

Police nab murder accused, on run for 23 years, from Guj

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, Nov 26: Odisha Police has arrested a murder accused, who had been on the run for 23 years, from Gujarat's Surat, an officer said Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Sachindra Sahani alias Sachi (50), along with six others, had allegedly killed Lingaraj Patra at Patigada in Ganjam district March 25, 2003 due to previous enmity.

Police had registered a murder case at Kabisuryanagar police station after the deceased's wife, Laxmi Patra, lodged a complaint, the officer said.

Patigada was under Kabisuryanagar police station limits at the time of the crime. The village, however, is now under the jurisdiction of Polsara police station, he said.

While the police had arrested six other accused involved in the murder -- identified as Alekh Patra, Mitu Mohanty, Sushant Mohanty, Babu Dalei, Mitu Routa and Kanhu Routa -- Sahani had been giving police the slip.

"We tried to nab him several times by raiding different places in Odisha and other states, and finally caught him in Surat," Ganjam Superintendent of Police Subhendu Patra said.

He was working as a mechanic in a power-loom in Surat by using a fake name, he said.

"The accused had been staying in Surat with his family. Two of his sons were studying in colleges and his daughter got married," Kaushik Majhi, Inspector-In-Charge of Polsara police station, said.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team rushed to Surat and arrested him from his residence there. He was brought to Pol-sara Wednesday.

An arrest warrant, issued by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court, Kabisuryanagar, was pending against him.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The way they're losing their lives under work pressure, he must be a BLO, not our party worker

It's official! Ahmedabad all set to host 2030 CWG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Glasgow, Nov 26: The Indian city of Ahmedabad was formally awarded hosting rights of the 2030 Commonwealth Games during Commonwealth Sport's general assembly here Wednesday, paving the way for the multi-sport event's return to the country after two decades.

It was a mere formality for the general assembly of 74 members to put a seal of approval on India's bid after Ahmedabad was recommended as the proposed host of the centenary edition by the Commonwealth Sport's Executive Board last month. India last hosted the CWG in 2010 in Delhi.

The Executive Board's recommendation followed a process overseen by the Commonwealth Sport's Evaluation Committee.

"India brings scale, youth, ambition, rich culture, enormous sporting passion and relevance...We start our next century for the Commonwealth Games in good health," said Dr Donald Rukare, President of Commonwealth Sport.

The decision also bolstered India's ambition to be an Olympic host in 2036.

Ahmedabad, the city which is in the race for Olympic hosting rights as well, has upgraded its sports infrastructure on a war footing in the last one decade.

India was facing competition from the Nigerian city of Abuja for the 2030 bid. But Commonwealth Sport decided to instead consider the African nation for the 2034 edition. **MORE P12**



TOWERING INFERNO: A helpless resident breaks down and sobs after a massive fire engulfed multiple high-rise towers of a residential complex in Hong Kong Wednesday, trapping his wife inside one of the buildings. At least 36 people died and hundreds were missing as firefighters struggled to douse the blaze **(Report P10)**

REUTERS

CJI mulls virtual-only hearings

Delhiites continue to gasp for breath as toxic air engulfs the national capital, exposing the utter failure of authorities to contain a crisis that now disrupts even the highest institutions such as the Supreme Court. When the Chief Justice of India and senior advocates struggle to appear in court due to hazardous pollution levels, it signals a breakdown both in public health and governance. Despite years of warnings, Delhi's Air Quality Index regularly plunges into the "very poor" or "severe" categories. When the top court has been forced to consider virtual-only hearings, it's not hard to imagine the inconveniences and health issues faced by the common man. The situation is no better elsewhere. In Angul district, unchecked mining, industrial emissions, and rising vehicular traffic have pushed AQI levels far beyond safe limits for days on end. Piecemeal measures, delayed responses, and weak enforcement continue to endanger millions, while governments struggle, or hesitate, to implement lasting solutions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 26: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, while considering the possibility of shifting Supreme Court hearings to the virtual-only mode due to the severe air pollution, said he felt unwell when he went for an hour-long walk a day before.

Kant said he would decide after consulting the bar, even as the idea of allowing virtual hearings for lawyers above 60 years



of age was floated in the court. The observations were made by the CJI at the outset of the

Alarming AQI levels in Angul

Angul: Air quality in Angul district has remained above the danger level for the past three days, with pollution rising steadily and making the air increasingly unfit for breathing. Heavy mining activity, industrial emissions and growing vehicular movement have contributed to the worsening conditions, officials said.

According to sources, the Air Quality Index (AQI) in Angul at the beginning of the month was recorded at 60 and 61 -- levels considered "satisfactory". However, from November 3 onwards, the AQI began to climb sharply. It first rose to 104, then 116 and reached 269 November 11. Pollution levels worsened significantly over the last three days. The AQI touched 322, November 24. It further deteriorated to 353 November 25, and Wednesday, the AQI stood at 337. These figures fall within the "very poor" category. Exposure to air of this quality can trigger respiratory illnesses and poses serious risks for patients with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and heart ailments. In recent days, residents of Angul and nearby areas have reported a hazy, smog-like atmosphere during early mornings and evenings. The sharp increase in particulate matter is the primary cause of the deteriorating air quality, said Ramesh Kumar Eka, Regional Officer of the State Pollution Control Board in Angul.



The only exercise I do is walking. But even that is difficult now. Yesterday I walked for 55 minutes, and till morning I had problems

JUSTICE SURYA KANT | CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

hearing on pleas -- challenging the Election Commission's decision to conduct Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, and other states -- when senior lawyer, Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the poll panel, sought exemption from personal presence.

"I have congestion issues... Please allow my colleague to take notes. I want to appear through video conferencing on the next date," Dwivedi said, adding that he is having some issues after he went for a morning walk. "I want your lordships' leave. Permission may be given to appear online, I am not well," he added.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal concurred and said, "At our age, we are breathing this ob-

noxious air when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is 400-500."

The CJI said, "Yesterday, I went for a walk for an hour. I was not feeling well." Then, the possibility of excluding lawyers aged 60 and above from in-person hearings was mooted.

"If I take any decision, then we will take the bar into confidence first. We will see hardship faced by lawyers and litigants ... if we get a proposal, then we will do something. I will meet office-bearers in the evening and take some steps," the CJI added. Presently, the top court functions through a hybrid mode where proceedings are conducted through both physical and virtual modes.

The air quality in the national capital was recorded in the "very poor" category Wednesday morning, with an AQI reading of 335.

As per the Central Pollution Control Board, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

Sky was never the limit: Shukla inspires students

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: The atmosphere at SAI International School crackled with curiosity and excitement Wednesday as students gathered for SAITED, the school's flagship science and technology festival. But the event soared to an entirely new dimension when ISRO astronaut and Indian Air Force test pilot, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla took the stage to share his extraordinary journey into space.

Shukla described the overwhelming stillness he encountered once he crossed the boundary of Earth's atmosphere. "When you look down at Earth," he said, his voice calm but powerful, "you see no borders, no divisions--just one beautiful, blue planet floating in the infinite darkness. It's



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi interacts with Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla during SAI International School's SAITED in City

humbling. In that moment, you realise that the sky was never the limit. Not for me, and certainly not for Bharat. Our potential is limitless, and if we dare to dream beyond the stars,

we can achieve the impossible." This year's theme "Infinite Possibilities, Endless Realities: Science Beyond the Omniverse!" could not have aligned more perfectly with

his message. While the event itself celebrated innovation, it was Shukla's firsthand account from space that truly ignited the students' imaginations, urging them to push beyond boundaries, both real and perceived.

During the lively Q&A session that followed, students enthusiastically quizzed the astronaut about life in space. One curious pupil asked what microgravity felt like. Shukla laughed warmly before replying, "At first, it's like your body forgets how to behave. Even holding a pen becomes a challenge. But soon you adapt--you learn to move slowly, with intention. And once you get the hang of it, it feels like flying--weightless, effortless, free."

Another student asked him to describe Earth as seen from space. His expression

softened as he recalled the sight. "From out there, Earth is silent," he said. "You don't hear anything--just stillness. And when you see that fragile, glowing blue sphere hanging in the vastness of space, it changes you. You understand how connected we truly are."

The event concluded with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi addressing the students, stressing the critical role of science and technology in shaping India's future. "Our students must embrace science to help build a prosperous India," he said, reinforcing the spirit of exploration and innovation that defined the day.

By the time the session ended, the young audience wasn't just inspired--they were transformed. Shukla's journey reminded them that dreams don't end at the sky; they begin beyond it.

In a first, President to address Assembly today

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: Droupadi Murmu will script history Thursday by becoming the first President to address the Odisha Assembly, of which she was earlier a member.

Speaker Surama Padhy, who chaired an all-party meeting Wednesday, said it will be a historic moment for the Assembly and its 147 members.

"The President will address the House from 4pm to 5pm. We are all eagerly waiting to listen to her. Her visit and address as the President are truly historic," she said.

Padhy said Murmu will be the first President to visit and address the Odisha Assembly. She said Murmu was elected to the Odisha Assembly from Rairangpur seat in Mayurbhanj district twice, in 2000 and 2004. She also became a minister in the BJD-BJP coalition government in Odisha.

During her visit, Murmu will also visit room number 11, the chamber in the Assembly from where she functioned as a minister. She served as an MoS with independent charge for Commerce and Transportation from March 6, 2000 to August 6, 2002, and Fisheries and Animal Resources Development from August 6, 2002 to May 16, 2004.

The chamber has been ren-



ovated ahead of her visit, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling said.

In 2007, Murmu received the Nilkanth Award for the Best MLA of the Odisha Assembly.

Governor Hari Babu Kam-bhampati and some MPs from the state and eminent personalities are also scheduled to attend the proceedings when the President addresses the Assembly.

Keeping in view the President's visit, the Odisha government has made elaborate security arrangements in Bhubaneswar, including in and around the Assembly. In place of the usual three-tier security for Assembly sessions, there will be four-tier security cover for the President's visit, a senior police officer said.

The Winter Session of the Assembly will also begin Thursday and is scheduled to continue till December 31. **P3**

Gundicha Temple to reopen Dec 1 after 6 years with ₹10 ticket

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Nov 26: The sacred Gundicha Temple here is set to reopen for devotees December 1 after remaining closed for nearly six years due to repair work, structural concerns, and administrative decisions.

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has announced a number of new guidelines ahead of the reopening, including the trial introduction of a ticketed darshan system under which each devotee will be required to pay ₹10 for entry.

Children below five years, senior citizens above 80 years and Divyang devotees will be allowed free entry.

SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee said that extensive preparations are underway to ensure smooth darshan for all visitors.

He stated that the temple will remain open daily from 6am to 6pm, although during the winter months of November to February it will close an hour earlier, at 5pm.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You may be taut with stress at work. But it doesn't stop you from knocking down your opponents. You are considerate but cunning when you need to be. People should know you by now. Ganesha say just march on ahead.

TAURUS
Your business and professional affairs will be well planned and organized this day, says Ganesha. Everything will run as scheduled. Your outstanding managing abilities, your business acumen will get noticed and appreciated. The home front may, however, not be as bright. The family scene is likely to be cheerless and gloomy.

GEMINI
Today, you need to find ways to integrate your feelings with your logical and analytical observations, says Ganesha. In nutshell, it's time you became a bit practical. Otherwise, the afternoon will prove to be too emotional for you. Fortune will favour you if you manage to keep your emotions in check.

CANCER
It is quite likely that the elderly will shower care and love on you, predicts Ganesha. Financially, you will probably collect certain overdue payments in the afternoon. Later in the day, your wooing may pay rich dividends, says Ganesha.

