

Lok Seva Bhawan entry allowed for all scribes

Bhubaneswar: The state government Tuesday reinstated journalists' access to Lok Seva Bhawan (Secretariat) here. A notification issued by I&PR department stated that the government has allowed both accredited and non-accredited journalists to enter the Secretariat for news reporting. The new guidelines mark a departure from the restrictions imposed by the previous BJD government during Covid-19 pandemic. The curbs on Lok Seva Bhawan entry were partially lifted in 2022 for accredited journalists, but they were still prevalent for many media personnel.

'India helping Kerala nurse on death row in Yemen'

New Delhi: India Tuesday said it is extending all possible help to explore relevant options in the case of an Indian nurse facing death sentence in Yemen. Nimisha Priya, hailing from Kollengode in Kerala's Palakkad, has been reportedly handed capital punishment for allegedly murdering a Yemeni citizen. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi is extending all possible help in the matter. "We are aware of the sentencing of Nimisha Priya in Yemen. We understand that the family of Priya is exploring relevant options," Jaiswal said. Priya's death sentence, pronounced by a trial court in 2020, was reportedly approved by Yemen's President Rashad al-Alimi.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



WELCOMING NEW YEAR: Fireworks explode over the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge during New Year's Eve celebrations in Sydney, Tuesday

Biren says sorry; Cong seeks apology from PM

Imphal, Dec 31: On the last day of the year, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh expressed 'regret' and 'apologised' for the ethnic strife that has gripped the state since May 3, 2023, leaving 250 dead and rendered thousands homeless. Addressing reporters here, Singh said that there has been relative peace in the state in the last three-four months, which gives him hope that normalcy will be restored in the New Year. "I want to say sorry for what happened in the state. Many people lost their loved ones and many had to leave their homes. I regret and want to apologise. But after seeing relative peace in the last three-four months, I hope that normalcy will be restored in the coming year," he said. Meanwhile, the Congress asked why can't PM Narendra Modi go there and do the same even though he travels across the country and the world. In a post on X, Congress

₹676cr edu boost

In what is likely to give a boost to quality of education in state universities and colleges ahead of the implementation of NEP, 2020, the Centre has approved ₹676.70 crore under Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) for their infrastructure development. Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said the funds, to be shared on 40:60 basis between the state and the Centre, has been sanctioned under four different components for top institutions across Odisha with a focus on research, training and attracting more female students. While the infra boost will make these institutions attractive for students, the government, at the same time, should initiate immediate steps to fill over 57 per cent of the sanctioned teaching posts presently lying vacant in 12 state public universities

Suraj said that of ₹676.70 crore, the state would bear ₹268 crore (40 per cent), while the Centre would provide the remaining ₹408.70 crore (60 per cent). The fund has been approved under different components, including Multi Disciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERU), Grants to Strengthen Universities (GSU), Grants to Strengthen Colleges (GSC) and Gender Inclusion and Equity Initiatives (GIIE), and Management Monitoring Evaluation and Research (MMER), he said. He said ₹100 crore each has been approved for Berhampur University; Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, Baripada; Ravenshaw University, Cuttack; and Sambalpur University, under the MERU component of the scheme. Similarly, under the GSU component, Vikram Dev University, Jeypore; Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur; Kalahandi University, Bhawanipatna; Rajendra University, Bolangir and Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur would get ₹20 crore each for development of infrastructure, Suraj said. The Education ministry has also sanctioned ₹5 crore each for 24 colleges under the GSC component, while five districts - Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Bhadrak, Nabarangpur and Sambalpur - would get ₹10 crore each for carrying out gender inclusion and equity initiatives, he added. Under the scheme, provisions have also been made for the development of classrooms, laboratories, libraries and hostels and making the infrastructure accessible to persons with disabilities. Besides, the higher educational institutions can procure software and hardware to enhance digital education, he said. To attract more female students, the higher educational institutes can offer skill development, career building and self-defence training under the gender inclusion and equity initiative component of the Central scheme. With the implementation of the scheme, the NAAC ranking of the higher educational institutes would improve in coming years, he hoped. Suraj said that the government is working to implement the National Education Policy 2020 to make the educational institutions multi-disciplinary and students compatible with global standards. Meanwhile, Berhampur University VC Geetanjali Dash said, "We are happy as the Centre approved the much-needed project for overall development of the university."

Upcoming concerts to make your 2025 pitch perfect

From pop performances under a 'sky full of stars' in Mumbai to a rugged rap gig complemented by the finest streetwear — the slew of upcoming concerts lined up for 2025 in India is exciting. The year promises with some of the finest in the business making pit stops around the country. The genres are varying — from rap to rock, with plenty of pop thrown in for good measure. Here are a few prominent upcoming concerts lined up to pencil into your social calendar for 2025.

Coldplay
If you've managed to make it past the wild booking experience of this concert, you're in for a performance of a lifetime. Grammy award-winning band Coldplay will bring its Music Of The Spheres World Tour to India from January 18 to 26 with two back-to-back concerts in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, respectively.

Savage has been slated at Gurugram between January 31 and February 2 during the country's biggest celebration of sneakers, streetwear - Indian Sneaker Festival ft. On the itinerary is a performance of a lifetime by the Grammy award-winning artist — complemented by fashion and food pop-ups.

Cigarettes After Sex
Alternative indie-pop band 'Cigarettes After Sex' will hit up Gurugram, Mumbai and Bengaluru January 24, 25 and 28 while on their World Tour. Front and centre are their latest LP, X which tells the tale of a relationship through heart-wrenching lyrics and melodies.

Lollapalooza
In 2024, the Jonas Brothers and Sting created history in Mumbai. 2025 will see the iconic punk-rock group Green Day and pop icon Shawn Mendes take centre stage March 8 and 9 at Mumbai — with artists like Zedd, Louis Tomlinson, and Glass Animals joining them at Lollapalooza music festival.

Ed Sheeran
Genre-bending English singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran is making his way back to India in 2025 for the Mathematics (+...x) tour. He's set to make pit stops across various parts of the country - Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, Shillong and Delhi-NCR - between January 30 and February 15, reports lifestyle magazine 'Lifestyle Asia'.



21 Savage
An exciting concert by 21

DADLS - 73

**ନବବର୍ଷ-୨୦୨୫
ଅବସରରେ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା**

ନବବର୍ଷ-୨୦୨୫ ଅବସରରେ ମୁଁ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଆନ୍ତରିକ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଉଛି । ନୂତନ ବର୍ଷ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ହସ, ଖୁସି, ଶାନ୍ତି ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ଭରିଦେଉ, ଏତିକି କାମନା । ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଦେଶର ଏକ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ପରିଣତ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ତେ ନିଜ ନିଜ ସ୍ତରରେ ନିଷ୍ଠାପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପ୍ରୟାସ କରି ରଖିବାକୁ ମୁଁ ଆହ୍ୱାନ ଜଣାଉଛି ।

**ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳ
ଓଡ଼ିଶା**

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା

ନୂଆ ବର୍ଷ ୨୦୨୫ ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ ମୁଁ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଆନ୍ତରିକ ଶୁଭକାମନା ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦରୁ ନୂଆ ବର୍ଷ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ଆନନ୍ଦ, ସୁଖ ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ଭରି ଦେଉ । ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ନୂଆ ବର୍ଷ ଅବସରରେ ସଂକଳ୍ପ ନେବା - ଏକ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ଓ ବିକଶିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଠନ ଦିଗରେ ନିଜର ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଅବଦାନ ରଖିବା ।

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

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WHAT 2025

HAS IN STORE FOR YOU

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ARIES

(21ST MARCH TO 20TH APRIL)

The impact of Jupiter indicates a positive beginning of year for your career growth. Mercury may help you to perform well amid some complex issues at your work place. Business persons will be able to grab some important projects around the middle of January. The impact of Mercury and Venus may grant you some good growth besides which some financial gains are also possible. Venus also suggests that plenty of passion and romance. You may shine brightly, and your radiance will draw the right people into your social circle. A highly desirable person may take an interest in you around the month of February. Married couples should enjoy this period as some joyful activities will take over. The influence of South Node can give some hindrance or slow progress in your education as well as some disagreement with the elder or with a mentor in your studies in the beginning but you may get strong support of Jupiter around the month of February hence you will flourish in your studies. The impact of North Node may cause some unrest in your health during the month of February. Due to the positive impact of Jupiter, your performance may remain excellent and success will be achieved in your career as the year advances. The business people may make encouraging progress and also fare well enough in new projects during the latter part of March. It would lead you towards the financial growth and you would have a good time besides enjoying all the financial comforts. You may however remain concerned with family related matters and your love relationship may also face some disruptions due to the impact of Mars during the latter half of March. Issues related to property can be resolved around the month of March. The impact of Mercury may bring a good period to carry out the plans that you may have in your mind in order to boost your prospects around the month of April. But your commitment and devotion in your love life will be tested.



TAURUS

(21ST APRIL TO 21ST MAY)

As the year begins, the impact of Saturn may push you to shake off your complacency. Conditions may begin to improve and some pending financial issues may also get resolved gradually. Things shall get better in your education and Mercury make you able to achieve your goals. There can be some phases of low vitality but you will be able to manage your health. This can be difficult phase for your relationship as suggested by North Node though. You may have enough support of Venus and Mercury to make progress in the beginning of February. But as the period progresses, you need to watch your step as the impact of the South Node can be very complex. This month may bring clarity and hence you may feel relaxed and confident about the future of your relationship. You may face a little hiccup in your studies. Some minor health issues may bother you. In the beginning of March, some uncertainty caused by Mars may leave you somewhat unsettled in your personal life and in your career as well. Gradually, though, things shall start falling in place due to the support of Venus. During April, you may think about starting a new and more relaxed regime but finding a balance between your material responsibilities and internal desires shall be difficult due to impact of the North Node. Some good inflow of money is expected but, your extravagance side comes to the fore which might cause some problems. Jupiter could prove to be a blessing for your studies and you are likely to enjoy success as well. Due to the impact of the South Node, your decision making ability may be affected adversely in the beginning of this May. Some happenings in close relationships may put you under stress. As the month progresses, Venus may be bringing you fresh hope and renewed energy. You may develop a strong urge to earn big money under the influence of North Node. Go slow, as it can cause illusions. The beginning of June will be the time to put your plans under testing.



GEMINI

(22ND MAY TO 21ST JUNE)

As the year begins, there will be positive momentum in your career due to support of Mercury but, you will be sort of unsure of your decisions and abilities at times. Gradually, you will have better control and there may be something promising for you in store around the end of January. Venus indicates that gradually the money flow will increase. New, meaningful and interesting relationships will get formed. Your love life will blossom but Mars indicates that hasty commitments may backfire. A sense of positivity will prevail on the career front during February. You may have enough support of Venus to enhance your financial potential. There may be some exciting romantic experiences around the mid of February. You are likely to face some stiff resistance in your education this time around. All you need to do is work methodically and properly. Jupiter may bring positive change in career path during March. Venus may shine brightly but some unavoidable expenses may cause some disruptions. Your bond with near and dear ones may improve gradually despite some complex issues caused by North Node. Barring some digestive disorders, due to some irregular eating habits, you may be able to maintain good health. Mercury indicates that you may have to struggle more during March before getting desired results in your studies. The impact of Jupiter and Mercury will be helpful for your career in April. For business persons, this phase shall bring good news. Some smart decisions are likely to enhance your financial strength. However, Mars indicates that there may be some unexpected ups and downs in your personal life and relationship this time around. Though you may have good inflow of money some incidental expenses may crop up suddenly due to the impact of South Node during May. A sense of dissatisfaction may bother you in your personal life as there may be less time to enjoy with your beloved ones.



CANCER

(22ND JUNE TO 22ND JULY)

In the beginning of year, the impact of Mars and Mercury may bring some complicated issues at career front but gradually, positive results are likely to come your way. Jupiter is likely to open new avenues to find higher elevation gradually, your love life is likely to be a roller-coaster keeping you in a state of flux. But Venus will encourage you go forward and nurture the bond of love in your relationship. Your relationship shall blossom during the latter half of January. During the latter half of January, the impact of South Node may bring confront some complex issues at financial front. There may be some disruptions in your studies in the beginning but Jupiter will shower blessing and you are likely to get success during February. Vicissitudes in health are possible around the middle of this January due to the impact of North Node. The impact of South Node can be complex during the latter half of February for your career but the combined impact of Mercury and Jupiter in the beginning of March indicates a good time for experimenting with new ideas. Expansion of business shall pick up the pace now. March looks romantic phase owing to Venus facilitating love and relationship. Also your performance in all subjects is going to improve due to support of Mercury during March. You would receive good gains and so on the financial position would stay satisfying and you are likely to register major improvement in your health status. This time around. The combined impact of Jupiter and Mars during April may bring some good opportunities for growth and gain in your profession. Also, you may get the help of Jupiter hence you may now feel a sense of relief as your beloved is starts getting attracted to you. However, South Node may bring some discontent in money matters but, you will be able to manage your money matters efficiently this time around. Due to the impact of North Node, you are likely to face some complex situations at your work place in the beginning of May.



LEO

(23RD JULY TO 22ND AUGUST)

In the beginning of this year, Venus may bring some good opportunities for progress in your career. It will be the time to be go slow and steady while making any financial decisions. Ambitious attempts for short term gains may cause unnecessary burden. Venus indicates that your love life and relationship will be in good shape. Jupiter may favour your study of new things and researches. You may get support from your mentors and hence you may make encouraging progress in your education. Barring some minor health issues, you are likely to maintain normal health. Jupiter may bring many positive developments in your professional life during the month of February. Business people may get some good opportunities to strike some big deals but, the impact of South Node may bring some stiff challenges as well. Mercury calls for cautious approach regarding your finance. Your love life is likely to be refreshing during February. You are likely to face some challenges in your education during February due to the impact of South Node. The month of February may help you improve your stamina but there are chances of some old health issues resurface. Venus may bring new opportunity your way at in the beginning of March. It will be very important for business activities as some important dealings may take place around this phase. Mercury is likely to provide you with some good opportunity to enhance your financial strength. North Node indicates that there will be some confusing situations in your personal life during March. It can also be challenging for your studies during March. Irregular eating habits or over-indulgence may cause some health issues. North Node may bring some fresh challenges at your work place during April. Gradually, there's a good chance of making long-term gains owing to your smart moves and good luck supported by Venus during April. Your love life and relationships will be reasonably sorted during May.



VIRGO

(23RD AUGUST TO 22ND SEPTEMBER)

In the beginning of this year, Mercury bringing chaos in love and relationships, but patience and quality time with loved ones help navigate. Money and finances begin with Mars bringing uncertainty and Saturn requiring discipline. Venus enhances earning and saving potential, helping manage finances efficiently as the year advances. Education is supported by Jupiter, suggesting ideal conditions for competitive exams. Health begins with robust vitality, rebounding from past issues. February favors academic pursuits, and March supports education and expansion of knowledge. Career progress is offered by Mercury, but remain calm and composed. February helps consolidate professional position, and March brings favorable opportunities. Venus brings positivity, significantly impacting love life during March, and April brings joy and freshness. March demands discipline and vigilance at your health front but April brings positive impact on your health. April also brings success in your profession, but be prepared for some disruptions as well. The planetary influences during this phase brings valuable guidance of your mentors in your studies, and May is excellent for acquiring new skills and adding knowledge. The impact of planets also motivates fitness enhancements. May brings fresh challenges at your work place, and June finds new ideas for growth. The impact of planets improves health and fitness during this phase and also brings a strengthening financial status. June brings opportunities for growth and gain, but caution is advised this time around. The impact of planets strengthens relationships, and Jupiter brings positive responses, while Venus boosts love and romance this time around. June also brings academic success, but Saturn demands intensified efforts during this phase. Mercury clears uncertainty in your career gradually but Saturn indicates ups and downs in your relationship, requiring tactful handling around the month of July.



