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leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES Today is an ordinary day, it is business as usual, but there will be some progress. You can while away your time doing petty chores. And, Ganesha says, while day-dreaming think about that coveted home, as that's how the first plans materialise.

TAURUS Feel your imagination run wild as you star-gaze throughout the day wondering about the existence of the extra terrestrial. You will paint the workplace in your flavour of innovation, combined with a drive to work equally hard. Add some smooth talk to the equation and you will find a lot of people in awe of your charm, says Ganesha.

GEMINI Today, you may encounter unusual challenges, says Ganesha. You will come up with new thoughts and tactics, which will bring about positive changes and results. Avoid any confrontation with those living around you. Ganesha advises you to keep your cool during the day.

CANCER Financially, you may be in a bit of a bother today. Payment of bills, taxes and loans may keep you busy for most part of the day. You may even contemplate borrowing money to meet the demands. However, you are likely to receive one of your pending payments, which will be enough to get you out of the fix.

LEO Being good to oneself is not vanity. To Ganesha, it seems as if you take this statement to heart, since it looks quite possible that you make your personal care number one priority today. On the flip side though, you become aware of the fact that the harder you try the more it seems you have to.

VIRGO The time today is ripe to venture into a new business. Projects that have been put-off will finally be completed. Looking into the week ahead, you are most likely to give yourself an energy zap. Parties will be all fun and entertainment. Your kids will bring home joy and pride and this will brighten the mood even more, says Ganesha.

LIBRA The Bhagavad Gita says, "Do your duty without expecting the fruit." Remember this important lesson and strive hard to put in extra efforts to finish off whatever you undertake to do. Worrying about results will only hamper your progress.

SCORPIO At work, you would want to change the perspective with which people see you. Your colleagues recognise you as the emerging alpha-lion. Ideas and opinions will impress your bosses. But keep a level head and learn where to stop when winning, counsels Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS Going to private parties is a high probability today. All in all, make the most of it as you get nostalgic with old friends and make plans with new ones. Moreover, relatives will be pleased to meet you after a long time.

CAPRICORN Whether you're an artist, performer, professional or an entrepreneur, career issues will take the foreground today, while personal matters will wait in queue for your attention, says Ganesha. Your performance will be at its all-time high, and your efforts will be duly rewarded, but credit for this must go to your loved ones who will lend their unceasing support for all your endeavours.

AQUARIUS Aim. Shoot. Achieve. Today, you will concentrate your energies to execute your plans with precision. Naturally, your work progresses by leaps and bounds. By sundown, you will achieve far more than everyone's estimation. That's the way to go, says Ganesha.

PISCES Of late, the harder you try, the more it seems you have to do. You are likely to put your foot down today and spend some time taking care of yourself and playing truant with your responsibilities. Recharge your batteries fully while you are at it, says Ganesha.



SYDNEY SWEENEY TALKS ABOUT HER STAGE FRIGHT

Hollywood actress Sydney Sweeney revealed she suffers from "terrible stage fright," admitting she has long avoided theatre roles because her overwhelming nerves make performing on stage difficult. She openly shared, "I have horrible stage fright. Terrible stage fright"

RYAN COOGLER REVEALS WHY HE DECLINED ACADEMY INVITE

Filmmaker Ryan Coogler has revealed his reasons for declining an invitation to join the Academy. He clarifies it was not due to animosity but rather his demanding commitments to his film school and unions. Coogler prefers the hands-on work of film-making over award ceremonies



DHARITRI CLIMATE FILM FEST WINNERS



Filmmakers Itishree Panda and Atasi Atipriya Rout (R) receiving cheques of ₹25,000 and ₹15,000, respectively, from Orissa POST and Dhartiri Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy at the leading Odia daily's office in Bhubaneswar, Friday. Itishree's film Suravi won the top prize, while Atasi's O2 Collapse bagged the second honour in the first edition of Dharitri Climate Film Fest held at Press Club of Odisha in the City, November 23. The dailies' Editor Tathagata Satpathy and staffers are also seen

PICS: MANORANJAN MISHRA



Nushrratt accepts 'opportunist' tag

Mumbai: Actress Nushrratt Bharuccha, who is known to always speak her mind, shared her views on ambition and being labeled as an "opportunist." Addressing an event, Nushrratt accepted the label head on; however, she reframed its meaning with honesty and maturity. The Dream Girl actress was heard saying, "I'm an opportunist too. If I get an offer for a film I genuinely want to do, then why not? Of course, I'll go and say, 'Yes, I want to do it.' Everyone stands in line for a reason because they want something. And that's not a bad thing." She pointed out that being an opportunist has an unnecessary negative connotation attached to it. "Being an opportunist isn't wrong, but your actions while walking that path should be responsible. Only you know that, or you learn it over time. I've learned from my experiences, and if my values, my perception, and my thoughts feel right to me, then they are right for me," she added. Work-wise, Nushrratt was last seen in G. Ashok's Ufff Yeh Siya-paa.

A unique comedy of errors shares the journey of Kesari Lal Singh, a sheepish common man, who lands in a spiraling mess when his wife, Pushpa, leaves him - convinced he's been flirting with their neighbor, Kamini.