LEO
Old is gold. This adage holds true for you in that you shall be led by conventional wisdom today. Your ability to stay upbeat is peaking just at the right time, and you shall be supremely confident about your chances of a brilliant future. This shall reduce the tension in your work and go a long way in helping you enjoy warmth and affection later in the evening, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Learn to weave emotions and cold logic in one fabric of thought, says Ganesha. The afternoon may be an emotional overdose for you. Fortune, however, will favour you in the evening when you set off on an impulsive outing.

LIBRA
So, love finally entraps you with the help of the stars, chuckles Ganesha. There is a high probability that you will begin a long-lasting romantic relationship today. This new factor shall keep you elated throughout the day. Avoid any confrontation with those living around you. All in all, fortune is on your side today.

SCORPIO
Children will be drenched in the rain of love and affection you shower on them, says Ganesha. A special treatment awaits you at work. Your spouse will be a permanent source of happiness and abundance. You shall feels whole and complete in the evening, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, most of your time will go in attending to your sweetheart – either in thoughts or in person. Thrills are on the anvil, with a casual conversation with someone special in the afternoon perhaps. You may go on a shopping spree and add more to that wardrobe of yours, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Certain distasteful events occurring during the day may spoil your mood, but it won't really show in your work, and you will get over that phase sooner than you may have thought, says Ganesha. An unusual day, indeed. You can expect some good news from abroad, something you may have expected long back. Your spouse will be very understanding and supportive of your decisions.

AQUARIUS
You can't tolerate inequality and discrimination. This may cause a furore at your workplace. Don't bite off more than you can chew, cautions Ganesha. Also, remember that the same principles apply in relationships too. Give importance to what your loved ones have to say.

PISCES
Your family will be the cause of annoyance to you in the morning. However, as the day progresses and you find out just how much of an annoyance the workplace can be, your thinking processes ought to shift right back to your heart. There never was a crusader who set foot upon the holy land as gratefully as you will, when you return home.



SIMU LIU CRITICISES INDUSTRY FOR LACK OF ASIAN REPRESENTATION

Actor Simu Liu, known for *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, criticised Hollywood's lack of Asian representation in cinema. On social media, he expressed frustration, stating, "Put some Asians in literally anything right now," and called out studios for viewing Asian actors as "risky" for lead roles

KIDMAN ON HOW A SINGLE BREAK CAN ALTER LIVES

Nicole Kidman expressed her love for the unpredictable nature of the movie business, noting that a single lucky break can change everything. She explained that even after years of auditions, an unexpected opportunity can suddenly transform a career, with life-changing moments often just around the corner



Rakul's confession

Mumbai: Rakul Preet Singh, who made her Bollywood debut with *Yaariyan* in 2014, recently confessed how little she understood about the professional ecosystem surrounding actors when she first entered Hindi cinema. Despite receiving positive reviews for her performance, Rakul admitted she was unaware that visibility, PR support, and consistent industry presence were essential to capitalise on early success.

In a conversation with Siddharth Kannan, Rakul revealed that she only understood the dynamics of the industry years later. "I got to understand this a few years ago," she said, explaining that achieving success required more than just good performances, it also needed strong PR machinery and being visible at various events. While *Yaariyan* gave her recognition, she confessed, "I wasn't here at that time, I was shooting in Hyderabad. I didn't know how to juice out opportunities during that time."

Rakul had assumed that more offers would follow naturally after her performance was noticed, but soon realised the process was much more layered. "I thought people would see me in the film, like me, and offer more films. I didn't know the whole process at that time," she laughed.

On the work front, Rakul was last seen in *De De Pyaar De 2*, a sequel to the 2019 comedy-drama.

AGENCIES

Mumbai: Aneet Padda, the young actor who gained overnight fame with her role in *Saiyaara*, has shared her thoughts on the overwhelming support she has received from fans. While she is grateful for the love, she admitted that it can sometimes feel pressurising. "I'm very sensitive. I feel things deeply," she said in an interview, reflecting on the weight of responsibility that comes with being adored by so many. "The responsibility of

love, that weight of wanting to do right by the people who support you, that can feel pressurising. It's beautiful, but sometimes, it is a lot."

Aneet, now 23, has built a loyal fan base, especially after *Saiyaara* became a global hit. She often expresses her emotions while watching fan-made videos featuring her and her co-star Ahaan Panday. "I cry once a week looking at the edits my fans make. The effort, the love, I just hope I can do justice to it."

Aneet's journey began as a model, working with major brands, before making her acting debut in the 2022 film *Salaam Venky*. Her big break came with the 2024 Amazon Prime Video show *Big Girls Don't Cry*, followed by *Yuva Sapno Ka Safar*. *Saiyaara* in 2025 marked her breakthrough, and she is now set to star in the horror-comedy *Shakti Shalini* from Maddock Films.

AGENCIES

'With fame comes responsibility'



IAN5

Kritika prioritises quality over popularity

Mumbai: Actress Kritika Kamra, who has worked in *Bambai Meri Jaan*, *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, *Bheed*, and the upcoming *Saare Jahan Se Achha*, said that she has never been interested in being part of the rat race or doing projects just to stay visible.

Kritika shared: "I have never been interested in being part of the rat race or doing projects just to stay visible. For me, every role should have purpose and depth. I would rather wait for something that challenges me and allows me to grow as an actor than do something that doesn't add value to my journey."

"Visibility fades, but good work stays with people. I want to be remembered for the choices I

make, not for how frequently I appear on screen," she added.

Known for portraying complex and layered characters, Kritika has steadily transitioned from television to OTT and films. From the gritty realism of *Bheed*, the period drama intensity of *Bambai Meri Jaan*, or the mystery-laced narrative of *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, reflects her conscious decision to be part of stories that matter.

She said: "I take my time before saying yes to a project. I look for stories that speak to me, roles that have something substantial to offer, and teams that are driven by passion, not pressure."

IAN5



Chitrangda talks about embracing roles that scare her

Mumbai: Actress Chitrangda Singh says the year has been defined by choosing stories that push her out of her comfort zone, admitting that the year 2025 for her has been about saying yes to projects that "scare" her a "little" and "challenge" her "a lot."

Reflecting on playing these range of characters in 2025, Chitrangda said: "I wanted my work to feel honest again, whether it's a big commercial film like *Housefull 5* or an intense character piece like *Parikrama* to now a crime thriller like *Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal Murders*."

"2025 has been about saying yes to stories that scare me a little and challenge me a lot.

For Chitrangda, 2025 has been a "dream year".

Explaining why, she said: "It feels like a dream year as an actor, especially to be able to work with directors from different schools of cinema. I feel like I'm finally playing to my full strength as an actor, and more importantly, reclaiming the kind of career I always wanted to build."

The actress was seen in *Housefull 5*, a comedy thriller directed by Tarun Mansukhani. It marks the fifth installment of the Housefull franchise.



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.

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

SOLUTIONS

L	T	S	S	O	P
Z	O	D	I	A	C
B	S	E	A	E	E
M	O	U	S	E	S
S	L	O	E	I	N
U	C	R	I	N	
A	S	I	D	E	
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S	D	T	Y	E	

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

CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6
7			8		
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Across

- 7 Obstacle
8 On the train
9 Without help
10 Retreat
11 Slippery
13 Yataghan, e.g.
15 Expression
17 Free weight
20 Irregular

Down

- 21 Meek
23 Classical music
24 Romance language
1 Motorcar
2 Detestable
3 Busy workplace

- 4 Golfer's helper
5 Area
6 Atrocious
12 Annoyance
14 Barn section
16 Jane Eyre, e.g.
18 Knock about
19 Enthusiastic approval
22 Rodents

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

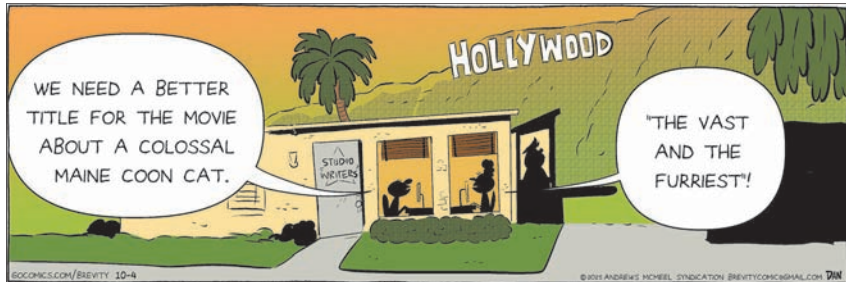
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



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Chandaka youth murder: Five held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: Five people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the murder of a 20-year-old youth at Chandaka on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, police said Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Satrugghna Birua, a resident of Badachana police station area in Jajpur district. His body was found near Godibari village under the jurisdiction of Chandaka police station Monday morning.

Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissioner S Dev Datta Singh said that during the investigation, it was found that Birua was murdered and his body was dumped there.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Bahadula Bandra (26), Rupa Pingua



- Birua was caught by Godibari residents with the woman in a compromising situation November 23
- He fled the area, leaving behind his scooter, mobile phone, and other belongings
- When Birua returned at midnight to retrieve his belongings, the accused assaulted and strangled him, hitting his face with a stone, resulting in his death

(26), Pitambar Kankel (22), Nabatiria (25) and Gultu Hembram (19), all residents of Godibari village, police said.

Birua was killed after one of the accused came to know that the deceased was having physical relations with his wife, another police officer said.

The residents of Godibari caught Birua and the woman in a compromising position near the village November 23, following which he fled the area, leaving behind his scooter, mobile phone and other belongings on the spot, the officer said.

The woman's husband kept the scooter in his house as bait, he said. When Birua returned to take his belongings at midnight the same day, the accused persons thrashed him and strangled him and hit his face with a stone, leading to his death. They left the body at the spot and parked the scooter around 100 metres away to mislead the investigation, he added.

BMC to set up ODA Courts, tackle traffic congestion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: The 36th General Council meeting of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday saw key decisions aimed at enhancing civic services and urban development in the City.

A major outcome was the approval to establish three Odisha Development Authority (ODA) Courts, one in each of the City's administrative zones. These courts are expected to expedite construction-related case resolutions, easing the burden on the regular judicial system and providing faster legal access for residents.

Other key measures included approval of a survey to tackle traffic congestion caused by roadside parking, with action planned against violators, including institutions parking outside designated areas. Additionally, to improve city infrastructure and conserve energy, fines will be imposed on agencies that keep streetlights on during daylight hours.

The council also emphasised leveraging technology to enhance civic services. Corporators will be trained to use the BMC "BLUIS App", which enables reporting of illegal encroachments and other civic violations, streamlining issue resolution.

BMC Mayor Sulochana Das highlighted the need to complete major developmental works before the rainy season, with plans to inaugurate finished projects and initiate new ones by December 2025. Discussions were also held on boosting community engagement through road festivals across all three City zones.

Finally, the BMC plans to introduce a monthly award system to honour outstanding sanitation workers, recognising their contributions to maintaining the city's cleanliness. Organisers of public events, exhibitions and festivals will now be required to pay user fees to cover post-event cleaning and maintenance.

The meeting was attended by BMC officials, including the Deputy Mayor, senior corporators and state government representatives, with Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahoo coordinating the session.



NOCi announces 5th edition of Expo 2025

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: The North Odisha Chamber of Commerce & Industry (NOCi), with support from the Union Ministry of MSME and the Odisha government, has announced the 5th edition of NOCCi Expo 2025, a major exhibition of industrial products, consumer goods and automobiles.

The Expo will be held from December 19 to 22 at the NOCCi Exhibition and Convention Centre in NOCCi Business Park, Balasore.

The four-day Expo is set to bring together the region's leading manufacturers, traders, and service enterprises under one roof—creating a powerful platform for growth, networking, and innovation.

The flagship event has the association and patronage of several leading industry bodies, including CII, UCCIL, OASME, OSIA, AIPMA, PFI, FOSMI, Tamil Nadu Plastic Association and Gujarat State Plastic Association. Response Marketing Services (P) Ltd. is the official event management partner.