LIBRA

(23RD SEPTEMBER TO 22ND OCTOBER)

The year begins with a mix of challenges and opportunities, as indicated by the South Node's emotional reorganization and Mercury's demand for clear financial goal-setting. Venus brings new career opportunities, while Saturn's influence may slow educational progress initially. As the year progresses, Jupiter's expansion and Venus' harmony create a favorable environment for growth and success. In February, Venus and Mercury promise growth and harmony in love, finance, career, education, and health. However, turbulence and temptations may arise, requiring effort, understanding, and discipline to navigate. March brings a mix of challenges and opportunities, with Saturn's influence starting the month slowly but improving as the week unfolds. Venus brings gradual improvement in the middle of the month, while the latter half brings opportunities for growth. April brings growth and deepening connections in love, finance, career, education, and health, thanks to Venus and Mercury. However, finances require caution and discipline throughout the month. May brings joy and growth in love, finance, career, education, and health, thanks to Mercury and Mars. However, finances require caution due to unexpected issues. June brings a mix of harmonious and challenging energies across love, finance, career, education, and health. Mars and Venus support strong finances and comfortable career environments, while Saturn demands extra effort and strategic planning. July requires extra attention in love, finances start strong but Mars may jeopardize stability, and Mercury helps calculated decisions in career and education. August brings passion in love, but requires caution and open communication to navigate emotional vulnerabilities. Jupiter resolves financial challenges with inner strength and resilience. September brings joy and delight in love, while finances are stable and prosperous, but require caution and informed decisions.



SCORPIO

(23RD OCTOBER TO 22ND NOVEMBER)

This year, expect a mix of opportunities and challenges in love, relationships, finance, education, career, and health, with each month bringing its unique planetary influences. In January, refreshing moments and reality checks await in love and relationships, while Jupiter brings financial growth opportunities and new work experiences, but beware of arguments and overconfidence. Initially, energies may be low, but health conditions improve gradually. In February, Jupiter and Venus favor love life and relationships, and financial progress is gradual. North Node indicates that health issues may arise, requiring attention to diet and exercise this time around. March brings challenges in personal life, and also financial planning is crucial. The health and fitness requires attention this time around. In April, Mars and Venus revitalize relationships, and Jupiter supports financial growth, while career progress is supported, but be prepared for work overload. May brings excitement in love life, but financial caution is necessary, and new plans and a strong business position are indicated. Also, indicates chances of health issues related to digestion and food poisoning. June flourishes love life and relationships, despite disruptions, and Jupiter ensures a comfortable financial position, while career growth opportunities arise, and business owners experience a lucky streak. July brings clarity to relationships, and Jupiter offers good earning opportunities, while new professional relationships and assignments emerge. August resolves personal issues, but Mercury's influence may cause concerns, and Saturn brings confusion and hurdles professionally. September brings initial uncertainty in personal life, Jupiter's support ensures sufficient funds, and job seekers receive attractive offers. October requires careful communication in relationships, and financial discipline is necessary, while Mars' presence may bring workplace pressure.



SAGITTARIUS

(23RD NOVEMBER TO 21ST DECEMBER)

As the year begins, you'll receive ample support from transiting Jupiter, enabling you to carry out your plans. However, Saturn demands hard work and a slight adjustment in professional ambitions. You may feel a temporary stagnation in finances, but Venus' positive impact will bring rewards as the year progresses. Initially, the Sun and Mars' impact may affect your love life, causing frustration. But, as the year advances, Venus along with the Mercury will prompt a significant romantic step. February's Venus and Mars influence will amplify your sensuality, making it a splendid phase for relationships and romance. Mars' positive energy will support your health, emphasizing the importance of a balanced and positive mind. However, hectic schedules may lead to burnout, and general health issues may persist until March. The impact of transiting Venus and Mercury will aid progress in studies, examinations, and potential recognition. If pursuing studies abroad, a favorable turn of events is possible. February's planetary influence will bring career growth, achieving favorable results. Be cautious with money matters from March, as Mercury's impact along with North Node can be complex. April is ideal for meditation, yoga, or short-term courses, providing additional knowledge. May's shadow planets can bring complex situations; avoid dubious or risky adventures. June's benevolent Jupiter will bring ease and good fortune. August's Jupiter and Mars influence indicates positive financial dealings and higher returns on previous investments. September's South Node reminds you that balance and moderation are key to a healthy life. Transiting Venus supports pending plans for higher financial status after September. Mercury will bring favorable events in educational matters. October's Venus and Mercury impact will inspire a search for deeper meaning and purpose in love. The last quarter offers ample planetary support for implementing plans and finding positive momentum in your career.



CAPRICORN

(22ND DECEMBER TO 20TH JANUARY)

This year begins on a promising note, with Venus blessing success and prosperity. If you're in business, Mars energizes expansion, and ideas flow. Patience is key, as Venus brings a successful phase and opportunities for additional income in March. In the realm of love, Venus fosters intimacy, but Mars brings shocks and surprises in February, making for a wild ride. Jupiter's benevolent influence supports academic pursuits from the start, bringing hard work closer to dreams. However, South Node's impact emphasizes the importance of devoting time to health. March brings good times, with promotion possibilities and strong positive momentum in business. Profits increase, and Jupiter brings new opportunities in April. Though March may bring love life misunderstandings, balance and positivity are essential. Long-distance travel with loved ones is possible, and Venus gradually boosts love prospects. Mercury brings balance in April, aiding studies, and highlights the importance of regular exercise for health. May's North Node impact causes stress, but Venus' "golden rain" brings extra earnings and exciting love prospects. However, South Node's confusion and obstacles require effort to achieve conjugal bliss, particularly in June. July marks a turning point in career success, despite South Node's challenges and Saturn's transformative power. August's North Node disrupts financial planning, but Venus prepares you for long-term commitment with your partner. As the period advances, love life becomes rewarding, and gratification comes from all spheres. September is crucial for studies and growth, with Jupiter bringing good fortune in business and finance. New sources of financial growth emerge, and Jupiter ensures a strong financial finish. However, October requires health attention, as lethargy and mood disturbances may arise from improper diet or disturbances. Fortunately, the year ends well for health.



AQUARIUS

(21ST JANUARY TO 18TH FEBRUARY)

This year promises to be highly productive for career-related matters, with a strong start for your financial status. It's an ideal time to put long-conceived plans into action to boost your financial prospects, supported by Jupiter's steady progress. Venus highlights your creative vision, setting you apart at work, and if you're willing to put in extra effort, Jupiter will support your studies, leading to significant growth and progress. However, South Node may disrupt your love life's harmony, requiring time and space for each other, and open communication to overcome challenges. Venus will bless your love life around mid-February, bringing new connections and strengthening existing bonds, and if single, you'll meet someone special, potentially leading to a meaningful relationship. Initially, health may be sensitive due to old issues, but Mercury's influence from April will improve your health status, bringing energy and vitality. Mercury also brings positive momentum for career moves, opportunities to interact with experts, expanding your skillset, and gaining valuable insights. Venus fills you with love, celebrating good moments around April's end, and May brings comfortable stability, with no worries about money matters, allowing you to focus on personal growth. Mars stimulates your love life, taking relationships to a fresh level, and June is a romantic time, with Venus helping you find your match if seeking a new relationship. From July, things improve at work, with Jupiter bringing opportunities for expansion and growth in business, and higher education abroad may become a reality, broadening your horizons. However, August's Mars influence can disrupt love life, requiring patience and understanding. Attend to minor health issues to prevent them from becoming serious, and old health issues may resurface in September, affecting activities, but Saturn forces you to quit or reduce addictions, leading to improved well-being.



PISCES

(19TH FEBRUARY TO 20TH MARCH)

In the beginning of the year, the North Node's impact may hinder your ability to break free from constraints, potentially disrupting business plans and causing emotional frustration in your love life, making it essential to navigate these challenges with caution and patience. However, as the period advances, opportunities for improving your financial status will arise, and higher education pursuits will be auspicious, bringing a sense of purpose and direction. Venus will facilitate intimacy with your partner and potentially introduce new relationships, fostering a deeper connection and understanding. Mercury may bring inventive ideas for career growth and financial strength through innovative ventures, encouraging creativity and resourcefulness. Despite some emotional frustration, your immune system will remain efficient, and health issues will be minimal, allowing you to focus on personal growth and development. In February, Mercury indicates opportunities for career growth, while Venus boosts financial strength, creating a sense of stability and security. March brings excellent options and solutions for career elevation, earning opportunities, and romantic wealth, making it an ideal time for progress and advancement. However, the South Node may complicate love life, and health status may be fragile, requiring extra care and attention. From April, planets inspire big thinking, and Venus brings harmony to love life, but North Node may encourage undue risk-taking, disrupting financial planning, and requiring careful consideration and prudence. Jupiter blesses education, and health improves, bringing a sense of well-being and vitality. May requires careful relationship navigation due to North Node's influence, and June is ideal for making a statement at work, and Venus enhances finances, but recent issues may disrupt love life, needing empathy and understanding, a balanced lifestyle.

I extend my heartfelt greetings to all my brothers and sisters in the state on the occasion of the New Year. With the blessings of Lord Jagannath, may your lives be filled with joy, peace and prosperity. Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year! Bande Utkal Janani

MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI | CHIEF MINISTER

Wishing all Odias a very Happy New Year for 2025! May 2025 bring abundant opportunities and growth for all. India and Odisha in particular is on a path to achieving world-class status by 2036 and 2047

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION MINISTER

We strive to make our City the best, and in the New Year, we remain committed to this goal. Our focus is on maintaining a beautiful, healthy environment for residents while addressing key challenges like drainage, roads, and beautification

SULOCHANA DAS | BMC MAYOR

The Commissionerate Police will introduce robust measures to tackle rising violence against women and children in the City. Offenders will face strict legal action. Enhanced training programmes will strengthen efforts to counter cybercrime

PINAK MISHRA | BHUBANESWAR DCP

AIIMS Bhubaneswar remains committed to providing quality healthcare to the people of Odisha. In 2024, we successfully performed several key transplants. In 2025, we will introduce new services, including a skin bank, and continue our focus on research

ASHUTOSH BISWAS | AIIMS BHUB EXE DIR



PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

In a first, Odisha will host the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar from January 8 to 10.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the event, which will offer an opportunity to engage and connect with the overseas Indians and enable the diaspora to collaborate in nation-building. President Droupadi Murmu, who belongs to Odisha, is slated to attend the mega event on the concluding day.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Sekhawat will also attend the event.

Trinidad and Tobago's President Christine Carla Kangaloo will be the chief guest of the event, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Tuesday after chairing a preparatory

meet in Bhubaneswar. Around 7,000 guests from the country and abroad are scheduled to attend the mega event. Among them are over 200 foreign journalists and vloggers from seven countries. Noting that the event is an opportunity to showcase Odisha's art and culture at the international level. Maihi

said all efforts would be made to provide the best of services to the guests.

"The guests will be taken on guided tours to 31 attractive spots in Bhubaneswar, Konark, Puri, and Cuttack, and various cultural programmes have also been lined up for them at different places," an official said.

The state government has deployed 140 liaison officers for the event. This apart, the BMC has been working to develop new parking areas in the City to ensure smooth traffic management during the mega event. All roads in Bhubaneswar were being renovated, illuminated, and attractively decorated.

Utkarsh Odisha conclave

The state government is all set to organise 'Utkarsh Odisha: Make in Odisha Conclave 2025' January 28 and 29.

In his first Budget presented in July, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who is also the Finance minister, announced his government's plan to attract domestic investment of ₹2.5 trillion and foreign direct investments (FDI) of over \$2 billion by 2029, keeping in line with the BJP's election manifesto.

Singapore will be the first country partner for the mega conclave. According to High Commissioner of Singapore to India Simon Wong who met Majhi, Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam will visit Odisha during his India tour in January.

Apart from Singapore, the Odisha government has invited several other countries, including Japan and Germany, to be the country partner for the up-

coming mega investment summit. At least 34 countries have been invited to participate in the two-day event.

While interacting with ambassadors from various countries and members of the different association in New Delhi, Majhi had informed them about Odisha, located on the eastern seaboard of India, with a coastline of over 480 kilometres.

Odisha, he said, is now an emerging destination for investments from diverse sectors, and geographies. "We are a state of immense natural wealth. Rich deposits of minerals like iron ore, bauxite, nickel, chromite, and coal, along with vast forest and water resources, have made Odisha a key player in India's mineral and metal-based industries," said the CM.

He said his state has a highly skilled workforce that is ready to meet the demands of modern industries.

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WINGS OF PROGRESS
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More Flights for Odisha in the New Year

Shri Narendra Modi Prime Minister | **Shri Mohan Charan Majhi** Chief Minister, Odisha

| Airline Operator | Routes | Frequency | Date of Commencement |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Star Air | Jharsuguda → Hyderabad → Jharsuguda | Daily flight | 01 January 2025 |
| | Jharsuguda → Raipur → Jharsuguda | Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday | 01 February 2025 |
| | Jharsuguda → Lucknow → Jharsuguda | Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday | 01 February 2025 |
| Air India Express | Bhubaneswar → Kochi → Bhubaneswar | Daily flight | 03 January 2025 |
| | Bhubaneswar → Jaipur → Bhubaneswar | Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday | 03 January 2025 |
| | Bhubaneswar → Lucknow → Bhubaneswar | Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday | 04 January 2025 |



Govt benefits elude tribals in Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary



The situation is aggravated by the Aadhaar card system, which has become a significant barrier for these communities to access benefits from government schemes

Pensions have become a distant dream for the elderly, differently-abled and widows.

Some of the families have been living in the sanctuary for generations, but they lack formal land and housing titles, while government assistance continues to elude them. The situation is aggravated by the Aadhaar card system, which has become a significant barrier for these communities to access benefits from the government schemes.

The Chuktia Bhunjia tribal community, also located within Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary, is receiving support from Chuktia Bhunjia Development Agency, which is implementing various schemes for their benefit. However, the Paharia and other tribal communities remain excluded from these programmes as they lack Aadhar and other documents meant for availing the benefits.

Vulnerable groups, including children, elderly, women and differently-abled often lack the necessary documents to avail government assistance.

Nuapada Collector Madhusudan Das, during his recent visit to the area, listened to the plight of the villagers and promised to address the issues soon. The forest dwellers are eagerly waiting for the promises to be fulfilled.

These villages lack basic infrastructure, such as proper roads and communication facilities. Lack of access to safe drinking water forces the villagers to rely on unsafe water sources. Absence of electricity has turned life miserable for the residents. Lack of schools for children and Anganwadi centres for early childhood education have crippled primary education here. Many of the residents lack Aadhaar and voter ID cards, rendering them ineligible for availing government benefits like ration cards and housing schemes.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nuapada, Dec 31: Residents of 52 villages across three panchayats – Sunabeda, Soseg and Michhapali—within Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary in this district are struggling to fulfill their basic needs, as the benefits of several government schemes fail to reach the forest dwellers residing 36,000 feet above sea level.

Reports said at least 60 families from Paharia community reside in three villages – Koked, Gambharipani and Jogimunda – under Sunabeda panchayat.

Cargo ship detained at Paradip Port on HC order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 31: A cargo ship was detained at Paradip Port on the direction of Orissa High Court as it did not settle dues of about ₹15.56 lakh.

MV Propel Fortune, which sails under the flag of Singapore, was not allowed to leave the territorial waters contiguous to the land of Paradip Tuesday morning.

The case pertains to an incident made by the cargo ship to a ship chandler, MH Bland SL, in May for the supply of a wide range of provisioning, maintenance and services for the vessel at the Paradip Port.

The ship chandler made the supplies to the cargo ship as per the invoice. However, the cargo ship, despite persistent requests, did not settle the cost in due time and was about to leave the Paradip Port.

The ship chandler approached the HC for an urgent hearing, stating that the interlocutor application would be infructuous as the cargo ship was set to leave the port.

Including the cost of litigation, the petitioner had made a maritime claim of ₹15.56 lakh on the cargo ship.

