONGC which will make the preferential issue of shares to the government.

BPCL and HPCL are targeting to end net carbon emission from their operations by 2040 and IOC is aiming for 2046 for the same.

STRATEGIC STORAGE

On plan for purchase of crude oil for strategic storage, the finance ministry said: "Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, has recommended that the proposal for filling of crude oil be deferred keeping in mind the emerging trends in oil markets."

Sources said the trimming of the equity infusion and deferral of crude oil filling may be linked to the government prioritising spending in a bid to try to limit its fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of GDP this fiscal year ending March 31.

This comes as the government faces shortfall in revenue collections particularly from sale of stake or divestment in PSUs.

Foreign fund inflow in real estate drops

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 27: The inflow of funds in Indian real estate from foreign investors fell 30 per cent to \$2.73 billion last year, but the influx jumped more than two times from domestic players to \$1.51 billion, according to real estate consultant Vestian.

According to Vestian data, the total institutional investments in real estate declined 12 per cent to \$4.3 billion in 2023, from \$4.9 billion in the previous year.

The consultant highlighted that investments from foreign funds fell 30 per cent annually because of their cautious approach, but rose 120 per cent from domestic investors.

Domestic investors pumped in \$1,511 million last year, as against \$687 million in the 2022 calendar year. However, the inflow from foreign funds stood lower at \$2,733 million last year, as against \$3,926 million in 2022. Accordingly, the share of domestic investors increased to 35 per cent in 2023 from 14 per cent in 2022.

Although investments reached a five-year low in 2023, Vestian expects a resurgence in 2024 on the back of robust performance of the Indian economy and a healthy pipeline of planned infrastructure developments.

JSP CELEBRATES 75TH REPUBLIC DAY

ANGUL: Jindal Steel & Power (JSP) celebrated the 75th Republic Day Friday at the OP Jindal School ground in Jindal Nagar. JSP's Angul location head and Executive Director (In-Charge) Pankaj Malhan unfurled the National Flag in the presence of Executive Director Damodar Mittal and other senior officials of the company. Malhan shared the message from Naveen Jindal, Chairman of JSP. In his message Jindal highlighted the major milestones of the company to make our country self-reliant and Viksit Bharat. "JSP Group has invested more than ₹1 lakh crore in the country creating employment for three lakh people," Jindal said in his message. On the occasion, students of OP Jindal School and DAV-Savitri Jindal School performed various patriotic programmes drawing applause from the audience.



PATRIOTIC FERVOUR ENGULFS PPL

PARADEEP: Paradeep Phosphates Limited celebrated the 75th Republic Day with a patriotic flavor. The plant township at Paradeep was buzzed with patriotic songs and decoration. Palanisamy Velusamy, Chief Manufacturing Officer and Unit Head unfurled the National Flag and wished the employees and their family members. In his speech he highlighted PPL's overall performance in achieving excellence in environment, safety management, production figures and expansion. Arun Kanti Acharya, Head (Security and Town Administration) lead the parade. Sumit Senapati, CGM (HR&IR) and other senior officials were present at the occasion.



Why it's important to turn on Apple's new Stolen Device Protection

THE THEFT PROTECTION UPDATE IS AVAILABLE IN IPHONE XS AND NEWER MODELS, INCLUDING SECOND AND THIRD-GENERATION SE MODELS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 27: You're in a crowded bar when a thief watches you unlock your iPhone with your passcode, then swipes it. That sinking feeling hits when you realize it's gone, along with priceless photos, important files, passwords on banking apps and other vital parts of your digital life.

Apple rolled out an update to its iOS operating system this week with a feature called Stolen Device Protection that makes it a lot harder for phone thieves to access key functions and settings. Users are being urged to turn it on immediately.

Here's how to activate the new security option and why it's so important:

HOW DO I TURN ON STOLEN DEVICE PROTECTION?

The software update for iPhones and iPads includes the essential new feature designed to foil thieves from wiping phones for resale or accessing Apple ID or other important accounts.

Stolen Device Protection is a new setting that's included with the latest iOS release, version 17.3.

Apple says the feature, buried in your iPhone's settings, adds an extra layer of security for users. It addresses a vulnerability that thieves have discovered and exploited: allowing them to lock victims out of their Apple accounts, delete their photos and other files from their iCloud accounts and empty their bank accounts by accessing passwords kept in the Keychain password manager.

Apple is introducing the feature as anecdotal evidence suggests phone thefts are surging. Stories of stolen phones abound on Reddit groups and in news articles in places from Los Angeles to London, where police say pickpocketing, "table surfing" and moped snatching are common tactics.

The Wall Street Journal reported last year how criminals watched people use their pass-



codes to gain access to their personal information after stealing their phones.

HOW DOES STOLEN DEVICE PROTECTION WORK?