NOCi has also invited stakeholders to the launching ceremony of NOCCi EXPO 2025, scheduled for November 27 here at Raj Darbar, 1st Floor, Hotel Empire, Saheed Nagar.

DDU-GKY ALUMNI MEET

ORMAS showcases Odisha's skilling success

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: ORMAS marked a significant milestone Wednesday as the DDU-GKY Alumni Meet brought together thousands of young professionals who have moved from classroom training to rewarding careers across India and abroad. Held at the OUAT Assembly Hall, the event showcased inspiring stories of determination and transformation, underscoring how structured skilling, industry partnerships and emerging trades are reshaping livelihoods across Odisha.

The event also highlighted Odisha's rising leadership in green jobs, digital competencies and future-ready employment avenues, reaffirming the state's commitment to building a globally competitive skilled workforce.

The event was attended by ORMAS CEO Monica Priyadarshini, Additional CEO Sanjeeb Kumar Singh, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) Director (Skill) Santosh Kumar Tiwari, Mission Manager (DDU-GKY) Shashi Kumar Yadav, NIRDPR Assistant Director Jeevan Reddy and NABCONS AGM Anamika Panda.



Their insights enriched discussions on strengthening rural skilling initiatives and expanding placement-driven interventions across the state.

At the heart of Odisha's skilling transformation is the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water and Rural Development Minister Rabi Narayan Naik. Though unable to attend in person, their guidance and commitment to youth-centric development continue to drive efforts toward

OSNA HONOURS 134 ARTISTES

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) Wednesday conferred the Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja Samman, Academy Awards, Upayana, and Kabichandra Kalicharan Yuva Pratibha Samman for the years 2023, 2024, and 2025, honouring a total of 134 eminent and emerging artistes from across the state. The Akademi's highest honour, the Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja Samman, was presented to six distinguished personalities — Pranab Kishore Pattnaik and Badal Sikdar (2023), Mohini Mohan Pattnaik and Sudhakar Sahu (2024), and Ghanashyam Panda and Bhagabat Pradhan (2025). Each award carries a cash prize of ₹5 lakh. Award amounts for the other honours included ₹2.5 lakh for the Hindustani Vocal Music Honour, ₹2 lakh for Academy Award recipients, ₹1 lakh for Upayana awardees, and ₹50,000 for youth talent honourees. In total, more than ₹2.5 crore was distributed. Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, who attended as chief guest, praised the contributions of artistes, saying, "Our artistic legends have enriched Odisha's culture through lifelong dedication. They are eternally revered." MLAs Sidhant Mohapatra, Akash Dasnayak, and Babu Singh congratulated the awardees and highlighted the vital role of artists in promoting Odisha's cultural heritage. The programme was coordinated by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Secretary Chandra Sekhar Hota.

Best Pavilion Award to Odisha



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi / Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: The Odisha Pavilion has been chosen for the Best Pavilion Award at the 44th India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2025, held at the India Pavilion complex in New Delhi. This is the fourth consecutive year Odisha has received the honour, having won the award for the past three years. The award ceremony is scheduled

for Thursday.

The theme of this year's trade fair, "One India, Best India", was reflected in the Odisha Pavilion's design, which highlighted the state's rich cultural heritage, traditional sculpture and development vision up to 2036. The pavilion showcased successful implementation of people-centric government schemes, demonstrating Odisha's commitment to inclusive growth, modernisation and the

preservation of tradition to national and international visitors.

The pavilion features a diverse array of exhibits, including premium agricultural products, handlooms, handicrafts and items crafted by self-help groups. Its design and presentation have garnered attention and appreciation from officials and dignitaries nationwide.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida inaugurated the pavilion November 14. During the fair several prominent leaders and guests, including Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo, Science and Technology Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, former cricketer and MP Yusuf Pathan, and Odisha MPs Anita Subhadarshini and Pratap Sarangi, visited the pavilion. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi attended as chief guest for Odisha Day November 22. The Odisha Pavilion is organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations, which has effectively managed the state's presentation at IITF, reinforcing Odisha's image as a hub of heritage, culture and innovation.

Guv stresses preserving Tribal healing knowledge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Wednesday stressed the need to properly document traditional tribal healing systems to ensure their preservation, promote scientific research and pass the knowledge to future generations. He was speaking while interacting with tribal healers at Raj Bhavan.

Sharing his delight over the opportunity to engage directly with tribal healers, the Governor said traditional healing systems evolved over centuries, particularly in remote regions. "Our indigenous communities have developed their own medicinal systems rooted in local plants, herbs, and natural resources. This knowledge is invaluable and must be preserved before it fades away," he said.

Encouraging the healers, Kambhampati urged them to record their healing processes, specific ailments treated,

and the medicinal plants used in preparation of herbal remedies. He assured that systematic documentation will also enable smoother coordination with the Forest department to ensure year-round access to essential medicinal plants, roots, leaves and other natural materials required for their work.

The Governor highlighted the global importance of traditional medicine and mentioned that China earns a large income from exporting medicinal plants and herbal products. He added that India also has huge potential in this field because of its rich biodiversity and strong traditional knowledge.

Kambhampati informed that the Ministry of Ayush has already shown interest in conducting research on tribal healing systems.

During the interaction, tribal healers shared their experiences, treatment approaches, and the challenges they face in sustaining the traditional system of healing.



MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	89.19 ▲ 0.06	SENSEX	85609.51 ▲ 1,022.50	GOLD	₹125,728 ▲ ₹503
EURO	103.35 ▲ 0.19	NIFTY	26205.30 ▲ 320.50	SILVER	₹159,157 ▲ ₹2,836

WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.7°	26.0°	Fog/mist in the morning and partly cloudy sky later
Min Temp	16.0°	14.6°	
Humidity	77%	83%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

A NEW SOIL AMENDMENT



With the right policy push and market incentives, India can transform the challenge of stubble burning into a pathway for agricultural renewal

Agriculture continues to be the backbone of India's economy, providing livelihood to around 70% of rural population. Today, the agricultural sector stands at a critical crossroads. On one hand, the country is facing soil degradation, declining fertility, and mounting pressure on groundwater resources. On the other hand, millions of tonnes of crop residues are burnt annually, adding to severe air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and irreversible nutrient loss. Between these overlapping crises lies a largely underexplored yet promising solution - the application of torrefied biomass (biotorr) as a new soil amendment.



Dr Sanjib Kumar Karmee

INDIA CANNOT AFFORD TO ADDRESS SOIL DEGRADATION AND CROP RESIDUE BURNING AS ISOLATED PROBLEMS

Torrefaction is essentially a mild thermo-chemical pre-treatment process. It involves heating of biomass at around 200–300°C within a low-oxygen environment, producing a carbon-rich, hydrophobic, and energy-dense material called biotorr. Although biotorr has received attention as a renewable fuel substitute; its value as a soil amendment is only now being recognised. For a country like India, which is struggling to restore soil productivity while managing agricultural waste sustainably, this technology presents an excellent opportunity.

India's scientific ecosystem has already invested heavily into understanding biochar. Biochar, produced at higher temperatures, is widely known for enhancing soil fertility and enabling carbon sequestration. Biotorr, however, offers a complementary set of advantages, namely, lower production costs, easier pelletisation, and suitability for decentralised rural systems. As a partially carbonised material that retains some volatile compounds, it improves soil organic carbon without significantly altering pH or nutrient balance. Importantly,

biotorr decomposes slowly as compared to raw biomass, allowing soil carbon to persist longer. In a country where soil organic carbon levels have declined to alarming lows across many states, restoring carbon is essential for sustaining agricultural productivity.

The benefits of biotorr extend beyond carbon enrichment. It is now known that biotorr can improve soil structure, enhances moisture retention, and supports beneficial microbial activity. These effects are particularly valuable in semi-arid and drought-prone regions, where soils often suffer from crusting, erosion, and rapid nutrient leaching. As climate change makes rainfall increasingly erratic, strengthening the soil's water holding capacity is essential for crop resilience. Unlike chemical fertilizers, which supply only nutrients; but do little to improve soil physical properties, biotorr helps rebuild the complete soil matrix. When used alongside compost or other organic manures, biotorr can reduce chemical fertilizer dependence as well as cutting input costs for small farm holders while promoting ecological sustainability.

Air pollution has long been a persistent challenge for India,

so severe that Delhi's iconic Red Fort often appears blackened, a visible marker of a deepening public-health crisis. According to IQAir, pollution levels in the capital routinely reach hazard-ous levels, consistently placing Delhi at the top of global rankings for poor air quality. Against this backdrop, the recurring issue of stubble burning in northern India further highlights the urgent need for effective technological interventions.

According to the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), nearly 14 million tonnes of rice stubble are burned in India each year. Despite subsidies, enforcement efforts, and machinery deployment, residue burning continues largely as existing technical solutions are either too expensive or impractical for mass field deployments. In this regard, torrefaction offers a more decentralised and farmer-friendly alternative. Small and mobile village-scale torrefaction units can process paddy straw, sugarcane trash, cotton stalks, and other agro-residues into torrefied pellets, which farmers can then apply back to their fields or sell it for additional revenue generation. This not only reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; but

also creates a circular nutrient economy. Instead of destroying biomass, farmers convert waste into a resource that enhances soil health. For regions such as Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Maharashtra, this approach could transform what is currently an environmental liability into an agronomic asset.

Despite its promising properties, biotorr is largely missing from mainstream agricultural discourse. Several challenges hinder its adoption, such as, low awareness among farmers, limited understanding among policymakers, absence of standard guidelines, insufficient R&D on region-specific feedstocks and field trials, and lack of a supporting market ecosystem. Without well coordinated policy support, private-sector engagement, and scientific validation, the technology will remain confined to research circles rather than reaching the farmers who need it most.

India cannot afford to address soil degradation and crop residue burning as isolated problems. Biotorr effectively bridges the two, offering a scalable, climate-friendly, and economically viable solution. It enriches soils, promotes sustainable farming, reduces air pollution, and strengthens rural livelihoods. To unlock its full potential, biotorr must be integrated into national missions such as the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture and ongoing crop residue management programmes. Equally important is the involvement of private enterprises, startups, and self-help groups to build a robust value chain around production, distribution, and field implementation. With the right policy push and market incentives, India can transform the challenge of stubble burning into a pathway for agricultural renewal.

The writer is a scientist.

SPECTRUM COP30

Denial, division & diversion

Has the 30th edition of UN climate summit, COP30, delivered as projected at the beginning of the summit? Certainly, the trust in the Paris Agreement has been maintained and partially achieved. Faith in multilateralism has been sustained despite the absence of the second-largest emitter of Greenhouse Gases (GHG), the US. However, the division among the coalition member groups within COP is as stark as ever in 30 years of climate negotiations. But then again, there is neither a financial commitment from developed member countries nor a roadmap for phasing out of fossil fuels, culprits of climate change. As a result, 194 parties (minus the US) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have collectively left the planet under increasing temperatures by slowing down climate actions.



Avilash Roul

OFFENSIVE RESISTANCE FROM MAJOR OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES AND THEIR POLITICAL ALLIES HAS SUCCESSFULLY KEPT A ROADMAP AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS IN THE FINAL AGREEMENT

Continuing the faith in the multilateral climate cooperation and maintaining the stature of Brazilian leadership, the outcome of the climate summit is a mixed one, with high disappointment but low ambitions. One can easily find out that the climate change mitigation, enshrined as the main objective of the UNFCCC in Article 2, has gradually and deliberately been put on the back burner. Stabil-

isation of GHG concentrations within a timeframe shall be the primary responsibility of the COPs. More than 80 members of the COP backed Brazil's proposal for a formal roadmap to phase out fossil fuels. However, offensive resistance from major oil-producing countries and their political allies has successfully kept a roadmap away from fossil fuels in the final agreement. Unusually, the final agreement has no direct mention of fossil fuels.