Taking cognisance of the matter, a vacation bench of Justice Murahari Sri Raman observed that a prima facie case was made out against the cargo ship. Accordingly, the court after considering the submission and perusing the documents was satisfied that the claim was maintainable under the Admiralty Act and ordered the “arrest” of the cargo ship.

Key accused nabbed in assault of women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasure, Dec 31: The prime accused in the assault of two women over allegations that they were attempting religious conversion of some tribal families in Balasure district was arrested, police said Tuesday.

Addressing a presser, DIG (Eastern Range) Satyajit Naik said prime accused Badal Panda, a native of Kansa village in Nilagiri police station area, was arrested Monday.

With this, four people were arrested in the case, he said.

Two women were tied to a tree and beaten up by a mob over the allegation that they were attempting religious conversion of some tribal families. The incident happened in Gorbardhanpur village Thursday and a video of it went viral on social media, they said.

4 held for murder in Paralakhemundi



POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, Dec 31: Four days after a man's decomposed body was found stuffed in a sack at Sita Sagar under this police limits in Gajapati district, the cops Tuesday arrested four persons and sent them to court, according to the police.

Addressing a presser here Tuesday, Gajapati Superintendent of Police (SP) Jatindra Kumar Panda said. “Krushnachandra's body was found in a sack December 27, two days after his murder. We have arrested four persons in this connection and all the accused belong to the same family. The murder took place due to misbehaviour with a lady of the family by the deceased.”

The accused were identified as M Durjyodhan, Arun Lima, T Mahesh and M Malli, he said.

Four mobile phones, an auto-rickshaw and a bicycle were seized from their possession.

The murder took place at Jangam Sahi at Paralakhemundi December 25. Krushnachandra,

a resident of Kampasahi had gone to Jangam Sahi on his bicycle on the fateful day but did not return. His son Santosh lodged a missing complaint at Paralakhemundi police station. The police, after scanning the CCTV footage, learnt that the deceased's last movement was towards Jangam Sahi around 3pm December 25. Further scanning the CCTV, the cops found a sack being carried in an auto-rickshaw by the accused and upon interrogation the accused confessed to have committed the murder.

Investigations revealed that accused Durjyodhan's wife was working in a cloth store when she came in contact with Krushnachandra. The deceased was a frequent visitor to Durjyodhan's house. On the fateful day, Krushnachandra visited Durjyodhan's house and allegedly misbehaved with his wife. On returning home, Durjyodhan saw his wife crying and confronted Krushnachandra. He attacked the latter leading to his death on the spot.

PICNIC SEASON

Noise pollution pushes wildlife out of Daringbadi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, Dec 31: Wildlife have reportedly disappeared from Daringbadi in Kandhamal district due to increasing noise pollution arising out of large-scale human activities during this ongoing picnic season.

As the tourism season peaks, Daringbadi, a popular hill station, is witnessing a massive influx of tourists. Between the end of December and January 10, thousands of visitors are expected to throng the hill station. Among the area's major attractions is Duluri pine forest, a secluded picnic destination renowned for its natural beauty.

Duluri pine forest offers a perfect retreat for families and friends with tall pine trees, resting areas, children's play zones, and ample space for



outdoor activities. This year, over 10,000 tourists have reportedly visited the forest for picnics and leisure activities.

However, with the year's final Sunday drawing even larger crowds, the area is experiencing severe noise pollution due

to loud sound systems used by some visitors.

Local environmentalists have raised concerns about the

impact of this noise pollution on the area's wildlife. Reports suggest that animals, including crows, hawks, squirrels, jungle cats, peacocks, and other bird species, are becoming increasingly scarce in the region. It is believed that the loud noise and human activity have frightened the animals, forcing them to abandon the forest.

Despite this trend continuing for several years, neither the Forest department nor local authorities, including police and district administration, have taken any significant measure to address the issue. This lack of action has sparked dissatisfaction among environmentalists and locals, who are now calling for stricter regulations to protect the environment and wildlife in Daringbadi.

Staff shortage, lack of funds cripple Kanjhari dam project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 31: The Kanjhari Dam irrigation project, once considered a successful venture in the district to resolve agrarian distress, is now struggling to meet its objectives owing to severe staff shortage and lack of adequate funding.

The crisis has led to difficulties in the maintenance and management of its canals, leaving farmers without reliable access to water for irrigation.

The dam serves as a key component of the region's water distribution network, with approximately 30 km of canals to its right flank, and nearly 31 km on the left, stretching from Patana to Rajanagar. However, in the absence of regular maintenance and staff crunch, the dam water is not reaching the end of the canals. This is affecting farmers who rely on the canal water for their crops.

The irrigation system, which is supposed to be managed by a team of around 40 employees, is currently running with only three staff members, leading to inefficiencies in canal upkeep. Most of the 22 outsourced workers employed by various agencies are assigned to administrative offices, leaving the crucial maintenance tasks unattended.

In addition to staff shortages, the delay in funding which has hindered necessary repair works, has led to dissatisfaction among local farmers. The canals need regular maintenance to remain functional. Farmers have expressed



their anguish over the disruption of the canal at several places which has led to water loss, and inadequate irrigation for crops.

The project was initially meant to irrigate approximately 10,900 hectares across various blocks. However, due to the ongoing crisis, far less land has benefited from the irrigation project. Sources said 19 pani panchayats function under the irrigation project. However, most of them have become non functional due to shortage of funds.

Opposition leaders, such as Binod Bihari Nayak, pointed out that politicians and officials make promises to farmers without taking any concrete actions. They argued that the state's leaders are quick to express sympathy for farmers in public, but the actual delivery of resources to support agricultural irrigation remains a

distant dream.

Sources said apart from the supply disruptions, a park project under the irrigation system, intended to provide further infrastructure support, has been delayed for years, causing further frustration among local population. Road and bridge construction projects, essential for safe transportation across the dam area, have also been stalled, forcing commuters and vehicles to navigate through unsafe conditions.

Kanjhari Dam's Associated Engineer Chaturbhuj Nayak said he is aware of the problems and attributed those to staff shortages and funding constraints. However, he maintained that work will commence once the necessary resources and staff is in place. He said some projects, such as the construction of the park, will be completed in the coming months.

Multi-lingual drama & dance fest wins hearts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 31: The 35th Multi-lingual Drama and Dance Festival was recently organised at the Civic Centre here by 'Spandan', a leading cultural association in the state. The festival included drama and dance performances by troupes from various states like Manipur, Assam, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Odia plays titled 'Karagarara Kahani' and 'Magunira Sagada'; Hindi plays 'Ek Durachari Raja', 'Agarbatti' and 'Phoolan Devi'; Assamese play 'Abhinandan Macbeth' based on William Shakespeare's tragedy; Bengali plays 'Twamasi Niranjan' and 'Jivan Mrityu', and Manipuri play 'Bhanumati' were staged on this occasion. Folk and classical dances also regaled the audience.

Alok Varma, executive direc-



tor (Works), RSP was felicitated with the prestigious 'Sanskriti Mitra Samman' for his outstanding contribution to the promotion of art and culture. Noted Odia playwright and

2 KILLED, 1 HURT IN ROAD MISHAP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur/Tentulikhunti, Dec 31: Two persons were killed and another sustained severe injuries in a road mishap near Kujajaniguda Chhak under Tentulikhunti block in Nabarangpur district Tuesday, when two motorcycles collided head-on.

The deceased were identified as Purna Majhi, 23, and Hemant Banua, 22, of Chitrakot village, while Sandeep Bhadra, 21, a resident of Pujariguda village, sustained critical injuries.

After preliminary treatment at Tentulikhunti hospital, Bhadra was shifted to Nabarangpur headquarters hospital and later to Koraput hospital for advanced care. Assistant sub-inspector (ASD) at Tentulikhunti police station Bharat Majhi visited the mishap site and started an investigation.

Purna, the biker who was employed as an operator at a mega water supply project, and Hemant were on their way towards Anchalgumma after having food at a hotel in Tentulikhunti when they collided with Sandeep's motorcycle, which was coming from opposite direction.

The impact of the collision was so severe that the two victims were flung at several metres away from the spot while another fell on a roadside paddy field. Purna sustained severe head injuries and died on the spot. Fire Services personnel rescued the other two and admitted them to Tentulikhunti Hospital, where Hemant succumbed to the injuries. Tentulikhunti police registered a case and seized both motorcycles.

Man found dead on state highway

POST NEWS NETWORK

Tihidi, Dec 31: Police here recovered the body of a 29-year-old man, a purported road mishap victim, from Pandapokhari Chhak on Bhadrak-Chandbali state highway under Pirhat police limits in Bhadrak district Tuesday morning.

The deceased was identified as Uttam Bariha of Dadangapali village under Kharmanda police limits in Bargarh district.

According to sources, Uttam had come here by bus for some work and alighted at Pandapokhari Chhak. However, he died at the spot after an unknown vehicle hit him.

On being informed, Pirhat police reached the spot, seized the body and informed his family members. A probe is on.



I spoke with the brother of late Santosh Deshmukh and told him that he should not be worried. Until the guilty are hanged to death, the police will continue to do their duty
DEVENDRA FADNIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

COLD WAVE GRIPS KASHMIR

Cold wave intensified further in Jammu and Kashmir as Srinagar city recorded minus 3.5 as the minimum temperature Tuesday



of the day quote

Attempts to downplay social reformer Sree Narayana Guru as a mere religious leader or as a religious saint must be realised. It should be understood that Guru had no religion and had no caste



PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

Goa has witnessed remarkable growth in its revenue collection for December 2024, with a surge of ₹75.51 crore compared to the same month last year. This year's numbers reflect a strong upward trend, signalling positive economic momentum



PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM

ISRO's Spa-DeX mission marks the beginning of a new era in space exploration, showcasing India's technological prowess and ambition



JITENDRA SINGH | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

UP: Dalit youth beaten to death

Muzaffarnagar (UP): A Dalit youth was beaten to death and his cousin seriously by some men after a dispute in Paldi village here Tuesday, police said. Superintendent of Police (City) Satyanarayan Prajapat said that some people have been detained in connection with the murder of 20-year-old Sunny.

ICG, AIIMS Delhi ink pact

New Delhi: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and AIIMS Delhi have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the medical training and capabilities of Coast Guard medical officers. The MoU focuses on providing specialised training in Indian guidelines for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), aiming to equip Coast Guard personnel with critical life-saving skills.

Three die in road accident

Uttara Kannada (Karnataka): Three persons died when the motorcycle they were travelling in dashed against an oncoming bus from Vijayapura to Mangaluru Tuesday evening. The deceased have been identified as Raghavendra Somaiah Gowda (34), Gaurish Naik (25) and Ramesh Naik (22). According to the report filed at the Honnavar Town police station, the motorcycle riders were going from a place called Manki, a village in Honnavar Taluk, Uttara Kannada district to Honnavar town police limits.

'Dallewal to take medical aid if govt agrees to talk'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: The Punjab government Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite fast for over a month, has agreed for medical aid given the Centre accepted his proposal to hold talks.

A vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia took note of a plea moved by Punjab government seeking an additional three days to comply with SC's December 20 order.

"...As per the negotiators there is a proposal given by the farmers to the Central government that in case they get an invite for a talk, Dallewal is ready to take medical help as desired," Punjab advocate general Gurminder Singh said, "therefore, the state government was seeking some more time and work positively towards compliance of the directions." The bench said, "We will not comment on what's going on as far as negotiations or your law and order is concerned. If something happens, which is acceptable to both sides and all stakeholders concerned, we will be equally happy. At the moment, we are only concerned with the compliance of our orders. If you want more time, we in peculiar circumstances are inclined to grant you some time."

Singh agreed with the bench on the point that no comments should be made on the negoti-



The top court December 28 came down heavily on the Punjab government for not moving Dallewal to a hospital even as it doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting availability of medical aid to their septuagenarian leader

ations at this stage and sought some time.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and Haryana government, said he did not have any instructions on this issue.

The AG said the intervenors and negotiators had tried complying with the court directives by engaging with

the farmers in a dialogue. Additionally, the government mobilised 7,000 personnel at the protest site, but December 30, a call for Punjab bandh was called by other farmer organisations, hindering its efforts, he said. The bench recorded the submissions and posted the matter January 2, 2025, for the compliance of its order on shifting of Dallewal to a hospital.

"We are inclined to accept

the request to afford some more time for compliance with the directions issued by the court," the bench said.

Punjab chief secretary and director general of police were directed to continue to appear in-person virtually during the hearing.

The top court December 28 came down heavily on the Punjab government for not moving Dallewal to a hospital even as it doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting availability of medical aid to their septuagenarian leader.

The Punjab government said it faced huge resistance from the protesting farmers who had encircled Dallewal and prevented him from being taken to a hospital.

Teacher sentenced to 111 yrs in jail for raping student



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 31: A special fast-track court here Tuesday sentenced a tuition teacher to 111 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of ₹1.05 lakh for raping a plus-one student after luring her five years ago.

If the fine remains unpaid, the convict, Manoj, 44, will face an additional year of imprisonment. Manoj's wife took her own life upon learning of her husband's abuse of the minor girl.

In the ruling, Judge R Rekha stated that Manoj, who was also supposed to be the child's guardian, had committed a crime that warranted no mercy. The incident occurred July 2, 2019.

According to the prosecution, the accused, a government

employee, conducted tuition classes at his residence.

He summoned the child for a special class and subsequently abused her, also taking photos of the abuse on his mobile phone.

Following the incident, the child became fearful and stopped attending tuition classes.

The accused then disseminated photos of the incident. Learning about the incident, the child's family lodged a complaint at the Fort Police Station.

Upon the accused's arrest, his phone was seized and sent for forensic examination, revealing photos of the child being abused.

Manoj claimed to have been at the office on the day of the incident, producing registered leave records with signatures. However, call records from the accused's phone, presented by the prosecution, revealed that Manoj was near the tuition centre on the day of the incident.

Special Public Prosecutor R S Vijay Mohan and R V Akhilesh appeared for the prosecution.

ISKCON devotees pray for safety of Hindus

Kolkata: ISKCON devotees Tuesday joined in prayers in Kolkata for the safety of Hindus and a peaceful 2025 for the minority community which has been facing attacks in Bangladesh since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government.

Hundreds of followers of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) chanted 'Hare Krishna' and sang songs to express solidarity with the Hindus in Bangladesh. Holding placards seeking the safety and security of Hindus and a peaceful 2025 in the neighbouring nation, the devotees joined in the prayers at the Albert Road centre on the eve of the new year, led by ISKCON Kolkata spokesperson Radharmn Das. "We are praying to God that the Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh can live in peace every day in 2025," Das said. Maintaining that life has been terrible for Bangladeshi Hindus in 2024, he said "We hope that they will get justice and peace in 2025."

Bangladesh's minority Hindus, who constitute only about 8 per cent of the 170 million population, have faced hundreds of attacks in 50-odd districts of the country since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government August 5. Das had earlier demanded that the interim government in Bangladesh take strong action against the fundamentalists fomenting trouble in that country and arrest them so as to build confidence among the minorities.

Toilet fee for men: HP govt faces backlash



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Dec 31: The main Opposition BJP in Himachal Pradesh Tuesday slammed the Congress-led Shimla Municipal Corporation (MC) for allegedly imposing a ₹5 fee on men for public toilet use, calling it a burden on the city's residents and tourists.

Party's state media chief Karan Nanda accused Mayor Surinder Chauhan of backtracking on his earlier claims and following Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's footsteps in imposing "anti-people decisions".

The decision on toilet tax comes just less than a three-month row over "toilet seat tax" in urban areas in the cash-strapped government that came with a populist manifesto to woo the electorates in December 2022 Assembly polls.

Addressing the media here, Nanda claimed that despite repeated denials by the Chief Minister, the Mayor has admitted the implementation of the fee.

Highlighting the issue of gender equality raised by the Mayor, Nanda suggested that instead of imposing new charges on the men, the MC should have rolled back the existing ₹5 fee for women.

He further criticised the Mayor's reference to the High Court's directives, accusing the Congress leaders of hiding behind the judiciary to justify their "dictatorial decisions".