Stolen Device Protection keeps track of a user's "familiar locations," such as their home or workplace, and adds extra biometric security hoops to jump through if someone tries to use the device to do certain things when it's away from those places.

It also reduces the importance of passcodes, which thieves can

steal by peering over someone's shoulder or threatening and forcing victims to hand them over, in favour of "biometric" features such as faces or fingerprints that are a lot harder to duplicate.

Let's say the bar thief that snatched your iPhone tries to erase its contents and settings to sell it. With Stolen Device Protection turned on, the phone will now require a Face ID or Touch ID scan to verify that person is the rightful owner.

And that's the only way — the new feature doesn't let someone use the passcode or any other backup method.

Other actions that will trigger this feature if it's not at a familiar place include using passwords saved in Keychain or payment methods saved in Safari, turning off Lost Mode, applying for a new Apple Card or using the iPhone to set up a new device.

There's also a second layer designed to slow down thieves trying to access critical security settings. If someone tries to, say, sign out of an Apple ID account, change the passcode or reset the phone while it's in an unfamiliar location, they'll have to authenticate using Face ID or Touch ID, wait an hour, then do a second facial or fingerprint scan.

Changing an Apple ID password, updating Apple ID security settings, adding or removing Face or Touch ID, and turning off the Find My device feature or Stolen Device Protection also will trigger this feature.

"The security delay is designed to prevent a thief from performing critical operations so that you can mark your device as lost and make sure your Apple account is secure," the company said. "When your iPhone is in a familiar location, these additional steps will not be required and you can use your device passcode like normal."

HOW DO I ACTIVATE STOLEN DEVICE PROTECTION?

It's simple — if you know where to look. First, download and update your iPhone or iPad with the latest iOS update. Then go to your settings, scroll down to "Face ID and Passcode" or "Touch ID and Passcode" and enter your passcode. Scroll down and you'll see Stolen Device Protection.

Depending on your iPhone model, you'll need to tap or toggle to turn it on or off. Make sure you've first activated two-factor authentication and Find My device for your Apple ID account, or it won't show up.

ENGLISH BATTER DEFIES HOSTS WITH GRITTY HUNDRED AS VISITORS REACH 316/6 ON DAY 3 HAVING A LEAD OF 126 RUNS

POPE FRUSTRATES INDIA



SPLENDID OUTING: England's Ollie Pope savours his Test century against India as Ravindra Jadeja looks on in Hyderabad, Saturday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Jan 27: Ollie Pope transformed the RGI Stadium into a gladiatorial fighting arena with a doughty hundred as England reached 316/6 to temporarily resist India's push for a win on the third day of the first Test here Saturday. Pope (148 batting, 208b, 17x4) and Rehan Ahmed (16 batting) were guarding England's second innings fort at close and the visitors are now 126 runs ahead of India, an unimaginable position at the dawn of the day. India were bowled out for 436 in their first innings after building a lead of 190 runs.

It was quite remarkable how Pope, who generally resembles a cat on a hot tin roof in these conditions, mustered fortitude and technical perfection to defy the Indian bowlers, who were primed to finish the match on day three itself, reducing England to 163/5. But Pope and Ben Foakes (34) milked 104 runs for the sixth wicket alliance to keep India at bay, stretching the match into the fourth day. It wasn't that Pope had complete command in the middle as spinners on occasions beat him for turn and pacers deceived him outside the off-stump. There was even a reprieve for

him on 110 when Axar Patel grassed a fairly straight chance at backward square leg off Ravindra Jadeja when the batter attempted a reverse sweep. But the 26-year-old Essex man found a way to push those distractions away from his thoughts to build on individual and the team's score. Pope, whose main source of runs were sweeps and reverse sweeps, duly completed his first Test hundred, fifth in his career, against India off 154 balls, leading England's recovery act. It was a massive effort from a batter who had just 384 runs from nine Tests against India at an average of 24 with a high-

est of 81 before this innings. However, credit should also be given to Foakes for playing a mature hand to support Pope in his venture. The Indian bowlers too looked clueless in the face of this unexpected confrontation from their rivals. However, the burgeoning stand came to a close when left-arm spinner Axar (1/69) managed to slip a low grubber past Foakes' defence to rattle his woodwork. But before that fight, England resembled a rudderless ship in a storm against a set of brilliant Indian bowlers. Pacer Jasprit Bumrah (2/29) found some relevance for himself