By side-stepping the climate mitigation in COPs, both developed and developing countries are benefiting. Developing countries, especially emerging economies like India and China, are opposed to any binding obligation in emission reduction. Likewise, developed countries are at ease as long as there are no legally binding conditions for extending climate finances to developing countries for mitigating emissions.

Similarly, countries agreed voluntarily to set up a two-year programme to enable developing countries to mobilise at least \$1.3 trillion yearly till 2035. A changing landscape in climate negotiations is emerging where the emerging economies will be substituting traditional leadership. Linking trade to climate

change came as no surprise at COP30. Participants and followers of the COPs are aware of the diversion tactics, like strategies used to shift focus from core issues like phasing out fossil fuels, financial obligations and delaying actions. Trade measures such as carbon adjustments - a tariff imposed on trade in goods that accounts for GHG emissions during their production were deliberately included during all negotiations. However, India and China vehemently opposed such measures as discriminatory. While COP30 calls for aligning trade with climate action, it also stresses the concerns of developing countries to avoid unilateral manipulation of international trade.

For the satisfaction of the most vulnerable countries, COP30 has agreed to a vaguely derived 'tripling' of financial support from developed countries to the adaptation fund. The increase in financial amount has been touted as the most visible outcome of the Belem COP. Developing countries require annually \$365 billion for adaptation costs. Surprisingly, the UN Environment Program (UNEP) reveals that adaptation finance flows to developing countries were \$26 billion and \$28 billion in 2023 and 2022, respectively. Is the tripling adaptation fund

enough for preparing communities and other living beings to be resilient to climate catastrophes?

From the civil society perspective, the Belem COP has provided a sense of climate justice in terms of establishing a just transition mechanism. A just transition is broadly defined as the process of transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies no one should be left behind or pushed behind. While countries will submit their views by March 2026, the mechanism's aim is to increase international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing as countries transition to sustainability.

Most remarkably, COP30 has witnessed the historical operationalisation of the loss and damage fund, established in COP27. Will the Fund respond rapidly and sufficiently where it is required most in the frontlines of climate emergencies? Frontline climate activists are sceptical. While COP30 acknowledged that more climate action and finance are urgently needed, it took backward steps to provide directions on how to get there.

The writer is an international advisor on climate change risks and transboundary rivers.

Full-blown crisis

Sir, India's worsening air quality has quietly grown into a full-blown public health crisis. When cities and districts across the country consistently record particulate levels far above safe limits, it is clear that pollution has become a daily assault on millions. The contrast between heavily burdened states and those that manage to stay within acceptable standards shows that governance, planning, and political will make all the difference. What we need now is not another round of blame-shifting but a shared national mission. Cleaner transport, stricter enforcement, responsible construction practices, and pollution-free energy must become non-negotiable priorities. Citizens, too, must recognise their role in demanding accountability and embracing cleaner habits. India cannot continue to live — and breathe — on borrowed time. Only sustained, collective action can ensure that future generations inherit air that heals rather than harms..

Gopalasuamy J, CHENNAI

Dominance dissipated

Sir, Until a few years ago for any team touring India for a Test series was considered the toughest challenge in world cricket. Australian cricketers would refer to it as the "Final Frontier," a fortress that was rarely breached. However, the period of such dominance by Team India in a home Test series has dissipated well and truly. Following a humiliating 0-3 whitewash by New Zealand last year in November, the Indian team has now surrendered meekly to South Africa, losing the series 0-2, ironically in the same month. A major reason for this decline is the muddled thinking within the team management, particularly on pitch preparations. For the Kolkata Test, the management opted for a turning track and fielded four spinners, a gamble that backfired spectacularly against the Proteas, who adapted to the conditions better than the hosts. Gautam Gambhir's stint as India's head coach, which began in July 2024, has been marked by turbulence in the longest format. Unlike former coach Rahul Dravid, who meticulously understood which surfaces suited his players, Gambhir seems disconnected from the team's strengths. Whether the two back-to-back Test series loss is a temporary phase or a sign of deeper decline is a question the team management will have to confront sooner than later.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

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

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If you can always smile at life, life will always smile at you.

THE MOTHER



Dangerous Liaison

US President Donald Trump's first social-media post of 2018, during his initial presidential term, highlighted his mounting frustration with Pakistan. Over the preceding 15 years, he lamented, the United States had "foolishly" handed the country more than \$33 billion in aid, and gotten "nothing but lies and deceit" in return. He subsequently suspended security assistance to Pakistan over its support for terrorists, including its concealment of Osama bin Laden for almost a decade after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Today, Pakistan continues to provide safe haven, as well as military and intelligence aid, to terrorist groups. It also remains a close ally of China – which, despite reaching a trade truce with the Trump administration earlier this month, remains America's leading rival. Yet, far from admonishing Pakistan, the US is now eagerly pursuing closer ties with it.

Trump administration officials have justified this reversal by casting Pakistan as a valuable partner in efforts to contain Iran and rein in terrorist groups that could threaten US interests in the region. But Pakistan has proved time and again that it is not a reliable security partner, and there is no reason to think this has changed. The real explanation for Trump's embrace of Pakistan probably lies in the convergence of his personal financial interests and his transactional approach to foreign policy.

Consider the controversial investment deal Pakistan signed in April with World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency firm majority-owned by the Trump family. The firm's CEO, Zach Witkoff – son of Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy to the Middle East – leads a company in which both the Trumps and the Witkoff family are the principal beneficiaries. The deal has alarmed ethics watchdogs and former US officials, who warn that Trump's business entanglements are bleeding into US foreign policy (Trump insists that conflict-of-interest rules do not apply to him). It has also reinforced a regional perception that personal enrichment is Trump's top foreign-policy priority, further undermining US credibility.

The romance continued in July, when the US and Pakistan announced that they had reached a trade agreement. While the details have not been fully disclosed, Pakistan has celebrated the reduction in US tariffs and the prospect of increased US investment. Pakistani officials declared that the deal "marks the beginning of a new era of economic collaboration especially in energy, mines and minerals, IT, cryptocurrency, and other sectors."

Since then, Pakistan has sought to build an image as a potential supplier of critical minerals that could help the US reduce its dependence on China's near-monopoly over rare earths. In September, its military-linked Frontier Works Organization signed a \$500 million agreement with the private firm US Strategic Metals to develop critical-mineral deposits in Pakistan.

For Pakistan, this was not so much a business deal as a diplomatic coup. When Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan's powerful military leader, Field Marshal Asim Munir, subsequently met with Trump in the Oval Office, they presented him with a polished wooden box containing mineral samples. Soon after, Pakistan dispatched a token shipment of enriched rare earths and other critical minerals to the US – a largely symbolic gesture meant to seal the new alignment.

But it is far from clear that Pakistan will be able to deliver meaningful quantities of rare earths to the US. The country's oft-repeated assertion that it possesses \$6-8 trillion in mineral wealth is based on unverified estimates, and most of the claimed reserves lie in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, where active insurgencies make large-scale extraction highly risky. As one analyst quipped, "Pakistan has long promised gold and delivered gravel."

Trump is particularly susceptible to such grand promises, especially when they are accompanied by personal flattery. It is no accident that Pakistan's leaders have lavished Trump with over-the-top praise, even nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize he so covets. For a president whose diplomacy often hinges on personal rapport, such gestures can have an outsized impact. It seems that Pakistan has cracked the Trump code. Emboldened, Pakistan's leaders have pushed through a constitutional amendment that elevates the army chief – whom Trump extols as his "favorite field marshal" – to the position of de facto ruler, reducing the elected government to little more than a civilian façade.

For India, the Trump administration's embrace of Pakistan feels like betrayal. The country has spent over two decades cultivating a strategic partnership with the US, grounded in shared democratic values and a mutual desire to counter China. Now, the US is actively working against India's diplomatic and security interests.

The problem extends beyond Trump's deal-making with Pakistan. Last May, after a three-day military clash between India and Pakistan ended in a ceasefire, Trump publicly took credit for stopping the fighting. India flatly denied the claim, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi stating that he had never even spoken to Trump during the conflict. But Trump stuck to his story, crediting his own trade threats, rather than India's targeted airstrikes, for the truce.

This undermined Modi's standing at home and reinforced the view in India that the US cannot be trusted. Modi's refusal to endorse Trump's bid for a Nobel Peace Prize deepened the rift. Soon, the spat spiraled into a trade war, with Trump imposing a 25% tariff – later raised to 50% – on imports from India, supposedly over India's own trade barriers and continued purchases of Russian oil.

In India's view, the tariffs amounted to political retribution – an extension of the diplomatic feud over Pakistan. After all, the European Union, Japan, and Turkey have not faced secondary US sanctions over their large Russian energy purchases, and pro-Trump Hungary, which gets some 90% of its energy from Russia, received an explicit sanctions exemption from his administration.

For India, these are more than diplomatic setbacks. They threaten to unravel a hard-won strategic partnership, which successive US administrations have recognised as critical to Indo-Pacific security. By letting Pakistan win him over with flattery, symbolic gestures, and the promise of personal enrichment, Trump is putting the entire region at risk, much like America's Cold War leaders did with their cynical policies toward South Asia.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

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Mumbai remembers 26/11 martyrs

As many as 166 people lost their lives and more than 300 were injured after 10 terrorists from Pakistan launched simultaneous attacks in several parts of Mumbai November 26, 2008

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai/New Delhi, Nov 26: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Wednesday paid floral tributes at the police headquarters to those who made the ultimate sacrifice while fighting terrorists during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

In their messages on the 17th anniversary of the attacks that claimed 166 lives, President Droupadi Murmu asked all citizens to reaffirm their commitment to combat terrorism, while Union Home Minister Amit Shah underlined the Narendra Modi government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism.

Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and state minister Ashish Shelar also paid tributes at the martyrs' memorial on the premises of the Police Commissioner's Office in south Mumbai. Maharashtra Director General of Police Rashmi Shukla, Mumbai Police Commissioner Devan Bharti and other officials were also present.

Family members of the policemen who lost their lives during the terror attack also paid homage to the fallen heroes on the occasion.

In his message in Hindi on X, Union minister Shah said terrorism is not a curse for just one country, but for the entire human race.

"I pay my respects to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives while facing the



Mumbai terrorist attacks, and I offer my tributes to all the people who lost their lives in the cowardly attack. The Modi government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism is clear, and the entire world is appreciating and providing broad support to India's anti-terrorism campaigns," he said.

President Murmu also took to X to remember the martyrs.

"On the anniversary of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, I pay my humble tribute to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the people of our country. The nation remembers their supreme sacrifice with gratitude," she said.

"Let us reaffirm our commitment to combat terrorism in all forms. Let us move forward together on the path of progress with a resolve to build a stronger and more prosperous India," the president added.

As many as 166 people lost their lives and more than 300 were injured after 10 terrorists from Pakistan launched simultaneous attacks in several parts of Mumbai on November 26, 2008.

The armed militants of the Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) entered the city via the sea and carried out a series of coordinated attacks at multiple high-profile locations, including the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Oberoi Trident Hotel, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) railway station, and Nariman House. The attacks prompted global condemnation and led to significant changes in India's counter-terrorism measures.

On Wednesday, several people also paid homage at CSMT, Cama and Alibless Hospital, and other locations in Mumbai targeted by the Pakistani terror-

ists. They also paid respects at "Prerana Sthal", the statue of Assistant Sub Inspector Tukaram Ombale, who fought with terrorists with a lathi and was killed while catching alive terrorist Ajmal Kasab at Girgaon Chowpatty.

