



Saluting Our Young Diaspora, The Architects of Viksit Bharat

YOUTH PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

10.00 AM | 8th January, 2025
Janata Maidan, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

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Inauguration by

Shri Mansukh L. Mandaviya

Hon'ble Union Minister of
Youth Affairs and Sports

Dr. S. Jaishankar

Hon'ble Union Minister of
External Affairs

Shri Mohan Charan Majhi

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

Guest of Honour

Dr. Dev Pragad
CEO, Newsweek from the USA

August Presence

Shri Pabitra Margherita
Hon'ble Union Minister of State for
External Affairs

Ms. Raksha Nikhil Khadse
Hon'ble Union Minister of State for
Youth Affairs & Sports



Young members of diaspora participating in large number

Sessions

Plenary on Beyond Borders: Diaspora Youth Leadership
in a Globalized World

&

Business between MEA and Odisha

"Unraveling India's Best Kept Secret"
by Government of Odisha

Scan for
Programme Details



leisure



FLORENCE PUGH REFLECTS ON MIDSOMMAR'S IMPACT

Actress Florence Pugh has opened up about her decision to steer clear of intense film projects like Ari Aster's *Midsummer*. Despite being proud of her acclaimed performance, the star revealed that such roles have had a lasting impact on her emotional well-being.

PAMELA SHARES STORY OF MID-FLIGHT ATTACK

Pamela Anderson revealed she "almost got killed" on a plane after an angry man mistook her for someone else. During a recent podcast appearance, Anderson shared how she was attacked mid-flight by a man who mistook her for a Dixie Chick.



FORTUNE FORECAST



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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Today nostalgia tinges your mood, and this reflects in your dealings at work, where others see your softer side. You even spend carefully, seeming to be wiser regarding your savings. Ganesha sees profits for cashiers and money lenders.

TAURUS
You may find yourself compromising against your will today, predicts Ganesha. Stand strong despite things going awry instead of feeling disillusioned due to poor results. Ongoing negotiations might come to a logical end and a few important decisions are likely to be delayed due to lack of proper information.

GEMINI
A progressive day awaits you. However, you need to keep yourself in check when enjoying yourself. You will spend time with your friends and family and bond emotionally. Do not neglect your family members in the group activities that you take up, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Dame Luck will patronise you today. You will gain from land, house or building trade. You will get total support and co-operation from bosses and colleagues in the office. Ganesha indicates it as a very profitable day for you.

LEO
Unlike Dennis or Calvin, expect your sometimes haughty and mostly naughty kids to behave "just right" at the right time. It's not that children like to break rules, they just want to have some fun, reminds Ganesha. Keep this in mind while you go about arranging for special classes to improve their academic skills and performance.

VIRGO
Ganesha foretells that you will start off on a long, arduous path to success. Some tough work will play a vital role in your progress. Don't cut corners, and your labours will pay rich dividends and you will reap due rewards. Some opportunities are best left alone as they involve too much risk.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will be more conscious about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor or by purchasing expensive cosmetics. Ganesha says you will be more conscious about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor or by purchasing expensive cosmetics.

SCORPIO
Keep your guards up and be wary today, warns Ganesha. A heat seeker meant for someone else may hit you in mid-flight. But all that watchfulness will save you from embarrassment. Like those old fables, these experiences have a lesson in them, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
The rewards of hard labour will be sweet, so start off by unwinding with some fun today. Ganesha sees quality time being spent with friends and family. All in all, a fun day.

CAPRICORN
Numerous projects and building work pressure can keep you busy, but get done with whatever you have on hand, for Ganesha says the day has a host of recreational activities lined up for you. This will also be the right time to reach out to more people, and devour whatever knowledge or information they have to offer.

AQUARIUS
Optimism rules today, and you are assured of your success. You are not usually affected by others' opinions, and that is how it should be. But you must keep in mind the inconvenience your decisions may cause people. Any stress or tension will vanish in the arms of your beloved, says Ganesha.

PISCES
Confusion and uncertainty will linger like dark clouds in today's sky which will rain on your decision making parade and make it hard for you to find tangible solutions to problems. Steer clear of controversy and try to delay any important decisions and stick to your daily routine, advises Ganesha.

Kriti's emotional breakdown

MUMBAI: Kriti Sanon, who has delivered remarkable performances in several films this year, including *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Ulja Jiya, Crew*, and her debut production *Do Patti*, recently reflected on her career-defining role in the 2021 drama *Mimi*. The film, in which she portrayed a surrogate mother, not only showcased her acting prowess but also earned her a National Award and widespread acclaim.

In a recent interview, Kriti shared fond memories of her time on *Mimi*, particularly recalling the emotional toll of a powerful breakdown scene. The actress shared, "It is one of my most favorite shots of that film as an actor. In front of the mirror, when I put powder and then I throw everything, and then I go and I start tearing all the posters and all...It's a small scene but requires a lot from within."

She admitted that the depth of the emotions required for the scene pushed her limits as a performer. "Some magic happened in that shot, and for the first time in my life, even after the

'cut,' I kept crying. I never thought something like that would happen to me," she revealed.

Kriti's role in *Mimi* revolved around navigating the challenges of motherhood and personal sacrifice. Her heartfelt portrayal won her several accolades, including the Filmfare Award for Best Actress (Critics) and the National Film Award for Best Actress.

AGENCIES



MUMBAI: Actress Janhvi Kapoor has professed her love for Hollywood star and Golden Globe-winner Jennifer Coolidge.

Janhvi took to her Instagram stories section, where she shared a video of Coolidge giving an epic reply on being asked about being a woman in 2025.

In the video, Coolidge was asked: "What's exciting you most about being a woman in Hollywood in 2025?"

To which, the Hollywood star replies: "Um, you can eat whatever you want now."

Janhvi shared the video with the caption: "Love her".

It won't be wrong to say that Janhvi too is a foodie and often shares pictures

Preity's fitness mantra



MUMBAI: Actress Preity Zinta has re-defined fitness goals as she shared a video of her working out and said that one has to make themselves better, stronger and healthier.

Preity took to Instagram, where she shared a video of herself exercising in the gym. In the clip, the actress is seen doing incline crunch sit ups. She used the song *The Business* by Dutch DJ and record producer Tiesto.

The actress also shared a motivating line about not giving up and being consistent. "It doesn't matter if you are on holiday or at work, you have to make yourself better, stronger and healthier cuz if it doesn't challenge you it doesn't change you. So don't give up, be consistent & push yourself."

"There is no better love than self love. A very Happy & Healthy 2025 to all of you," she wrote as the caption.

It was in 2016, when Preity got married to Gene. The two then welcomed twins, a boy named Jai and a girl named Gia via surrogacy in 2021.

On the professional front, Preity is gearing up to make her comeback to the Hindi film industry with Rajkumar Santoshi's upcoming directorial *Lahore 1947*, where she will star alongside star Sunny Deol.

IAN5

Janhvi professes love for Coolidge

of all the delicacies she gorges from sushis to laddoos.

On the work front, Janhvi will next be seen in *Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsii Kumari* with actor Varun Dhawan, Sanaya Malhotra, Rohit Saraf and Manish Paul. The film is directed by Shashank Khaitan.

She will also be seen in *Param Sundari*, which is set to release July 25, 2025.

The film is by production house Maddock Films, directed by Tushar Jalota of *Dasvi* fame.

It centers on a love story between a North Indian played by Sidharth and a South Indian girl, filmed in Kerala.

MUMBAI: Actress Sreeleela has showcased what her life is like between jets and jetties.

Sreeleela took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a picture of herself sitting on a jetty and putting. For the caption, she wrote: "Life between jets and jetty's be like :P (sic)".

January 6, Sreeleela said that she started the year with being grateful and that it felt nice.

Sreeleela took to her Instagram, where she shared a reel video dancing on the number *Thank You God* by Dhvani Bhanushali and Shloke Lal. The actress is seen grooving along with her team members to the track, which came out in 2024.

"For Well..... Starting the year with being grateful. Felt new..... It's good to flip at times (I meant your phone)," she wrote as the caption.

The 23-year-old actress was recently seen grooving alongside Allu Arjun in the song *Kissik* from *Pushpa: The Rule*, which has reportedly made Rs. 1,208 crore in India.

IAN5

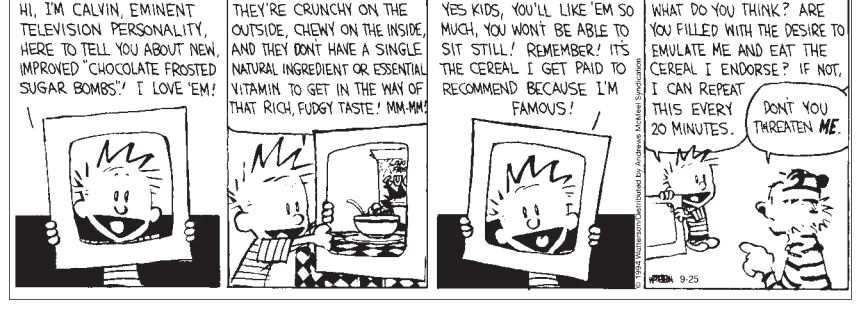
Sreeleela's Life between 'jets & jetties'



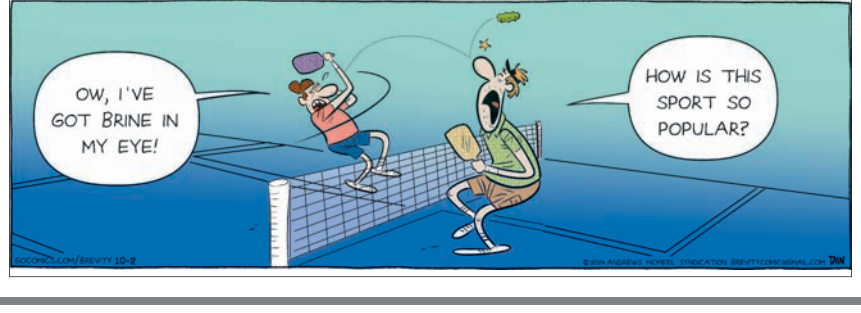
PEANUTS



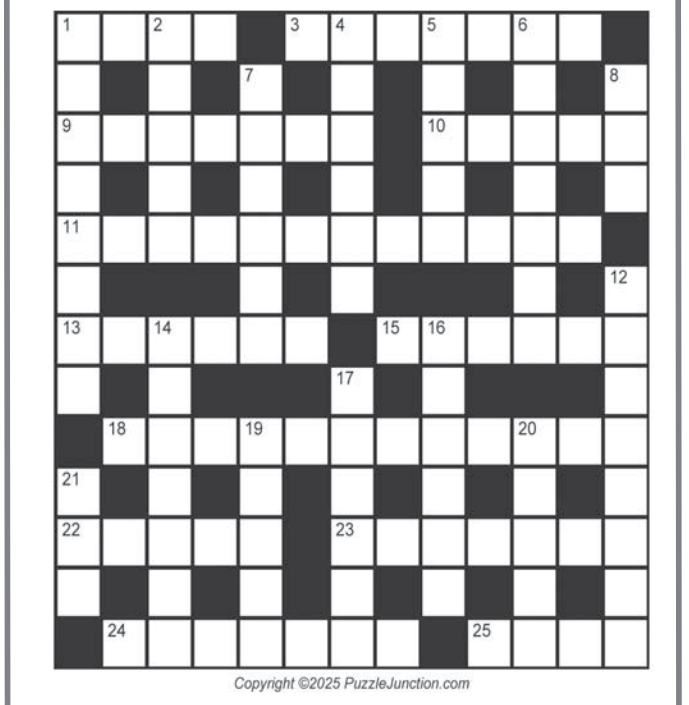
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



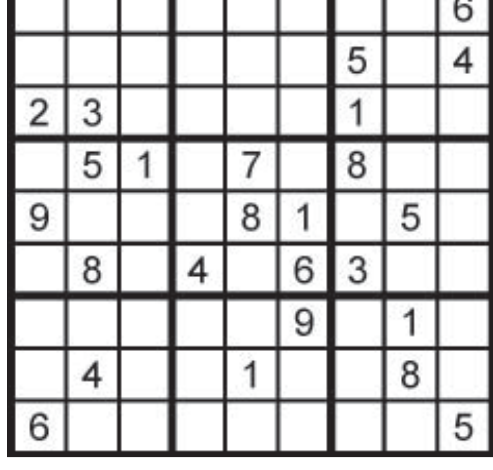
CROSSWORD



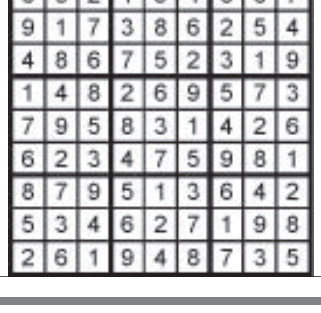
- Across**
- 1 Spare tire
 - 3 Tinned snack
 - 9 Largest of the Balearic Islands
 - 10 Greyish brown
 - 11 Pompous bore (7,5)
 - 13 Heir's concern
 - 15 Twin brother of Artemis
 - 18 Equally skilful with each hand
 - 22 Starbucks order
 - 23 Sweet sultan, for one
 - 24 Violent storm
 - 25 Clutter
 - Down**
 - 1 Ravenous
 - 2 Winter pear
 - 4 Medals, at times
 - 5 Kind of treat or oven
 - 6 On the fence
 - 7 Business hope
 - 8 Fashion line
 - 12 Ogres and such
 - 14 Bond actor Dalton
 - 16 Entree with a crust
 - 17 Jelly ingredient
 - 19 Utopian
 - 20 Bizarre
 - 21 Grimm character

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




Crop loss aid
Odisha farmers affected by unseasonal rain will receive input assistance in next five days
DOWNTOWN | P3



Trump mocks Trudeau
US President-elect Donald Trump renews his offer of making Canada the 51st state of the United States
INTERNATIONAL | P8



Growth at 4-yr low
India's economic growth rate is estimated to slip to a four-year low of 6.4 per cent in 2024-25
BUSINESS | P9



Roof leak halts match
HS Prannoy's match with Canada's Brian Yang suspended midway due to a leaking roof at Malaysia Open
SPORTS | BACK PAGE



MOBILITY BOOST: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi flags off the double-decker Hop-On-Hop-Off and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) eBus service at Mo Bus depot in Gadakana area of Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

Celebrate PBD like Diwali

The stage is all set for the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention which will kick off today in the Capital City which is hosting the event for the first time. The event, celebrating the noteworthy contributions of the Indian diaspora, promises to be a grand affair as it will witness the convergence of around 5,000 distinguished delegates, thought leaders and community members from across 50 countries. As India's connect with its expat citizens deepens, the three-day event will highlight the role of the NRIs in bolstering the nation's global presence, fostering economic ties, and promoting cultural exchange. With state government putting its best efforts in showcasing Odisha's rich historical backdrop and futuristic vision, the event is poised to leave a lasting impact in the minds of the overseas natives to foster an enduring bond with their motherland. Seeking citizens' cooperation in making the event memorable, the government has made a fervent appeal to decorate houses with bright lights and vibrant Rangolis like Diwali.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: On the eve of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention, which begins at the Janata Maidan here Wednesday, the state government Tuesday appealed to the residents of Bhubaneswar to decorate their houses as they do during Diwali celebrations with a view to make the event memorable for the visiting guests. The convention will begin

with the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas event being organised by the Odisha government in partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, officials said. PM Narendra Modi will take part in the inaugural session Thursday, while President Droupadi Murmu will preside over the valedictory session Friday. Murmu will also confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman upon members of the Indian diaspora to recognise their

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- State Museum to remain open till 9 pm every day for 3 days from today
 - 3 dance fests kick off from Tuesday till Jan 11
 - A flower show in City and a bird festival at Chilika
 - Beach festival in Puri

achievements in various fields. Trinidad and Tobago President Christine Carla Kangeloo is the chief guest of this edition, which is being held on the theme 'Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat'. She will address the convention virtually. Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said 21 destinations in Bhubaneswar, Puri and Jajpur have been selected, and the delegates would be taken to there. Over 5,000 delegates are expected to attend the convention. Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (CPV & OIA) Arun

Kumar Chatterjee said the Indian diaspora is working as the "living bridge" between the country where they stayed or worked and their motherland. On Odisha hosting the 18th edition of the convention, Chatterjee said the Centre has been focusing on the development of eastern India under the initiative of 'Purvadoy'. The PM will also remotely flag off the inaugural Pravasi Bharatiya Express, a special tourist train for the diaspora, which will depart from the Nizamuddin station in Delhi and travel to multiple destinations for three weeks. He will also inaugurate four exhibitions at the convention. The convention will have five thematic plenary sessions. The state government has lined up several programmes for the guests, Ahuja said. CM Mohan Charan Majhi urged the people to ensure that the visiting guests feel at home in Odisha, and return to their respective countries with a good experience. P3

SC BAIL FOR ASARAM

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday granted till March 31 interim bail to jailed self-styled godman Asaram in a 2013 rape case observing he had various ailments and needed treatment. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed 86-year-old Asaram not to meet his followers in a group post release. Asaram, however, would remain in jail as he faces another rape case in Jodhpur. The court said it won't consider the plea on merits, but only the medical grounds. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



HMPV: Govt puts hosps, labs on alert

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Amid the detection of cases of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) infection in Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the Odisha government Tuesday asked all medical facilities and laboratories in the state to remain prepared to tackle any exigency. After holding a high-level meeting here in the morning, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling said a small number of HMPV cases have been detected in some parts of the country so far. However, no case has been detected in Odisha so far. So, there is no need to panic, he said. "I held discussions with authorities of major medical colleges and hospitals across the state through video conferencing and directed them to remain on alert. We are prepared and ready to deal with any unforeseen situation, if it arises," he said. Premier national healthcare institutions such as AIIMS, RMR and ILS were asked to remain prepared, Mahaling said.