Leopard spotted at Infosys campus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mysore (Karnataka), Dec 31: The forest department has launched a combing operation after a leopard was spotted in Mysore's Infosys campus Tuesday early morning.

Following the incident, the employees of the IT company were asked to work from home keeping the safety aspect in mind.

The big cat was sighted in the underground car parking area of the campus at around 3.30 am by the security staff of the company and analysis of the CCTV footage has also confirmed the same, officials said.

A team of 50 personnel is involved in the operation, with cages and nets on standby to capture the animal. "A leopard was spotted inside the Infosys campus and our personnel are on the job. Combing operation has been launched and drones are also being used to spot the leopard," a senior forest officer said.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre expressed confidence that the forest department staff will soon capture the leopard and allay people's fears.

"As soon as the matter was known, a leopard task force was sent to capture the leopard. The team includes veterinarians and 40 personnel trained in leopard capture. Officers from the Wildlife Department are also at the site and are supervising the operation," he was quoted as saying in a statement.

According to the statement, the leopard's movement was captured in the CCTV footage, and an emergency operation was ordered.

Shivaji statue at Pangong lake sparks controversy



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 31: The Indian Army has recently unveiled a grand statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Pangong Tso in Ladakh near the India-China border, a move that has drawn both praise and criticism.

Installed by the Fire and Fury Corps December 26, the statue honours the legendary Maratha king, celebrated for his courage and foresight. While the installation underscores India's strategic and cultural presence in the contested region, it has also sparked controversy over its relevance to Ladakh's heritage and ecology.

Pangong Tso, a picturesque yet strategically vital high-altitude lake in eastern Ladakh, has long been a flashpoint in India-China relations.

The lake gained prominence during the 2020 standoff, when both nations' forces engaged in intense confrontations along its banks.

Following a disengagement agreement in 2021, the region remains a sensitive area of geopolitical significance. The installation of the Shi-

A Army unveiled Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue at Pangong Tso December 26

Debate arose in Ladakh over national symbolism vs local identity

Locals criticised lack of consultation over statue installation

vaji statue at Pangong Tso is not merely symbolic but also reflects the Army's changed posturing along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The initiative aligns with the Army's broader strategy of enhancing infrastructure in Ladakh, including roads, bridges and fortified installations, to bolster preparedness against potential threats.

The statue serves as a reminder of India's strategic and cultural assertion in a region where territorial sovereignty is constantly contested.

The installation, however, has not been without its detractors. Chushul Councillor Konchok Stanzin expressed disapproval over the lack of consultation with local communities.

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| WEATHER | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| | BBSR | CTC |
| Max Temp | 27.4° | 25.2° |
| Min Temp | 18.1° | 16.5° |
| Humidity | 71% | 85% |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil |
| FORECAST | | |
| Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later | | |

| MARKET WATCH | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------|
| INDEX | VALUE | CHG |
| SENSEX | 78,139.01 | ↓ 109.12 |
| NIFTY | 23,644.80 | ↓ 0.10 |
| DOLLAR | 85.56 | ↑ 0.08 |
| EURO | 89.37 | ↓ 0.25 |
| GOLD | ₹76,743 | ↑ ₹483 |
| SILVER | ₹87,452 | ↓ ₹79 |

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GREENWASHING MINING



Given the increasing demand for minerals to fuel the energy transition, setting high expectations and establishing strong, enforceable rules for the mining sector is more important than ever

serious human-rights abuses, which could lead to penalties for automakers down the line. Moreover, the draft standard does not protect the right of indigenous peoples - who are disproportionately harmed by mining - to free, prior, and informed consent, which is derived from their right to govern their territories and resources and to self-determination. Protecting this right must be a minimum requirement for the foundational practice level. But the very notion that respect for fundamental rights can be broken down and parceled into varying levels of performance reflects the CMSI's flawed design. This approach would cause even more harm to indigenous communities, given that more than half of critical minerals are on or near their lands. Despite the efforts of the ICMM and its partners, including CMSI advisory group members like BMW and Tesla, to market the standard as a tool for responsible mining, it is nothing more than an attempt by the industry to present a clean, green face to the public. If successful, the CMSI will consolidate the power and influence of mining giants like Rio Tinto, Glencore, and BHP, and allow them to act with impunity while providing false assurances to all major stakeholders. Instead of delivering a just energy transition, the CMSI would allow extractive industries to prioritise profit over clean air and water, human rights, and a livable planet, and expose automakers, governments, and investors to reputational risk. Given the increasing demand for minerals to fuel the energy transition, setting high expectations and establishing strong, enforceable rules for the mining sector is more important than ever. The writer is Senior Electric-Vehicle Advocate in Public Citizen's Climate Programme. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

mining sector. In fact, the four associations leading the CMSI - the ICMM, the Mining Association of Canada, the World Gold Council, and the Copper Mark - each have their own assurance framework. But evaluations of these voluntary schemes, conducted by Germanwatch, Mercedes-Benz, and others, have shown that most lack transparency, rigor, and oversight, and cannot ensure that their requirements are implemented. In short, they constitute a sophisticated form of greenwashing. In February, Lead the Charge published an assessment of third-party assurance and accreditation programmes in the raw-materials sector, evaluating each one against a series of minimum criteria for credibility. Tellingly, the ICMM's Performance Expectations Validation process met only 16% of the criteria. These failing grades have real-world implications for indigenous peoples, workers, and local communities. According to the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, ICMM member companies, whether through direct ownership or joint ventures, account for more than half of the 20 firms responsible for the majority of alleged human-rights violations in crit-

In July, the Serbian government reinstated the permits for Rio Tinto's lithium mining project, after canceling them in 2022 following public protests. The decision triggered demonstrations, with thousands of people taking to the streets of Belgrade over concerns that the mine would pose a threat to water sources and public health. After all, Rio Tinto had already demonstrated its willingness to circumvent the country's environmental regulations. Rio Tinto has a long history of alleged human-rights violations and water mismanagement and contamination at its mines around the world. But it is not just Rio Tinto: corruption and negligence are endemic in the mining industry. A US judge ordered Glencore to pay \$700 million in fines for its decade-long scheme to bribe officials in several countries. Mining giant BHP and its Brazilian partner Vale are tied up in legal battles over the collapse of the Fundão tailings dam - Brazil's worst environmental disaster. As the European Union plans to increase domestic mining of materials that are essential to the green transition, as well as to numerous defense technologies and digital products, policymakers and populations are seeking reassurance that such efforts will be sustainable. To that end, the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) - an association that Rio Tinto helped establish and includes Glencore, Vale, and BHP - and other major industry players are working to create a global standard, called the Consolidated Mining Standard Initiative (CMSI), to certify minerals as responsibly produced. Given their track record, can these mining giants be trusted to set their own rules and hold themselves accountable? Voluntary standards and certifications are hardly new. They exist across a range of industries, from agriculture to construction, and many such initiatives already exist in the



Chelsea Hodgkins

POLICYMAKERS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ARE CHANNELING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTO MINING PROJECTS AROUND THE WORLD BASED ON VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS LIKE THE PROPOSED CMSI



Justice for the Unjust

Syria is in the grip of uncertainties since the fall of Bashar al-Assad on 8 December. There are still no signs of any let-up in fighting, especially in the northeast of the country, where Turkey's Syrian allies intend to push back Kurdish forces. The latter are allied with the West in their fight against the Islamic State (IS). What is even more worrisome is the fact that the intentions of those who ousted the former ruler of Damascus remain veiled in mystery. This is particularly valid for the militiamen who were originally jihadists. They include Ahmed al-Sharaa, the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Ahmed is known by his nom de guerre, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani. Interestingly, he changed his military fatigues and slipped into a jacket with a tie in record time. Whether that is merely a strategy to gain world-wide acceptance till he shows his true colours is a matter of speculation. However, the changeover to this 'free' Syria is showing signs from the first days that do not inspire a degree of confidence. Many wish to see an end to the monstrosity that characterised the hated regime that has collapsed. The prisons and mass graves that have come to light have already started to tell their gruesome tales. Families after families have been without news of their loved ones, often imprisoned without cause for decades when Bashar was in full fury. They briefly regained hope as soon as their executioner fled. The repression of the uprising that began in March 2011 led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Syrians. The new Syrian authorities will be judged not simply on their determination to respect fundamental rights but also their ability and willingness to ensure that justice is done for mass crimes that have gone unpunished for far too long. State records - the country's archives that have been preserved -, people hope, will be used to reconstruct what happened to those who disappeared. This is necessary to establish who was responsible and even to throw light on the links with those who were the dictatorship's blind proxies abroad. Now contacts are being forged, including with countries that had placed HTS on their lists of terrorist organisations. This is a welcome sign as it is a pragmatic approach. The task is indeed huge, given the dark legacy of a regime identified with a dynasty for over half a century. But, the international community that is backing the new rulers believes there is an opportunity to usher in a radical change from an era of terror and avoid new bloodbaths following in the footsteps of those committed by Hafez al-Assad and later his son Bashar. Syrian society is divided into religious and ethnic groups with often antagonistic relations. But, with the new conditions that are slowly unfolding in that country, there is hope for forging unity at least for a short term. At the same time it is true that many members of the Assad clan and its repressive apparatus have left without asking for a second chance. They have already looted the country that had been cut off for decades. One of the tasks of the new rulers, as being demanded by the victims, is that these exploiters and agents of torture must be pursued relentlessly, starting with the head of this tribe, who has taken refuge in Russia. Already legal proceedings have been initiated in Europe, notably in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and France, against regime officials who had taken refuge in various countries. It is now time for Syrians, having liberated themselves, to take responsibility for dispensing justice to the unjust and cruel.

WISDOM CORNER

- Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them - that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like. LAO TZU
Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness. ANNE FRANK
Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing. HELEN KELLER

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1735: Paul Revere, the horseback-riding folk hero of the American Revolution, was born.
1804: Haiti declared its independence from France.
1808: The United States made the slave trade illegal as the Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves went into effect; slavery, however, continued in the country.
1863: The Emancipation Proclamation, which freed enslaved people in the Confederacy (the states in rebellion against the Union during the American Civil War), was issued by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln.
1958: The European Economic Community (EEC) is founded. The EEC was a predecessor of today's European Union (EU)
1959: Dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba after his regime was toppled by rebel forces led by Fidel Castro.
1992: The Russian Federation is founded. The formation of the Russian Federation followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

IN JEST THIS

Make 2025 a special year for you

As we say goodbye to 2024 and hello to 2025, I'd like to share some tips that could make this a special year for you, perhaps even the second greatest year of your life. The greatest, of course, is the year of your birth. Without it, the world would be deprived of you. Maybe you think that no one would notice, but trust me, you're leaving a mark on the world every day, even if the train cleaner keeps wiping it away. There are many ways to make 2025 a special year for you. Here are just a few:
1. Stop comparing yourself to others. You are a unique person. You have unique blessings and unique curses too. Nobody curses as uniquely as you. But those aren't the curses I'm referring to. I'm referring to troubles or problems. All of us have them. Even Elon Musk, the richest man in the



Melvin Durai

EVEN ELON MUSK, THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD, HAS PROBLEMS, SUCH AS HAVING TO CONSTANTLY BUY A BIGGER PILLOW FOR HIS HEAD

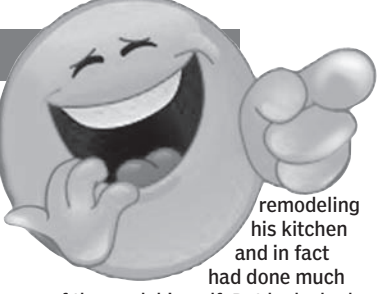
world, has problems, such as having to constantly buy a bigger pillow for his head. Comparing yourself to others may frustrate you, especially if they are far ahead of you, or it may restrict you - if they are far behind you. It's wiser to focus on yourself and your self-improvement. Compare yourself today (present you) to yourself yesterday (past you), while picturing yourself tomorrow (future you). If "present you" isn't happy with "past you," will "future you" present you with more happiness?
2. Small changes can make a big difference. If you don't believe me, try eating a small bowl of ice cream every night and see what a big difference it makes to your waist after a month. If you are consuming 2,500 calories every day, but burning only 2,400, you will gain about 5 kg over the course

of a year. But if you cut just 200 calories from your daily diet - equivalent to a cup of rice - you will lose 5 kg. In the same way, writing just 200 words a day will get you an entire book by the end of the year, especially if you have a kind friend who says, "Here's a reward for your efforts: Stephen King's latest thriller."
3. Don't let starting trouble stop you. Starting trouble is something you've probably encountered, especially if you have an old car. Sometimes it's hard to get the engine going. The human body is no different. You have to perform a task and you just can't get started. It's easier to procrastinate. But here's what I do: I tell myself I'm going to do just a little bit, perhaps running half a lap around the track. That's like turning the key in the ignition. Soon I'm zooming

around for several laps, before running out of gas and parking myself under a tree.
4. Spend more time offline. Technology has been taking over our lives in so many ways. Sometimes you just need to unplug yourself from it and enjoy the peace and calm that comes from spending time in the natural world around you.
5. Make a 'Things to Do' list. I usually get more done when I make a 'Things to Do' list. Here, for example, is my list from a recent Saturday: (1) Take a nap; (2) Wash clothes; (3) Wash dishes; (4) Wash myself; (5) Watch football; (6) Get some exercise; (7) Get some ice cream.
Yes, my 'Things to do' list always has a few enjoyable tasks. Without a little fun each day, life would be pretty boring. I wish you a fun-filled 2025, and I hope "future you" doesn't frown on it.

LOL TASK FOR PRISONER

Several years ago, Andy was sentenced to prison. During his stay, he got along well with the guards and all his fellow inmates. The warden saw that deep down, Andy was a good person and made arrangements for Andy to learn a trade while doing his time. After three years, Andy was recognized as one of the best carpenters in the local area. Often he would be given a weekend pass to do odd jobs for the citizens of the community.... and he always reported back to prison before Sunday night was over. The warden was thinking of



remodeling his kitchen and in fact had done much of the work himself. But he lacked the skills to build a set of kitchen cupboards and a large counter top which he had promised his wife. So he called Andy into his office and asked him to complete the job for him. But, alas, Andy refused. He told the warden, "Gosh, I'd really like to help you but counter fitting is what got me into prison in the first place".

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



A year of promise

Sir, As 2025 begins, the world embraces a new chapter filled with hope, unity, and progress. This year invites reflection and inspires a commitment to advancements in health, technology, and sustainability. Across nations, people focus on fostering equality and justice, envisioning a more inclusive and harmonious future for all. New Year celebrations mirror this optimism, blending unique cultural traditions with shared themes of renewal. From New York's iconic ball drop in Times Square to Sydney's stunning fireworks over its harbour, the spirit of joy resonates worldwide. Tokyo mixes modern festivities with traditional shrine visits, while Rio's Copacabana beach comes alive with music, dance, and fireworks. In India, the diversity of celebrations shines through, from grand city parties to regional festivals like Pongal and Baisakhi. Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Fire of xenophobia

Sir, this refers to "Big Tech's H1B arguments in spotlight," Orissa Post, Dec 31. In the name of his Make America Great Again (MAGA) campaign, Donald Trump and his associates like Elon Musk and others have sown the seeds of intolerance among people. In the view of his voter base, Trump has mostly focused his attention on jobs shipped to China, and other countries. However, he had never spoken against granting temporary visas for highly educated foreign professionals through H-1B visas. Caught off-guard by civil war among his supporters on H-1B visa, Trump tried to salvage the situation by supporting the idea of welcoming the top talent to America to create more jobs for his country. Nevertheless, his supporters did not budge. They pointed out that people hired through H-1B visas were not exceptional talent by any standards as evident from their annual compensation of \$80,000 and \$120,000. They accused companies, especially those from India, of mass hiring Indians for low paying jobs to make more profits. The H-1B flareup also teaches a lesson or two to political leaders across the world: If you encourage divisiveness, it will get out of your hand at some point in time. One should not play with the fire of xenophobia for short-term gains and sacrifice long-term interests of the country. N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE



Let us welcome the new year with joy and enthusiasm and take our society and nation further on the path of unity and excellence
DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

DECEMBER POWER DEMAND IN DELHI CROSSES 5,000 MW

The plummeting temperature in Delhi has raised power demand to newer heights with December clocking a peak of 5,213 MW, the highest ever for the month, discom officials said



SHORT TAKES

Wild elephant hit by speeding train

Agartala: A 35-year-old wild elephant, critically injured by a speeding train in Tripura's Khowai district, succumbed to its injuries late Monday night, officials said Tuesday. Despite the best efforts of doctors from the state veterinary hospital, the animal could not be saved. "The jumbo succumbed to its injuries late Monday night, despite intensive medical care," a senior forest official confirmed.