In the evening, the National Security Guard (NSG) has organised a commemorative "Neverever" memorial and pledge gathering at Gateway of India, in which family members of the victims will also participate along with the citizens of Mumbai.

In a statement posted on X, the US Embassy in India said it honors the memory of the victims and stands in solidarity with the survivors and families. "The United States has long supported India's efforts to ensure those responsible for these attacks are brought to justice," it said, noting that the US extradited Tahawwur Hussain Rana to India this year for his role in planning the horrific attack which claimed the lives of six American citizens among others.

"Rana's extradition is a critical step toward seeking justice for the victims who were killed in the heinous attacks and their families. As we remember the victims of 26/11, we reaffirm our determination to continue to fight against acts of terror together with the Government of India to ensure the safety and security of our citizens," the US Embassy said.

Nearly 14 lakh SIR forms identified as 'uncollectable' in WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Nov 26: Nearly 14 lakh SIR enumeration forms have so far been identified as "uncollectable" in West Bengal, the Election Commission said.

These forms are "uncollectable" since the voters were either absentee, duplicate, dead or permanently shifted, an official said.

"As of Tuesday noon, the number stood at 13.92 lakh... We expect this figure to continue rising daily as more updates roll in," he said.

The figure was 10.33 lakh Monday evening, he added.

Booth Level Officers (BLOs) have been actively engaged in distributing the forms and gathering necessary details, the official said.

More than 80,600 BLOs, along with around 8,000 supervisors, 3,000 Assistant Electoral Registration Officers and 294 Electoral Registration Officers, have been engaged for the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state, he said.



Mamata hails WB's tourism milestone

The state has ranked second in foreign tourist arrivals after Maharashtra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Nov 26: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday hailed West Bengal's rise to the No 2 position in foreign tourist arrivals in the country, saying the state has emerged as one of India's most preferred international destinations.

In a post on X, Banerjee said the 'India Tourism Data Compendium 2025' of the Union Tourism Ministry has placed the state second nationwide in terms of international tourist footfall.

"Proud to share that West Bengal has emerged as one of the most favoured international tourist destinations in the country, and has achieved another great milestone!" she wrote.

According to the report released in September, the country received 2,948.19 million domestic tourists in 2024, a rise of 17.51 per cent over 2,508.82 million visits in the previous year.

Foreign tourist visits touched 20.94 million in 2024, marking an 8.84 per cent increase from

19.24 million in 2023.

Uttar Pradesh (646.81 million) and Tamil Nadu (306.84 million) topped the list of states in terms of domestic tourist footfall, while Maharashtra (3.71 million) and West Bengal (3.12 million) recorded the highest number of foreign tourist arrivals among all states and Union Territories, the report added.

The CM credited the state's performance to a surge in post-pandemic travel and the government's efforts to develop new tourism segments, including festival tourism, religious tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions).

Welcoming travellers from across India and abroad, Banerjee described West Bengal as "the sweetest part of India" and urged visitors to experience its culture, heritage and natural beauty.

She also thanked tourism industry stakeholders for their "relentless work", calling the recognition a proud moment for the state.

Political storm after Babri Masjid posters surface in Murshidabad

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Nov 26: Posters announcing the construction of a 'Babri Masjid' have surfaced across West Bengal's Murshidabad district, days after Trinamool Congress MLA Humayun Kabir claimed that a foundation stone would be laid December 6 in Beldanga. The development has sparked intense political reactions.

The initiative is being carried out under the supervision of MLA Humayun Kabir.

Speaking to IANS, the BJP's West Bengal President Samik Bhattacharya condemned the move and alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress is pushing the state towards instability.

"The entire country is watching how Mamata Banerjee has brought West Bengal to the brink of collapse. If anyone dares to suggest rebuilding the Babri Masjid in India, the nation will not stay silent. The whole country will rise against it," Bhattacharya claimed.

Bihar Minister Nitin Nabin also criticised the announcement, stating, "Those who do not respect the authority of the High Court and still believe in living in the era of Babur should understand that such a mindset has come to an end. Those who continue thinking in that direction will receive a fitting response in due course."

Recently, Humayun Kabir had reiterated his plans and said several Muslim clerics and community leaders were expect-



ed to attend the ceremony.

"We will lay the foundation stone of the Babri Masjid on December 6 in Beldanga, Murshidabad district. The structure will take approximately three years to complete," he had told reporters.

His announcement immediately revived political and social tensions, given the historical and emotional significance attached to the Babri Masjid dispute.

However, the Trinamool Congress moved quickly to distance itself from Kabir's public declaration. Trinamool Congress MLA Nirmal Ghosh clarified that Kabir's statements were made in a personal capacity and not endorsed by the party.

"His speeches have nothing to do with the party. They are his personal views, and the party does not agree with them. He has crossed the line," Ghosh said.

The BJP escalated its criticism, linking the announcement to appeasement politics. Earlier, November 22, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya reacted sharply to Kabir's statement, es-

pecially since the proposed date coincides with the anniversary of the demolition of the original structure in Ayodhya.

Speaking to IANS, Maurya had said, "On the land of Bharat, if they believe a foreign invader like Babur — who broke the Ram temple and erected a structure — should be honoured, they are deeply mistaken."

"Babri Masjid was demolished on December 6, 1992, by kar sevaks. Now, no such construction will be allowed on the soil of Bharat," he had added.

VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal also had criticised Kabir for using the name "Babri," calling it "an insult to national sentiment." He had accused Mamata Banerjee of allegedly encouraging the incident to strengthen what he alleged was her "jihadist vote bank."

The foundation-stone event in Beldanga is scheduled on the same day that Mamata Banerjee and Trinamool national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee are set to address a gathering in Kolkata marking the Babri Mosque demolition anniversary.



Members of the West Bengal Recognised Un-Aided Madrasah Teachers' Association take part in a protest rally demanding government aid, in Kolkata

PTI PHOTO

'PATAAL LOK'

Underground tunnels anchor Mumbai's traffic revolution

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Nov 26: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis recently announced a comprehensive plan to make Mumbai "traffic-free" in the next three years by building a network of underground tunnels and parallel roads.

The Chief Minister described the city's upcoming underground road system as a 'pataal lok' (underworld) during a Bharatiya Janata Party 'Youth Connect' interaction programme, asserting it would permanently ease commuter congestion.

Fadnavis said that the government has a comprehensive

plan to construct a city-wide web of tunnels and parallel routes alongside chronically choked roads, relieving pressure on existing arteries. He confirmed that building this system of underground corridors will make Mumbai free of chronic traffic snarls in the coming years.

The Chief Minister pointed out that approximately 60 per cent of Mumbai's traffic load currently runs along the Western Express Highway, and reducing this burden is central to any viable solution.

Parallel roads are being built to address this, with new corridors being designed to permit vehicle speeds up to 80

km per hour, significantly cutting bottlenecks, in contrast to the current average speed of about 20 km per hour which drops to 15 km per hour during the peak hours in the city, he said.

Fadnavis said that an underground tunnel is currently under construction between Thane and Borivali, with another planned between Mulund and Goregaon to significantly boost east-west connectivity in Mumbai.

"A new road parallel to the Western Express Highway is being constructed between Borivali and Goregaon, while a bridge from Worli to Sewri is being built to connect directly to the Atal Setu, allowing people from the suburbs to reach the Navi Mumbai International Airport via the coastal road," he noted.

On the eastern side, the

The ambitious infrastructure project aims to transform Mumbai's transportation landscape and provide long-term relief from the city's notorious traffic problems within the next three years

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | CM, MAHARASHTRA

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER KALAHANDI SOUTH DIVISION

At/Po:Paramanandapur, Bhawanipatna, Ward No.4, Rly, Station Road Dist:Kalahandi, Odisha, Pin Code:766002 Phone & Tele Fax No.06670-295360 (O) Email Id: dfo.kalahandisouth@odisha.gov.in

NOTIFICATION
No.MM-302:This is for information of all concerned that the following Forest Roads of Kalahandi South Division will remain closed to traffic on the 31st December, 2025 from 0" (Zero) hours to 24 hours in accordance with rule-284 of Forest Department Code 1979. The movement of Traffic on the date and time specified above will be violation of Section 26 of Odisha Forest Act, 1972 and hence will be liable for prosecution.

Name of the Ranges	Name of the Forest Road	Length in Km
Karlapat Sanctuary Range	01. Jugsaipatna-Ghatikutru	9.5 Km
	02. Ghatikutru- Bijepur	3.0 Km
	03. Ghatikutru- Madanguda	3.0 Km
	04. Madanguda-Tijhula	2.5 Km
	05. Sagada- Deodhar	9.5 Km
	06. Karlapat-Ghatikutru	1.5 Km
	07. Jakam-Karlapat	9.5 Km
Junagarh Range	08. Banamalipur-Kiapadar	15.0 Km
Dharmagarh Range	09. Ampani- Badkutru	21.0 Km
Jaipatna Range	10. Dhansuli- Benakhamar	5.5 Km
Th.Rampur South Range	11. Kalampur-Singari	8.5 Km
Biswanathpur Range	12. Biswanathpur-Bijepur	42.0 Km
	13. Khikabhatna- Bhurty	14.5 Km
	14. Kadanguda-Amthapada	9.5 Km
	15. Bandhapani- Bhatguda	9.5 Km
	16. Nachniguda- Bankuli	3.7 Km
	17. Silet- Bijepur	7.4 Km
Total		175.10 Km

OIPR- Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer Kalahandi South Division

When the counsel said the petitioner was not given the details of these FIRs, the bench said, “You want the FIR details to be served to you on a platter in Dubai? You come here. They will provide you the details with full fanfare”. The counsel said the petitioner wanted to come back to India, but he does not have his passport with him. “They (authorities) will bring you,” the bench said. The counsel claimed that one of the co-accused in the case had died in custody, but the police said it was a natural death.

of the day

quote

We have a great relationship, the new prime minister and myself, she's very smart, she's very strong, and she's going to be a great leader



DONALD TRUMP

PRESIDENT, USA

Since pressure remains the only language Russia responds to, we will continue to increase it until there is a genuine willingness to engage on a credible path toward peace



URSULA VON DER LEYEN

PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

I think under the present circumstances and the fact that the elections will be held when they haven't had the needed inclusive dialogue yet, it will be difficult for us to re-engage with Myanmar



SHASAK PHUANGKETKEOW

FOREIGN MINISTER, THAILAND

SHORT TAKES

Schoolgirls abducted from Kebbi rescued

Lagos: All 24 schoolgirls who were abducted by armed assailants from a school last week in Kebbi in northwestern Nigeria have been rescued, the country's president announced Tuesday. The girls were abducted November 17, and police at the time had said 25 were taken, but a statement Tuesday quoted President Bola Tinubu as saying that all 24 of the students who had been abducted were rescued. No details were released about the rescue mission.

Oz bans social media for kids

Melbourne: The Australian government said young children will be banned from social media next month as scheduled despite a rights advocacy group Wednesday challenging the world-first legislation in court. The Sydney-based Digital Freedom Project said it had filed a constitutional challenge in the High Court Wednesday to a law due to take effect December 10 banning Australian children younger than 16 from holding accounts on specified platforms.

Direct flights between Pak, B'desh from Dec

Lahore: Direct flights between Pakistan and Bangladesh will begin from next month, a significant leap in strengthening connectivity between the two countries, Dhaka's top diplomat said here Wednesday. There has been no direct flight between Pakistan and Bangladesh for the last several years. As relations between the two countries improved this year, two Pakistani private airlines have recently received approval for direct flights. "Mahan Air will start three weekly flights between Dhaka and Karachi from next month," Bangladesh's High Commissioner in Islamabad, Iqbal Hussain Khan, told businessmen at Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) here.