126 dead in Tibet quake

Beijing, Jan 7: A massive earthquake struck near one of holiest cities in southern Tibet Tuesday, killing at least 126 people and injuring 188 with tremors forcing people to rush out to the streets also in parts of Nepal and India. China Earthquake Networks Centre (CENC) said the quake was of 6.8 magnitude while the US Geological Service (USGS) put it at 7.1 magnitude. The quake jolted Dingri county in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) at 9:05 am (Beijing Time), with the epicentre located in Tsogo township, Dingri county, in the city of Xigaze. Xigaze is located 90 km north-east of Lobutse in the Khumbu Himalayan range in northeast Nepal, and is the last border town of Tibet not far from the Nepal-Tibet-Indian tri-junction touching Sikkim. Xigaze, also Shigaste, is the seat of Panchen Lama, the second most influential Buddhist monk after the Dalai Lama.



The CENC said the quake struck at a depth of 10 km. Shallow quakes cause maximum damage, and Tuesday's quake highlighted the ecologically fragile nature of the Himalayan region prone for volatile seismic activity. The quake also rattled Nepal and damaged buildings. However, there was no loss of life there. Several places in Bihar too were jolted, but there was no loss of life nor any damage to property. Footage shown by state-run Chinese TV showed people, including children, being pulled out from the rubble and being carried by stretchers to make shift medical camps. The Tsogo township, where the epicentre was located, has a population of approximately 6,900 people within a 20-km radius. There are sparsely populated 27 villages within this area while the Dingri County has a population of over 61,000 people, official data shows. The Dingri county lies on the northern slope of the Himalayas in southern Tibet. With an average altitude of 4,500 metres, it is home to the northern base camp of Mt Everest, referred in Tibet as Mount Qomolangma, the world's highest peak.

DELHI TO VOTE FEB 5, COUNTING FEB 8

New Delhi, Jan 7: All the 70 Assembly seats in Delhi will go to polls February 5 and the votes will be counted February 8, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced Tuesday. Bypolls to two Assembly constituencies -- Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh and Erode in Tamil Nadu -- will also be held according to the same schedule. The bypoll was necessitated following the election of Milkipur MLA Awadhesh Prasad to the Lok Sabha and the death of Erode MLA EVKS Elangovan. The CEC announced that bypolls in two constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir -- Budgam and Nagrota -- will take place later due to the current snowy conditions. The by-elections in West Bengal's Basirhat and Gujarat's Visavadar cannot be held till election petitions are pending, he said. The last date to file nominations is January 17 and the scrutiny of nominations will be done by January 18. Candidates will be able to withdraw their nominations till January 20,

Kumar said. "It is a single-phase election... We have deliberately kept polling on a Wednesday so more people come out to vote... like we did in Maharashtra. The entire election process will be completed by February 10," Kumar said at a press conference. Of the 70 seats in Delhi, 58 are general and 12 reserved. According to the electoral roll, Delhi has 1.55 crore voters -- 83.49 lakh men, 71.74 lakh women and 1,261 transgender persons. There are 25.89 lakh young voters, 2.08 lakh first-time voters, and 830 above the age of 100, Kumar said. More than 13,000 polling stations will be set up in Delhi, he said. In the 2020 polls, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won 62 seats and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) eight while the Congress drew a blank. Kumar also said bypolls were due in two Assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir -- Budgam and Nagrota. "Because of snow conditions, we will do it later. We have time till April and we will complete those elections before that," he said. P9



KALINGA INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY (KIIT)
Deemed to be University
(Established U/S 3 of UGC Act 1956), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Firstever Concrete Velodrome in India (250 m)

MINATI CYCLING VELODROME, KIIT & KISS

This Velodrome is named in honour of **Ms. Minati Mohapatra, the first Arjuna Awardee from Odisha (Cycling)**

Date: 8th January 2025 | Time: 4.00P.M. | Venue: KIIT & KISS Campus, Bhubaneswar



KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (KISS)
Deemed to be University
(Established U/S 3 of UGC Act 1956), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India



FIT INDIA

Inauguration by
Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya
Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Govt. of India



» KIIT & KISS is proud to have created World-Class Sports Infrastructure in multiple disciplines

» All stadiums are approved by their respective National Sports Bodies

 Cricket Stadium
  Football Stadium
  Rugby Ground
  Tennis Complex
  Indoor Volleyball Court
  Shooting Range

 Hockey Stadium
  Athletics Stadium
  Badminton Complex
  Olympic-size Swimming Pool
  KIIT-Biju Patnaik Multipurpose Indoor Stadium
  Archery Stadium

KIIT is only 27 years old as an institute (1997 - 2024) and 21 years old as a university

KISS is the World's Largest Tribal Education Institution Empowering Indigenous Children through Education

KIIT: www.kiit.ac.in | Email: kiit@kiit.ac.in
KISS: www.kiss.ac.in | Email: info@kiss.ac.in

MULTI-CRORE SCAM

IT raids on 12 locations including City apartment

Couple Hansita Abhilipsa and Anil Mohanty are accused of swindling businessmen, builders, and miners through extortion and deceit



confirmed that IT sleuths, accompanied by Infocity police gained entry into the couple's apartment by breaking the door lock.

During the search, officials seized several luxury items, including four high-end cars parked in the garage, along with crucial documents and two smartphones for further investigation.

According to sources, the couple came under suspicion after a mining executive lodged a complaint against them. The executive accused the couple of attempting to extort a large sum of money, threatening him with false legal charges when he refused to comply.

Sources from the Infocity police station revealed that the couple posed as relatives of a senior Central government bureaucrat and used this false identity to extort money from builders and miners.

They allegedly promised businessmen lucrative government tenders in exchange for bribes. The IT department is currently scrutinising the couple's bank accounts to assess the full scale of the fraudulent transactions.

Authorities are examining the bank transactions of the couple to probe any suspected involvement of financial fraud.

During the search, officials seized several luxury items, including four high-end cars along with crucial documents and two smartphones for further investigation

apartment of Hansita Abhilipsa, 38, and Anil Mohanty 40, who were arrested last year December 26 in connection with the case. A senior police official



FUN & FROLIC: People enjoy flying kites in various shapes on the inaugural day of three-day Kite Festival at the Lighthouse area on Puri Beach, Tuesday

Adivasi Mela highlights Odisha's tribal traditions

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: The third day of Adivasi Mela 2025 is drawing large crowds as 20 traditional tribal huts from various districts of Odisha highlight the diverse culture, lifestyle, and heritage of indigenous communities.

The vibrant exhibition has attracted people from all walks of life, including students, media representatives, and vloggers. Visitors have had the chance to engage with tribal



community members, who are dressed in traditional attire and share insights about their culture, festivals, cuisine, dance, and religious beliefs.

Raya Munda, a tribal representative, said, "We stand at



our individual huts from 3pm to 9pm, dressed in tribal attire, interacting with visitors. It's a chance to share the essence of our culture." Somnath, a Koya tribe member from Malkangiri, expressed pride in showcasing

his culture, stating, "It's wonderful to represent our tribe and offer a glimpse into our way of life, especially for those attending the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)."

Sunita, a visitor, shared her experience: "It's amazing to see Odisha's rich culture in such detail. I brought my 9-year-old daughter, and it's a wonderful way to explore our roots and learn about these traditions."

The Mela also features food stalls, dance performances, and a drone show. Anthropology students from Utkal University are also preparing to represent tribal communities at the PBD, further educating guests about their history and lifestyle.

11th Kalinga Literary Festival in Capital from March 21-23

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: The 11th edition of the Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) is set to be held from March 21 to 23 in Capital city, celebrating ideas, languages, and cultures from across the globe.

Over 500 writers, thinkers, visionaries, and intellectuals representing more than 25 languages are expected to participate in the three-day event.

The festival will be hosted across three venues: Mayfair Lagoon, Kala Bhoomi, and Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre. It will feature prominent speakers, including recipients of prestigious awards such as the Nobel, Booker, International Booker, and Sahitya Akademi.

Discussions will cover a wide range of topics, including cultural nationalism, female identity, crime fiction, memoirs, poetry, translation, economics, Indian languages, mythology, media, ethics, Artificial Intelligence, the global crisis, and more. One-on-one

sessions with leading experts and storytelling events will add depth to the festival's vibrant literary atmosphere.

Since its inception in 2013, the KLF has welcomed nearly 4,000 speakers and performers, along with book lovers from around the world.

This year, acclaimed writers and thinkers from countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Indonesia, Japan, the UK, Spain, France, and the USA will participate. Over 100 artists will also take part in the Kalinga Art Festival, enriching the event with visual expressions.

KLF CEO Ashok Kumar Bal said, "The festival aims to invigorate, educate, provoke, and entertain. It is a celebration of our shared heritage and a platform to explore interconnections between literature, freedom, republican values, cultural diversity, and social equity."

The festival promises to inspire audiences while showcasing the enduring relevance of ancestral wisdom in today's world.

NZP celebrates 65th Foundation Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) celebrated its 65th Foundation Day Tuesday by unveiling six new facilities to boost visitor experience and strengthen conservation efforts.

Forest, Environment, and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singhkhuntia inaugurated the additions, emphasising the state's commitment to wildlife preservation and sustainable development.

The new facilities include a Zoo Security Staff Residential Complex, a Zoo Library and Digital Hub, an upgraded bear enclosure, a Centre for Conservation, Research, and Training, a birds quarantine facility, and the Kanjia Wetlands Discovery Trail.

These enhancements aim to improve infrastructure, research capabilities, and the overall experience for visitors while promoting the zoo's role in education and wildlife conservation.

Samanta gets first-ever PIO Excellence Award

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta was honoured with the inaugural PIO Excellence Award by the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) for his exceptional contributions to education and tribal empowerment.

The award was presented during the 'PIOs Dialogue with India 2025' session, hosted by KIIT-DU as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations.

Themed "Empowering Global Connections: The Role of PIOs in Emerging India," the event brought together global dignitaries and leaders. Along with Samanta, OSD to the Prime Minister of Malaysia Shanmugan Mookkan, and JNU Professor Ajay Kumar Dubey were also recognised for their contributions.

A key highlight of the event was the proposal to organise an international cultural festival for the Indian diaspora every four years in India, celebrating the heritage and achievements



of People of Indian Origin (PIO) and strengthening their ties with India. Additionally, the GOPIO International Chair was launched at KIIT-DU to promote research on the Indian diaspora and document their global contributions.

Expressing gratitude, Samanta said, "It is an honour for KIIT and KISS to host this prestigious event. From 12 students, KIIT has grown to over 80,000, and KISS has become a revolution in the country. I hope our distinguished guests are inspired by this progress." GOPIO International Sec-

retary General A Ravendiran Arjuna praised KIIT's growth, linking the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' origins to PIO contributions under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership. Reflecting on Odisha's historical significance, he called for preserving the legacy of Kalinga's traders and businessmen.

GOPIO leaders emphasised the importance of cultural preservation and engaging younger generations to strengthen global connections. The event concluded with KIIT-DU Pro Vice-Chancellor Debasish Bandopadhyay delivering a vote of thanks.

2.4 MILLION INDIANS EMPOWERED WITH AI SKILLS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 7: Microsoft Tuesday said it has empowered 2.4 million Indians, including civil servants, college students and people with disabilities, with artificial intelligence (AI) skills.

Last year, Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella launched an India-specific initiative to equip two million individuals with AI skills by 2025.

"Our aim is to not only enhance employability but also bridge the digital divide and create a more inclusive future

for every Indian," Puneet Chandok, President of Microsoft India and South India, said in a statement.

Those involved in the programme said as the use of AI tools spreads across the workforce, those who don't learn how to use them risk falling behind.

"Once upon a time, humans discovered fire and were afraid of it. But then we learned to channelise it and put it to good use. Similarly, AI needs to be used wisely for the benefit of humanity, rather than letting us be devoured



by it," said Neha Jain, Special Secretary, IT and Electronics, UP government.

Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Nadella, saying he was glad to know about

the tech giant's ambitious expansion and investment plans in the country.

Nadella thanked the Prime Minister for his leadership, saying the tech company is excited to build on "our commitment to making India AI-first and work together on our continued expansion in the country to ensure every Indian benefits from this AI platform shift".

Microsoft's AI tools, such as Copilot, TechSaksham and Seeing AI, have profoundly transformed people's lives through AI skilling initiatives in the country.

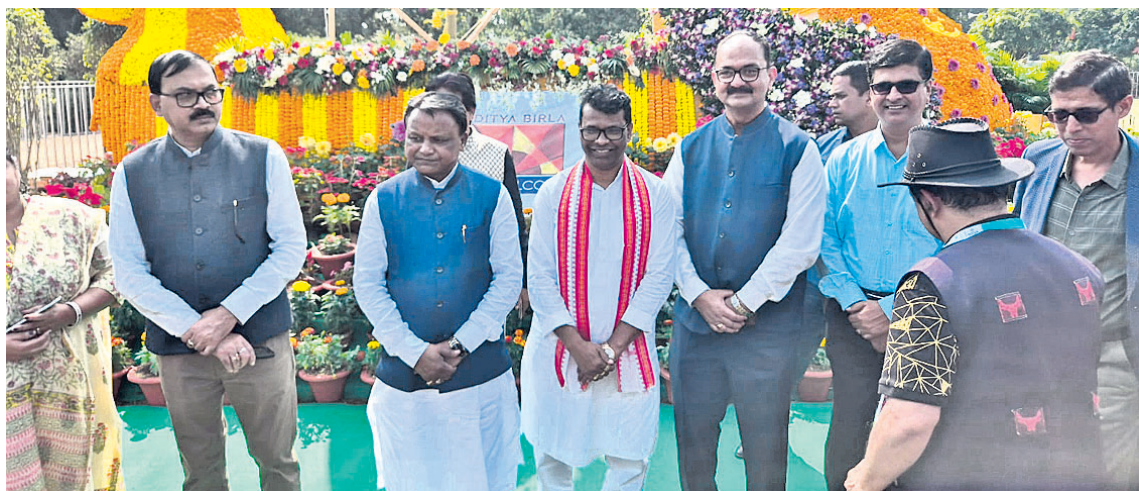
For example, Raghendra Pratap Singh, 33 who is a review officer in the Uttar Pradesh government and analyses new policies then helps disseminate them to the local officers responsible for carrying them out, has found these AI tools handy.

A few months ago, Singh attended a one-day digital skills course run by Microsoft together with the state IT agency. There, he learned tools like Microsoft Copilot and Copilot for Word, PowerPoint and Excel as well as OpenAI's ChatGPT.

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STAGE SET FOR 18TH PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Additional Chief Secretary Satyabrata Sahu visit flower stall of Hindalco Industries Limited at RPRC, Bhubaneswar, Tuesday. Hindalco's President (Corporate Affairs) Ardhendu Mohapatra received the dignitaries during opening of the stall organised to mark 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention



Artistes perform during Rajarani Sangeet Utsav in the City



An artiste performs during Mukteswar Odissi dance festival in Old Town area of Bhubaneswar

PBD opportunity for Odisha to showcase potential: Jaishankar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar Tuesday said that the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) event is an opportunity for Odisha to showcase its rich cultural heritage and tradition before the world.

PBD, a three-day event beginning here Wednesday, is celebrated once in every two years. It provides an important platform to connect and engage with the Indian diaspora and enable them to interact with each other.