BJP MLAs protest in Delhi Assembly

New Delhi: BJP MLAs Tuesday held a sit-in at Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel's office and demanded that he convene a special session for tabling 14 pending CAG reports. Leader of Opposition Vijender Gupta said a memorandum was handed over to the speaker, urging him to call a special session without further delay. The AAP government has shown a lack of accountability by not tabling the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports in the assembly, he alleged.

Disabled woman sold off, raped

Gurugram: A 19-year-old disabled woman was allegedly kidnapped from her home and sold off to a man who repeatedly raped her before she was rescued by the police, officials said Tuesday. According to police, the woman, living with her uncle, had been missing since December 21. On December 30, her uncle got to know about her whereabouts in Khera Khalipur village and he informed the police. Following this, a police team along with the survivor's family reached the spot and rescued her, police.

Political battle over scheme for priests escalates



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

launch of registration process from the Hanuman temple, gave a slip to the CP venue and instead reached 'Marghat Wale Baba' temple in north Delhi's Kashmiri Gate and registered the priest there.

The Aam Aadmi Party, however, did not share the details about the number of priests and granthis registered for the scheme on the first day.

Kejriwal visited Marghat Wale Baba temple along with his wife Sunita and registered the priest there. "Today I visited Marghat Wale Baba's temple (ISBT) and launched the Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana. Today is the birthday of Mahant ji here. I also celebrated his birthday with him," he said in a post on X. The former Delhi chief minister alleged that the BJP tried its best to stop the registration process for the scheme, and said no one can stop a devotee from meeting the god.

As politics over the honorarium gathered momentum in Delhi, a group of priests staged a protest against Kejriwal outside the Connaught Place temple for announcing the honorarium after a delay of 10 years. Kejriwal said the BJP instead of cursing him, should implement the 'Pujari Granthi' scheme in the states ruled by it. Addressing a press conference, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "Kejriwal who questioned the very existence of Lord Ram can never be a Hindu nationalist. The people of Delhi have resolved to bid farewell to an opportunistic 'Chunavi Hindu' from power corridors of Delhi."



Indian Navy personnel during rehearsal for the Republic Day Parade 2025, at Kartavya Path in New Delhi

Tech to meet tradition at Maha Kumbh 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: Cutting-edge technology will light up the night sky of Sangam during the upcoming Maha Kumbh, as a fleet of 2,000 drones will take off in the holy city of Prayagraj to depict the mythical 'Samudra Manthan' and the emergence of 'Amrit Kalash'.

The Union Culture Ministry Tuesday said that Maha Kumbh 2025 is set to be a "divine and digitally advanced event", reflecting the "seamless integration" of spirituality and technology. Held every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh will be organised from January 13 to February



26 to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and spiritual traditions.

As part of the efforts to celebrate tradition while embracing technology, 360-degree virtual reality stalls will be set up in the fair area, officials said.

"These stalls will show videos of major events such as 'peshwai' (grand procession of

'akhadas'), auspicious bathing days ('snaan'), 'Ganga aarti', and multiple special footage from the grand festival of faith and harmony," the ministry said in a statement.

A major attraction will be a drone show in the night skies of the holy city. "A fleet of 2,000 drones will narrate the legendary tales of 'Prayag Mahatmyam' and 'Samudra Manthan', creating a magical evening spectacle over the Sangam Nose," it said.

The drone show will also depict the emergence of 'Amrit Kalash' (nectar pot), creating a "magical visual narrative in the evening sky", the statement said.

BEED SARPANCH MURDER

Dhananjay Munde's associate Walmik Karad surrenders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Dec 31: Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde's close aide Walmik Karad, wanted in an extortion case linked to the murder of a sarpanch in Beed district, surrendered before the police in Pune Tuesday.

While Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, facing heat over the law-and-order situation, said no "goonda-raj" will be tolerated in the state, the Opposition questioned the police's failure to nab Karad for about three weeks.

Before turning himself in, Karad posted a video on social media, claiming that he was being linked to the murder for reasons of political vendetta.

The Fadnis-led coalition government, sworn in on December 5, finds itself in a tricky situation because of Karad's links with Dhananjay Munde, and also because of the caste angle. While the victim was a Maratha, the accused are from the OBC Vanjari community.

Inspector General of Police Sarang Awad said after Karad surrendered, a preliminary inquiry was conducted and he was handed over to the Crime Investigation Department (CID) team at Beed which is investigating the murder and extortion cases.

NE CRISIS IN 2023

Manipur accounted for 77% of total violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: Manipur, which has been witnessing prolonged ethnic violence between majority Meitei and tribal Kuki communities, accounted for about 77 per cent of the total violence in the entire northeastern region in 2023, according to the latest annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In 2023, Manipur witnessed an increase in violent incidents owing to the prevailing ethnic strife and the resultant increase in the casualties of civilians and security forces personnel as compared to 2022. The state accounted for about 77 per cent of the total violent incidents in Northeastern region in 2023, according to the MHA annual report.



Among the total 243 violent incidents occurred in the Northeast, 187 took place in Manipur.

The counter-insurgency operations in Manipur resulted in killing of 33 insurgents and arrest of 184 insurgents besides recovery of 49 weapons. Further, 80 cadres of insurgent outfits surrendered with 31 arms. Large-scale ethnic violence erupted between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur May 3, 2023. The violence resulted in numerous casualties, injuries, and incidents of arson.

Though the issue of violence primarily relates to maintenance of public order, which is a state subject, the central government has been consistently extending its support, as required by the state government.

The annual report said the central government took a series of immediate and sustained actions to handle the situation. Immediate action was initiated by engaging with top officials of Manipur, progressively deploying additional companies of Central Armed Police Forces, Army and Assam Rifles columns, deploying helicopters and drones, and implementing a unified command system.

CUTTACK MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Tender ID: 2024_ORULB_107985
Tender Call Notice No.10930 (PW) Date:31.12.2024
No. of Works : 2 Nos.
Bid Value: Rs.14.27 Lakhs to Rs.14.66 Lakhs
Period of Completion: Three Calendar Months
Date and Time Schedule:

| Start | End | Opening |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 11.00 AM on Dt.02.01.2025 | 5.00 PM on dt.08.01.2025 | 11.00 A.M. on Dt.13.01.2025 |

Tender Details: Can be seen from the procurement portal: www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Engineer
City Division-III, CMC
OIPR-13031/11/0118/2425

DISTRICT FISHERIES OFFICE, MALKANGIRI
Email: malkangirifisheries@gmail.com
No.2462/ Date: 31.12.2024

SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from interested reputed Firms/ Agencies/Bidders for construction of 2.5 MT Ice Plant and 5.00 MT Cold Storage at Swabhimanchal, Janbai, Chittrakonda, Malkangiri District. The tender completed in all respect should reach the undersigned on or before dt.21.01.25 by 5.30 P.M. through Speed Post/ Courier only and it shall be opened on dt.22.01.25 at 11.00 A.M. at CDO cum EO, Zilla Parishad Chamber, Malkangiri.

The tender document may be downloaded from the website: www.malkangiri.nic.in or received from the office of District Fisheries Officer, Malkangiri by depositing Rs.200/- only.

Interested firms/ bidder may submit their sealed tender in two bid systems i.e. Technical Bid and Financial Bid as per terms and condition of the tender documents. The filled in tenders with Tender fee- Rs. 10,000/- and Earnest money of Rs. 1,50,000/- in shape of Demand Draft only in favour of District Fisheries Officer, Malkangiri, through Speed Post/ Courier only by dt.21.01.25 time 5.30 PM enclosed in a single envelope superscribed "Tender for 2.5 MT Ice Plant and 5.00 MT Cold Storage".
Sd./- District Fisheries Officer, Malkangiri

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
TITILAGARH IRRIGATION DIVISION, TITILAGARH
DIST-BALANAGIR (ODISHA), PIN-767042
E-mail ID: setid2024@gmail.com
No.408, Date:23.12.2024

No.A-804: 1. Type/Nature of Work: Civil Work/Canal Works. 2. Total No. of Works: 01 (One) No., 3.Approx. value of works: Rs.31.41 Lakh (Excluding GST), 4. Period of Completion: 03 (Three) Calendar Months, 5. Classification of bidders: 'C' & 'B' Class Contractor only.

Other details as follows:

| Procurement Officer | e-Procurement Notice No. | Availability & Submission of bids in online | | Date & time of opening of tender |
|---|--------------------------|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | From | To | |
| 1 Superintending Engineer, Titilagarh Irrigation Division, Titilagarh, Dist-Balangir, Odisha, Pin-767042 | 2 SETID-01/2024-25 | 3 01.01.2025 from 10.00 AM | 4 14.01.2025 upto 5.00 PM | 5 15.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M. |

N.B.: Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation to the above notice will be published in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd./- (Er. Sivananda Sethi)
Superintending Engineer, Titilagarh Irrigation Division, Titilagarh, Dist- Balangir,
OIPR-32132/11/0001/2425

JAZBA JEET KA

vedanta transforming for good

vedanta KALANGA LANCERS

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025

ASSOCIATE PARTNER: rockit, Himadri
RADIO PARTNER: 92.7 BIG FM
PRINCIPAL SPONSOR: KALYANI
ASSOCIATE SPONSOR: ROYAL STAG
PARTNER: SNM S.N. Mohanty



In the face of the accelerated transformation unseen in a century and a volatile international landscape, China and Russia always move forward hand in hand along the right path of non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third party

VENEZUELA'S TOP COURT ISSUES \$10 MILLION FINE FOR TIKTOK

Venezuela's Supreme Court has issued a \$10 million fine against TikTok for "not implementing measures" to prevent viral video challenges that have allegedly led to the deaths of three Venezuelan children recently



of the day quote

Today is a historic day as we commence the journey of Uraan Pakistan. Through hard work, we can achieve success. Inflation has visibly decreased and the collaboration between the government and institutions continues to strengthen

And now, on the threshold of the new year, we are thinking about the future. We are confident that everything will be fine, we will only move forward. We know for sure that the absolute value for us was, is and will be the fate of Russia, the well-being of its citizens

Strength comes from solidarity. And we are a country that sticks together

Indian-origin heroes shine in King Charles' 2025 Honours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 31: Community leaders, campaigners, academics and medics are among over 30 Indian-origin professionals to be recognised in King Charles' 2025 New Year Honours List released in London in time for New Year's Eve.

Ranil Malcolm Jayawardena, a Conservative member of Parliament of Sri Lanka and Indian heritage, has been conferred a Knighthood for political and public service along

with recently resigned England men's football team manager Gareth Southgate, for services to the game.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan and former West Midlands Mayor Andy Street are also among those receiving Knight-hoods among more than 1,200 recipients on the 2025 honours list released Monday night across all sectors, with particular commendation to role models in sport, healthcare, academia and voluntary service.



out and do extraordinary things for their communities," UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. "They represent the very best

Every day, ordinary people go out and do extraordinary things for their communities. The New Year Honours List celebrates more of these unsung heroes, and I thank them for their incredible contribution

KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

of the UK and that core value of service which I put at the centre of everything this government does. The New Year Honours List celebrates more of these unsung heroes, and I thank them for their

incredible contribution," he said.

The list, released annually by the Cabinet Office in the name of the British monarch, includes Commanders of the Order of the British Empire (CBEs) for Satwant Kaur Deol for services to further education, Charles Pritam Singh Dhanowa OBE for services to Competition Law, and surgeon Professor Sneha Khemka for services to healthcare, science and innovation and technology.

US: China hacked Treasury systems

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 31: Chinese state-sponsored hackers breached the US Treasury Department's computer security guardrails this month and stole documents in what Treasury called a "major incident," according to a letter to lawmakers, opens new tab that Treasury officials provided to Reuters Monday.

The hackers compromised third-party cybersecurity service provider BeyondTrust and were able to access unclassified documents, the letter said.

According to the letter, hackers "gained access to a key used by the vendor to secure a cloud-based service used to remotely provide technical support for Treasury Departmental Offices (DO) end users. With access to the stolen key, the threat actor was able to override the service's security, remotely access certain Treasury DO user workstations, and access certain unclassified documents maintained by those users."

"Based on available indicators, the incident has been attributed to a China state-sponsored Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) actor," the letter said.

The Treasury Department said it was alerted to the breach by BeyondTrust Dec 8 and that it was working with the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the FBI to assess the hack's impact.

MARTIAL LAW INVESTIGATION

SK court approves arrest of Prez Yoon

The arrest warrant for an incumbent president is unprecedented, and deepens the political crisis that has engulfed South Korea, Asia's fourth-largest economy and a key US ally

REUTERS

Seoul, Dec 31: A South Korean court gave authorities approval Tuesday to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol in a criminal investigation into his martial law decree, marking the first time that a sitting president of the country has faced arrest.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) confirmed the Seoul Western District Court approved an arrest warrant requested by investigators examining Yoon's short-lived imposition of martial law.

Yoon, who has been suspended from office, is facing investigation on allegations that he was the leader of an insurrection, one of the few criminal charges from which a South



Yoon has not responded to investigators' summons multiple times. Yoon's lawyers say warrant is invalid. Presidential security service says to treat warrant with due process.

Korean president does not have immunity. Separately, his trial on impeachment is being heard at the Constitutional Court.

The arrest warrant for an incumbent president is unprecedented, and deepens the political crisis that has engulfed South Korea, Asia's fourth-largest economy and a key US ally.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who took over from Yoon as acting president, has also been impeached by parliament, which is dominated by the Op-

position. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, who took over as acting president after Han's impeachment, has been dealing with Sunday's crash of Jeju Air flight 7C216, which killed 179 people in the deadliest air disaster on South Korean soil.

The current arrest warrant is viable until Jan 6, and gives investigators only 48 hours to hold Yoon after he is arrested. Investigators must then decide whether to request a detention warrant or release him.

Norovirus cases surge across US

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that is also sometimes referred to as the 'winter vomiting bug'

AGENCIES

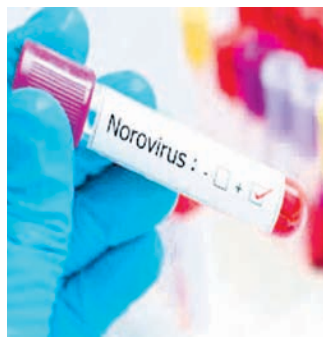
New Delhi, Dec 31: The stomach infection norovirus is causing alarm in the United States, with the first week of December seeing more than 90 cases recorded.

According to The New York Times, at least 80 people fell ill from norovirus linked to raw oysters served at a restaurant event in Los Angeles this month. They were sourced from British Columbia, Canada, and had been sold in 14 US states before being recalled.

In India, norovirus has previously affected people in Kerala, although on a much smaller scale compared to the numbers in the US. Here is what to know about the disease, its symptoms, precautions and treatment.

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that is also sometimes referred to as the 'winter vomiting bug'. It can be transmitted through contaminated food, water, and surfaces. The primary route is oral-faecal.

It is similar to diarrhoea-inducing rotavirus and infects people across age groups. Disease outbreaks typically occur aboard cruise ships, in nursing homes, dormitories, and other closed spaces.