Lebanon, Cyprus inksea border deal

Beirut: Lebanon and Cyprus signed a long-delayed sea border agreement Wednesday, ending an almost 20-year impasse that had stalled some oil and gas exploration in the Mediterranean Sea, as Europe seeks alternatives to Russian fuel. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Cypriot counterpart Nikos Christodoulides signed the agreement at the Baabda presidential palace outside the Lebanese capital, Beirut, finalising an initial deal first inked in 2007.



Moscow's proposals regarding the New START nuclear arms control treaty are designed to prevent negative global scenarios

SERGEI RYABKOV | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

AMBEDKAR'S BUST UNVEILED AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS

A bust of B R Ambedkar was unveiled at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on the occasion of Constitution Day Wednesday, a top Indian diplomat said. The bust was unveiled by Vishal V Sharma, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO, in the presence of UNESCO Director General Khaled El-Enany



Hong Kong fire: Toll rises to 36



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, Nov 26: Hong Kong's deadliest fire in years blazed late into the night Wednesday as the city's leader confirmed at least 36 people, including a firefighter, had died and another 279 people were reported missing.

Hundreds of residents were evacuated as the blaze spread across seven high-rise apartment buildings in a housing complex in Tai Po district, a suburb in the New Territories. At least 29 others remained hospitalised. "Police and the Fire Services Department have already set up a dedicated investigation team to investigate the cause of the fire," John Lee, Hong Kong's chief executive, said.

He said the fire was "coming under control" shortly past midnight. Chinese leader Xi Jinping Wednesday expressed condolences to the firefighter who died and extended sympathies to the families of the victims, according to state broadcaster CCTV. He also urged efforts to minimise casualties and losses. The housing complex consisted of eight buildings with almost 2,000 apartments housing about 4,800 residents,

including many elderly people. The housing complex was built in the 1980s and has recently been undergoing a major renovation.

Fire chiefs said high temperatures at the scene made it difficult for crews to mount rescue operations. It was not immediately known how the fire started, but officials said the fire started at the external scaffolding of one of the buildings, a 32-storey tower, and later spread to inside the building and then to nearby buildings, likely aided by windy conditions.

A column of flames and thick smoke rose as the blaze spread quickly on bamboo scaffolding and construction netting that had been set up around the exterior of the buildings. About 900 people were evacuated to temporary shelters. Multiple buildings close to each other were set ablaze, with bright flames and smoke shooting out of windows as night fell. Authorities said that hundreds of firefighters, police officers and paramedics were deployed. Firefighters aimed water at the intense flames from high up on ladder trucks.

The blaze, which started

- Fire is deadliest since 1996 Kowloon blaze killed 41
- Several residential high-rise towers engulfed in flames
- Bamboo scaffolding, which is being phased out, fanned fire
- Tragedy could stoke resentment ahead of a city election

mid-afternoon, was upgraded a level 5 alarm - the highest level of severity - as night fell. Authorities said that conditions remained very challenging for firefighters.

The fire department said that it received "numerous" calls requesting assistance. It said some residents remained trapped as of Wednesday night. Firefighters deployed more than 140 fire trucks and more than 60 ambulances to the scene.

The dead included a 37-year-old firefighter, while another received treatment for heat exhaustion, Director of Fire Services Andy Yeung said.

District officials in Tai Po have opened temporary shelters for people left homeless by the fire. Tai Po is a suburban area in the New Territories, in the northern part of Hong Kong and near the border with the mainland Chinese city of Shenzhen. Bamboo scaffolding is a common sight in Hong Kong at building construction and renovation projects, though the government said earlier this year that it would start phasing it out for public projects because of safety concerns.

The fire is the deadliest in Hong Kong in years. In November 1996, 41 people died in a commercial building in Kowloon in a level 5 fire that lasted for around 20 hours.

HASINA EXTRADITION

B'DESH AWAITS INDIA'S REPLY



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Nov 26: Bangladesh said India gave "no reply" to its earlier request seeking the extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, but Dhaka now expects a response from New Delhi as the "situation is different now" with the judicial process completed and the former premier convicted, Wednesday.

The interim government led by Muhammad Yunus last week had sent an "official letter" to India seeking the extradition of 78-year-old Hasina after a special tribunal sentenced her to death November 17 for committing "crimes against humanity".

Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain told reporters that the government is awaiting India's reply to its latest request to extradite Hasina.

"I do not expect that they (India) will answer within a week of Dhaka's request, but we expect we will get an answer," he said. Hossain said Bangladesh had earlier requested India to return Hasina but received "no reply".

However, he said, "the situation is different now" as the judicial process is complete and she has been convicted.

Hossain said the formal extradition request was conveyed through the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi fol-

'Examining request'

New Delhi: India Wednesday said it is examining a request by Bangladesh to extradite former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and that it is committed to ensure the best interests of the people of that country. "The request is being examined as part of ongoing judicial and internal legal processes," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "We remain committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh, including peace, democracy, inclusion and stability in that country and will continue to engage constructively in this regard with all stakeholders," he said.

lowing the verdict delivered by the International Crimes Tribunal-Bangladesh (ICT-BD).

He said the request was made under the existing extradition treaty between the two countries.

Bangladesh had earlier sent a note verbale in December last year seeking Hasina's extradition, to which India acknowledged receipt without further comment.

Hossain, a former diplomat, clarified that Bangladesh was not ruling out a reply from India, but it is simply not expecting it within seven days.

Along with Hasina, the ICT-BD had also sentenced the then home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal after a trial held in absentia. Hasina is currently in India, while Kamal is also believed to be hiding in the country.

UK tables tax-raising budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Nov 26: UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves Wednesday tabled the Labour Party government's second budget in Parliament with a range of tax rises worth around 26 billion pounds, including a surcharge on wealthy properties and a tax on online gambling.

The Autumn Statement kept corporation tax levels for businesses at 25 per cent, with some incentives introduced for entrepreneurs looking to scale-up their operations and a listings relief to attract more businesses going public in the UK.

Reeves was also keen to highlight what she dubbed as



British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves poses with the red budget box

her "inflation-busting decisions", by cutting 150 pounds off energy bills, freezing rail fares and lifting thousands of children out of poverty by abolishing a two-child benefits cap for families.

Army officers say they have seized power in Guinea-Bissau

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bissau, Nov 26: Soldiers in Guinea-Bissau appeared on state television Wednesday saying they have seized power in the country, following reports of gunshots near the presidential palace, three days after national elections. The president told French media he had been deposed and arrested.

It was the latest of several coups in recent years in West Africa. "The High Military Command for the reestablishment of national and public order decides to immediately depose the president of the republic, to suspend, until new orders, all of the institutions of the republic of Guinea-Bissau,"



spokesperson Dinis N'Tchama said in a statement.

He said they acted in response to the "discovery of an ongoing plan" that he said aimed to destabilise the country by attempting to "manipulate electoral results".

The "scheme was set up by some national politicians with the participation of a well-known drug lord, and domestic and foreign nationals," N'Tcha-

X's new feature exposes foreign origin of US political account

Researchers at NewsGuard, a firm that tracks online misinformation, identified several popular accounts – purportedly run by Americans interested in politics – that instead were based in Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Nov 26: They go by names like @TRUMP_ARMY— or @MAGANationX, and their verified accounts proudly display portraits of President Donald Trump, voter rallies and American flags. And they're constantly posting about US politics to their followers, sounding like diehard fans of the president.

But after a weekend update to the social media platform X, it's now clear that the owners of these accounts, and many others, are located in regions such as South Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

Elon Musk's X unveiled a feature Saturday that lets us-

ers see where an account is based. Online sleuths and experts quickly found that many popular accounts, often — but not limited to — posting in support of the MAGA movement to thousands or hundreds of thousands of followers, are based outside the United States — raising concerns about foreign influence on US politics.

Researchers at NewsGuard, a firm that tracks online misinformation, identified several popular accounts — purportedly run by Americans interested in politics — that instead were based in Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa.

The accounts were leading disseminators of some misleading and polarising claims about



US politics, including ones that said Democrats bribed the moderators of a 2024 presidential debate.

What is the location feature? Nikita Bier, X's head of product, announced Saturday that the social media platform is rolling out an "About This Account" tool, which lets users see the country or region where an account is based. To find an account's location, tap or click the signup date displayed on the profile.

"This is an important first step to securing the integrity of the global town square. We plan to provide many more ways for users to verify the authenticity of the content they see on X," Bier wrote.

In countries with punitive speech restrictions, a privacy tool on X lets account holders only show their region rather than a specific country. So instead of India, for instance, an account can say it is based in South Asia.

Bier said Sunday that after an update to the tool, it would 99.99 per cent accurate, though this could not be independently verified. Accounts, for instance, can use a virtual private network, or VPN, to mask their true location.

On some accounts, there's a notice saying the location data may not be accurate, either because the account uses a VPN or because some internet providers use proxies automatically, without action by the user.

Which accounts are causing controversy?

Some of the accounts supported slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk as well as Trump's children. Many of the accounts were adorned with US flags or made comments suggesting they were American.

An account called "@BaronTNews_" for instance, is shown as being located in "Eastern Europe (Non-EU)," even though the display location on its profile says "Mar A Lago." The account, which has more than 580,000 follow-

Israel returns 15 more Palestinian bodies to Gaza

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Khan Younis, Nov 26: Israel handed over the bodies of 15 Palestinians Wednesday, a day after Hamas returned the remains of an Israeli hostage. This is the latest exchange as part of a US-brokered ceasefire reached last month, whose first phase is coming to an end.

The remains of two hostages, one Israeli and a Thai national who were abducted in the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel that ignited the war, are still to be returned.

Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem said Wednesday that the militant group was committed to handing over the remains of the two hostages. Israel has accused the militants of stalling after the last living hostages were released October 13.

Turkish, Qatari and Egyptian mediators met in Cairo Tuesday to discuss the second phase of the ceasefire, reached October 10. That is expected to include deploying an armed International Stabilisation Force, or ISF, and developing an international body to govern Gaza and oversee reconstruction.

Kremlin: US envoy to visit Moscow for peace talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, Nov 26: A senior Kremlin official confirmed Wednesday that US special envoy Steve Witkoff is set to visit Moscow next week as efforts to find a consensus on ending the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine pick up speed.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign affairs adviser, insisted that Kremlin officials still have not seen a US peace proposal, even though representatives of the United States, Russia and Ukraine held talks in Abu Dhabi earlier this week.

"Contact is ongoing, including via telephone, but no one has yet sat down at a round table and discussed this point-by-point. That hasn't happened," Ushakov told Russian state media. Ukrainian officials didn't confirm whether US Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, who in recent weeks has played a high-profile role in the peace efforts, would be in Kyiv in the coming days, as Trump indicated Tuesday. Trump's plan for ending the war became public last week, setting off a spate of diplomatic manoeuvring. The initial version appeared heavily slanted to ward Russian demands for halting its invasion of its neighbour. After weekend talks in Geneva between US and Ukrainian officials, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the plan could be "workable," although key points remain unresolved.

ers, posted Tuesday that "This is a FAN account, 100 % independent, run by one guy who loves this country and supports President Trump with everything I've got." NewsGuard also found evidence that some X users are spreading misinformation about the location feature itself, incorrectly accusing some accounts of being operated from abroad when they're actually used by Americans. Investigators found several instances where one user created fake screenshots that appear to suggest an account was created overseas.

It's not always clear what the motives of the accounts. While some may be state actors, it's likely that many are financially motivated, posting commentary, memes and videos to draw engagement.

Users were divided over the new ability to see an account's location information, with some questioning whether it went too far.