Amid tight security, Jaishankar visited the famous 13th-century Sun Temple at Konark and the Srimandir at Puri.

"Delighted to visit the magnificent Sun Temple in Konark today. A testimony to our heritage and creativity, Konark is a must-visit for all our Pravasi friends visiting Bhubaneswar over the coming days," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

He also posted two pictures in the backdrop of the famous

Konark wheels.

Later, the minister visited the 12th-century Srimandir in Puri and offered prayers to the deities of Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath.

He spent around 40 minutes inside the temple and interacted with the servitors regarding the temple and the deities.

"I am blessed to have 'darshan' of Lord Jagannath before beginning of the PBD event in Bhubaneswar. The PBD is being organised in Odisha for the first time. We have made all attempts along with the Odisha government. This is an opportunity for Odisha to showcase its potential before the entire world and get focus in the global map," he said.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bhubaneswar on the occasion of the PBD.

He said the delegates coming to attend the PBD event may visit Srimandir in Puri.

Non-resident Indians have started arriving in Bhubaneswar to attend the PBD.



Tight security at Janata Maidan, the venue of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, in Bhubaneswar



NRIs being welcomed upon their arrival in the City

PICS: MANORANJAN MISHRA

Crop loss aid in 5 days: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: The state government Tuesday said all the farmers affected by the unseasonal rain will receive their input assistance within the next five days as the Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) department has already disbursed around Rs 292 crore to the district Collectors.

R&DM Minister Suresh Pujari said that the process of disbursement of financial assistance to the

affected farmers has already started.

"In some places, the people have received money as per the provision of the Odisha Relief Code," the minister said.

He said the farmers who have lost 33 per cent of their crop or more due to the unseasonal rain between December 22 and 28 will get assistance at the rate of Rs 15,000 per hectare for irrigated land and Rs 7,500 for non-irrigated land.

Pujari said that the estima-

tion of crops damaged was done by district Collectors based on which assistance is being given.

Farmers in 14 districts have suffered losses due to the unseasonal rain, the minister said, adding that reports of partial loss to farmland and crops were reported from two more districts.

Over 6.66 lakh farmers have been affected by the unseasonal rain, which caused damage to crops over 2.26 lakh hectares of area.

State added 2,10,904 new voters: CEO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Odisha has added 2,10,904 new electors, taking the total number of voters to 3,40,72,744, according to the Photo Electoral Roll Special Summary Revision (SSR) 2025 published by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Tuesday.

"Of the 3,40,72,744 electors, 1,72,05,150 are male voters (50.5 per cent), 1,68,64,160 female voters (49.49 per cent) and 3,434 transgender voters," the CEO said. There has been a significant rise in young voters (18-19 years) with the count reaching 5,99,555, 1.76 per cent of the total electorate. The gender ratio has shown an improvement, from 976 in draft roll to 980 in the final roll, signalling enhanced gender inclusivity in the final electoral roll.

The roll now includes 5,22,364 persons with disability (PWD) electors (1.53 per cent), underscoring Odisha's commitment to ensuring accessibility and participation for all. There are 3,38,516 (0.99 per cent) voters aged 85 and above.

The CEO said the final publication of the Photo Electoral Roll SSR 2025 is a testament to the collective effort of the election machinery and the enthusiastic participation of citizens.

"We are particularly encouraged by the increased representation of young voters and the improvement in gender ratio. These numbers reflect Odisha's progress towards a more inclusive and representative democracy."

63RD FOUNDATION DAY

People have unwavering faith in ITBP: Minister



POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, Jan 7: People of India have unwavering faith in the nation's security as long as the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) is stationed at the borders, said Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, while addressing the 63rd foundation day of ITBP at Taratua ITBP 41st Battalion Camp in this district Tuesday.

Rai addressed the gathering as the chief guest and paid tributes to the bravery and sacrifices of the ITBP personnel. "ITBP has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the nation, particularly along the Indo-Tibetan border, and has earned the trust of the Prime Minister, the hopes of the Home Minister, and the pride of the people," Rai said. The sacrifices, dedication, and courage of the ITBP personnel are being recognised across the country, he added. In keeping with India's long-standing tradition, martyrs who have laid down their lives for the country are honoured,

with ITBP naming 164 roads and parks after these brave souls. The families of martyrs also receive all necessary support and facilities.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has lauded ITBP for its remarkable work in challenging terrains, especially in extreme cold conditions at altitudes of 13,000 feet, Rai said. The personnel's commitment to protecting the nation's borders is an enduring testament to their patriotism and resolve.

Since the formation of ITBP in 1962, the force has provided exemplary service in safeguarding the China border and beyond. ITBP has been instrumental in countering Naxal activities in Chhattisgarh and fighting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Their efforts to improve the lives of local communities in Chhattisgarh by providing employment opportunities and promoting self-reliance through initiatives in fisheries, agriculture, and other sectors have been highly commendable.

During the ceremony, several ITBP personnel were honoured with the President's Police Medal, including SI Sanjay Kumar Gunjal, DIG Ashwin Kumar, and Ranveer Singh. Recognition was also given to 15th Battalion CEO VN Thapa, 56th Battalion CEO Dharmendra Kumar, and 38th Battalion CEO Saman Bahadur Singh for excellence in border security, cleanliness, and regional language initiatives.



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“
The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught.
”

SRI AUROBINDO



Trudeau Trumped

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation 6 January as leader of the Liberal Party, effectively ending nearly a decade in power. He will stay on as caretaker PM until a new leader of the party is chosen. The development was on the cards as Trudeau had been besieged with criticism from his own party leaders for his failure to deliver, while US President-elect Donald Trump's threat of imposing a massive tariff on Canadian goods seemed to have proved to be the proverbial last straw.

A new party leader will be entrusted with the uphill task of shoring up support for Liberals ahead of a general election that must be held this year. Trudeau's Liberals are trailing badly in the polls to the Opposition Conservatives and only narrowly survived three non-confidence votes in Parliament late last year.

Trudeau's fate became sealed after all three Opposition parties had said they would support a vote to topple his minority government. But Trudeau's situation appeared more and more precarious with members of his own party increasingly clamouring for his resignation. No wonder that in his parting words he admitted "internal battles" meaning that he "cannot be the best option" in the next election. Known to be a fighter against odds, Trudeau, however, found the going extremely tough this time as his political moves backfired and he became mired in personal scandals, including ill-gotten money for his family through quid pro quo.

The Parliament was to resume 27 January, but Trudeau announced it would remain suspended until 24 March. The intent of the move is to allow his Liberal Party to find a new leader and try to influence the electorate with a fresh face.

There is no denying the fact that Trudeau had taken many laudable steps as a promising liberal leader. He was instrumental in setting up a \$10-a-day child care, providing better dental care and a national climate plan. However, Conservative leader Pierre Poillievre, who is ambitious to capture power, said nothing has really changed under Trudeau.

Trudeau came to power in 2015 after 10 years of Conservative Party rule, and had initially been hailed for returning the country to its liberal past. He was once the rising star of global progressive politics, but ended up being a discredited leader with his approval ratings dropping to a new low of only 33 per cent late last year. He became deeply unpopular with voters in recent years over a raft of issues, including rise in cost of food, housing, and immigration. Trudeau's political fortunes nosedived following the surprise resignation in December, 2024 of his former finance minister and deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland. In a scathing resignation letter, Freeland accused Trudeau of focusing on "costly political gimmicks" to appease voters, including a costly Christmas tax holiday. She felt Trudeau needed to steady Canada's finances ahead of a possible trade war with the US.

Donald Trump, who will assume charge as US President later this month, has promised to impose a 25 per cent tariff on all Canadian imports, a measure that could prove devastating to Canada's economy.

Trump and his new lieutenant Elon Musk are elated over the development. The President-elect has gone to the length of saying that Canada should merge with the US in which case its economic ills will be remedied and the defence system strengthened enough to withstand attacks from China or Russia.

This is undoubtedly all rhetoric. But, it is true that Trudeau's time is out as he became tactless on many issues, including his personal life in which he divorced his wife and started living with a male partner. It is to be seen how his successor takes up the challenges facing Canada. The Conservatives, with the likely support from Trump, may succeed.

WISDOM CORNER

- Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it. **VIKTOR E. FRANKL**
- There are two kinds of teachers: the kind that fill you with so much quail shot that you can't move, and the kind that just gives you a little prod behind and you jump to the skies. **ROBERT FROST**
- No man ever got very high by pulling other people down. The intelligent merchant does not knock his competitors. The sensible worker does not knock those who work with him. Don't knock your friends. Don't knock your enemies. Don't knock yourself. **ALFRED LORD TENNYSON**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

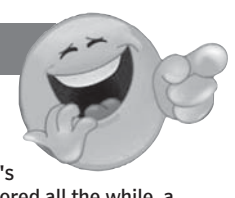
- 1790:** U.S. President George Washington delivered the first State of the Union, the annual address to Congress.
- 1889:** Computer pioneer Herman Hollerith patents his punched card calculator. His invention paved the way for modern automatic computation.
- 1912:** The African National Congress (ANC) is founded. The ANC, whose most famous member is Nelson Mandela, played an important role in the fight against the South African apartheid regime and it is now the country's governing political party.
- 1918:** U.S. President Woodrow Wilson announced his Fourteen Points, an outline for peace following World War I.
- 1942:** English theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who developed a theory of exploding black holes that drew upon both relativity theory and quantum mechanics, was born.
- 1959:** Charles de Gaulle becomes president of France. His right-wing political ideology, Gaullism, still influences French politics today.

LOL

Two angry neighbours

Two neighbours had been fighting each other for nigh on four decades. Bob buys a Great Dane and teaches it to use the bathroom in Bill's yard. For one whole year Bill ignores the dog. So Bob then buys a cow and teaches it to use the bathroom in Bill's yard.

After about a year and a half of Bob's cow crapping in Bill's yard; being ignored all the while, a semi pulls up in front of Bill's house. Bob runs over and demands to know what's in the 18-wheeler. "My new pet elephant," Bill replies solemnly.



FOCUS PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

WARM WELCOME

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is all set to begin in the capital city of our State of Odisha. A large number of NRIs and Indian diaspora members from nook and corner of the globe have arrived in the temple city of Bhubaneswar. We are thrilled by the information coming from the Ministry of External Affairs that there is strong enthusiasm among the NRIs and Indian diaspora members to participate in the event.



Mohan Charan Majhi

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SUCH A GRAND, LARGE, AND AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME IS BEING ORGANISED IN AN EASTERN INDIAN STATE

We have left no stone unturned to extend royal hospitality to the guests. Though the biennial event is being organized by the Ministry of External Affairs, I on behalf of the people of the State, extend my gratitude to the Honourable Prime Minister as the convention is being held in our State capital. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jualoram, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Railways, Information and Broadcasting, Electronics and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw will attend the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention.

According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an ardent devotee of Mahaprabhu Sri Jagannath, the more India shines and develops the more will be the influence, image and prestige of NRIs and Persons of Indian Origin abroad. The vision of Vikshit Bharat will be realized when they will have an emotional attachment with their motherland. They are hardworking and rich in knowledge, skills and technology having financial flexibility. Their participation in the upcoming convention will be helpful in building a Vikshit Bharat which will be a game changer. They will not only invest in India but also extend all possible support as brand ambassadors.

More than 3.54 crore Indians living abroad will spread the glorious Indian culture through their conduct and practice thereby presenting India as the Vishwa Guru. As a result, a developed and prosperous India



More than 3.54 crore Indians living abroad will spread the glorious Indian culture through their conduct and practice thereby presenting India as the Vishwa Guru

will give them security and a life, to live with dignity in the foreign land.

In the run up to the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, various events such as Patha Utsav, Ekamra Utsav, Adivasi Mela, flower exhibitions are being organized in different parts of the State capital. Efforts are being made to exhibit Odisha's rich art and heritage. Raja Rani Music Festival, Mukteshwar Dance Festival, Odissi Dance, and various folk dances will also be organized. Sand art exhibition and beach festival will be organized in Puri.

I am happy that all stakeholders have put best of their efforts to make Bhubaneswar and its periphery beautiful. The capital city has been decked up like a newlywed bride. Arrangements are being made to take guests to about 31 tourist spots in various cities like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, and Konark.

A pavilion of Odisha will be set up at Janata Maidan, showcasing the Jagannath culture, historic Baliyatra, the Kalinga War, the transformation of emperor Ashoka from Chandashoka to Dharmashoka. Besides, a digital exhibition will also be held. Ten modern buses and five double-decker buses are being arranged for the movement of guests. More than 200 foreign journalists, YouTubers and bloggers from seven countries will attend the event.

Hence, I appeal to all the citizens of the State to make the event a successful one by adhering to the rules and regulations, discipline and cleanliness activ-

ities in the city. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas provides an opportunity to connect NRIs and Indian diaspora members with their very own culture, heritage, tradition and works done by their forefathers. We consider this a unique opportunity. This is the first time such a grand, large, and ambitious programme is being organised in an eastern Indian State. This is an opportunity which has become possible due to the foresight of the Prime Minister and his commitment towards the development of Odisha.

Our Prime Minister is such a towering personality that when he posted his pictures of sitting and strolling along unspoiled beaches of Lakshadweep, on Arabian seashore, on social media 'X', Indian tourists stopped going to the Maldives and rushed to Lakshadweep for holiday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken India's culture, traditions, heritage, art, and language to new heights by promoting them at the international level. Under his leadership, India has created a unique identity in every field. India is ready to lead the world.

At a time when the nation is embarking on a journey to build a developed India, we, the people of Odisha, have taken a solemn resolve to build a developed Odisha. At the same time, we face many challenges. We are convinced that the Prime Minister has always been a friend of Odisha to take us in the process of development hand in hand. We realized his

great friendship when, during his visit to Indonesia, he mentioned the Baliyatra of Cuttack.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself explained the features and characteristics of the Konark Chakra to the world leaders at the G20 summit.

The Prime Minister is emphasizing on the development of Purvodaya, in which Odisha will be at the forefront. Purvodaya is the Prime Minister's visionary scheme for the rapid development of Eastern India including Odisha under the Purvodaya Mission. Its main focus is the development of Odisha. Without the development of Odisha in the Purvodaya, as envisioned by the Prime Minister, the country's overall development can't be achieved. In the States of Eastern India, special attention is being paid to how to create skilled manpower along with infrastructure development.

Born in a poor family, Modi, through his perseverance and patriotism, has asserted himself as a popular Prime Minister. Had he not been poor, he would not have been able to show such promptness by ensuring opening of bank accounts in the name of everyone, giving toilets and clean drinking water to every household. He has visited Odisha on several occasions and made night halts. The simplicity, commitment and hard work of the world's most popular leader Modi ji has inspired everyone. He will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention in Bhubaneswar. The inaugural event may be a formality, but his gracious presence will influence all the countrymen, not just the Indian diaspora.

I would urge the people of the state to celebrate this event as a festival, and I would urge them to be imbued with the mantra of 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. Once the NRIs return to their workplaces after receiving the best hospitality, Odisha will definitely benefit from it. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and I strongly believe this. I once again welcome all the guests to the land of Mahaprabhu Sri Jagannath.

The writer is Chief Minister, Odisha.

IN JEST THIS

Sharing seat with bedbugs on a flight



BEDBUGS ENJOY FLYING – AND NOT JUST ON TURKISH AIRLINES. SOMETIMES THEY EVEN FLY BUSINESS CLASS

Turkish Airlines got some unexpected publicity on New Year's Day, a prominent article in the New York Times about the free bites on flights that the airline is offering, courtesy of a dedicated team of bedbugs. According to the article, passengers on several Turkish Airlines flights have complained in recent months about bedbugs, spotting some crawling on seats and blankets, and others falling from the ceiling. A Malaysia-based science teacher, Kristin Bourgeois, recently flew from Washington D.C. to Istanbul and ended up with 13 bite marks on her body, none of which could be blamed on the man sitting next to her. "Before departure, I noticed a bug crawling on my blanket," she told The Times. "When I found another on the pillow, I realized it was a bedbug."

Another passenger, Patience Titcombe, encountered bedbugs during a Turkish Airlines flight from Johannesburg to Istanbul. "I had to strip down at the airport and change clothes because I have kids — what if I brought

bedbugs home?" Titcombe said. Imagine having to strip down at the airport without even going through security. Perhaps we need to have a multipurpose checkpoint. Before flying: check for weapons. After flying: check for bedbugs. I don't know about you, but I found this news about bedbugs so unsettling, I immediately made a call to my travel agent, Seema.