According to the WHO, emerging evidence suggests that "norovirus infection is associated with intestinal inflammation, malnutrition and may cause long-term morbidity".

It adds that an estimated 685 million cases of norovirus are seen annually, including 200 million cases among children under the age of five. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website further states norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States, causing 58% of all foodborne illnesses in the country.

The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that those infected should avoid contact with others and avoid preparing food for others while sick and for two days after symptoms stop.

SHORT TAKES

Pentagon chief loses 9/11 plea bid

Washington: A military appeals court has ruled against Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin's effort to throw out the plea deals reached for Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and two other defendants in the 9/11 attacks, a US official said. The decision puts back on track the agreements that would have the three men plead guilty to one of the deadliest attacks ever on the United States in exchange for being spared the possibility of the death penalty. The attacks by al-Qaida killed nearly 3,000 people September 11, 2001, and helped spur US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in what the George W Bush administration called its war on terror. The military appeals court released its ruling Monday night, according to the US official, who was not authorised to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

SL police, govt website hacked

Colombo: The social media accounts of the Sri Lankan police and the official website of the government's Printer Department were targeted by cyberattacks Tuesday, according to officials. "Our YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and X were hit by cyber-attacks. By now, we have restored all of them other than YouTube," said Police Spokesman and Superintendent KB Manathunga. He added that the hackers had been identified, and investigations were ongoing. In addition to the police social media accounts, the official website of the government's Printer Department was also hacked. The group behind the attack has yet to be identified, according to the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), a state agency.

PIO jailed for hurling racial slurs

Singapore: An Indian origin man has been jailed for four weeks and fined SGD 4,000 for having hurled racial slurs and throwing a tip box at a cashier in a café. Rishi David Ramesh Nandwani, 27, Monday pleaded guilty to one charge of using insulting words and one charge of a rash act that endangered the victim's safety at the café in an upmarket shopping conclave of Holland Village. Two similar charges were considered in sentencing. Rishi appeared in court through video link from his place of remand, according to a Channel News Asia report.

Bangladesh's interim govt to declare 'proclamation of July uprising'

Dhaka: The interim government in Bangladesh has announced that it will prepare a "proclamation of July uprising", a day after it distanced itself from a proposed declaration with an identical title by the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement that led to the ouster of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina four months ago. "We hope within few days the proclamation will be prepared with the participation and consensus of all and presented before the nation," Shafiqul Alam, Press Secretary to the chief adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, said in a midnight press conference Monday. Addressing reporters in front of Yunus' official Jamuna residence, Alam said the declaration would be based on the views of all participating students, political parties, and stakeholders, including the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime August 5. Alam said the government took the initiative to prepare the proposed charter to "consolidate the people's unity, anti-fascist spirit and desire for state reform developed through the July uprising".

US, Boeing investigators examine site of deadly SK plane crash

Seoul: A team of US investigators including representatives from Boeing have examined the site of a plane crash that killed 179 people in South Korea while authorities were conducting safety inspections on all Boeing 737-800 aircraft operated by the country's airlines. All but two of the 181 people aboard the Boeing 737-800 operated by South Korean budget airline Jeju Air died in Sunday's crash. Video showed the aircraft, without its landing gear deployed, crash-landed on its belly and overshoot a runway at South Korea's southern Muan International Airport before it slammed into concrete fence and burst into a flame. The plane was seen having an engine trouble, and preliminary examinations also say the pilots received a bird strike warning from the ground control centre and issued a distress signal as well. But many experts say the landing gear issue was likely the main cause of the crash. The South Korean government has launched safety inspections on all the 101 Boeing 737-800s in the country. The Transport Ministry said authorities are looking at maintenance and operation records during five days of safety checks that are to run until Friday.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Pak Punjab govt opens Bhagat Singh Gallery to tourists

The gallery houses historical documents, including pictures, letters, newspapers, details of trial and other memorial articles related to his life and freedom struggle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Dec 31: Pakistan's Punjab government has opened to tourists the Bhagat Singh Gallery at the historical Poonch House here, where the independent freedom fighter's trial was conducted some 93 years ago.

The gallery houses historical documents, including pictures, letters, newspapers, details of trial and other memorial articles related to his life and freedom struggle.

Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman inaugurated the

gallery Monday.

"Tourists will have access to the gallery under an agreement between the departments of industry, commerce and tourism of the Punjab government," Zaman said, adding that the historical building of Poonch House has been restored to its original form.

"The gallery showcases Bhagat Singh's struggle for independence," he said.

Pakistan's Punjab Archives Department in 2018 for the first time had displayed some records of the legendary freedom

fighter's case file, including his execution certificate, letters, photographs and newspaper clippings and other material.

Singh, 23, was hanged by British rulers March 23, 1931 in Lahore, after being tried under charges for hatching a conspiracy against the colonial government.

The case was filed against Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru for allegedly killing British police officer John P Saunders. The record which was put on display also included a request of Singh for providing the order of court dated August 27, 1930, and his petition dated May 31, 1929, for the interview of his father.

It also contained a petition of his father, Sardar Kishan Singh, against the death sen-



Singh, 23, was hanged by British rulers March 23, 1931 in Lahore, after being tried under charges for hatching a conspiracy against the colonial government

tence of his son and the certificate/execution of his death in Lahore district jail by the

superintendent of jail dated March 23, 1931.

It also includes a petition of

Singh for allowing him daily newspapers and books, and some other records related to the manifesto of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha Lahore by BC Vohra and several clippings of the daily VIRBHARAT etc.

One document about the execution of the death sentence of Singh says, "I (superintendent of the jail) hereby certify that the sentence of death passed on Bhagat Singh was duly executed and that the said Bhagat Singh was accordingly hanged by neck till he was dead at Lahore Jail 9 pm Monday the 23rd day of March 1931. The body was not taken down until life was ascertained by a medical officer to be extinct; and that no accident, error or other misadventure occurred."

Business



Of ₹80 trillion investment projected in the maritime sector in the next 25 years in Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, ₹54 trillion is estimated in enhancing India's ship ownership, ship-building and ship registration ecosystem
SARBANANDA SONOWAL | UNION MINISTER OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

COWORKING OPERATORS RENT RECORD OFFICE SPACE

Coworking operators have taken on rent a record 125 lakh square feet of premium office space in 2024, up 44 per cent annually, to expand their businesses amid rising demand for flexible workspaces, according to Colliers. The operators had taken on lease 8.7 million (87 lakh) square feet of office space in the 2023 calendar year for further sub-leasing to corporate clients.



of the day note

In 2025, new-age technologies such as Artificial Intelligence /Internet Of Things, cloud computing, robotics, and automation to name a few, will continue to be leveraged to democratise technological transformation and deliver smart ecosystem solutions to the consumers

2025 should be a good year. The fundamentals are clear, the economy is doing very well, customers are... well aware of the technology. So obviously the brands that can offer a differentiated product and proper after-sales service and communication will do very well next year also

The Indian residential real estate market has entered a promising up-cycle post-pandemic, bolstered by pent-up demand and a stronger sentiment for homeownership. Over the past two to three years, the sector experienced exceptional growth, which has naturally moderated in 2024

Fiscal deficit at 52.5% of full-year target at Nov-end

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of the eighth month of financial year 2024-25 touched 52.5 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed Tuesday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between the government's expenditure and revenue -- was about ₹8.47 lakh crore during the April-November period, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year. The deficit was 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24.

In absolute terms, the government aims to contain the fiscal deficit at ₹16,13,312 crore during the current fiscal.

The revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for the first eight months of 2024-25 showed that the net tax revenue was about ₹14.43 lakh crore.

The Central government's total expenditure in the eight months through November stood at ₹27.47 lakh crore or 56.9 per cent of the budget estimate.

Of the total expenditure, ₹22.27 lakh crore was in the revenue account and ₹5.13 lakh crore in the capital account.

Out of the total revenue expenditure ₹6,58,494 crore is on account of interest payment and ₹2,79,211 crore is on account of major subsidies.

A fiscal deficit is the difference between the total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowing needed by the government.

India's RE investments to double in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: As barren arid land gets covered with solar panels and giant windmills dot the coastline, India made it to the high table of clean energy superpowers with installed capacity crossing 200 gigawatts and projections of investment doubling to over USD 32 billion in 2025.

According to the International Energy Agency, India's annual renewable capacity additions through 2030 are expected to increase more quickly than any other major economy, including China. It seeks India's capacity addition more than quadrupling from 15 GW in 2023 to 62 GW in 2030. By the end of 2024, its installed capacity touched 205 GW.

Alongside, domestic solar PV and wind turbine manufacturing is being scaled up as part of the broader commitment to decarbonise and shift away from fossil fuels. India, which has set 2070 as the target for Net Zero, is aiming 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. To achieve this it is looking to add 50 GW of renewable energy (RE) capacity annually.

Talking to PTI, Union New & Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said, "We have installed a total capacity addition of 24.72 GW RE in the country during the last 11 months of 2024 (from 1st January 2024 to 30th November 2024), compared to 11.83 GW capacity addition during the same period last year."

Back-of-envelope calculations show that the RE capacity addition of 50GW will entail an investment of ₹2,75,000 crore



or USD 32.35 billion (at ₹85 per USD)

Joshi said that 2024 has been a remarkable year for the RE sector and added, "We are working relentlessly to chart the growth of the sector."

He informed that in December 2023, as much as 1.23GW RE capacity was added which means that in the entire 2023, 13.06GW of RE capacity was added.

The 24.72 GW capacity added from 1st January 2024 to 30th November 2024 includes 20.85 GW Solar Power, 3.22 GW Wind Power, 0.50 GW Bio Power and 0.09 GW Small Hydro Power and 0.06 Large Hydro Power.

It has a share of 86.86 per cent in the total installed power generation capacity added during this period (Jan to Nov) in the country (28.46 GW).

"For the very first time in 2024, a record amount of ₹32.45 lakh crore has been pledged," he said.

About the PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana for install-

ing rooftop solar and providing free electricity up to 300 units every month for 1 crore households, Joshi informed that there are more than 1.5 crore registrations so far and over 6.85 lakh installations are done till now.

On challenges in 2025, he mentioned about the development of new policies to further reduce the cost of Green Hydrogen as well as pursuing remaining States & UTs to issue their Green Hydrogen Policies.

According to Joshi, getting additional standards to be published in various categories such as, hydrogen production, storage and transportation, application, aviation and railway etc. by relevant organizations is also a challenge.

He thinks that identifying demand in domestic & international markets for Green Hydrogen consumption is also a challenge.

However, Joshi is optimistic about the award of additional production capacity of 7.80

Lakh MTPA of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives in India in 2025.

Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme of India is likely to be published in 2025, he said, adding that the draft scheme has been published in public domain for stakeholders' comments.

He said that the ministry will be encouraging potential use of Hydrogen in Hard-to-Abate/new sectors and the pilot projects in steel and transport sector are likely to be awarded.

Three pilot projects in the steel sector for a total plant capacity of 3,290 TPD using hydrogen have already been awarded in 2024 for a total amount of ₹347 crore.

At least two more pilot projects may be awarded in the coming year in this sector, he stated. He also hinted about setting up a Centre of Excellence for dedicated research in Green Hydrogen in 2025.

The MNRE has proposed to create testing facilities for Green Hydrogen, for developing a Robust Standards and Regulatory Framework.

Sandeep Agarwal, Founder and MD of GreenZero Energy India said that success in 2025 will hinge on forging public-private partnerships, promoting innovation, and ensuring that the green hydrogen roadmap is not only visionary but also actionable and inclusive.

Debi Prasad Dash, President, India Energy Storage Alliance said, "2025 will be a pivotal year for the sector, estimating a cumulative market potential of around 250 gigawatt-hours of battery energy storage requirements by 2032."

RUPEE AT FRESH ALL-TIME LOW



AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 31: The rupee depreciated 13 paise to close at fresh record low of 85.65 (provisional) against the US dollar Tuesday, ending the year with a sharp 3 per cent loss on significant foreign fund outflows and a strong greenback in global markets.

Forex traders said the rupee has been under continued pressure amid the Federal Reserve's cautious stance on rate cuts and the "Trump factor" driving up the dollar index (DXY) and US 10-year bond yields.

Additionally, slowing domestic macroeconomic growth, widening trade deficit and persistent foreign fund outflows have further fuelled the rupee's depreciation.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.54 and touched the lowest level of 85.66 against the greenback during intra-day trade. The unit ended the session at 85.65 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee dropped 4 paise to 85.52 against the US dollar.

The domestic unit has depreciated against the greenback by almost 3 per cent from 83.16 December 29, 2023, to 85.65 December 31, 2024.

SHORT TAKES

Interest rates unchanged

New Delhi: The government Tuesday left the interest rates unchanged on various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, for the fourth straight quarter beginning January 1, 2025. "The rates of interest on various small savings schemes for the fourth quarter of FY 2024-25, starting from January 1, 2025, and ending on March 31, 2025, shall remain unchanged from those notified for the third quarter (October 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024) of FY 2024-25," said a finance ministry notification.

Proposals for nuclear reactors

New Delhi: India's nuclear power operator NPCIL on Tuesday invited proposals from the industry to set up 220 MW Bharat Small Reactors for captive use, replacing the existing coal-fired thermal power plants used by the steel, aluminium, copper and cement industries. Bharat Small Reactors are 220 MW Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) with an impeccable safety and excellent performance record, which are compact and tailored for captive use, according to a statement from the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).

UPI boost to WhatsApp Pay

New Delhi: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has lifted the limit from onboarding UPI users for the third-party app provider WhatsApp Pay with immediate effect. With this development, WhatsApp Pay can now extend UPI services to its entire user base in India, NPCI said in a statement. Previously, NPCI had permitted WhatsApp Pay to expand its UPI user base in a phased manner, it added. There was a cap of 100 million users which has been lifted by NPCI. With this notification, it said, NPCI is removing the limit restrictions on user onboarding on WhatsApp Pay.

Key infra sectors' growth slows to 4.3% in Nov



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: The output of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 4.3 per cent in November 2024 against 7.9 per cent growth registered a year ago, according to official data released Tuesday.

On a monthly basis, the production growth of these sectors was higher than the 3.7 per cent expansion recorded in October 2024. In November, production of crude oil and natural gas contracted.

The production growth of coal, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, and electricity moderated to 7.5 per cent, 2.9 per cent,

2 per cent, 4.8 per cent, and 3.8 per cent, respectively, against 10.9 per cent, 12.4 per cent, 3.3 per cent, 9.7 per cent and 5.8 per cent in November last year.

However, cement output rose to 13 per cent in the month under review.

The growth of core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 4.2 per cent during April-November this fiscal. It was 8.7 per cent in the same period last fiscal.

The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which measures overall industrial growth.

Sensex, Nifty close year with over 8% gains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 31: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on the final session of 2024 Tuesday amid persistent foreign fund outflows and weak trends in the global markets.

Falling for the second straight day, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined 109.12 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 78,139.01. Intra-day, it tanked 687.34 points or 0.87 per cent to 77,560.79. The NSE Nifty dipped marginally by 0.10 points to settle at 23,644.80.

In the entire 2024, Sensex jumped 5,898.75 points or 8.16 per cent, and the Nifty surged 1,913.4 points or 8.80 per cent.

The BSE benchmark Sensex hit its record peak of 85,978.25 on September 27 this year, and the NSE Nifty also reached the lifetime high of 26,277.35 on the same day.

Stock market investors became richer by a whopping ₹77.66 lakh crore in the year 2024. The market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed firms surged by ₹77,66,260.19 crore to

BSE SENSEX IN 2024



₹4,41,95,106.44 crore (USD 5.16 trillion) in 2024.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 12,506.84 points or 29.30 per cent and the midcap index jumped 9,605.44 points or 26.07 per cent this year.