Rhythm, Ujjwal secure mixed team pistol gold



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, Jan 27: India picked up their first gold medal of the ISSF World Cup here Saturday when Rhytham Sangwan and Ujjwal combined to defeat the Armenian pair of Elmira Karapetyan and Benik Khlgatyan 17-7 in the 10m air pistol mixed team event. Earlier, Arjun Babuta and Sonam Uttam Maskar won silver in the 10m air rifle mixed team event. Indian shooters have so far won one gold and two silver medals here. Anuradha Devi had opened the team's account with a silver in the women's 10m air pistol Friday evening. Rhythm, who won her second consecutive World Cup mixed team gold in Cairo, and Ujjwal finished second behind the Armenian pair in qualifying with a total score of 580. The Armenians were a point ahead. The Indians, however, proved far too superior in the final, going up 7-1 very quickly as Benik had a horror outing. The closest the Armenians got was when the scores read 11-7, but Rhythm picked up in the later

stages and despite low scores all around, the Indians prevailed by a big margin in the end. In the air rifle mixed team, Arjun and Sonam had topped qualification, piping the British pair of Dean Bale and Seonaid McIntosh by a point but then went down 3-9 at the beginning of the race to 16 points final. It was soon 6-12, as whatever the Indians threw at the British pair, they would return in kind. But Arjun and Sonam held their composure as Dean showed nerves and soon it was 14-14. On match point, McIntosh showed her class and hit a 10.9 and despite solid 10s from the Indians, the British pair snatched the gold. No Indian shooter, however, was able to make the trap finals at the shotgun ranges. Zoravar Sandhu shot 118 to finish 12th in the men's trap event as Bhowneesh Mendiratta (114) and Prithviraj Tondaiman (112) finished further down. In women's trap, Rajeshwari Kumari was 13th with a score of 110 while Manisha Keer (109) and Bhavya Tripathi (106) finished 15th and 18th respectively.

Bopanna oldest GS winner among men



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Jan 27: Rohan Bopanna became only the third Indian to win a men's doubles Grand Slam title, taking the Australian Open crown with partner Matthew Ebden following a commanding win over Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori, here Saturday. At 43, Bopanna also became the oldest Grand Slam champion in men's tennis. He bettered the record of Jean-Julien Rojer who, at age of 40, had lifted the French Open men's doubles trophy in 2022 with Marcelo Arevola. In a high-quality game of tennis, second seeded Bopanna and Ebden won 7-6(7-0), 7-5 against the Italian team in the final that lasted one hour and 39 minutes. Only the iconic Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi have won Major titles for India in men's tennis while trailblazer Sania Mirza did it in women's tennis. For Bopanna it is his second Grand Slam title, having won the French Open mixed doubles trophy with Canada's Gabriela Dabrowski in 2017. Bopanna was playing his third men's doubles final at Grand Slam events, having ended runner-up at US Open twice (2013, 2023). Bopanna is already assured of becoming the new number one Monday when the ATP rankings will be updated. At 43, he will be the oldest player to be perched on top of the ranking pile. Bopanna acknowledged the

Back-to-back titles



Melbourne: World No.2 Aryna Sabalenka clinched back-to-back Australian Open titles with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Zheng Qinwen Saturday in a lopsided women's final. Sabalenka is the first woman since Victoria Azarenka in 2012 and 2013 to win back-to-back Australian Open titles, and the fifth since 2000 to win the championship here without dropping a set — a group that includes Serena Williams. Sabalenka now extended her winning streak at Melbourne Park to 14 matches.

contribution of his Australian partner Ebden and his American coach Scott Davidoff in his success story. Ebden, who had won men's doubles, too, praised the Indian. "Age truly really is not even a number for this guy. He is a champion, he is a warrior, I am forever grateful to you and your amazing team, thank you mate!" said Ebden.

Deep Grace Ekka hangs up her shoes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 27: Indian women's hockey team defender and penalty corner specialist Deep Grace Ekka on Saturday announced her international retirement, ending an illustrious career during which she represented India in two Olympic Games. "It is with immense gratitude and humility that I officially announce my retirement from International Hockey today. The journey from 2011 to 2023 has been the highlight of my life, and I am deeply honoured to have represented India at the pinnacle of the sport," Ekka said in a social media post. The 29-year-old was instrumental in India qualifying for the 2016 Rio Olympics. She was a vital cog in the team's defence line at the Tokyo Games where India finished fourth. Ekka was also a member of Indian team that won bronze in the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. She also represented the Indian teams that won medals in 2014 and 2018 Asian Games. She was also a member of the title-winning Indian teams in 2016 Women's Asian Champions Trophy and 2017 Asia Cup. Ekka began her journey in in-



ternational hockey as a 17-year-old in 2011 when she made her debut in the Four-Nation Tournament in Argentina. She then went on to play in the U18 Girls Asia Cup in Bangkok, Thailand and her strong performance led her to become a regular feature in the National Camp. "To my teammates, coaches, mentors, and the entire support staff — your presence has been nothing short of a privilege. I am grateful for your instrumental role in transforming my aspirations into reality," Ekka said. "I extend my sincere thanks to Hockey India, Hockey Association of Odisha, Odisha Government, Government of India and Sports Authority of India for their unwavering support." Ekka, hailing from Lulkidih village in Sundargarh district of Odisha, won the bronze medal as part of the Indian squad at the 2013 Women's Junior Hockey World Cup in Germany. She doubled up for both Junior and Senior squads that year, winning a bronze with the senior side at the Women's Asia Cup in 2013 and a silver at the Asian Champions Trophy in 2013. Congratulating Ekka on a glorious career, Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said: "For over a decade, Deep Grace Ekka has been a household name in women's hockey. Her success in hockey has been a huge inspi-