Me: "Please don't ever book me on a Turkish Airlines flight!" Seema: "Why not? They are one of the cheapest airlines and you like to fly cheap." Me: "I like to fly economically. That's why I'm always in the economy seats." Seema: "As I said, you like to fly cheap. Did you know that you can fly from New York City to New Delhi roundtrip for only 900 dollars on Turkish Airlines?" Me: "Only 900? Will I get my own seat?"

Seema: "You might have to share, but it won't be with humans." Me: "Dogs and cats? I'm allergic to cats!" Seema: "Don't worry, no

cats. But there might be some bedbugs sharing your seat."

Me: "Bedbugs! That's the reason I don't want to fly Turkish Airlines! I hate being bitten. Put me on Etihad or Lufthansa."

Seema: "Etihad? You'll still be bitten."

Me: "I'd rather be bitten in the wallet than everywhere else."

Seema: "Bedbugs aren't so bad, you know. There is no evidence of bedbugs ever spreading any diseases, nor has there been a single recorded case of bedbugs trying to hijack a plane. You'll still land safely, no matter how many bedbugs are on your flight."

Me: "Will I receive any compensation if I get bitten?"

Seema: "Yes, just show your bites to a ticket agent and you will get 1% off your next flight for each bite. Hundred bites and you fly free."

Me: "Good deal. With my savings, I can get myself a T-shirt that says, 'Turkish Airlines Bites.'"

After speaking to Seema, I

decided to do a little more research. I called Professor John Thurman, an entomologist who specializes in flying insects.

Me: "Professor Thurman, how long have bedbugs been flying?"

Thurman: "For longer than you think. For my research, I zoomed in on an old photo of the Wright Brothers and guess what I saw: several bite marks on Wilbur's neck. Bedbugs enjoy flying — and not just on Turkish Airlines. Sometimes they even fly business class. Several years ago, business class passengers on British Airways and Air India were bitten."

Me: "Oh no, not Air India too!"

Thurman: "Don't worry, Air India took care of the problem. They fumigated their planes. Airlines need to do that occasionally. It's not their fault, really. Bedbugs sneak onto planes inside passengers' belongings. And once they're on board, they stick around, enjoying the atmosphere and the many opportunities to bite. So many choices for them."

Me: "Who said airlines don't serve free meals anymore?"

Letters TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 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



Unilateral decision

Sir, This refers to "Dam on Brahmaputra: China moves forward," Orissa POST, Jan 7. China has unilaterally decided to build the world's largest infrastructure project across the Brahmaputra River, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in China. Originating in the Himalayas, the river flows through China, enters India, and eventually meets the Bay of Bengal. China's plan to build a \$137-billion dam on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo in the ecologically fragile Tibetan plateau is certain to have tremendous implications for millions of people in the lower riparian states of India and Bangladesh. India and Bangladesh have as much stake in the river as China does. Millions of people in the Northeast India, especially in Assam, depend on the river for their daily sustenance and economic activities. Add to this, the dam will be situated in an earthquake-prone area, raising concerns not only for India and Bangladesh but also for China, which is investing such a colossal amount in a project at a time when dams are being decommissioned globally. Ideally, China should have consulted the riparian states in India and Bangladesh to alleviate their concerns. Yet, true to its nature, it is intent on imposing its will, disregarding the fears that this project may ultimately prove more harmful than beneficial to humanity and the environment. **N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE**

No need to panic

Sir, A few cases of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) have been reported from parts of India. While the common man is worried, there is absolutely no need to panic because the infection is similar to influenza-like infections that are commonly seen in India in early summer and winter. Since COVID 19 originated from China and that the first cases of HMPV have come from China, people are worried. That being said, children below the age of 5, pregnant women, elderly and the immune-compromised are susceptible to HMPV. Excessive self-medication may worsen the symptoms; there is no vaccine for HMPV. Respiratory infection experts say that HMPV infection has been present across the globe for more than two decades and it is only that specific cases are being detected now because more and more testing is being done. COVID-19 has taught a telling lesson to the world: personal hygiene cannot be compromised at any cost. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

Sulia Jatra sees mass sacrifice of animals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Jan 7: The roads of Khairaguda and Kumuria in Kulpada panchayat of Deogaon block in this district turned red as thousands of animals were sacrificed on the occasion of traditional Sulia Jatra Tuesday.

The festival held on the first Tuesday of the lunar fortnight (Sukla Paksha) of the Hindu month 'Pousha' drew lakhs of people from Subarnapur, Kalahandi, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Nuapada, Boudh, Kandhamal and other districts as well as from neighbouring Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

The festival is named after god Sulia of tribal communities. The Sulia Pitha is an open place situated on a hilltop surrounded by a picturesque landscape and a large water reservoir.

The devotees thronged the main Sulia shrine at Badakhala in Khairaguda village, Sanakhala at Kumuria as well as at Mirdhapali and other places of the district to pay obeisance to the deity by sacrificing animals like poultry, goats, sheep, ducks, pigeons and buffaloes. Prior to Sulia Jatra, a secret ritual 'Nishi Puja' was held before the deity late Monday night.

The Baruas, possessed by the deity walk to the Badakhala in a procession carrying the offerings to the beats of traditional musical instruments like



Dholaks and Nishans. Later, the head priest invites the deity and performs rituals by wearing Si-ali leaves.

Similar rituals were also conducted at Sanakhala in Kumuria. After the rituals, thousands of animals were sacrificed and devotees paid their obeisance to the deity praying for their wellbeing and fulfillment of their wishes. As per their belief, it is an act of gratitude to the deity and meant to pay back the debt after the fulfilment of their wishes.

Congress leader and former minister Narasingh Mishra visited the main Sulia shrine at Khairaguda while BJD leader and former minister Ananga Udaya Singhdeo visited the Sulia shrine at Kumuria and paid their obeisance

to the deity.

This year, the district administration had cancelled Sulia Mahotsav due to a serious face-off between two factions of the community. Three platoons of police force led by an additional superintendent of police (ASP) maintained law and order during the festival.

People in the area have a lot of faith and belief in the festival. They celebrate it with a lot of devotion for fulfillment of their wishes, said a local devotee.

Tusra tehsildar Artatrana Thati, his Deogaon counterpart Bikram Keshari Nayak, Sadar SDPO Pradip Kumar Sahu, president of the Sulia Jatra puja committee Maya Padhani, head priest Somanath Deheria, Kalindri Majhi and Tapan Kuanar were present on the occasion.

BJP MP acquitted in two cheating cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Jan 7: BJP MP Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy was acquitted in two cases of cheating by a special court in Ganjam district Tuesday.

The court also acquitted former IFS officer Abhay Pathak and his son Akash Pathak who were the co-accused in one of the two cases against Panigrahy.

The judge of the special MP/MLA court acquitted them due to lack of evidence, said the MP's counsel Deepak Patnaik.

One of the cases was registered against Panigrahy, Pathak and his son in Baidyanathpur police station in 2021 after a man filed a complaint, alleging that he had given ₹6 lakh to the then Gopalpur MLA for a job for his son in an automobile company, the lawyer said.

The other case was registered at Golanthara police station after a man lodged a complaint, alleging he had given ₹5 lakh to Panigrahy for a job for his brother in 2021, he said.

Patnaik said the hearing of another three cheating cases registered against the MP at the Golanthara police station is pending.



SCINTILLATING SHOW: Artists of Prince Dance Group, Berhampur perform at the district-level cultural festival 'Jatra-2025' at Sundargarh

CLASS IX BOY STABBED BY CLASSMATE IN BALASORE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasore, Jan 7: A Class IX student of Dahamunda Nodal High School in Bhograi block of this district was injured when his classmate allegedly stabbed him outside the school

premises Tuesday, a police official said.

The injured boy was admitted to nearby Dahamunda primary health centre (PHC), the cop added.

The accused boy, who was waiting outside the school, sud-

denly attacked the victim with a knife when the latter was on his way to attend the school's annual function, the police official said.

Earlier, there was a heated exchange between the victim and the accused boy Monday.

It is suspected that the boy attacked the victim to take revenge, he said.

"An investigation has been initiated into the incident," inspector-in-charge of Kamarda police station Premada Nayak said.

Patient jumps off hospital roof, dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan. 7: A patient jumped to death from the roof of a medical college and hospital here late Monday night.

The deceased was identified as Manoj Dzungdung, 39, of Kimjharia village under Kuanrmunda police limits in Sundargarh district. The man with liver ailment had undergone treatment at various hospitals including this medical college. Raghunathpalli police seized the body and handed it over to the family after a post-mortem Tuesday. Police registered a case (No. 2/25) of unnatural death and launched an investigation. However, no complaints have been filed by the family when reports last came in.

Manoj experienced severe chest pain January 2 night following which his family admitted him to Hi-Tech Medical College and Hospital January 3.

He was undergoing treatment in the hospital's medicine ward. The incident occurred when he reportedly went to the rooftop of the three-storied building late Monday night and jumped from there. Security personnel noticed the incident and informed hospital authorities, who then alerted the police. Hospital CEO Sushanta Kumar Acharya said the patient had been battling a chronic liver condition and admitted for treatment January 3. He suspected that the patient might have been under mental stress, which could have led to the tragic incident.

Four Ganjam villages declared 'Tsunami Ready'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Jan 7: Inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) - UNESCO has recognised four Ganjam villages as 'Tsunami Ready' and renewed the certificate of one village at the 2nd World Tsunami Symposium held in Indonesia recently.

The villages declared 'Tsu-

unami Ready' are: Upulaputti under Chhatrapur block, Kantagada and Prayagi under Ganjam block and Markandi under Rangeilunda block. The certificate of Venkatrapur has been renewed that was recognised in 2020. A team from National Tsunami Council conducted a survey in these five villages along the Ganjam coast September 22 and 23, 2024 using



12-point index for assessment. Later, the reports of these assessments were recommended to IOC-UNESCO for validation and grant of certification.

The awards and certificates were presented at 20th Indian

Ocean Tsunami Conclave recently held at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information (INCOIS), Hyderabad. Ganjam district project officer Debendra Nayak received the certificates on behalf of the villages. Later, Ganjam Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida presented these certificates to the representatives of the respective villages.

Bumpy road for speed governor plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 7: Even as the government has mandated installation of speed governors in passenger and freight vehicles to curb road mishaps, lack of a mechanism to check the functionality of the devices has rendered the plan ineffective.

According to reports, most accidents occur due to speeding, a concern that has prompted the government to mandate installation of speed limiting devices in passenger and freight vehicles.

The government has even warned not to issue fitness certificates to vehicles without speed governors. However, these warnings have remained only in pen and paper. Most vehicles continue to flout norms with impunity owing to lack of a strict monitoring mechanism.

Officials have reported that speed governors are installed in vehicles with the sole purpose of getting fitness certificates. Many



vehicles with speed governors fail to meet fitness certification requirements, as these devices are often either non-functional or not checked post-installation.

Reports said that there are 57,000 registered trucks and 498 buses in Ganjam district. According to regional transport officer (RTO) Manas Ranjan Sahu, all vehicles are fitted with speed governors. However, there is no consistent mechanism to ensure they are operational. Data on how many vehicles have active speed governors is unavailable, Sahu said. Cases are being filed against drivers operating vehicles without functional speed governors. Around 30-40 cases are registered every month, said sources.

Despite rules, vehicle own-

ers and drivers often neglect on maintenance of these devices after obtaining fitness certificates. This leads to frequent mishaps. Recently, a collision between an OSRTC bus and a minibus at Digapahandi in Ganjam district June 25 was attributed to overspeeding.

Last year, out of 630 vehicles inspected for fitness in Ganjam, many were found without speed governors. As a result, they were disqualified for fitness certificates. Additionally, the RTO office retrofitted speed governors on 4,345 older vehicles in 2024. According to Transport department, speed governors are essential for limiting vehicle speeds as per road-specific regulations. However, enforcement of these rules remains slack.

Ganjam SP Sarvana Vivek M emphasised the need for stricter checks to ensure all vehicles have functional speed governors, highlighting their critical role in preventing speeding and related accidents.

YOUTH KILLED IN NABARANGPUR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Papadahandi, Jan 7: A youth was killed in an organised attack on him at Barawada village under Kodinga police limits in Nabarangpur district late Monday night.

The deceased was identified as Umakanta Harijan, a resident of Kenduguda under Maidapur police limits. Umakanta had gone to Barawada village to collect paddy Saturday.

There, he entered into a nearby house to charge his mobile phone, his family members said, adding that they rescued Umakanta in a critical condition in the wee hours of Tuesday and rushed him to Papadahandi CHC, where doctors pronounced him dead. Umakanta's family has lodged a police complaint alleging murder. The cops seized the body and sent it for post-mortem. A probe is in progress.

Bhatra dam: Migratory birds' new destination

Since various species of migratory birds are flocking to Bhatra dam and its peripheries, a proposal has been sent to the state govt to declare the area as a bird sanctuary



areas of this dam and Indravati reservoir since October. These birds are seen in Bhatra dam, Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary, and other water bodies.

Forest department has initiated an eco-tourism plan by making necessary arrangements for a boating centre at Bhatra dam. Since various species of migratory birds are flocking to Bhatra dam and its

peripheries, a proposal has been sent to the state government to declare the area as a bird sanctuary, which is currently under consideration, according to sources.

Some Siberian birds have been spotted at Bhatra dam and Sundarijore in Jayapatna block. Migratory bird species like Gadwall, Red-crested pochard, Northern Pintail, Sir

bird, Wood sandpiper, Green sandpiper, Little ringed plover, Black-winged stilt, Whiskered tern, and Rosy starling, among others, have been spotted here.

Additionally, over 250 species of birds, including Indian pitta, Brown-capped pygmy woodpecker, and Red-naped ibis from the Himalayan foothills, have also been found in

Kalahandi, according to bird experts.

These migratory birds were also seen perching on farmlands and ponds near Bhatra dam in search of food. Bird specialist and lawyer Mohammad Khalil stated that these species have traveled from far-off regions like North America, South America, Africa, and Australia.

While the forest division is developing Bhatra dam as a boating site, measures like bird protection camps and food provisions can be implemented to ensure their safety. Such steps can enhance the influx of migratory birds, contributing to the area's eco-tourism potential. A significant increase in bird count could attract tourists to Bhatra dam, boosting local employment and economic prospects in Kalahandi.

Bird enthusiasts and environmentalists have urged the administration to take necessary actions in this regard.

PANCHAYAT SAMITI, CHHENDIPADA

E-mail Address: ori-chhendipada@nic.in

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

IDENTIFICATION No. CHHB-03/2024-25

The Block Development Officer, Chhendipada on behalf of the Governor of Orissa invites percentage rate bid in single cover system for the 1 No. of AWC Building & 3 Nos. of GPLF Building "B" & "C" contractors accordingly, registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent grade/class registered with Central Government/MES/Railway, to be eventually drawn up in PWD P-I form, for execution of Building. The proof of registration from the appropriate authority shall be enclosed along with the bid. If successful, the bidder who has not registered under State Government has to register under the State PWD in appropriate class of eligibility before signing the agreement. Bidders may submit bids for any or all the buildings. The details of the eligibility criteria, enclosures etc. along with the list of project and date and time of sale, receipt and opening of bid documents can be viewed in the office of the undersigned during office hours & downloaded from the District website i.e. www.angul.odisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Block Development Officer, Chhendipada

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Addl. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar

Email Address: semechcircle104@gmail.com

e-Procurement Notice

No.A-830 Bid Identification No.-ACEM/MDL-27/2024-25

- Name of the Work : Mechanical Gate Works
- No. of Works : 01 (One)
- Category of executors : SSI Units registered under DIC/NSIC/MSME for Irrigation Shutters/Hydro Mechanical gates
- Bid Identification No. : ACEM/MDL-27/2024-25
- Estimated Cost : Rs.12,08,393/-
- Period of Completion : 02 (Two) Calendar Months
- Date & Time of availability of bid documents : From Dt.07.01.2025 (10.00 AM) to dt.20.01.2025 (5.30 PM) in the portal
- Last date/time for receipt of bid in the Portal : dt.20.01.2025 (upto 5.30 PM)
- Date and Place of Opening of Bid : dt.21.01.2025 (12.00 Noon onwards in the O/o the undersigned)
- Name of the Officer Inviting : Addl. Chief Engineer bid Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any further issue of Addenda/ Corrigenda/ Cancellation Notice shall be uploaded in the aforesaid website only.