"The final day of the year concluded with minor loss-

es, despite a recovery from the day's lows. However, the pressure of consolidation is dragging the domestic momentum amid negative global cues and ongoing concerns over a strengthening dollar index and US bond yields. FII outflows and rising crude

prices are pressuring the rupee and dampening sentiment. Nonetheless, the market's focus is expected to shift back to domestic Q3 results for insights into potential growth and earnings recovery and to the Union Budget, offering a short- to medium-term perspective amid global uncertainties," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30 blue-chip pack, Tech Mahindra, Zomato, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and HCL Technologies were the major laggards Tuesday.

Kotak Mahindra Bank, ITC, UltraTech Cement and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.71 per cent and the midcap index went up by 0.13 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT declined 1.47 per cent, IT (1.29 per cent), teck (1.02 per cent), realty (0.36 per cent) and financial services (0.29 per cent).

Emerging technologies to drive job growth in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 31: Indian IT ecosystem is poised for a promising growth trajectory in the coming years with emerging technologies expected to witness a 20 per cent increase in new jobs in 2025, Human Resources platform FirstMeridian Business Services said Tuesday.

Looking back at 2024, it said the Indian IT and tech ecosystem witnessed a 17 per cent surge in new employment opportunities, driven by rapid digital transformation and the concurrent rising demand for emerging tech niche job profiles.

"After a muted H1, the sector regained momentum, as we gear up for 2025, these trends will continue, while also eyeing an average 20 per cent rise in profiles like application developers, software engineers, DevOps engineers, AI, ML, and Cyber Security," FirstMeridi-



an Business Services CEO, IT Staffing, Sunil Nehra said.

Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI), which was a major trend in 2024, is expected to further accelerate in 2025, Nehra added.

The sector is set for remarkable expansion, with high demand for roles like data analysts, data engineers, data scientists, and others, he said, adding that the Gen-AI industry alone is projected to have 1 mil-

lion new job opportunities by 2028, contributing significantly to the nation's GDP.

Salaries for Gen-AI positions like Generative AI engineer, Algorithm engineer, and AI security specialist are projected to rise from the previous year, indicating a 25-30 per cent upward trend in compensation for the mid-level category.

As businesses expand and innovate, this surge in hiring will support new projects, enhance

digital infrastructure, and keep pace with technological advancements. For instance, industries like Global Capability Centers (GCCs) have created over 6,00,000 jobs between 2018-19 and 2023-24.

By 2030, they are projected to employ 2.5 to 2.8 million professionals. Additionally, other non-tech sectors like BFSI and Telecom are also likely to increase their intake of IT/tech professionals in 2025.

"As we move towards an evolving IT landscape in 2025, there will be an essential focus on tech upskilling to cultivate a robust workforce pool. The majority of large enterprises and mid-sized companies are expected to marginally increase their upskilling budgets by an average of 15-20 per cent in 2025," Nehra said.

Additionally, he said that individuals will continue taking the initiative for their own upskilling efforts to prepare for promising new-age tech roles.

**OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER
ATHGARH FOREST DIVISION**

No.MM-390: Email:-dfo.athgarh@odisha.gov.in

INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | Name of the Work | Elephant Proof Trench at Subasi RF over-2 Km of Khuntuni Range under Athgarh Forest Division |
| 2. | Total No. of Works | For Elephant Proof Trench over-2 K.M |
| 3. | Estimated Cost per Quarter | For Elephant Proof Trench Rs.10,00,000/- |
| 4. | Class of Contractor | "D" & "C" |
| 5. | Period of Completion | 01 (One Calendar Month) |
| 6. | Type of Tender | Single Cover Tender |
| 7. | Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal | From 11.00 A.M. of Dt.01.01.2025 to 5.00 P.M. of dt.08.01.2025 |
| 8. | Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal | Dt.08.01.2025 upto 17.00 hrs. |
| 9. | Submission of Original documents (TP cost, EMD, Affidavit etc as per DTCN) | During office hours from 10.30 A.M. to 5.00 PM on dt.09.01.2025 in the office of the undersigned. |
| 10. | Date of Opening of Bid through online | Dt.10.01.2025 at 11.30 AM in the office of the undersigned. |
| 11. | Name & Address of the O.I.T. (Officer Inviting Tender) | Divisional Forest Officer, Athgarh Forest Division |

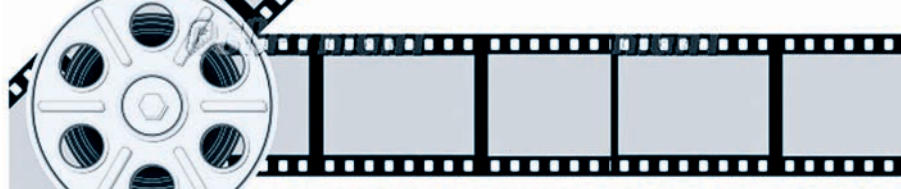
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.
N.B.: Subsequent corrigendum/addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above.

**Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer,
Athgarh Forest Division**

OIPR-08063/11/0004/2425

B-TOWN HOPES

The 2025 cinematic landscape is dominated by diverse content. While there are a few big banner movies to entertain viewers, some star kids are set to launch their careers. Similarly, quite a few yesteryear heroines are hoping to make comebacks either on big screens or streaming platforms. As the showbiz prepares for an eventful year, Orissa POST takes a look at some of the key events to keep an eye on



PROMISING DEBUTS

Veer Pahariya, the son of Sanjay Pahariya and Smruti Shinde, hails from a politically prominent family, with his grandfather being former Maharashtra CM Sushil Kumar Shinde. According to Filmibeat, Veer is all set to make his film debut in the movie Sky Force.



Shanaya Kapoor, daughter of actor Sanjay Kapoor and jewellery designer Maheep Kapoor, has already bagged several projects even before her debut film hits the screens. As per Pinkvilla, Shanaya will star in her first film opposite Lakshay Lalwani and Gurfateh Parizada. The film is being produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions.

Ibrahim Ali Khan, the son of Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh, has been in the media spotlight for quite some time. Known for his fun, relatable videos with his sister Sara Ali Khan, Ibrahim is all set to make his acting debut in Sarzameen, a film produced by Dharma Productions.

Aaman Devgan, the nephew of Ajay Devgn, is creating quite a stir in Bollywood circles. As per India.com, Aaman, who comes from a family with a legacy of successful actors, will make his debut in a film directed by Abhishek Kapoor, where he is paired with Rasha Thadani.

Aryan Khan, the eldest son of superstar Shah Rukh Khan will be entering the entertainment industry not as an actor but as a director. King Khan made an official announcement that Aryan will be directing a Netflix series that will be backed by his better half Gauri Khan under the banner of Red Chillies Entertainment.



Awaited comebacks

Fans will get a chance to see yesteryear charismatic female leads on the silver screens once again. As 2025 kicks off, here's a look at some of the potential comebacks of veteran actresses

Zeenat Aman: After staying away from the limelight for a long time, the Satyam Shivam Sundaram actress recently became very active on social media. Zeenat will be returning to the films with the forthcoming drama, Bun Tikki. The project will also see Shabana Azmi and Abhay Deol in significant roles.

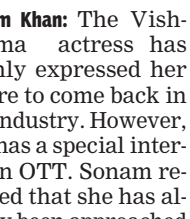


Meenakshi Sheshadri: The Hero female lead left her fans heartbroken when she decided to step away from the movies around three decades ago. Now, the diva has returned from the US and wishes to come back into the entertainment industry. Meenakshi has been making a few appearances on TV recently.

Mamta Kulkarni: Another actress who left the film industry without a notice was Mamta Kulkarni. Known for her roles in Krantiveer, Karan Arjun and Sabse Bada Khiladi, the actress has now come to Mumbai after 25 years. Mamta revealed that she has received few web series offer.



Sonam Khan: The Vishwatma actress has openly expressed her desire to come back in the industry. However, she has a special interest in OTT. Sonam revealed that she has already been approached with a few scripts and desires to play her age with grace, even if it's a negative role.



Sangeeta Bijani: Even at the age of 64 she can give the young actresses a run for their money. The Tridev actress said the depiction of female characters has changed over time. She added that when she was working, most films lacked strong female roles, but this has changed over time. She desires to make a comeback through OTT.



CELEBS SPEAK

As the world bids farewell to another year, a few Odia film celebrities took some time off to share with Orissa POST their plan for the New Year

The year 2024 was great with Daalcheeni winning state film award. In the New Year 2025 two projects of my will be releasing Angel in January and Dahaan in March. For mew year I will ask people to support Odia industry as we are in transition phase and trying to change its image from doing copy paste movies to original and good script based movies.

PARTHA SARTHI RAY | ACTOR
May this New Year bring more happiness, success and prosperity to our film industry. I wish that all the industry people come together and join hands for one single cause - The development of Odia film industry. 2024 had been excellent for me. I look forward to 2025 with Gangs of Puri 2, Dahaan, Raavan and another untitled film which will be announced soon.

ANUPAM PATNAIK | DIRECTOR
The year 2024 was a great year for me with multiple movies released in cinema halls, such as Parab,, Karma, Ashram. I also received best actress award for the Daalcheeni. In 2025 two of my movies are releasing Rangashoor and Simili. This year too I will focus on choosing scripts which are good and will try to win hearts of as many viewers as possible.

SURYAMAYEE MOHAPATRA | ACTRESS
The year 2024 was good with my movie Khoka Bhai Tama Pain released and made audience entertained. In 2025 I will start shooting for my new movie Sessa Kisan Balasingha ru Berlin which is a biopic of a young tribal Odia scientist and his journey.

SWARAJI BARIK | ACTOR
The year 2024 I had two movies Operation 12/17 and Tike Tike Achinha Tu, but most of my time went to my academic study as dentist. I will remain occupied in 2025 also with my exams. I have some interesting projects in kitty on which I will work after the exams.

BHOOMIKA DASH | ACTRESS

BIG TICKET RELEASES

Some high-budget movies are slated to hit the theatres in 2025. A quick glance at a few of the most expected projects of the upcoming year

OLLYWOOD

WIFE starring actress Varsha Priyadarshini in titular role is a story of a wife who sacrificed a lot for the well being and happiness of her family. It gives a message of women empowerment. The film is directed by Sudhakar Vasanth and produced by Bijay Kandoi. The film will be releasing January 3.

RANGASHOOR, the Prakash Films and Moon TV Movies Production is much awaited movie which will be releasing January 12, 2025. The movie tells the story of revival of Bagha Nacha, a dying folk dance form of Odisha. It show how a father-daughter duo tried to make the form alive. Starring Suryamayee Mohapatra, Chaudhury Jayprakash Das, Chaudhury Bikash Das, Samaresh Routray, and Dipanwit Das Mohapatra among others. The movie is directed by Pratap Rout and produced by Sachikant Jena, Prashant Beura, Sunil Yadav and Pratap Rout.

SANATANI starring Sambeet Acharya, Arlin Ankita is a Vidisha Kraft production which will be releasing in January. The film is directed by Basudev Barad and produced by Bijay Kandoi. The film deals with religious issues and will make people aware about religion.

A Subham Cine Productions movie, **ANGEL** is a thriller starring Partha Sarthi Ray, Kavya Jeeranm Prasanjeet Mohapatra in lead role. The film will be releasing in January. The film tells the story of a brave police officer whose eight year old daughter was kidnapped.

BOLLYWOOD

SIKANDAR: While Salman decided to stay away from the big screens this year, he has already managed to create a lot of buzz for his forthcoming action-entertainer, Sikandar. Adding to the hype, Salman recently released the teaser of AR Murugadoss' directorial. Backed by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, the project will also see Rashmika Mandanna, Suniel Shetty, and Sharman Joshi in pivotal roles.

ALPHA: The Yash Raj Spy Universe has been keeping the fans on the hook with its back-to-back entertainers. Now this spy universe is about to expand its horizon as it is all set to add its first-ever female-centric drama starring Alia Bhatt, Sharvari, Bobby Deol, and Anil Kapoor. Going by the reports, Alpha will revolve around two agents on their respective missions.

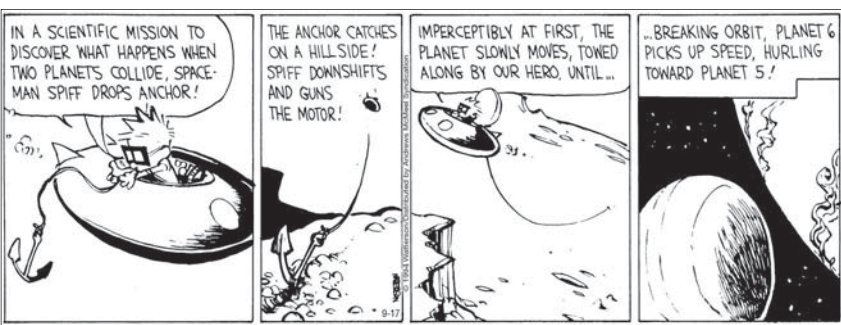
WAR II: Hrithik Roshan fans are in for a treat as they will get to see their beloved star in the second installment of the action drama, War 2. Ayan Mukerji is directing the movie that will see Jr NTR and Anil Kapoor in significant roles. Hrithik will be seen reprising his role of Major Kabir Dhaliwal as he deals with a new threat to the safety of the nation.

BAAGHI 4: Tiger Shroff is known for his jaw-dropping action in the popular Baaghi series. The actor will once again be seen as Ronny in Baaghi 4. Helmed by A Harsha, the much-anticipated drama will be produced by Sajid Nadiadwala under his banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment. Along with Tiger Shroff, Baaghi 4 will also star Sanjay Dutt, Sonam Bajwa and Harnaaz Sandhu in crucial roles.

PEANUTS



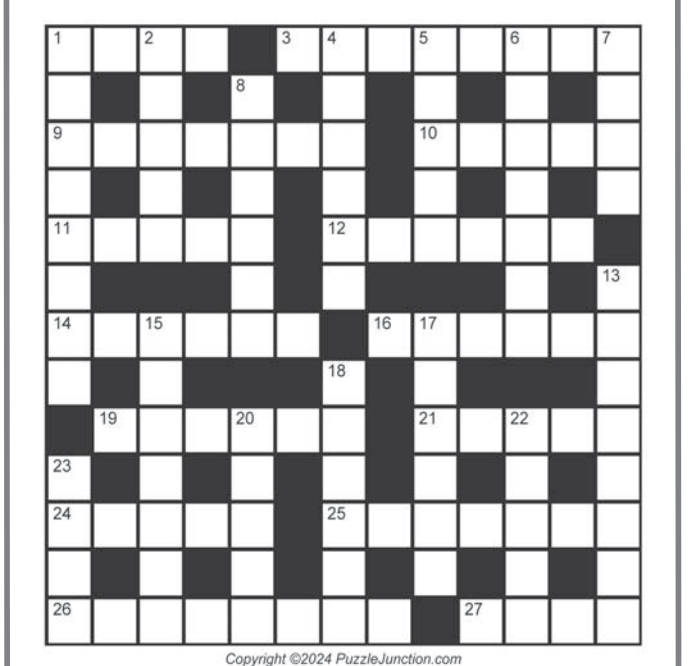
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Hoodwink
 - 3 Laughs softly
 - 9 Give in
 - 10 Float
 - 11 Proportion
 - 12 Expedient
 - 14 Audience request
 - 16 Greek goddess of wisdom
 - 19 Light show
 - 21 Criminal offence
 - 24 Waldorf salad ingredient
 - 25 Flower
 - 26 Worn to shreds
 - 27 Military award
 - 7 Fill to excess
 - 8 Hearsay
 - 13 Seasickness (3,2,3)
 - 15 Thick soft cake
 - 17 Non-stick name
 - 18 Trinket
 - 20 Having a lot to lose?
 - 22 Valuable quality
 - 23 Hops kiln
- Down**
- 1 Abandoned
 - 2 Embroidery stitch
 - 4 Brouhaha
 - 5 Chain of hills
 - 6 Freedom to choose a pastime

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.