EVES IN FINAL

Muscat: India registered a thrilling 6-3 win over South Africa to advance to the final of the FIH Hockey5s Women's World Cup here. They will now face the Netherlands for the title Sunday. Akshata Abaso Dhekale (7th minute), Mariana Kujur (11th), Mumtaz Khan (21st), Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (23rd), Jyoti Chhatre (25th) and Ajima Kujur (26th) scored for India in the semifinal Friday night. Teshawn De La Rey (5th), captain Toni Marks (8th) and Dirkie Chamberlain (29th) were on target for South Africa.

COMFORTABLE WIN

Cape Town: The Indian men's hockey team continued their unbeaten run on the tour to South Africa, registering an easy 3-0 win over the hosts here. Captain Harmanpreet Singh (2nd minute), Abhishek (13th), and Sumit (30th) scored for the winners Friday night. India will play against the Netherlands Sunday.

ration for youngsters not only in Odisha but across the country. "She has shown great sportsmanship throughout her career and has immensely contributed to the team's growth in the past decade. On behalf of Hockey India, I wish her the very best for the future and congratulate her on her illustrious career," added the former India captain.

Jyoshna's lift from remote region to breaking NR

AGENCIES

Chennai, Jan 27: Every now and then, India is getting talents from very remote places, who are seemingly waiting for an opportunity to prosper. Such an example is Odisha's Jyoshna Sabar — a 15-year-old from Pekata village in Gajapati district. A few months ago, Commonwealth Games gold medalist weightlifter K Ravi Kumar was supposed to reach Pekata at around 11 am. However, he couldn't find his way through the mountainous forested region of Odisha near the Andhra border and it was already getting dark. The road wasn't exactly motorable either. Fortunately, he spotted a man who turned out to be Jyoshna's grandfather, and the old man guided them to Pekata, a village so remote that the nearest bus stop is a few hours by foot. Jyoshna, the daughter of a



small-time farmer father and homemaker mother, has risen from this impoverished background to become one of India's leading junior weightlifters. After winning bronze at the

World Youth Championships in Albania last year, she shattered the national snatch record on her way to the gold medal in the 40kg category Friday at the 6th Khelo India Youth Games in Chennai. Coincidentally, it was the 75th Republic Day of India. Jyoshna lifted a total of 130 kgs, including 60 kg in Snatch (a new national record) and 70 kg in Clean and Jerk. The target was to go after all three records — Snatch, Clean and Jerk and total. "Unfortunately, she failed an attempt in jerk, otherwise we would have broken jerk and total too. She is upset and repeatedly saying that she has not been able to achieve her target," said coach Ravi. A shy-natured Jyoshna is still opening up to a world that she had no idea about until a couple of years ago. "She is from a very humble and from remote background. Only in the last few months she has begun to know

more about the world when she travelled for the World Championships. She does not speak much. We treat her like a delicate flower, because if you say anything to her, she gets scared," revealed Ravi. Jyoshna's parents have become used to her winning medals, scholarships and incentives, but aren't familiar at all with her sport. "Even after their daughter won a medal at the World Championships, they don't have much idea about weightlifting. But they are proud of their daughter," Ravi explained. Jyoshna's talent was spotted by coach Ramesh Chandra Pandhi at the NGO-run Gram Vikas School, Kankia, a residential facility for underprivileged children about 90km from Pekata. She was then selected for the Tenuic High Performance Centre in Bhubaneswar, where she studies in 10th grade at the Kalinga Institute.



Earlier, Himachal bundled the hosts out for a paltry 138 in the first innings Friday after winning the toss and opting to field. Aasirwad Swain (37) was the top scorer for Odisha, while Abhishek Kumar (4/39) and senior campaigner Rishi Dhawan (3/35) shared seven wickets between them for the visitors. In response, Himachal were cruising at 80/1 at stumps on Day 1, but they lost their last five wickets in just 11 balls without adding a single run as they were bowled out for 176. They could take only 38-run lead. Rajesh Mohanty (3/56) and Biplab (3/30) shared six wickets between them, while Debabrata Pradhan (2/28) and Sunil Roul (2/44) bagged two wickets apiece.