Sd./- Addl. Chief Engineer Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32405/11/0026/2425

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Addl. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar

Email Address: semechcircle104@gmail.com

e-Procurement Notice

No.A-839 Bid Identification No.-ACEM/MDL-23/2024-25

- Name of the Work : Mechanical Gate Works
- No. of Works : 01 (One)
- Category of executors : SSI Units registered under DIC/NSIC/MSME for Irrigation Shutters/Hydro Mechanical gates
- Bid Identification No. : ACEM/MDL-23/2024-25
- Estimated Cost : Rs.11,25,925/-
- Period of Completion : 02 (Two) Calendar Months
- Date & Time of availability of bid documents : From Dt.07.01.2025 (10.00 AM) to dt.20.01.2025 (5.30 PM) in the portal
- Last date/time for receipt of bid in the Portal : dt.20.01.2025 (upto 5.30 PM)
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Sd./- Addl. Chief Engineer Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32405/11/0035/2425



Do we have any plan to get the patrolling rights for our soldiers restored in Galwan, Hot Spring, Gogra, Pangong and Kailash range? Have we completely given up on restoration of status quo of April 2020 in eastern Ladakh
ASADUDDIN OWAISI | AIMIM PRESIDENT

TEENAGE GIRL RESCUED FROM BOREWELL, DIES

An 18-year-old girl who fell into a 540-foot-deep borewell and was rescued after more than 33 hours in Gujarat's Kutch district was declared dead at a hospital Tuesday, officials said



of the day quote

Manmohan Singh brought various schemes for the welfare of the people. The economic policies formulated by him became the foundation for India's growth
M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM



It is unfortunate that today, instead of creating opportunities and fostering unity, the government is resorting to policies that divide and alienate our youth
MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF



BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) is contesting this election independently and with full preparation and vigour. I hope the party will definitely perform better in this election
MAYAWATI | BSP SUPREMO



HMPV SCARE States asked to ramp up surveillance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: The Centre has advised states to step up surveillance for respiratory illnesses, including ILI and SARI, and spread awareness about the prevention of transmission of the human metapneumovirus (HMPV) after five cases were detected in India.

Two suspected cases of the virus were reported Tuesday from Maharashtra's Nagpur. Both the patients were discharged after treatment, a senior official said. Their samples have been sent to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Nagpur and the National Institute of Virology in Pune, the official said.

India reported its first HMPV cases Monday after five children tested positive in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat. Union Health Minister J P Nadda had said that the government was closely monitoring the situation and there was no reason to worry. HMPV is a globally recognised respiratory virus. It is a viral pathogen that causes respiratory infections in people of all age groups.

Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava Monday chaired a virtual meeting with



India reported its first HMPV cases Monday after five children tested positive in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat

Union Health Minister J P Nadda had said that the government was closely monitoring the situation and there was no reason to worry

HMPV is a globally recognised respiratory virus. It is a viral pathogen that causes respiratory infections in people of all age groups

states and Union Territories to take stock of respiratory illnesses and HMPV cases in the country and public health measures for their management, a health ministry statement said. The meeting was held amid reports of a surge in HMPV cases in China and on a day when India reported five cases.

During the meeting, it was reiterated that the data from IDSP does not indicate any

unusual rise in influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory illnesses (SARI) cases anywhere in the country, the statement said. Union health secretary Srivastava emphasised that there is no cause for concern for the public as HMPV has been present globally since 2001, the statement said. She advised states to strengthen and review the ILI/SARI surveillance. Srivastava

reiterated that an increase in respiratory illnesses is usually seen during the winter months and that the country is well prepared for any potential surge in such cases, the statement said. The two suspected cases of HMPV detected in Nagpur, both children aged seven and 14 years, were treated in the outpatient department of a private hospital. Their samples were tested and marked as suspected, Nagpur District Collector Vipin Itankar told reporters. "The media reports about HMPV patients in Nagpur are wrong," he asserted. Itankar said there were no HMPV patients in Nagpur, and there was no need to panic. While health officials Tuesday reiterated that there was no reason to ring the alarm bells, several state governments said they were on alert. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin is constantly monitoring the situation, Health and Family Welfare Minister Ma Subramanian told a press conference here. Of the five cases reported Monday, two were from Tamil Nadu. The virus has not created any big impact in India, and especially in the state, the minister said, adding that the two patients, aged 45 and 69 years, who tested positive Monday were "doing well".

People will teach BJP a lesson in upcoming polls: Kharge slams PM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: "Awakened" people will teach a lesson to the BJP in upcoming elections, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said Tuesday as he targeted the Modi government over inflation and asked when will it be reduced.

His remarks came after the Election Commission announced the schedule for Delhi Assembly polls, which will be held in a single phase February 5. "Narendra Modi ji, is there any plan to increase public savings in the budget, or will you continue to trouble the public with back-breaking inflation," Kharge asked in a post in Hindi on X. He alleged that over the past six months, prices of essential medicines and everyday items like oil, tea, coffee, biscuits, soap, etc, have gone up. "Every person is troubled by the senseless rates and tax burden of GST, consumption has fallen, entire India is worried about economic slowdown. There is no importance of nine pre-budget consultations, when you do not intend to discuss how inflation will be reduced," the Congress chief said.

"The BJP's job is to loot the public and benefit its billionaire friends. In the coming elections, the awakened public will teach a lesson to the BJP," Kharge said. AICC general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal said it was the Congress which had transformed Delhi into a modern city during its

rule. With its people-friendly vision and a proven track record of transforming Delhi, the Congress will bring the city back to the path of development and improve the standard of living for everyone, he said. "The moment that the people of Delhi have been waiting for is here! On 5th February, Delhi will get to make a decision on whether it wishes to see five more years of chaos and confrontation between the State and Centre, or a stable government that works solely for the people," Venugopal said in a post on X.

Under the Congress, he claimed, Delhi was transformed into a modern city that responded to 21st century needs. Be it the world-class metro or the massive infrastructure that brought connectivity, Delhi had its golden period under Congress rule, he said. "The present regime, be it the Centre or the State, has failed to address the basic concerns of the people - with pollution, crime, poor infrastructure and urban decay becoming the norm."

"Our party, with its people-friendly vision and a proven track record of transforming Delhi, will bring it back to the path of development and improve the standard of living for everyone," Venugopal said. Assembly polls in Delhi will be held February 5 and the votes counted February 8, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced Tuesday.

ED raids BBMP offices in PMLA case probe

BANGALORE: The Enforcement Directorate Tuesday conducted searches at half a dozen locations of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) as part of a "comprehensive" money laundering investigation against alleged irregularities in the civic body that works for the Greater Bengaluru metropolitan area. Official sources said the federal agency collected a "good number of" documents and electronic gadgets during the raids. They said about six offices linked to the BBMP were searched under the provisions of the PMLA. The action pertains to a "comprehensive" action by the ED against some alleged irregularities in the execution of civic works by the cash-rich body including the digging of borewells and installation of Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants among others, the sources said.

SHORT TAKES

Minor girl dies in IED blast in J'khand

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): A minor girl was killed in an IED blast allegedly carried out by Maoists at Jarakela area in West Singhbhum district, a senior police officer said Tuesday. The incident occurred when the seven-year-old girl went to the forests in Tirilposi and Thalkobad villages to collect firewood, and accidentally stepped on the improvised explosive device (IED) "planted by CPI (Maoist)", he said. Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Shekhar said a team of officers has rushed to the spot.

Drugs worth over ₹11 crore seized

Guwahati: Drugs worth over Rs 11 crore have been seized in three separate operations from Assam's Cachar and Karbi Anglong districts, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Tuesday. Police seized 1.17 kg of suspected heroin worth Rs 5.1 crore from Dighar Fulertol area in Cachar district late Monday. In another operation, they recovered 73.97 kg of ganja worth Rs 38 lakh from Dhanehari. The officers intercepted a bus coming from a neighbouring state at Dillai Tiniali and seized another 1.22 kg of suspected heroin worth Rs 6 crore in Karbi Anglong district, Sarma said.

2 dacoits killed in encounter in Bihar

Patna: Two dacoits were killed and a policeman was injured in an encounter in Patna district of Bihar, police said Tuesday. The incident took place in Hinduni area under the jurisdiction of Phulwari Sharif police station Monday night, a police officer said, adding that an associate of the deceased was also arrested. The deceased have been identified as Vivek and Lal Dahin, both residents of Nalanda district.

Tremors felt in Bihar districts

Patna: Several places in Bihar were jolted by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake that struck near the Tibet-Nepal border Tuesday morning, an official said. The quake with its epicentre 93 km northeast of Lohuche, near the Nepal-Tibet border, occurred at 6.35 am. The earthquake, centred at a depth of 10 kilometres, caused tremors in Bihar and several parts of north India, the official said. There was no immediate report of any loss of life or damage to property in Bihar, he said.

India, Maldives to hold defence talks today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Nearly eight months after New Delhi completed pulling out its military personnel from the Maldives, the island nation's defence minister Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon will pay a three-day visit to India from Wednesday to strengthen military ties amid a thaw in the overall relations between the two countries.

Maumoon will hold wide-ranging talks with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh besides meeting several senior officials in the national capital. India had withdrawn its around 80 military personnel stationed in the Indian Ocean archipelago following a demand by its pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu. The Indian military personnel were in the Maldives to maintain and operate two military platforms. They were replaced by Indian civilian staff.

The overall episode had significantly frayed the ties between the two nations. "Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hold a bilateral meeting with the Defence Minister of Maldives Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon in New Delhi January 8," the defence ministry said. It said the two ministers will review the various facets of bilateral defence cooperation including training, exercises and defence projects to enhance the capability of the Maldives National Defence Forces as well as supply of defence equipment.

"The Maldives occupies a special place in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, which aims to bring stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region," it said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



SC to examine age bar in India's surrogacy laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: The Supreme Court Tuesday agreed to examine February 11 issues over the age bar for surrogate mothers and others under the laws.

A bench comprising Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma, which heard about 15 petitions challenging certain provisions of the Surrogacy Regulation Act and the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, asked the Centre to file its written submissions in the case.

Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre, said she would file the written submissions and the government would abide

by the apex court's directions. The court underscored the need to pass an interim order in the case.

The 2021 surrogacy laws set age limits for intended parents and surrogate mothers. According to the law, the intended mother must be between 23 and 50 years of age, and the intended father must be between 26 and 55 years of age.

Further, the surrogate mother must be married and between 25 and 35 years of age, having a biological child, and only act as a surrogate once in her lifetime. The laws also provide conditions to regulate surrogacy.

The top court had outlined the importance of safeguarding the interests of surrogate



mothers, observing the need for a robust system to prevent exploitation, especially given commercial surrogacy was prohibited in India.

"There can be a database, so that the same lady is not exploited. A system must be there. Nobody is saying it's a bad idea, but at the same time, it can be badly used," the bench had said. The court also discussed alternative mecha-

Cities in India reduce PM2.5 pollution by 27 pc in 6 yrs: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Indian cities achieved an average 27 per cent reduction in PM2.5 pollution levels from 2019 to 2024, with those under NCAP alone recording a 24 per cent decline, a new report has found.

According to the report by climate tech firm Respirometer Living Sciences, Varanasi and Moradabad reduced PM2.5 levels by 76 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively. Other top performers include Kalaburagi (57.2 per cent), Meerut (57.1 per cent), Katni (56.3 per cent), Agra (54.1 per cent), Baghpat (53.3 per cent), Kanpur (51.2 per cent) and Jodhpur (50.5 per cent). "Air quality has improved

considerably, with a 27 per cent decline in PM2.5 levels across all monitored cities since 2019. NCAP (National Clean Air Programme) cities alone achieved a 24 per cent reduction, showing progress in combating air pollution," according to the report.

Despite the improvements, several cities remain highly polluted. In 2024, Delhi recorded PM2.5 levels of 107 microgrammes per cubic metre while Bymnihat in Assam reported 127.3 microgrammes per cubic metre.

Other highly polluted cities include Gurugram (96.7 microgrammes per cubic metre), Faridabad (87.1 microgrammes per cubic metre), Sri Ganga-



nagar (85.5 microgrammes per cubic metre), and Greater Noida (83.9 microgrammes per cubic metre). The list of the

most polluted cities also includes Muzaffarnagar (83.2 microgrammes per cubic metre), Durgapur (82.0 microgrammes

per cubic metre), Asansol (80.3 microgrammes per cubic metre), and Ghaziabad (79.9 microgrammes per cubic metre).

"India's air quality is a story of both hope and caution," said Ronak Sutaria, founder of Respirometer Living Sciences. "While cities like Varanasi have achieved remarkable progress with a 76.4 per cent reduction, northern regions, including Delhi-NCR, Rajasthan, Haryana,

Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, continue to face severe pollution episodes."

India launched NCAP in 2019, aiming to reduce particulate pollution by 20-30 per cent by 2024, using 2017 as the base year. The target was later revised to a 40 per cent reduction by 2026, with 2019-20 as the base year. In practice, only PM10 concentration is being considered for performance assessment.

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT BY CLIMATE TECH FIRM RESPIROMETER LIVING SCIENCES, VARANASI AND MORADABAD REDUCED PM2.5 LEVELS BY 76 PER CENT AND 58 PER CENT, RESPECTIVELY

OTHER TOP PERFORMERS INCLUDE KALABURAGI (57.2 PER CENT), MEERUT (57.1 PER CENT), KATNI (56.3 PER CENT), AGRA (54.1 PER CENT), BAGHPAT (53.3 PER CENT), KANPUR (51.2 PER CENT) AND JODHPUR (50.5 PER CENT)



Government and people of India express condolences on the tragic loss of life and property caused by the devastating earthquake in the Tibet Autonomous Region

ALLU VISITS INJURED BOY IN HOSPITAL

Top Telugu actor Allu Arjun Tuesday visited the boy, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital here after suffering serious injury in a stampede at the premiere of his latest film Pushpa 2. Earlier, Arjun was scheduled to visit the hospital January 5 but the plan was cancelled



of the day quote

We discussed HMPV (at health department meeting). It is not a very worrying virus. It is not the one that is prevalent in China. The virus that has been detected is an existing one. It infects children, aged people and those with less immunity

Today, the dates of formation of a people-friendly government of Congress have been announced

Terror-free and fear-free Jammu and Kashmir is our resolve. At the operational level, we have improved coordination between the police and other security agencies and adopted a whole-of-government approach to dismantle the terrorist and separatist ecosystem

POST OF THE DAY

VOTER LIST FRAUD Many journalists have proved that names from the voter lists are deleted by BJP in Elections. Opposition parties have complained about it but here ECI is completely denying this claim and acting as a BJP agent.

SHORT TAKES

Woman ends life at relief camp

Imphal: A 21-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide at a relief camp in Manipur's Imphal West district Tuesday, police said. The incident happened at the Mekola relief camp in the afternoon, they said. The body of Sukham Ongbi Chanu, hanging from the ceiling, was spotted by another inmate who tried to save her but failed, police said. A case has been registered and an investigation is underway, they added.

Elephant found dead in Bengal

Jhargram (WB): The carcass of an adult elephant was found in a mustard field in West Bengal's Jhargram district Tuesday, officials said. The male elephant was found dead in Nayagram area in the morning hours, they said. The carcass was sent for post-mortem examination, they added. An inquiry has been ordered to find the reasons behind the death, a senior forest official in Kolkata said. In August 2024, a pregnant elephant was killed in the district after a flaming iron spear was hurled at it, triggering outrage.

Engineer killed in fire at ONGC facility

Jorhat: A senior engineer was killed in a fire at an ONGC facility in Assam's Jorhat district Tuesday, a company spokesperson said. The incident happened at the Borholla Group Gathering Station around 3.20 pm in one of the heater treaters, used to separate oil from water, she said. "While scheduled maintenance was being carried out, a fire broke out in the heater treater. One employee, Rahul Dutta, a senior engineer (production), sustained burn injuries," the spokesperson said. He was rushed to the Jorhat Medical College and Hospital, where he succumbed to the injuries, she said.

Difficult to define freebie: CEC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 7: It is very difficult to define what a "freebie" is and the Election Commission's "hands are tied" on the issue as it is subjudice, CEC Rajiv Kumar said Tuesday.

He also said it was "high time" that "accepted and legal answers" were found. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kumar was addressing a press conference to announce the schedule for the Assembly polls in Delhi. Asked about political parties announcing freebies during election campaigns, he said the matter was sub-judice and referred to a court judgment that had held freebies were not "disallowed".

"What is freebie for me may be an entitlement for someone else... It is very difficult to define what a freebie is," Kumar said. "Our proforma is on our website, this is high time it is accepted and legal answers are found but our hands are tied at the moment because the matter is subjudice," he added.