"Isn't this kind of an invasion of privacy?" One X user wrote.

of the day

quote

Excessive rainfall in some areas of the country affected crops, but most areas have benefited significantly from a good monsoon, leading to overall good crop growth

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUDHAN | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

While minimising the forecast errors is equally important, there is no systematic bias in the forecast. It is not that the forecast is biased in any particular way

POONAM GUPTA | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

It will be an important industry gathering to discuss the critical aspects of the global steel supply chain including impact of tariffs, trade policies, technology disruptions, raw material security, and logistics infrastructure

SANDEEP POUNDRICK | STEEL SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

LPG imports rise as demand surges

New Delhi: India's liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) market remains heavily import-reliant, with overseas supplies meeting 55-60 per cent of national demand over the past decade despite incremental growth in domestic production, Crisil Intelligence said in a report Wednesday. A new long-term India-US LPG agreement, covering 2.2 million tonnes per annum, marks a significant diversification move, reducing exposure to traditional Middle Eastern suppliers, it said. However, landed costs, particularly freight, will be a key determinant of oil marketing companies' near-term economics. LPG consumption rose to about 31.3 million tonnes in FY25, up from 21.6 million tonnes in FY17, and is expected to reach 33-34 million tonnes in FY26.

L&T rebrands data centre business

New Delhi: Engineering and construction major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Wednesday said it has rebranded its data centre business as Larsen & Toubro-Vyoma, a name inspired by the Sanskrit word for 'sky'. L&T's data centre business, launched in 2024, was previously known as L&T-Cloudfniti. By integrating advanced AI capabilities, cloud-native architectures and low-carbon operations, Larsen & Toubro-Vyoma offers a platform for resilient digital foundations -- enabling businesses and communities to thrive in an increasingly connected world. In a statement, the company said, "Larsen & Toubro-Vyoma extends L&T's core engineering and manufacturing expertise into the digital economy, with a forward-looking approach to data infrastructure that emphasises scalability, security, sustainability and Responsible AI."

Mittal-led ICIL sells Bharti Airtel's stake

New Delhi: Telecom czar Sunil Bharti Mittal's family office-owned ICIL Wednesday raised Rs 7,195 crore by selling a 0.56 per cent stake in Bharti Airtel to long-term investors through an open market transaction. Indian Continent Investment Ltd (ICIL) is one of the promoter entities in city-based Bharti Airtel. According to a regulatory filing, "The transaction attracted strong interest, receiving robust orders from marquee domestic and international long-only investors. Both new and existing shareholders of Airtel participated, with the placements majorly allocated to long-only investors".



We are confident of achieving its 3 per cent net interest margin guidance even if the Reserve Bank decides to cut the repo rate by 0.25 per cent in next week's monetary policy review

CS SETTY | CHAIRMAN, SBI

TESLA'S FIRST EXPERIENCE CENTRE IN INDIA

US electric-vehicle maker Tesla opened its first full-scale retail experience centre in India at Gurugram's Orchid Business Park. Unlike earlier experience centres in Mumbai's Bandra Kurla Complex and Delhi's Aerocity, which mainly served as display and brand-familiarisation spaces, the Gurugram centre will offer consultations, bookings, and test-drive support, signalling Tesla's move toward a more structured retail network



IMF reclassifies India's FX regime

The Washington-based lender terms India's "de facto" exchange rate regime as a "crawl-like arrangement", two years after it had termed the country's FX management framework as a "stabilised arrangement"

REUTERS

Mumbai, Nov 26: The IMF Wednesday reclassified India's "de facto" exchange rate regime as a "crawl-like arrangement", two years after branding it "stabilised". The move follows an IMF review earlier this year and could influence how global investors interpret India's foreign exchange framework and its tolerance for volatility. "While the exchange rate has exhibited increasing two-way movement this year, there remains room for additional exchange rate flexibility," the International Monetary Fund said. The rupee has declined about 4% over the year so far and its volatility has risen under Sanjay Malhotra, who became Reserve Bank of India governor late last year. The currency hit an all-time low of 89.49 against the US dol-



lar November 21, in part due to steep US trade tariffs which have dented trade and inward portfolio flows. A crawl-like arrangement is when the exchange rate remains within a "narrow margin of 2% relative to a statistically identified trend for six months or more (with the exception of a specified number of outliers), and the exchange rate arrangement cannot be considered as floating", the IMF says. The IMF moved India to "stabilised" from "floating" for the period between December 2022 and November 2024. Allowing greater exchange rate flexibility would help absorb external shocks, reduce the need for costly reserve accumulation and encourage market development, the IMF

- India's forex reserves remain among the world's largest, at nearly \$700bn
- Rupee hits all-time low of 89.49 against the US dollar November 21
- So far this year, rupee has dipped about 4% against dollar, most among Asian peers

added. While the Indian central bank continues to intervene in the FX market to limit out-sized swings, the rupee's 1-year realised volatility has jumped above 5% compared to below 2% before Malhotra became RBI governor. The RBI's increased tolerance for volatility has also prompted local companies to more actively manage foreign exchange risks, which analysts

FIRST TIME EVER IN ODISHA

Khimji announces Black Friday sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 26: Khimji Jewellers, one of Odisha's most trusted and iconic jewellery brands, has announced its special Black Friday offers, bringing unmatched savings for customers across its wide range of gold, diamond, and silver jewellery collections. The exclusive offers will be available till November 30 across all Khimji Jewellers showrooms. As part of the Black Friday celebrations, customers can enjoy flat 50% off on making charges of gold jewellery, flat 50% discount on making charges of diamond jewellery and flat 25% off on making charges of silver jewellery weight items and 20% off on silver jewellery MRP products. Speaking on the occasion, Mitesh Khimji, Managing Director, Khimji Jewellers, said "Black Friday has emerged as one of the most awaited shopping festivals, and we are delighted to bring exceptional value to our customers through these exclusive offers. At Khimji Jewellers, we constantly strive to combine craftsman-



ship with affordability, ensuring every customer enjoys a memorable and rewarding shopping experience." Founded in 1936, Khimji Jewellers is among Odisha's most respected jewellery houses, known for its legacy of trust, craftsmanship, and customer-first values. With an exquisite range of gold, diamond, silver, and precious gemstone jewellery, Khimji has been a pioneer in bringing contemporary designs while preserving traditional artistry. Over the decades, the brand has grown into a symbol of quality and elegance, serving generations of customers across the state.

Union Bank organises 18th CKYCRR Awareness Programme

Bhubaneswar: The 18th CKYCRR Awareness Programme was successfully organized by Union Bank of India at the World Skill Centre, Bhubaneswar. The programme aimed to



enhance understanding of the Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCRR) and its role in strengthening customer verification processes across the banking sector. Senior officials of Union Bank of India, along with participants from various bank of the City attended the event and discussed the latest guidelines, best practices, and operational updates related to CKYCRR. The initiative reflects Union Bank's commitment to promoting transparency, compliance, and improved customer service through effective KYC management. Sunil Kumar, GM-KYC, HO-Union Bank of India, Sudhir Shyam, Joint Secretary, DFS, Ministry of Finance, Govt of India, Umesh Kumar Singh, MD & CEO, CERSAI, Honey Patodi, Deputy Director, FIU-IND, Goutam Patra, CGM & SLBC Convenor were present on this occasion. HK Das, Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar, Union Bank of India gave vote of thanks.

French company Safran bets big on India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Nov 26: Boosting its India presence, French major Safran Wednesday said its maintenance, repair and overhaul facility for the LEAP engines will be operational in 2026 and also expects to triple its annual revenue in the country to more than 3 billion euros by 2030. Safran, which is into aerospace, defence and space segments, will also be setting up a dedicated MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facility

for the M88 engines powering the Dassault Aviation Rafale fighter jets. Both facilities will be in Hyderabad. "The new LEAP engine MRO centre represents a total investment of 200 million euros and will be operational in 2026. The 45,000-square-meter facility will ramp up to a capacity of 300 LEAP shop visits a year and boast a next-generation test bench," the company said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the facility through video conferencing

Wednesday. The facility is the company's largest MRO facility for LEAP engines in the world. The MRO facility is for LEAP (Leading Edge Aviation Propulsion) engines that power Airbus A320neo and Boeing 737 MAX planes. These engines are manufactured by CFM International, an equal joint venture between Safran Aircraft Engines and GE Aerospace. India is CFM's third-largest market, with five Indian carriers operating more than 400 LEAP-powered aircraft and 2,000 engines on order.

TWO-WEEK HIGH

Gold surges to hit ₹1.30 lakh/10 grams

New Delhi: Gold prices surged Rs 1,200 to hit near a two-week high of Rs 1,30,100 per 10 grams in the national capital Wednesday, tracking a rally in the international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Analysts said the rise was mainly driven by renewed expectations of interest-rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve next month. The precious metal of 99.5 per cent purity also advanced by Rs 1,200 to Rs 1,29,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). On November 13, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent closed at Rs 1,30,900 and Rs 1,30,300 per 10 gram levels, respectively.

Odisha among top 10 states in JCB sales: Shetty

JCB India stands as a shining example of Atmanirbharta, says the MD-cum-CEO

RATAN KUMAR PRADHAN, OP

Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, Nov 26: JCB, India's leading company in the earthmoving and construction equipment segment, is witnessing a booming market in mineral-rich Odisha. During a recent media interaction with journalists from eastern India at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi, JCB India's Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Deepak Shetty, revealed that Odisha ranks among the top 10 states in the country for JCB machine sales. Replying to a question on Odisha's exact position in JCB product sales compared to other states, Shetty said, "Let me first highlight the positives. Our products are extensively used as mining equipment in Odisha. Wheel-loading shovels and excavators are in high



demand here. Sales of backhoe loaders, which are popular in rural areas, though have dipped slightly. However, we are seeing stronger demand for these machines in western India -- Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh -- largely driven by rural development programmes." When asked how Odisha compares with states like West Bengal and Maharashtra, the JCB India chief said, "Odisha is not far behind Bengal or Maharashtra. I would place it around

7th, 8th or 9th position nationally." Asked which machine offers the best daily income opportunity for owners, Shetty strongly recommended the backhoe loader. "The backhoe loader is an excellent choice. It runs on wheels, can be driven home and parked easily, and has multiple applications."

Looking east

On the company's focus on eastern India, Shetty said, "We have a warehouse in Kolkata that supports customers in Jharkhand and Odisha too. We have offices in Kolkata and Bhubaneswar, and have recently appointed new dealers in Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Bhubaneswar. The entire eastern and north-eastern region has been a major focus for us." He also praised the improved road infrastructure that now enables faster movement of machines across the country. Shetty revealed that 70% of JCB India's machines are sold in rural India. "Anyone with Rs 3 lakh in pocket can take a loan to buy a machine. While a housing loan typically requires



20% down payment, JCB buyers with a good credit history can avail up to 95% financing." Proudly highlighting the company's long-standing commitment to India, he said, "Our chairman, Lord JC Bamford, invested in India in 1979 when it was not fashionable to do so. Today, JCB India stands as a shining example of Atmanirbharta."

Despite facing 28 competitors -- virtually the who's who of the global market -- JCB India has emerged as the market leader. The company now exports its 'Made-in-India' machines to 135 countries, a matter of great pride for both JCB and India.

Green initiatives

On sustainability initiatives, Shetty said, "With support

JCB'S LARGEST PLANT

The Ballabgarh factory near New Delhi serves as JCB India's headquarters. Spread over 57 acres, it manufactures backhoe loaders, diesel and natural gas generators, diesel engines, producing 130 machines daily. Established as a joint venture in 1979, JCB India is today a wholly-owned subsidiary of UK-based JC Bamford Excavators Ltd.

from former Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and the present Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, we are transporting machines by rail across India, including up to Kolkata." Regarding green technology, he added, "At the last Excon, JCB unveiled Asia's first hydrogen-powered construction machine, which received an overwhelming response. Building on that success, we are now launching a hydrogen genset as well." On women empowerment and gender diversity, Shetty shared, "At our Jaipur factory in Rajasthan, 34% of the workforce comprises women -- a remarkable achievement in a traditionally conservative state."