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| | 5 | | | 9 | 7 | 4 | 2 | |
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SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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| L | X | M | Y | U | O | E | | | | | |
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| N | Z | R | A | G | P | | | | | | |
| K | Y | O | T | O | B | S | C | U | R | E | |
| R | N | E | | | | | | | | | L |
| W | H | I | T | S | L | Y | T | A | C | T | |
| A | G | E | | | | | | | | | A |
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SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

WORLD BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP

Vaishali advances to quarterfinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Dec 31: Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali surprised herself with a stellar performance to enter the quarterfinals of the World Blitz Championship here, even as recently-crowned rapid champion Koneru Humpy made an early exit.

Following Koneru Humpy's stellar performance in Rapid, which earned her the gold medal and a prize of USD 60,000, it was Vaishali's turn to impress her fans. She triumphed in the women's section, scoring 9.5 points out of a possible 11 with three draws.

"I'm very happy with today's performance. Tomorrow will be a big day. Honestly, it (performance) was completely unexpected. I was not expecting the result like how it went today. Tomorrow, I have to be ready and prepare well and then see," she said.

Russian Kateryna Lagno came closest to Vaishali, scoring 8.5 points, while the remaining six qualifiers finished with an identical eight points. Despite meeting the points criteria, Humpy was eliminated due to the worst tiebreaker, finishing ninth.

In the Open section, 10 players were tied for first place, including world number one Magnus Carlsen. The Norwegian scored when needed and drew six of his 13 games, finishing among the co-leaders at the end of the qualifiers.

Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi won the qualifier with 9.5 points, benefiting from the best tiebreak, while Fabiano Caruana of the United States finished



second, ahead of Carlsen, who was placed third.

Surprisingly, none of the Indians made the top eight, despite some early promising performances.

Arjun Erigaisi played brilliantly at the start, securing victories in the first five rounds but faded away to finish with a sub-par seven points. R Pragnanandhaa was the best-placed Indian, with 8.5 points, but a last-round loss to Russian Daniil Dubov cost him a spot in the quarterfinals.

In the women's quarterfinals, Vaishali will face Chinese Grandmaster Zhu Jiner.

Vaishali's back-to-back victories against GMs Nana Dzagnidze of Georgia and Valentina Gunina of Russia in rounds 7-8 provided the necessary boost for the Indian player to top the event with ease.

The 23-year-old Indian played a dramatic match against Gunina, where she found herself under extreme time pressure and played 23 moves with hardly any time to think.

"You have nothing to think, you keep playing your moves.

That was a very bad time management in that game (by me). She (opponent) was ahead on the clock and on the board, she was a full pawn up but I kept playing," said Vaishali, who virtually had seven second for each of her 23 moves.

"Towards the end, I offered a draw with the rook-knight 3 versus 3. I think she wanted to play but her clock fell and that's how I won the game."

Vaishali said there were many players stronger than her in Blitz and that she was just lucky to have led the field by

INDIAN STANDINGS:

Open: R Pragnanandhaa (8.5) - 23; Raunak Sadhwani (8) 46; Arjun Erigaisi (7) 64; Aravindh Chithambaram (7) 68; V Pranav (7) 67;

Women: R Vaishali (9.5) 1; K Humpy (8) 9; Divya Deshmukh (7) 18; Vantika Agarwal (7) 19; D Harika (7) 22.

Qualifiers Open 1-8: Ian Nepomniachtchi, Volodar Murzin (Both Fide); Fabiano Caruana, Hans Niemann Moke, Wesley So (all USA); Magnus Carlsen (Nor); Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol); Alireza Firouzja (Fra).

Women 1-8: R Vaishali (Ind); Lei Tingjie, Wenjun Ju, Zhu Jiner (all Chn); Kateryna Lagno, Valentina Gunina (Both Fide); Carissa Yip (Usa) Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz).

one full point.

"I don't think I'm a great blitz player, honestly. There are many more strong players here. I think, today, I was lucky in many games and it just worked out," she added.

Talking about the knockout round, Vaishali said, "I haven't thought about it at all. The last few days I've been sick, not gone out much," she said, adding that she would any day prefer classical games to Rapid chess.

"I prefer classical any day... rapid is fun to play but lots of emotions. Like, so many games you are playing in a day and it's hard to deal with sometimes. I think that's the major difference (between classical and Rapid)," she said.

Deepti jumps to 5th in ICC ODI rank



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 31: India off-spinner Deepti Sharma climbed a spot to enter the top 5 in the latest ICC women's ODI ranking for bowlers following her match-winning performances in the recently-concluded series against the West Indies at home.

Deepti, who is fifth now, has 665 rating points and is marginally behind fourth-placed South Africa's Marizanne Kapp (677 rating points).

The 27-year-old made headlines, taking eight wickets in two matches, including 6/31 in the last game as India completed a clean sweep in the three-match series in Vadodara.

Among batters, Jemimah Rodrigues (537 rating points) is closing in on a top-20 as she has jumped four spots to 22nd thanks to scores of 29 and 52 during the series.

The big-hitting Richa Ghosh (13 not out and 23 not out) has moved seven spots to 41st (448 rating points), with Chinelle Henry's half-century in the

The 27-year-old made headlines, taking eight wickets in two matches, including 6/31 in the last game as India completed a clean sweep in the three-match series in Vadodara

third ODI leading to a 21-spot leap to 65th (349 rating points).

However, charismatic India opener Smriti Mandhana (720 rating points), who scored two half-centuries in the series, has dropped one place to third and trails South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt (773) and Chamari Athapaththu (733).

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur has dropped three places to 13th.

Hayley Matthews' seventh ODI century in Vadodara has helped the West Indies opener climb six places to seventh in the ICC Women's Batting Rankings.

SHORT TAKES

Gauff, Fritz qualify for United Cup quarterfinals

Perth: The top-seeded pair of Coco Gauff and US Open finalist Taylor Fritz of the United States are into the United Cup mixed teams tennis quarterfinals. Fritz beat Borna Coric 6-3, 6-2 Tuesday as the American team needed to win only one match to top Group A. For good measure, Gauff beat Donna Vekic 6-4, 6-2 in the later women's singles. The Perth quarterfinals were set for Wednesday, with the US taking on China, which qualified as the best runner-up, and group winners Kazakhstan and Germany playing each other.

Arif Saeed elected as POA president

Karachi: After being led by just two presidents over the past 46 years, the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) has elected Arif Saeed as its new president for the 2025-2029 term. Arif's unopposed election follows the resignation of Lt General (ret'd) Arif Hasan in January 2024 due to health reasons. Hasan had served as president from March 2004 to December 2024, succeeding the late Wajid Ali Shah, who led the POA from March 1978 to March 2004, becoming the longest-serving sports official in Pakistan.

Slovakia beats Kazakhstan

Ottawa: Maxim Strbak scored 2:55 into overtime to lead Slovakia to a 5-4 win over Kazakhstan at the world junior hockey championship. Slovakia held a 4-2 lead with less than five minutes remaining in regulation and Kazakh forward Asanali Sarkenov was assessed a 5-minute major and a game misconduct for cross-checking Slovak forward Frantisek Dej. Kazakhstan scored twice while short-handed, sending the game into overtime.

IOA recognises Harish Reddy's IGU

New Delhi: The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has given recognition to the Indian Golf Union (IGU) led by Harish Kumar Reddy while declaring the other body, headed by Brijinder Singh, void. A letter signed by IOA president PT Usha issued Monday stated that the National Olympic Committee had "reviewed the facts" and "examined the procedural adherence" before recognising the body headed by Reddy.

Cricket Australia names Bumrah as captain, Jaiswal too makes it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Dec 31: Jasprit Bumrah Tuesday was recognised for his splendid performances in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as Cricket Australia named the Indian pace spearhead as the captain of its Test team of the year, which also features Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Bumrah has been the best bowler in Test cricket in 2024 with 71 wickets from 13 matches at an average of 14.92 and a strike rate of 30.16.

"One of the greatest calendar years by a bowler ever; not since Dale Steyn's 74-wicket 2008 has a pace bowler been as prolific and not since Imran Khan's 1982 (62 victims at 13.29) has one taken them at a better rate," CA, the game's governing body in the country, said of Bumrah.

"As the only member of this side to have skippered their team in 2024 (leading India to victory in Perth) Bumrah also gets the captaincy reins - a job he could well see more of in future," CA added.

The peerless fast bowler



has been the best bowler in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy with 30 wickets in just four Tests.

Apart from Bumrah, Jaiswal has been picked as the opener for his exploits with the bat in the year.

Jaiswal finished the year as the second-highest scorer with 1,478 runs from 15 matches (29 innings) at an average of 54.74

with nine fifties and three centuries.

For Jaiswal, CA wrote, "India's bright young batting star was only 22 for all but four days of 2024 but played with the composure and class of a veteran."

Jaiswal's back-to-back double centuries in February ensured a home Test series win for India over England, while the left-hander's stunning 161 in Perth was also decisive.

"His runs tally is the most by an Indian opener in a calendar year and his 36 sixes is a new worldwide benchmark for a calendar year."

Meanwhile, Australia captain Pat Cummins failed to make it to the XI despite enjoying a good year with 37 wickets from nine matches at an average of 24.02 with two five-wicket hauls.

Alex Carey and Josh Hazlewood were the two Australians in the team, while the others included England's Ben Duckett, Joe Root and Harry Brook, New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra and Matt Henry, Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis and South Africa's Keshav Maharaj.

ANANYA NAIDU BAGS WOMEN'S AIR RIFLE GOLD



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Dec 31: Young Maharashtra shooter Ananya Naidu clinched the women's 10m air rifle gold defeating the experienced Meghana Sajjanar of the Railways by a fraction of a point in the National Shooting Championship Competitions here Tuesday.

Ananya, who trains regularly at legendary rifle shooter Anjali Bhagwat's academy in Pune, shot 252.5 in the final at the MP State Academy range to beat Meghana by a mere 0.2 points for her maiden senior national title.

R. Narmada Nithin of Tamil Nadu bagged the bronze with a score of 231.3.

Ananya, who was a part of the Maharashtra contingent at the Khelo India University Games and took up shooting as a 16-year-old, took a 1.4-point lead after the first-five shots itself and never looked back.

However, Meghana closed the gap and was in contention for the top podium finish but finally missed out in the 24-shots final.

In the qualification round, Ananya finished eighth, while state-mate Arya Rajesh Borse topped with a score of 633.3. Nithin gave a consistent performance both in the qualifications and the final by maintaining her position in the top three. She qualified second with a score of 632.9 points.

Hyderabad Toofans beat Delhi SG Pipers 5-4 in shoot-out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rourkela, Dec 31: Hyderabad Toofans grabbed a bonus point after prevailing over Delhi SG Pipers 5-4 in shoot-out after both sides were locked 2-2 at the end of regulation time in their Hockey India League (HIL) match here Tuesday.

Hyderabad Toofans took a 2-0 lead through Amandeep Lakra (11th min) and Gonzalo Peillat (13th) before Delhi SG Pipers drew level with goals from Dilraj Singh (21st) and Gareth Furlong (50th).

Hyderabad Toofans broke the deadlock through Amandeep in the 11th minute after a perfectly executed penalty corner. Amandeep generated a lot of power with his low driving shot that left Delhi SG Pipers goalkeeper Pawan with no chance.

The Hyderabad side scored a quick second a minute from the first quarter off a penalty corner through Peillat.

Delhi SG Pipers reduced the margin in the 21st minute through Dhiraj, who showed great presence of mind to lift the ball over the Toofans keeper.

In the 34th minute, Hyderabad's Rajinder Singh hit a low driving shot from distance, which took a deflection and ended up at the back of the net but the goal was not counted as the final touch came outside the circle.

In the 37th minute, Delhi SG Pipers had its first penalty-corner of the match but they could not capitalise on the chance as Hyderabad went into the third quarter with a 2-1 lead.

It was do-or-die battle in the third quarter but both the sides failed to get any result despite creating numerous opportunities.

Delhi SG Pipers finally drew level in the 50th minute when Furlong scored from a well-executed penalty-corner. Peillat came close to scoring the winner for Hyderabad two minutes from time but his shot from the penalty corner rattled the post and came back into play.

With both teams failing to find the winner, the match went into shoot-out where Hyderabad came out victorious.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Mhatre makes world record; Sharma, Utkarsh shine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Dec 31: Mumbai's Ayush Mhatre created a world record by becoming the youngest to score more than 150 runs in a List A game, Punjab's Abhishek Sharma hammered a 96-ball 170 against Saurashtra, while Jharkhand's Utkarsh Singh's 91 fired his team to a big win against Odisha, in their respective Vijay Hazare Trophy matches Tuesday.

Mhatre broke the world record set by Mumbai teammate and India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal by becoming the youngest to score 150 runs in a List A game.

At 17 years and 168 days, Mhatre bettered Jaiswal who was 17-years-and-291-days old when he made the record against Jharkhand in 2019.

Mhatre's 181 from 117 balls, studded with 11 sixes and 15 fours, powered Mumbai to

403/7. In reply, Nagaland could manage only 214/9 and lost their Group C match by 189 runs.

Utkarsh fires Jharkhand to win

Utkarsh Singh fired 91 not out from 60 balls with 11 fours and three sixes as Jharkhand defeated Odisha by seven wickets in a Group A match in Jaipur.

Having restricted Odisha to 162 in 24.5 overs, Jharkhand replied with a robust 164 for three to win with seven wickets in hand and more than 27 overs to spare.

Karun Nair guides Vidarbha to win over TN

Karun Nair led from the front as his unbeaten 111 took

Vidarbha over the line with six wickets to spare in a Group D contest against Tamil Nadu in Visakhapatnam.

Batting first, TN scored 256 in 48.4 overs with opener Tushar Raheja top-scoring with 75 and Mohamed Ali making 48.

Darshan Nalkande wrecked the TN innings, returning figures of 9.4-0-55-6.

In reply, Nair scored 111 not out off 103 balls with 14 fours and a six as Vidarbha recorded a crucial win.

Abhishek, Prabhsimran hit tons

India batter Abhishek Sharma hammered a 96-ball 170 with as many as 22 fours and eight sixes, while opening partner Prabhsimran made a 125 as shone in Saurashtra in a run-fest in Ahmedabad.

At the Gujarat College Ground, nearly 800 runs were scored as Punjab, who made 424/5 batting first, bowled out Saurashtra for 367 to win by 57 runs.

For the losing side, Ar-

pit Vasavada made 104 and opener Harvik Desai scored 59 but their efforts went in vain.

Hyderabad end Karnataka's unbeaten streak

Skipper Mayank Agarwal's third century in a row was not enough as Hyderabad pipped Karnataka by three wickets to end their four-match winning streak in a Group C contest in Ahmedabad.

Agarwal, who had scored 100 not out and 139 not out in his last two outings, made 124 off 112 balls with 15 fours and two sixes to take Karnataka to a huge 320 for eight. R Smaran also did well to make 83.

Hyderabad were bolstered by Tilak Varma's 99 off 106 balls and a superb unbeaten 109 off 82 balls from Aelagani Varun Goud. They made 322 for seven to win with three wickets and two balls to spare.



Punyatoya



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| DECEMBER | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 14 January Makara Sankranti, 23 January Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti, 26 January Republic Day, 03 February Vasanth Panchami, 26 February Maha Sivaratri, 05 March Panchayatiraj Divas, 14 March Holi, 31 March Idul Fitri, 01 April Odisha Day, 06 April, Ram Navami, 13 April Maha Vishuva Sankranti, 14 April Dr Ambedkar Jayanti, 18 April Good Friday, 07 June Bakrid / Eid al Adha, 14 June Pahili Raja, 15 June Raja Sankranti, 27 June Ratha Yatra, 06 July Muharram, 08 August Jhulan Purnima, 15 August Independence Day, 16 August Janmashtami, 27 August Ganesh Chaturthi, 28 August Nuakhai, 05 September Eid e Milad, 21 September Mahalaya Amavasye, 29 September Maha Saptami, 30 September Maha Ashtami, 01 October Maha Navami, 02 October Vijaya Dashami, 02 October Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti, 06 October Lakshmi Puja, 07 October Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti, 21 October Diwali, 05 November Guru Nanak Jayanti, 25 December Christmas Day.

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