Kumar further said that while such announcements were made, people should also be aware of the state's fiscal health. "It is necessary to see what is the fiscal health of a state... What is the debt-to-GDP ratio? How much will you borrow on that promise? How much is the financial cost



of this promise?" he said.

"...We cannot mortgage the future of future generations, this is a very very serious issue," he added. The Election Commission has proposed to amend the Model Code of Conduct to add a proforma to Part VIII (Guidelines on Election Manifesto) of the poll code.

It will require political parties to inform voters about the financial feasibility of the promises made in their manifestos and also if they are sustainable within the financial space of the state or the Union government. The proposed proforma seeks details of revenue generation ways (through additional tax, if any), rationalising expenditure

(cutting some schemes, if so required), impact on committed liabilities and/or raising of fur-

ther debt and its impact on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM) limits. The model code is a document that guides the poll panel in ensuring a level playing field for all political parties and candidates during elections.

Meanwhile, the BJP is making all-out attempts to come back to power in Delhi after over 26 years by focussing on its slogan "Parivartan" (change) and a targeted campaign against the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP over corruption allegations. The BJP was in power in Delhi the last time between December 2, 1993 and December 3, 1998, a period during which the national capital saw three chief ministers -- Madan Lal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma and Sushma Swaraj.

SC: States have money to give freebies but can't pay judges

New Delhi: States have enough money to give freebies to people who do no work but they claim financial constraints when it comes to paying salary and pension to judges of the district judiciary, the Supreme Court said Tuesday. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih made the oral observation after Attorney General R Venkataramani submitted that the government has to consider financial constraints when deciding the pay and retirement benefits of judicial officers. "The state's have all the money for the people who don't do any work. Come elections, you declare ladli behna and other new schemes where you pay fixed amounts. In Delhi, we have announcements now from some party or the other saying they will pay ₹2500 if they come to power," the bench remarked.

Quami Insaaf Morcha protest turns violent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 7: Police used tear gas shells and a water cannon to prevent the Quami Insaaf Morcha activists from heading towards Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's residence here Tuesday.

The Quami Insaaf Morcha activists also clashed with the police personnel at Sector 43 near Chandigarh bus stand, leading to injuries to three policemen, including an inspector.

The Quami Insaaf Morcha, which is seeking the release of 'Bandi Singhs' (Sikh prisoners), had planned to march towards the Punjab chief minister's residence. The protesters had gathered in Mohali on the second anniversary of the morcha.

Meanwhile, jailed radical preacher and Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh's father Tarsem Singh said that he was placed under house arrest in Amritsar by the Punjab Police.

Tarsem Singh was to participate in the programme of the Quami Insaaf Morcha in Chandigarh.

Barricades had been erected at several Chandigarh-Mohali border points to prevent the protesters from marching towards the chief minister's residence in Chandigarh. Several entry and exit points of Chandigarh were fortified.

When some protesters tried to force their way through the barricades at the Chandigarh-Mohali border point near YPS chowk, the police lobbed tear gas shells and used a water cannon to disperse them.



Efforts underway to rescue the labourers trapped inside a coal mine, in Dima Hasao district, Assam. At least nine labourers were trapped inside the mine, according to officials

T'gana HC refuses to quash FIR against KTR

Hyderabad: In a setback to BRS Working President K T Rama Rao, the Telangana High Court Tuesday refused to quash the FIR against him in connection with the Formula E race issue, removing the protection against the arrest given to him. On December 31, 2024, the HC had reserved its orders on the petition filed by the former minister after hearing the arguments made by the state government as well as the defence in the case registered by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) which alleged that Rama Rao authorised payments to the tune of ₹55 crore, most of it in forex, to Formula E Organisation without necessary approvals. High Court Judge Justice K Lakshman in his order said the allegations indicate that Rama Rao without any approval from the State Cabinet or the finance department directed the HMDA (Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority) to pay huge sums of money to a foreign company.

BPSC exam row: SC refuses to hear plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday refused to examine a plea over the alleged irregularities in the BPSC exam held December 13, 2024, and the consequent police action on protestors. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan asked petitioner to move the Patna High Court with the grievances. The counsel appearing for petitioner, Anand Legal Aid Forum Trust, urged the bench to consider the plea, saying the country witnessed Bihar police's brutally on peaceful protestors who sought cancellation of the contentious Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) exam. "We are asking you to go to the Patna High Court," the CJ said.

Tamil actor Ajith escapes unhurt after racing car crash in Dubai

New Delhi: Tamil superstar Ajith Kumar escaped unhurt after crashing his car during a practice session for the upcoming Dubai 24 Hours race. The 53-year-old actor, who launched his racing team Ajith Kumar Racing in September last year, is participating in the event alongside teammates Mathieu Detry, Fabian Duffieux, and Cameron McLeod. The race is scheduled to be held January 11 and 12. The official Instagram page of Ajith Kumar Racing shared a video of the incident. In the short clip, Ajith's car is seen crashing into the barriers at high speed. In the next shot, the actor is seen getting out of the vehicle, seemingly without any injury. "Ajith Kumar's massive crash in practice, but he walks away unscathed. Another day in the office... that's racing!" read the caption.

Vehicles ferrying drugs to be confiscated post trial: SC

A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and Manmohan passed the verdict and said there was no specific bar under the the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act against the interim release of seized vehicles, provided the owner was not complicit in the offense

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: The Supreme Court Tuesday held vehicles used for ferrying drugs could only be confiscated after the conclusion of the case's trial when the accused was convicted or acquitted or discharged.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and Manmohan passed the verdict and said there was no specific bar under

the the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act against the interim release of seized vehicles, provided the owner was not complicit in the offense.

"Upon a reading of the NDPS Act, this court is of the view that the seized vehicles can be confiscated," the bench said. "by the trial court only on conclusion of the trial when the accused is convicted or acquitted



or discharged." Further, even when the court decides the vehicle should be confiscated, it must give an opportunity to the person to be heard, it said.

The seized vehicle, however, was not liable to be confiscated if its owner proved the vehicle

was used by the accused person without their knowledge or connivance and they took all precautions against the misuse, said Justice Manmohan, who authored the judgment on behalf of the bench. In the absence of any specific bar under

the NDPS Act, the courts could invoke the general power under the CrPC for return of the seized vehicle pending a final decision of the criminal case.

"Consequently, the trial court has the discretion to release the vehicle in the interim. However, this power would have to be exercised in accordance with law in the facts and circumstances of each case," said the verdict. The judgment stemmed from an appeal filed by one Bishwajit Dey, challenging a Gauhati High Court order that upheld the trial court's refusal to release his truck, which was seized in a narcotics case.

The truck was allegedly found carrying 24.8 gram of heroin concealed in soap boxes during a police inspection April 10, 2023. The main accused, Md Dimpul, was arrested, but nei-

ther the truck's owner nor the driver was named as accused in the chargesheet.

The apex court allowed the vehicle's release and observed a strict interpretation of the NDPS Act would lead to unjust results, such as indefinitely seizing planes, buses, or ships used without the owner's knowledge for drug trafficking. It noted the vehicles left unattended in police custody deteriorate and stressed on the need to prevent wastage.

In the present case, the truck owner, it said, was not named in the chargesheet, and his only source of income was at risk due to the vehicle's prolonged detention. The release of the vehicle would benefit the owner, the financier, and society at large by ensuring its productive use, said the apex court.

international



The President happily informed me that \$2 billion owed by Pakistan in January was being extended by the UAE. He proposed it himself and immediately issued
SHEHBAZ SHARIF
PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN

FRANCE MARKS 10 YEARS SINCE DEADLY CHARLIE HEBDO ATTACKS

A decade after gunmen stormed the offices of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in a deadly assault that shook France to its core and ignited a global outcry in defence of freedom of speech, the nation paused Tuesday to honour the victims and renew its resolve to fight for liberty and democracy



of the day quote

Southeast Asian countries are in a strategically important region and occupy key points on our sea lanes, I would like to take this visit as an opportunity to further develop our cooperative relationship with Indonesia
GEN NAKATANI | DEFENCE MINISTER, JAPAN



The planned meetings between Keith Kellogg, a highly decorated retired three-star general who has long been Trump's top adviser on defence issues, and Ukrainian officials are "extremely important", I am confident that this meeting will take place in its own time
ANDRII SYBIHA | FOREIGN MINISTER, UKRAINE

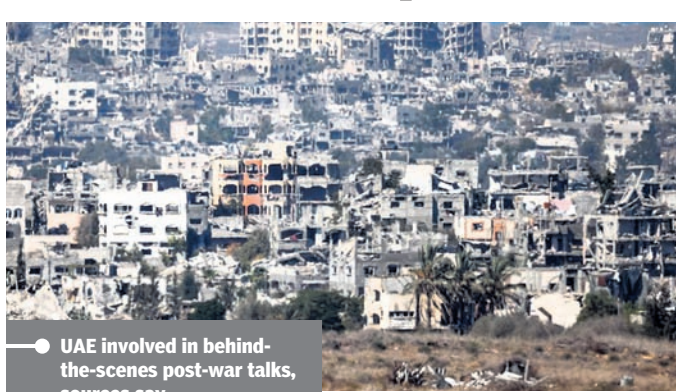


My parents got to see me sworn in as the first Indian American and South Asian Congressman from Virginia
SUHASH SUBRAMANYAM | CONGRESSMAN, US



UAE discusses post-war Gaza govt with US, Israel

In the behind-the-scenes talks, Abu Dhabi is advocating for a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA) to govern Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem under an independent Palestinian state



- UAE involved in behind-the-scenes post-war talks, sources say
- Temporary governance, peacekeeping mission discussed, according to sources
- Use of private military contractors in peacekeeping also under discussion, sources say
- UAE official says post-war plan must include reform of the Palestinian Authority

Dubai, Jan 7: The United Arab Emirates has discussed with Israel and the United States participating in a provisional administration of post-war Gaza until a reformed Palestinian Authority is able to take charge, according to people familiar with the talks.

The behind-the-scenes discussions, reported by Reuters for the first time, included the possibility of the UAE and the United States, along with other nations, temporarily overseeing the governance, security and reconstruction of Gaza after the Israeli military withdraws and until a Palestinian administration is able to take over, a dozen foreign diplomats and Western officials told Reuters.

The UAE is a close security partner of the US and, unlike most Arab governments, has diplomatic ties with Israel. The diplomats and officials said this provides the Gulf state with some leverage over Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

The diplomats and officials stressed the ideas that had emerged from the UAE talks lacked detail and had not been distilled into a formal, written plan nor adopted by any government.

some governance in the Israeli-occupied West Bank but was run out of Gaza in 2007 by Hamas after a brief civil war.

RECONSTRUCTION WILL TAKE YEARS
Rebuilding Gaza, including its political institutions, is expected to take years and cost tens of billions of dollars, requiring substantial international support, following 15 months of Israel's devastating military campaign.

While the UAE has criticised the conduct of Israel's military and Netanyahu himself, Israel still wants the oil-rich nation involved in post-war Gaza, according to two former Israeli officials, who declined to be identified.

REFORM OF PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY
The Gulf state has said it would only send troops to a post-war multinational mission at the invitation of the Palestinian Authority and with the involvement of the US

Netanyahu, however, has said he is against the Palestinian Authority in its current form governing Gaza, citing his long-standing grievances over the PA's school syllabus, which he says fuels hatred of Israel, and its policy of giving salaries to families of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

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US police officer who killed Indian student with patrol car fired

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Seattle/New York, Jan 7: In a significant development, a Seattle police officer who killed Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula in January 2023 when the patrol vehicle he was driving struck her, has been fired from the police department, officials said.

Kandula, 23, from Andhra Pradesh, was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle January 23, 2023. He was driving 74 mph (more than 119 km/h) on the way to a report of a drug overdose call.

Kandula was thrown 100 feet when she was struck by the speeding police patrol vehicle.

According to a report in The Seattle Times Monday, Interim Seattle Police Chief Sue Rahr said that she had fired Dave from the Seattle Police Department. The report, citing an email sent by Rahr to employees, said she fired Dave Monday after the Seattle Office of Police Accountability found he had violated four department policies.



"I believe the officer did not intend to hurt anyone that night and that he was trying to get to a possible overdose victim as quickly as possible," Rahr said. "However, I cannot accept the tragic consequences of his dangerous driving. His positive intent does not mitigate the poor decision that caused the loss of human life and brought discredit to the Seattle Police Department," according to the Seattle Times report.

New court warrant to detain President Yoon

The anti-corruption agency is leading a joint investigation with the police and military into Yoon's brief power grab, which included declaring martial law and dispatching troops to surround the National Assembly



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, Jan 7: South Korea's anti-corruption agency said it received a new court warrant Tuesday to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after its previous attempt was blocked by the presidential security service last week.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which plans to question the embattled president on rebellion allegations over his short-lived martial law decree Dec 3, didn't immediately confirm how long the warrant would remain valid.

The agency's chief prosecutor, Oh Dong-woon, refused to answer when asked by lawmakers when the warrant would expire, saying such information is sensitive as the agency and police contemplate ways to execute it.

Detention warrants typically last seven days but can be extended to around 10 days. Oh didn't say when investigators planned to make their next attempt to detain Yoon.

The Seoul Western District Court last week had initially issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence after he repeatedly defied authorities by refusing to appear for questioning.

About 150 anti-corruption

agency investigators and police officers attempted to detain Yoon Friday but retreated from his residence in Seoul after a tense standoff with the presidential security service that lasted more than five hours. The investigators did not make another attempt to detain Yoon and the previous court warrants expired after a week Monday.

If investigators manage to detain Yoon, they will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, he will be released after 48 hours.

The anti-corruption agency and police have pledged to make a more forceful effort to detain Yoon, which could be a complicated process as long as he remains in his official residence.

The anti-corruption agency is leading a joint investigation with the police and military into Yoon's brief power grab, which included declaring martial law and dispatching troops to surround the National Assembly. Lawmakers who managed to get past the blockade voted to lift martial law hours later.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended after the opposition-dominated Assembly voted to impeach him Dec 14, accusing him of rebellion. The Constitutional Court has started deliberations on whether to formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

SHORT TAKES

Indonesia joins BRICS

Sao Paulo: Indonesia has been admitted as a full member of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, the group's presiding country Brazil announced Monday. Indonesia's candidacy was endorsed by BRICS leaders in August 2023, according to the foreign ministry of Brazil, which holds the group's presidency for 2024. However, the world's fourth-most populous nation opted to formally join the bloc only after the formation of its newly elected government last year. "The Brazilian government welcomes Indonesia's entry into the BRICS," the government said in a statement.

2 Indian firms charged in fentanyl smuggling

Washington: RaxuterChemicals and Athos Chemicals have been charged with criminal conspiracies to distribute and import fentanyl precursor chemicals to the United States. Bhavesh Lathiya, a founder and senior executive of Raxuter Chemicals, was arrested in New York on January 4 on the same charges. US Magistrate Judge Joseph A Marutollo for the Eastern District of New York has ordered detained pending trial. If convicted, Lathiya faces a maximum penalty of 53 years in prison. This is probably for the first time that Indian companies and its executives have been charged for distribution and import of fentanyl precursor chemicals to the United States.

Mahama sworn in as Ghana's president

Accra (Ghana): John Mahama was sworn in as president of Ghana for a third time Tuesday against the backdrop of the country's worst economic crisis in a generation. Thousands of Ghanaians from all walks of life attended the ceremony in the capital. Mahama, the Opposition leader who started his political career as the communications minister, won the presidential election late last year after pledging to tackle the economic crisis, corruption and unemployment. Mahama, 66, who was previously Ghana's president between July 2012 and January 2017, will replace current President Nana Akufo-Addo. Mahama promised to "reset" the country on various fronts during a campaign that prioritized the economy and largely appealed to young Ghanaians who saw the vote as a way out of the country's economic crisis.

China shuts down Mt Everest area



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 7: China has closed for tourists the scenic areas of its side of Mt Everest, also known as Mount Qomolangma, following a 6.8-magnitude earthquake that jolted Dingri County in the Tibet Autonomous Region Tuesday.

Dingri is home to the base camp of the world's highest peak.

According to local authorities, the staff and tourists were in safe condition after the quake, which hit the region at 9:05 am Tuesday (Beijing Time). At least 126 people have been

confirmed dead and 188 others injured, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The hotel buildings and surrounding areas in the scenic area have remained intact, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing the Dingri Culture and Tourism Bureau.

However, the Qomolangma Station for Atmospheric and Environmental Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, located in Dingri, is experiencing a power outage. Despite this, the facilities have remained in good condition.