Test cricket faces moment of reckoning

South Africa hand India biggest defeat to clinch historic series win

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Nov 26: By the end of a bruising Test series, it wasn't just the scoreboard that told the story; it was the silence of disbelief echoing across Indian cricket.

Time is the only healer may sound comforting, but for the current Indian Test side, time feels more like a ticking clock. A back-to-back series loss,



capped by a humiliating defeat at home, has left nowhere to hide. The wounds are fresh,

the questions louder, and the scrutiny unforgiving.

South Africa's 2-0 sweep was not just historic; it was ruthless. The visitors etched their names into the record books with a 408-run demolition in the second Test, India's heaviest defeat in the format. It marked only the Proteas' second-ever Test series win on Indian soil, and their first since 2000, making

BIGGEST DEFEATS IN TERMS OF RUNS:	
408 runs vs South Africa in 2025	
342 runs vs Australia in 2004	
341 runs vs Pakistan in 2006	
337 runs vs Australia in 2007	
333 runs vs Australia in 2017	
329 runs vs South Africa in 1996	

the result all the more damning for the hosts.

The Guwahati decider became a showcase of South African dominance. What began as a cautious innings turned monumental through Senuran Muthusamy's resolute 109 and Marco Jansen's commanding 93, pushing the total to a formidable 489. Jansen then switched roles seamlessly, tearing through India's batting with a fiery 6-48 as the home side crumbled to 201.

Refusing to loosen their grip, South Africa extended the ad-

Terrifying test tale

■ India's chances of reaching the World Test Championship finals took a major hit as they slipped to the fifth spot in standings following their embarrassing 0-2 series whitewash to SA at home. The team has played nine Test matches in the current WTC cycle, winning four, losing four, and drawing one game

■ After a 3-day triumph against Shubman Gill's Team India in Kolkata, South Africa secured a thumping 5-day win in Guwahati, securing their first series triumph in the country since 2000-01

■ The victory marked another historic milestone for the Proteas, who became the first team to beat India by over 400 runs in a Test match, surpassing the previous best, held by Australia

■ It was also the first time since the 2000-01 series that South Africa managed to complete a 2-0 sweep in India

vantage. Tristan Stubbs' assured 94 powered them to 2605 declared, setting an impossible target. Simon Harmer, already a hero from Kolkata, delivered the final blow with a magical 637, dismantling India's resistance on the last day.

India lose five home Tests in span of seven games

This is the first time India have lost five Test matches at home in a span of seven matches since 1959, when they lost the three-match Test series against Australia 2-0 and the five-match Test series against the West Indies 3-0.

Before South Africa's 0-2 whitewash, India beat the West Indies 2-0 after losing to New Zealand 0-3 last year. While India have lost a number of series at home in their Test third time they have been clean swept at home. The first instance came back in 2000 when South Africa beat them 2-0. The second whitewash came at the hands of New Zealand, who beat them 3-0 in 2024, and finally the latest one against South Africa 0-2. Notably, India last endured back-to-back home Test series defeats in successive years more than 40 years ago, against the West Indies in 1983 and England in the 1984/85 season.

FIRST TIME IN 66 YEARS

It's massive. These are the type of things that we're working towards and dreaming of. It's not every day where you get to think that you can come to India and walk away with a two-nil series win

TEMBA BAVUMA | CAPTAIN, SOUTH AFRICA

They definitely played better cricket, but at the same time, in cricket you can't take anything for granted

RISHAB PANT | STAND-IN SKIPPER, INDIA

India's fight was sporadic at best. Sai Sudarshan showed promise, and Ravindra Jadeja's gritty 54 offered brief hope, but the collapse that followed spoke volumes of a side struggling for identity and direction.

Beyond the boundary, the fallout is intensifying. Critics, former cricketers, and fans alike are questioning selections, strategies, and leadership. Coach Gautam Gambhir now finds himself under the microscope, with BCCI officials expected to seek clear answers from both him and the team management.

The defeat also stings in the larger picture. India's WTC 2025-27 campaign has taken a severe hit, slipping to fifth in the standings with a PCT of 48.15, overtaken even by arch-rivals Pakistan. South

Africa, meanwhile, surge with confidence, boasting 36 points and a commanding 75 per cent PCT as they tighten their grip near the summit.

As the focus shifts to the upcoming ODI series starting November 30, the narrative remains uneasy. Fans may forgive, but critics will not forget easily. The reasons behind this collapse will unfold in time but for now, one truth stands stark and unshaken.

Indian cricket is at a crossroads, and every decision from here on could define its future.

BRIEF SCORES

South Africa: 489 & 260 for 5 declared beat **India:** 201 & 140 all out in 63.4 overs (Ravindra Jadeja 54, Washington Sundar 16, Simon Harmer 6/37)

SHORT TAKES

India beat Malaysia

Iphoh: The Indian men's hockey team eked out a narrow 4-3 victory against hosts Malaysia at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup here Wednesday. Selvam Karthi (7'), Sukhjeet Singh (21'), Amit Rohidas (39') and Sanjay (53') scored for India, while Faizal Saari (13'), Fitri Saari (36'), and Marhan Jilil (45') got on the scoresheet for Malaysia. India started the game on the front foot, forcing the hosts back in their own half as they looked to assert themselves on the opposition. Determined to see the game out, India remained resolute to defend a couple of late penalty corners from Malaysia to prevail in this contest.

Neeru wins 4th gold

Jaipur: Trap shooters Neeru Dhand and Aditya Bharadwaj powered Guru Nanak Dev University to a clean sweep of all four shotgun medals, while their cyclists clinched both individual road race titles in the Khelo India University Games here Wednesday. Neeru, the reigning Asian Shooting Championships gold medallist, secured her fourth straight individual gold with a final score of 47. Manisha Keer (39) and Nandika Singh (30) took the silver and bronze respectively. The trio also combined to win the team gold with a score of 344 at the Jagatpur Shooting Range.

New FIFA WC format

Geneva: The 2026 World Cup draw next week will reward the four highest-ranked teams — Spain, Argentina, France and England — who will be placed in separate sections of a new tennis-style seeded tournament bracket. FIFA said the top four teams in the latest men's rankings will, if they finish out of their respective round-robin groups, avoid each other until the semifinals of the June 11-July 19 tournament being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Defending champion Argentina with Lionel Messi and top-ranked European champion Spain with Lamine Yamal therefore can ensure they do not meet until the final at MetLife Stadium near New York.

FIDE WORLD CUP

Sindarov scripts history as youngest-ever champion

Uzbekistan teen's triumph signifies a significant change in the world of chess. After D Gukesh's World Championship victory and Divya Deshmukh's, Sindarov becomes the third teenager to win a major world title in less than a year

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Nov 26: Uzbekistan's teenage sensation Javokhir Sindarov carved his name into chess history, becoming the youngest player ever to win the Chess World Cup after outlasting China's Wei Yi in a nerve-wracking tiebreak finale in Goa Wednesday.

In an event where favourites were eliminated one after another before the knockout stages, Sindarov started the tournament as the sixteenth



seed. It was anything but simple for him to earn the title. In a close semifinal match against fellow countryman Nodirbek Yakubboev, he only prevailed after reaching the tiebreaks.

Both Wei Yi and Sindarov qualified for the 2026 Candidates Tournament by making it to the championship round. He defeated Wei in a thrilling finish to take home the trophy after winning the second 15' +

10" Rapid tiebreak.

Wei Yi used the Petrov Defense in Tuesday's opening match, which once again put Sindarov in a difficult situation as he looked for opportunities to win with White. Wei's plan almost worked. In an attempt to force a result, the Chinese grandmaster moved into a bishop-pawn endgame that was marginally advantageous.

However, Sindarov remained vigilant, accurately defending against every subtle threat and making deep calculations. After 50 moves, with the margins razor-thin, the two agreed to a draw—setting the stage for a tiebreak showdown.

When the fast-paced games started on Wednesday, Sindarov's poise was crucial. He decisively defeated Wei Yi in the second 15' + 10" rapid tiebreak, outplaying him with conviction and clarity to win the biggest title of his early career. He pocketed a cheque worth \$120,000 for winning the title in the tournament with a total prize fund of \$2 million.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 26: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Wednesday said the Commonwealth Sport's decision to award the hosting rights of the 2030 Commonwealth Games to Ahmedabad is a prestigious moment for the country as it strives to become a sporting powerhouse by 2047.

Ahmedabad was formally awarded hosting rights of the centenary edition during Commonwealth Sport's general assembly in Glasgow, clearing the decks for the event's return to India after two decades.

"It is a prestigious moment that India will host centenary Commonwealth Games," Mandaviya said here.

"India is capable of hosting major events and will be among top-five sporting nations by 2047," he added.

The general assembly of 74 members put a seal of approval on India's bid after Ahmedabad was recommended as the proposed host by the Commonwealth Sport's Executive Board last month.

2030 Games to feature 15-17 disciplines

Commonwealth Sport also confirmed that 15 to 17 sports



will feature at the 2030 Games.

"The Amdavad 2030 team will work closely with Commonwealth Sport and the International Federation community to shape a dynamic and exciting sport programme with strong local resonance and global appeal," the body stated.

Athletics and Para Athletics, Swimming and Para Swimming, Table Tennis and Para Table Tennis, Bowls and Para Bowls, Weightlifting and Para Powerlifting, Artistic Gymnastics, Netball and Boxing are the confirmed disciplines.

"The process to finalise the remainder of the programme will start next month, and the full Centenary Games line-up will be announced next year.

It is a prestigious moment that India will host centenary Commonwealth Games

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | SPORTS MINISTER

"The sports under consideration are: Archery, Badminton, 3x3 Basketball and 3x3 Wheelchair Basketball, Beach Volleyball, Cricket T20, Cycling, Diving, Hockey, Judo, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Rugby Sevens, Shooting, Squash, Triathlon and Para Triathlon and Wrestling. "The host can also propose up to two new or traditional sports," it added.

The expanded programme stays true to the Indian Olympic Association's commitment

MILAN CORTINA WINTER GAMES

Under a cloud, Olympic flame begins journey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ancient Olympia (Greece), Nov 26: The Olympic flame began its journey Wednesday to the Milan Cortina Winter Games — missing a little of its usual magic.

Bad weather lashing western Greece forced organizers to move the torch-lighting ceremony indoors, from Olympia's ancient stadium and temples to a nearby museum.

The flame is lit by focusing the sun's rays with a concave mirror. But with skies overcast, officials used a backup flame kindled during a brief spell of sunshine at Monday's rehearsal.

Greek rower Petros Gaidatzis launched the torch relay, which,



after reaching Italy, will be carried across the host country by

about 10,000 runners before the Feb. 6-22 competition. The sun

ultimately made an appearance over rain-soaked Olympia

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Chelsea crush Barca in style

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Nov 26: On a night of changes, blunders and a glorious individual goal by 18-year-old Estevao, defensive lapses cost Manchester City and Barcelona dearly as both teams slumped to notable losses in the Champions League.

In Pep Guardiola's 100th Champions League game as City coach, his team struggled to cope with Bayer Leverkusen's quick transitions in a 2-0 defeat, while Barcelona had an own goal and a red card in its 3-0 loss at Chelsea.

Chelsea comfortably beat 10-man Barcelona 3-0 at Stamford Bridge to earn its third league-phase win and move closer to the top. Jules Koundé's own goal handed Chelsea the lead in the



27th as Barcelona defenders got tangled up in the goalmouth.

The hosts stretched their advantage with a fine individual goal by Estevão in the 55th as he held off two defenders, and a close-range shot by Liam Delap in the 73rd.