Located at the China-Nepal border, Mount Qomolangma reaches an altitude of more than 8,840 metres, with its northern section located in Tibet referred to as Xizang by China.

The weather forecast showed that Dingri's temperature ranged from minus 18 degrees Celsius to zero.



Residents watch a woman jump into a pool carved from ice on the frozen Songhua river in Harbin in northeastern China's Heilongjiang province, Tuesday

Trump renews his offer of making Canada 51st state of US

Trudeau, 53, announced to resign Monday as he was forced by his ruling Liberal Party amidst his growing unpopularity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 7: Hours after the resignation of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, US President-elect Donald Trump Monday renewed his offer of making Can-

ada the 51st state of the United States.

Trudeau, 53, announced to resign Monday as he was forced by his ruling Liberal Party amidst his growing unpopularity. General elections are scheduled this year. The Canadian prime minister said that he would stay on as prime minister till the party elected a new leader.

Trump, 78, who never had a good relationship with Trudeau even during his first term from 2017-2021, has been floating the idea of making Canada the 51st state of the United States ever since he met Trudeau after his November 5 electoral victory in Mar-a-Lago. Thereafter, he has



Trump has threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian imports if Toronto is not able to stop the flow of illicit drugs and illegal migrants from its southern border with the US

been mentioning this on his social media posts several times.

"Many people in Canada LOVE being the 51st State.

If Canada merged with the US, there would be no Tariffs, taxes would go way down, and they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese Ships that are constantly surrounding them. Together, what a great Nation it would be!!!
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT-ELECT, US

The United States can no longer suffer the massive Trade Deficits and Subsidies that Canada needs to stay afloat. Justin Trudeau knew this, and resigned," Trump said on Truth Social.

"If Canada merged with the US, there would be no Tariffs, taxes would go way down, and

they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese Ships that are constantly surrounding them. Together, what a great Nation it would be!!!" said the president-elect after the resignation of Trudeau Monday.

There has not been much reaction to Trump's proposal from the Canadian side.

Trump has threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian imports if Toronto is not able to stop the flow of illicit drugs and illegal migrants from its southern border with the US. In some of the posts, Trump even mocked Trudeau as "Governor of the Great State of Canada".



“The journey of Indian pharma is a testament to how key policy reforms coupled with entrepreneurial spirit have nurtured the sector's growth”
SAMIR MEHTA | TORRENT GROUP CHAIRMAN

EXIM BANK RAISES \$1BN

EXIM Bank Tuesday said it has raised USD 1 billion (about ₹8,570 crore) through an overseas bond issuance at very competitive rates. The policy bank will be using the money to fund its ongoing and new initiatives across the world, according to a statement. Its managing director Harsha Bangari said the money has been raised at “the tightest spread ever achieved from India.”



of the day quote

The company continues to work on balancing growth and profitability, by increasing market share and launching innovative products

UPASANA TAKU | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ONE MOBILKIK SYSTEMS



Instead of cutting tariffs, GTRI recommends setting up component hubs near ports to reduce import delays and warehousing costs. This approach, used by countries like Vietnam and China, would support local manufacturing and reduce import dependency

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | GTRI FOUNDER



We request the government to consider the EMI on jewellery, which has been a long-standing demand of the industry. Gold monetisation Scheme also needs a revamp as it has the potential to unearth idle household gold in the economy and thus helping us to be self-reliant and promote less imports

AVINASH GUPTA | GJC VICE-CHAIRMAN



GDP growth to hit 4-yr low in FY25

The growth rate of 6.4% will be the lowest since the Covid year (2020-21) when the country witnessed a negative growth of 5.8%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: India's economic growth rate is estimated to slip to a four-year low of 6.4 per cent in 2024-25, mainly on account of poor showing by the manufacturing and services sector, according to government data released Tuesday.

The GDP rate of 6.4 per cent will be the lowest since the Covid year (2020-21) when the country witnessed a negative growth of 5.8 per cent. It was 9.7 per cent in 2022-23; 7 per cent in 2022-23; and 8.2 per cent in the last fiscal ended March 2024.

The first advance estimates of National Income for 2024-25 released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) is lower than the 6.6 per cent projected by the Reserve Bank in December 2024. It is also a tad lower than the finance ministry's initial projection of 6.5-7 per cent.

The advance estimates will be used in preparation for the Union Budget to be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha February 1.

The economic growth slowed to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per



cent during the July-September period. It was 6.7 per cent in the first quarter (April-June).

The manufacturing sector output is expected to decelerate to 5.3 per cent from a high of 9.9 per cent recorded in the previous fiscal, NSO said.

The services sector, comprising trade, hotels, transport and communications, is estimated to expand at 5.8 per cent against 6.4 per cent in 2023-24.

On the other hand, the farm sector is estimated to record a growth of 3.8 per cent in the current fiscal, up from 1.4 per cent in 2023-24.

“Real GDP has been estimated to grow by 6.4 per cent in FY 2024-25 as compared to the growth rate of 8.2 per cent in Provisional Estimate (PE) of GDP for FY 2023-24,” NSO said.

Nominal GDP is likely to grow at 9.7 per cent in 2024-25

against 9.6 per cent in 2023-24.

According to the data, nominal GDP (GDP at current prices) is estimated to attain a level of ₹324.11 lakh crore in 2024-25 compared to ₹295.36 lakh crore in 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.7 per cent.

The size of the economy, as per the current estimates, is USD 3.8 trillion (@Rs 85.7/USD) during 2024-25.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Ica opined that while the NSO's implicit H2 FY2025 projections seem reasonable, some of the sectoral numbers could report higher growth prints.

“In our view, the GDP growth in FY2026 will be crucially influenced by global uncertainties as well as domestic uncertainties, amidst considerable base effects. Benefitting from an anticipated capex push in the upcoming Budget, we proj-

ect the GDP growth at 6.5 per cent in FY2026,” she said.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil, said the decline in government capital expenditure, a key driver of post-pandemic recovery, during the second quarter is unlikely to be compensated for in the rest of the fiscal.

“The urban economy is grappling with the dual challenge of high inflation and slowing credit growth. The Reserve Bank of India's recent data indicates consumer confidence has moderated in urban areas, and growth in retail credit, which has a larger footprint in the urban economy, has slowed,” he said.

Further, as per the NSO, the nominal Gross Value Added (GVA) is estimated to attain a level of ₹292.64 lakh crore in 2024-25 against ₹267.62 lakh crore in 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.3 per cent.

Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) at constant prices has witnessed a growth rate of 7.3 per cent during 2024-25 over the growth rate of 4 per cent in the previous financial year.

Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE) at Constant Prices has rebounded to a growth rate of 4.1 per cent compared to the growth rate of 2.5 per cent in the previous fiscal.

NSO also said the per capita income (at current prices) is estimated to increase by 8.7 per cent to ₹2,00,162 per annum. It was ₹1,84,205 in the preceding fiscal.

Banks' profits to moderate as bad assets inch up: Ind-Ra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 7: Increase in bad assets will impact banks' profitability in FY26, a domestic rating agency said Tuesday.

Indian banks' profitability is at an 'inflection point' in FY25 and is likely to moderate further in the fiscal afterwards, India Ratings and Research said, adding that FY24 was the peak for profits.

“Profitability (is)... expected to moderate further in FY26 with an expectation of rising slippages and higher credit costs over the FY24 levels which was at decadal lows,” the agency's head and director financial institutions Karan Gupta told reporters here.

A bulk of the asset quality stress will emanate from the unsecured retail exposure, Gupta said, stressing that the same is 'manageable' and will not have any systemic ramifications. The under ₹50,000 retail unsecured portion accounts for around 0.4 per cent of the banking credit, while only 3.6 per cent of the advances are the ones having a lending rate of over 11 per cent, the agency said.

The agency further said that credit growth has 'lost steam', and sharply revised down its FY25 system credit growth estimate to 13-13.5 per cent as against 15 per cent earlier, and also added that the core interest income is likely to be hit in the next fiscal.

Banks' net interest margin (NIM) will narrow by 0.10 per cent in the new fiscal due to a transmission of past hikes,

higher slippages and a change in accounting policies, the agency said.

The gap between credit and deposit growth, which has moderated lately, is likely to narrow in FY26, the agency believes.

Other challenges for the sector include the introduction of new norms on project finance which may require higher provisioning, liquidity coverage ratio under which lower proportion of liabilities may be available for lending and a transition to expected credit loss framework, the agency said, without sharing its expectations on when the same will be implemented.

The Reserve Bank's moves on bank regulation under former governor Shaktikanta Das' six-year term have made the sector more resilient and the central bank is unlikely to 'completely dilute' the same in favour of addressing the growth requirements, an analyst said.

There is a possibility that the RBI's norms 'can become less stringent' under the new Governor Sanjay Malhotra, the analyst said.

The agency has maintained its rating and outlook on banks, non-bank finance companies and housing finance companies, but tweaked the outlooks on certain asset segments due to the heightened stress possibilities.

Gupta said the outlooks on personal loans, unsecured business loans and microfinance have been downgraded to 'deteriorating' from 'stable' earlier on the asset quality concerns.

SHORT TAKES

Auto retail sales rise 9% in 2024

New Delhi: Automobile retail sales grew 9 per cent year on year in 2024 riding on the back of robust demand for two-wheelers and passenger vehicles amid challenging business environment, dealers' body FADA said Tuesday. Overall vehicle registrations stood at 2,61,07,679 units last year as compared to 2,39,28,293 units in the 2023 calendar year, recording a growth of 9 per cent. “Despite multiple headwinds in CY24, including heatwaves, elections at both central and state levels and uneven monsoon, the auto retail industry remained resilient,” the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President CS Vigneshwar said in a statement.

BMW India posts record car sales

New Delhi: BMW Group India Tuesday reported its best-ever annual car sales at 15,721 units in 2024, an 11 per cent growth over the previous year. The BMW brand registered 15,012 units, while the MINI brand clocked 709 units in 2024, BMW Group India said in a statement. The group's motorcycle brand, BMW Motorrad sold 8,301 units in the January-December 2024 period, it added. “Posting the highest-ever car sales in India, BMW Group India has also crossed a milestone of 15,000 cars,” BMW Group India President and CEO Vikram Pawah said. In 2024, 1,249 units of fully-electric BMW and MINI cars were delivered, the company said, adding BMW Group India also crossed cumulative 3,000 EV deliveries till date.

Kalyan Jewellers revenue up 39%

New Delhi: Kalyan Jewellers on Tuesday said its consolidated revenue increased 39 per cent year-on-year during the third quarter of the current fiscal, driven by strong festive and wedding demand. The company had reported a consolidated net revenue of ₹5,223.07 crore in the third quarter (October-December) of the previous fiscal. India operations saw a 41 per cent revenue growth during Q3 of the fiscal 2024-25 compared to Q3 of the previous year, with 24 per cent same-store-sales-growth, the company said.

BIZ BUZZ

SBI OBSERVES PBD 2025



Bhubaneswar: State Bank of India Bhubaneswar Circle is celebrating Prabasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) 2025 from 8th to 10th January and has scheduled a series of events to connect and engage with the Indian diaspora. Aparajita Sarangi, MP, Bhubaneswar, unveiled a sand art sculpture crafted in front of SBI Local Head Office building in the presence of MLA Khurda Prasanta Jagdev, Chief General Manager SBI Bhubaneswar Circle Dinesh Pruthi, General Manager (Network-I) Ponnambalam M, General Manager (Network-II) Kaushal Kishor Singh, Dy General Manager (RC&WM) Alok Kumar Sinha and staff members of LHO. A Nukkad Natak was also performed on the Raj Path in front of LHO building on the occasion and was viewed by a large number of public.

Housing demand at 12-year high

New Delhi: Housing sales rose 7 per cent annually in 2024 across eight major cities to reach 12-year high at 3,50,613 units on better demand for premium homes amid stable mortgage rates and strong economic growth, according to Knight Frank. Last month, real estate consultant Anarock, however, had reported that housing sales declined 4 per cent in 2024 to nearly 4.6 lakh units across seven major cities. In a virtual conference Tuesday, property consultant Knight Frank India Chairman and Managing Director Shishir Bajjal noted that the Indian housing market saw a strong demand for homes priced between ₹2-5 crore each. Hyderabad and Pune reached an all-time high and Mumbai recorded a 13-year peak.

Getty Images buying Shutterstock amid AI challenge

The merger comes at a time when companies that use still images are facing increased competition from images generated by artificial intelligence

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Jan 7: Getty Images is buying Shutterstock to create a \$3.7 billion visual content company.

The merger comes at a time when companies that use still images are facing increased competition from images generated by artificial intelligence.

The companies said Tuesday that they have complementary

portfolios and that a merger will provide customers with a broader array of still imagery, video, music, 3D and other media.

“With the rapid rise in demand for compelling visual content across industries, there has never been a better time for our two businesses to come together,” Getty Images CEO Craig Peters said in a prepared statement.

Peters will serve as CEO of the combined business.

“We are excited by the opportunities we see to expand our creative content library and enhance our product offering to meet diverse customer needs,” Shutterstock CEO Paul Hennessy said.

Getty Images shareholders will own about 54.7% of the

Rupee continues to drop against dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 7: The rupee fell 5 paise to settle at 85.73 (provisional) against the US dollar Tuesday, as higher crude oil prices and outflow of foreign funds continued to weigh on the local unit. Forex traders said the rupee pared some of its intraday losses as the American currency retreated from its elevated levels. Moreover, the recovery in the domestic equity market also aided sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.77, touched the day's peak of 85.65 and hit an intraday low of 85.80 against the greenback. The unit settled at 85.73 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 5 paise from its previous close. Monday, the rupee settled 11 paise higher at 85.68 against the dollar. During intraday, the unit had hit the lowest-ever level of 85.84 against the American currency.

“We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on FII outflows and underlying strength in the US dollar amid expectations of no rate cut by Fed in January. However, any extended recovery in the domestic markets may support rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from ISM services PMI, trade balance and JOLTS jobs data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹85.50 to ₹85.90,” Anuj Choudhary of Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Markets rebound after 2-day decline



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 7: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded Tuesday after sliding for the past two sessions, driven by intense buying in blue-chip stocks like Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and L&T amid a firm trend in global markets. However, a decline in IT stocks ahead of the earnings season and depreciating rupee against the greenback restricted the market rally, traders said.

In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 234.12 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at 78,199.11. During the day, it jumped 487.75 points or 0.62 per cent to 78,452.74. The NSE Nifty gained 91.85 points or 0.39 per cent to 23,707.90.

“Amid positive global cues indicating no major concerns regarding HMPV, the domestic market partially recovered

from yesterday's sharp sell-off but traded within a range ahead of the critical first advance estimates for India's FY25 GDP. This comes in the context of moderated growth expectations, as the RBI recently revised its growth projection downwards. In the near term, the market is expected to remain cautious, awaiting signs of earnings recovery during the upcoming result season, while also dealing with ongoing FII selling, which is driven by the strengthening dollar, rising US bond yields, and reduced expectations of further rate cuts,” Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Tata Motors, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Nestle India, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers.



combined company at closing and Shutterstock stockholders will own approximately 45.3%. Shutterstock shareholders can choose to receive either approximately \$28.85 per share

in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own; or a mixed con-

sideration of 9.17 shares of Getty Images common stock plus \$9.50 in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own.

The combined company will operate as Getty Images, and will continue to trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the GETY ticker symbol.

Its board will have 11 members, comprised of Peters, six directors designated by Getty Images and four directors designated by Shutterstock, including Hennessy. The chairman will be Mark Getty, current chairman of Seattle-based Getty Images.

Shares of New York-based Shutterstock jumped more than 30% before the market opened, while Getty Images' stock soared more than 58%.

Microsoft to invest \$3bn in AI, cloud expansion in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 7: Microsoft will invest USD 3 billion (about ₹25,700 crore) to expand its cloud computing and artificial intelligence capabilities in India, its chief executive officer Satya Nadella said Tuesday.

The tech giant will also train 10 million people in AI skills in India by 2030, Nadella said, addressing a conference attended by startup founders and executives from technology firms here.

Nadella is the latest in the list of tech tycoons to have visited India - the nation of 1.4 billion people that is emerging as an AI battlefield. Chip maker Nvidia chief Jensen Huang, AMD's Lia Su and Meta chief AI scientist Yann LeCun had in recent months visited India, home to millions of programmers and technology services providers like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys and Wipro.



Nadella said the USD 3 billion investment in India would be the "single-largest expansion" done in the country. “The diffusion rate of AI in India is exciting.”

He, however, did not give a time frame for the spending.

Microsoft provides its cloud computing services under the Azure brand name. It has over 60 Azure regions comprising more than 300 data centres.

“In India, we are excited about all the regions that we have. We have Central India, South India, West India, and South Central India. We also have the capacities that we built up with Jio. We have a lot of regional expansion happening,” Nadella said.

When Nadella last visited India in February 2024, he announced the company would provide 2 million people in the country with AI skilling opportunities by 2025, focused on training individuals in smaller cities and rural areas. The Microsoft Chairman also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday in New Delhi. Nadella said the Prime Minister shared his vision on the artificial intelligence mission, India stack, and entrepreneurial aspirations in the country, among others.

MALAYSIA OPEN

Lakshya crashes out; Prannoy's match halts

Sen, Sindhu to headline India Open Super 750

Kho Kho WC to begin with India vs Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Jan 7: An inconsistent Lakshya Sen faltered in his opening match, while HS Prannoy endured a frustrating start to the season-opening Malaysia Super 100 badminton tournament as his opener against Canada's Brian Yang was suspended midway due to a leaking roof at the Axiata Arena Tuesday.

Lakshya, coming off a title win at the Syed Modi International in Lucknow and a third-place finish at the King Cup International, failed to replicate his recent form and succumbed to Chi Yu-jen of Chinese Taipei, losing 14-21, 7-21.

The Indian shuttler's game was riddled with unforced errors, leaving him with little chance against the 27-year-old.

Prannoy, returning to action after the Paris Olympics, was leading 21-12, 6-3 when rainwater began seeping through the roof, forcing play to be stopped on Court 3 about 25 minutes into the match.

After a delay of over an hour, play resumed around 4:15 PM, but the match was halted again as the leak persisted.

Yang was leading 11-9 in the second game when officials decided to suspend the match, which will now resume on Wednesday with the score reading 21-12, 9-11.

"Played for 25 min, took a break for 165 min because of Rain and then again played for 5 more minutes. Shall continue playing the same match tomorrow," Prannoy wrote on his 'X' page. Prannoy had raised the issue with the chair umpire af-



ter water started pooling on the left front section of the court. Organisers inspected the area, leading to the suspension of the match.

Matches on Court 2 were also stopped for the same reason, while Court 1 remained operational. In bizarre scenes, organisers were seen using white towels to dry the courts.

Treesa-Jolly ease into second round

Earlier in the day, India's women's doubles duo of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand easily overcame Ornnicha Jongsathapornpam and Sukkita Suwachai, beating the Thai pair in straight games in the opening round.

The Indian pair, seeded sixth here, won 21-10, 21-10 in just 30 minutes to secure a place in the round of 16.

On a high following their success in the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament in Lucknow, Treesa and Gayatri faced little challenge from the unseeded Thai pair taking a 17-8 lead in no time.

The second game saw the Thai pair go neck-and-neck till 8-all before Treesa and Gayatri ran away with the game and the match.

Lakshya succumbs to errors

The opening game was tightly contested in the initial stages as the two players traded points to stay level at 6-6.

Leading 9-7, Yu Jen claimed a crucial long rally with a cross-court smash and entered the mid-game interval with a three-point cushion, aided by a misjudgment from Lakshya. After the break, Lakshya

began committing a flurry of unforced errors, allowing his opponent to build confidence and extend his lead to 13-9.

In the end, Lakshya's inconsistency proved costly as three successive unforced errors handed Yu Jen the opening game.

The Indian's struggles carried over into the second game as well, where he quickly found himself trailing 1-8.

By the mid-game interval, Lakshya faced an uphill battle, trailing 4-11. His downward spiral continued as Yu Jen surged ahead to 19-7, just two points away from victory.

A netted shot from Lakshya gave Yu Jen 13 match points, and the Chinese Taipei player sealed the win with a decisive cross-court smash.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Star shuttlers Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu will headline host India's largest-ever contingent of 21 players at the Yonex-Sunrise India Open Super 750 badminton tournament, starting here from January 14.

With top stars like Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen, An Se Young, and world No 1 Shi Yuqi leading the field, top-tier action is expected at the Indira Gandhi Stadium.

Axelsen, a 2023 finalist, had withdrawn from the last edition after falling sick while playing in the Malaysia Open.

A total of 21 Indian players, including three men's singles, four women's singles, two men's doubles, eight women's doubles, and four mixed doubles pairs, will compete in the USD 950,000 BWF World Tour event, which offers 11,000 ranking points for the champions.

"With so many Indian players competing in a Super 750 event, it's a remarkable sign of the growth and rise of Indian badminton on the world stage," Sanjay Mishra, General Secretary, Badminton Association of India, said in a release.

"This is just the beginning—2025 promises to be a year where more names will feature alongside the established names, while fresh faces will emerge and shine bringing glory and pride to India."

The tournament, which was elevated to Super 750 category in 2023, saw India field 14 entries in the past two editions, and India's highlights were Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy reaching the men's doubles final and HS Prannoy making the men's singles semi-finals in 2024.



LIST OF INDIA PLAYERS

Men's Singles: Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy, Priyanshu Rajawat

Women's Singles: PV Sindhu, Malvika Bansod, Anupama Upadhyaya, Aakrushi Kashyap

Men's Doubles: Chirag Shetty/Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, K Sai Pratheek/Pruthvi K Roy

Women's Doubles: Treesa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand, Ashwini Ponnappa/Tanisha Crasto, Rutuparna Panda/Swetaparna Panda, Mansa Rawat/Gayatri Rawat, Ashwini Bhat/Shikha Gautam, Sakshi Gahlawat/Apoorva Gahlawat, Sania Sikkandar/Rashmi Ganesh, Mrunmayee Deshpande/Prerana Alvekar

Mixed Doubles: Dhruv Kapila/Tanisha Crasto, K Sathish Kumar/Aadya Variyath, Rohan Kapoor/G Ruthvika Shivani, Ashithi Surya/Amrutha Pramuthesh.

New Delhi, Jan 7: A potentially exciting match between India and Nepal January 13 will set the ball rolling for the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup to be played here at the Indira Gandhi Stadium.

The January 13-19 tournament will see participation from 39 teams in the men's and women's categories.

The men's competition features 20 teams divided into four groups and the league stage will culminate January 16, followed by the playoffs beginning January 17.

The men's final will take place January 19.

India are in group A that also has Nepal, Peru, Brazil and Bhutan.

In the women's segment, 19 teams have been divided into four groups. India are in Group A along with Iran, Malaysia, and South Korea. The home side will begin its campaign with a match against South Korea January 14.

Playoff format

The top two teams from each group along with the two best third-placed teams will qualify for the quarter-finals before the semis and finals pan out.

Teams and groupings

Men
Group A: India, Nepal, Peru, Brazil, Bhutan
Group B: South Africa, Ghana, Argentina, Netherlands, Iran
Group C: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, South Korea, USA, Poland
Group D: England, Germany, Malaysia, Australia, Kenya.

Women
Group A: India, Iran, Malaysia, South Korea
Group B: England, Australia, Kenya, Uganda, Netherlands
Group C: Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Germany, Bangladesh
Group D: South Africa, New Zealand, Poland, Peru, Indonesia.

SHORT TAKES

Forest wins at Wolves

Wolverhampton: Nottingham Forest beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 3-0 away from home and moved within six points of Premier League leader Liverpool recently.

Robbie Keane to coach Ferencvaros

Budapest: Ireland soccer great Robbie Keane was hired to coach Ferencvaros, which is chasing a sixth straight Hungarian league title and looking to advance in the Europa League.

Norrie accidentally hits spectator

Auckland: British tennis star Cameron Norrie apologised and avoided disqualification when a racquet he tossed in the air struck a spectator at the ATP Tour tournament in Auckland Tuesday.

Over 300 athletes to join in Boccia nationals

New Delhi: Over 300 athletes from across the country will participate in the 9th Boccia Sub-Junior, Junior and Senior National Championship, scheduled to be held at the Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone in Visakhapatnam from January 8 to 14.

Guangzhou FC folds under debts

Guangzhou: Guangzhou FC, the most successful soccer club in Chinese history, disbanded recently due to crippling debts. The club, formerly known as Guangzhou Evergrande, has been unable to meet the Chinese Football Association's financial entry requirements needed to compete in the 2025 domestic season.

Pak fined; docked 5 WTC points

Dubai: The ICC has fined Pakistan players 25 per cent of their match fee and also docked the team five World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa in the second Test at Newlands. South Africa, which will take on Australia in the WTC final at Lord's in June, swept Pakistan 2-0 in the series with a 10-wicket win inside four days in the second test.

Bumrah nominated for ICC Men's Player of the Month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Jan 7: Star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah was Tuesday nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for December 2024 after his standout performance against Australia in the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

In the month of December, Bumrah took 22 wickets in the three Tests at a phenomenal average of 14.22 and overall, the 31-year-old finished with 32 wickets across five Tests.

Unfortunately, Bumrah could not bowl in Australia's second innings at Sydney because of a back spasm.

His standout spells included nine wickets in both the Brisbane and Melbourne Tests, which played a pivotal role in keeping India in competition.

Competing with Bumrah for the award is Australian skipper Pat Cummins, who guided Australia to 3-1 series win over India, and South African seamer Dane Paterson.

Pacer Cummins showcased fine form, claiming 17 wickets



across three Tests against India at an average of 17.64.

His best bowling performance came in Adelaide, a sensational 5/57, which helped the hosts secure a commanding 10-wicket victory.

Cummins also contributed with the bat through crucial knocks of 49 and 41 in Melbourne.

Paterson's bowling efforts against Sri Lanka and Pakistan were crucial in the Proteas' successful campaign.

He took 13 wickets in two Tests at an average of 16.92 as SA sealed a place against the Aussies in the World Test Championship final later this year.

India to host top javelin competition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 7: Olympic gold and silver medallist Neeraj Chopra will headline a star-studded global javelin competition which India will host most likely in September, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) announced Tuesday.

This event is in addition to a slew of competitions India has expressed its interest to host, including the marquee 2029 World Championships.

Outgoing AFI president Adille Sumariwalla confirmed that India has expressed interest to host the 2029 World Championships, as well as the 2027 World Relays. The AFI has already submitted its expression of interest to host the 2028 World Junior Championships when the international body chief Sebastian Coe visited the country in November last.

"There will be a top javelin competition in India in which the top-10 javelin throwers in the world will compete. This will be an invitation tournament to be held later this year," Sumariwalla, whose 12-year tenure as AFI chief ended Tues-



day, said on the first day of the AFI Annual General Meeting (AGM).

"Neeraj Chopra will be there. He is part of the team that is organising the event, along with JSW, a foreign firm and the AFI are together creating this competition. This is being done as there is so much interest in javelin with August 7 -- when Chopra won the Tokyo Olympics gold -- being observed as National Javelin Day."

Sumariwalla later told PTI that the event is most likely to be held in September.

Talking about the big global events India is hoping to host in the next four years, Sumari-

walla said, "Bids are open at the moment for (2028) World Junior Championships, 2029 World Championships, World Relays (2027) and India is going to bid for all of them. We have put in our expression of interest and so the process has started."

"We might also do a World Half Marathon," he said.

India is hosting a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze-level event in Bhubaneswar August 10. This will be the first global athletics meet to be hosted by India after the international permit meets, held in the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Odisha FC refutes claims

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Odisha FC has refuted recent claims by local media outlets regarding the club's probable move. In a statement released Tuesday, the team has called out the media reports as completely untrue and misleading.

"Odisha FC remains deeply committed to its roots in Odisha, and enjoys a strong and fruitful partnership with the state Government and the Sports and Youth Services Department. We are proud to represent the people of Odisha on the national and international football stage," the statement read.

The team has also laid out its commitment to the state through active participation in various leagues and competitions. In Indian Super League (ISL), the senior men's team continues to compete at the highest level of Indian club football. The men's team has won the Super Cup 2023 and made it to the final of the Super Cup 2024 edition as well. The team also made it to the semi-finals of the ISL in the last season as well.

FROM ALIEN TO ARJUNA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Thulasimathi Murugesan was once reduced to tears as some of her schoolmates taunted her with the calls of 'alien' -- an unsympathetic reference to her birth deformity and dark complexion. But those days of tribulations are behind her now.

The 22-year-old stands in front of the world as an Arjuna Awardee, a reward came her way after winning a silver medal in the Paris Paralympics.

Thulasimathi's story is of relentless perseverance, fuelled by the unwavering support of her father who refused to let societal scorn dictate his daughter's destiny.

D Murugesan, a daily wage labourer with an unquenchable love for sports, did not let his circumstances scuttle him from encouraging his daughters --Thulasimathi and Kirut-tigha -- from pursuing a career in sports.

"He never let us see his struggles. He didn't want us to know

Murugesan dedicates award to her father

how hard he worked or how much he sacrificed to make our dreams come true. That's why every medal, every award I win, belongs to him," Thulasimathi told PTI.

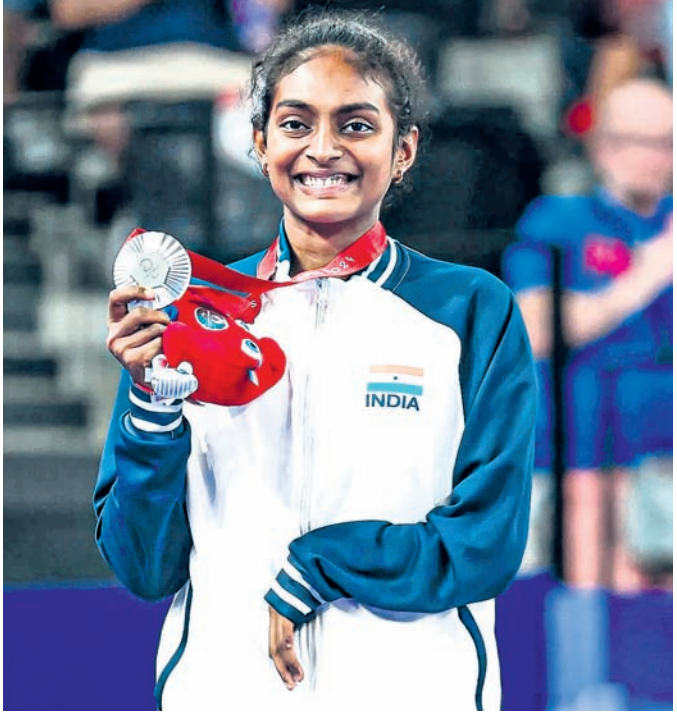
Murugesan's belief in his daughters was steadfast, even as neighbours scoffed at his ambitions.

"Why take them to the ground? They're just girls—they'll get married and leave one day," they would sneer. Yet, Murugesan persisted, taking coaching courses to train his daughters personally.

The journey began with experimentation. Hockey, tennis, football, volleyball—no sport was left untried. But it was badminton, the one they found the most challenging, that Murugesan chose as their calling.

"When we said it was hard, my father declared, 'This will be your profession.' That decision changed our lives," Thulasimathi said.

Battling Against Odds
Despite the family's financial constraints, the Murugesans



found ways to keep the dream burning bright. Street-level tournaments

with cash prizes became the stepping stone. Every rupee earned went towards buying

better equipment -- shoes, rackets, shuttlecocks etc.

"I still remember asking my father why we couldn't have branded shoes like others. Our shoes cost Rs 200, and the tournament T-shirts were the only branded items we had," the girl from Kancheepuram shared.

Talking about her childhood, Thulasimathi said, "During my first grade, I still remember, I went through many painful experiences where my classmates would bully me because of my disability. They would call me 'alien' because of my hand, and they would tease me about my colour, my background—everything."

Her disability, a result of muscular dystrophy, had already limited her left hand's movement.

But an accident in 2022 rendered it completely paralyzed. While driving a scooter with one hand, she lost control and suffered a severe injury, leading to a radial excision. The family was devastated.

"My parents cried for days.

They couldn't believe what had happened to me," she recalled.

Yet, Thulasimathi rebounded. After recovering, she traveled to 15 countries, amassing 16 gold, 11 silver, and 7 bronze medals, including a remarkable haul at the Asian Para Games.

"I dedicated the medals to my father at Chennai airport. I knelt down and offered it to him—it was the most memorable moment for me."

The Paris Paralympics and the Arjuna Award

Her silver medal performance at the Paris Paralympics in 2024 was a career-defining moment. Thulasimathi was in her veterinary medicine class in Namakkal when the Arjuna Award was announced.

"My classes usually end at 5 pm, but I think the announcement was made around 3 pm. I was in class, and I didn't know about it. After my classes ended, I checked my phone and found it was flooded with congratulatory messages. I also received many calls from my friends," she said.