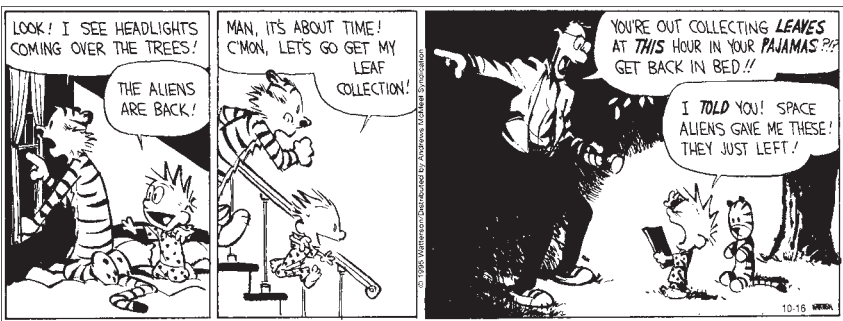
Priyanka on embracing vulnerability

Mumbai: One of India's finest stars Priyanka Chopra Jonas says embracing vulnerability has become an essential part of her personal evolution, especially in a world that celebrates relentless strength. The global star adds that she's working hard on trying to be a lot more emotionally honest with herself and "not always try to be the tough girl." Asked what does vulnerability mean to her in a world that expects constant strength? "It's hard to show it, I think," Priyanka, who has produced the film Born Hungry, told this news agency. "The world expects constant strength, which is why this movie will really move you, because it is a beautiful amalgamation of strength and vulnerability and that's not easy to do," added the actress. Reflecting on her journey, the actress said the pressure to appear tough had shaped much of her early life. "It's really not easy to show your real self and your real feelings. I'm working very hard on trying to be a lot more emotionally honest with myself and not always try to be the tough girl." "I was raised like that. I was raised to always, you know, never show the chinks in your armour. No one should see how difficult your journey was, only the good should be out there," said Priyanka, who is often seen as an epitome of strength and confidence.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

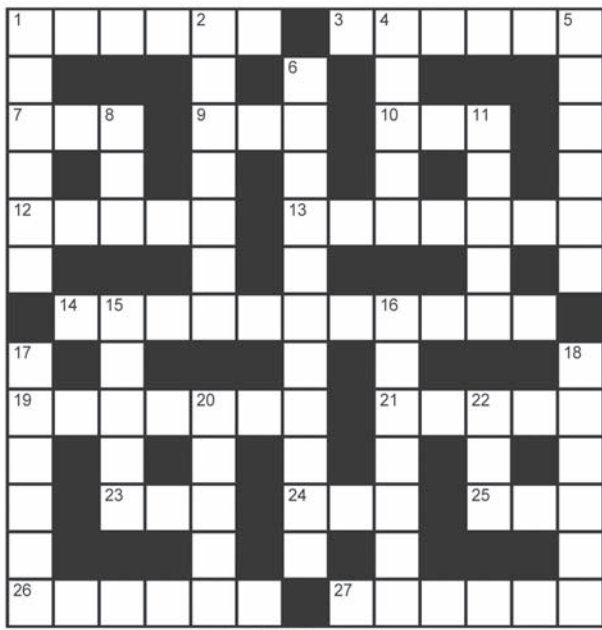


BREVITY



FUN post

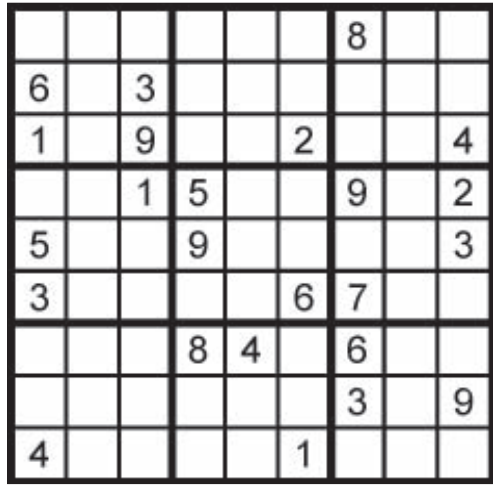
CROSSWORD



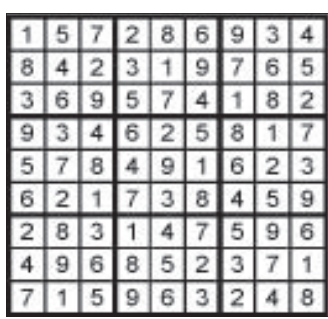
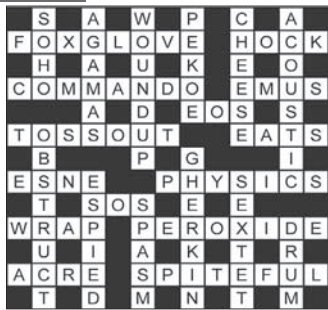
- Across 1 Fast bird of prey 3 Court game 7 Jar part 9 Historic period 10 Barley bristle 12 Jet black 13 Policeman 14 Without compunction or human feeling (4-7) 19 Catch-22 21 Praise 23 Drunkard 24 Swedish shag rug 25 Darjeeling or oolong 26 No-nos 27 Gdansk locale Down 1 Made a movie 2 Like Cyclops (3-4) 4 Swig 5 Source of danger 6 Where an heiress is raised? (3,2,6) 8 Twosome 11 Mother-of-pearl 15 Monsters 16 Sauce ingredient 17 Decide against doing something (3,3) 18 London theatre district street 20 "Likewise" 22 Back at sea

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





## Nushratt clarifies

Actor Nushratt Bharuccha shares her views on ambition and being labeled as an “opportunist”

LEISURE PAGE



## Washington floods

Torrential rains unleash widespread flooding across Washington state and British Columbia, evacuations in Pacific Northwest

INTERNATIONAL | P8



## Inflation rises

Retail inflation rises in November from a record low in the prior month but stayed below RBI's target range for 3rd month on trot

BUSINESS | P9



## Test trouble

India slip a rung to sixth position in the World Test Championship standings after New Zealand jumped to 3rd place

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

\*\*\*\*  
P1

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BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 13, 2025

## Malkangiri unrest By CM submits report to Majhi

FNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Malkangiri, Dec 12:** A day after visiting a violence-hit village in Malkangiri district, Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and MSME, Fisheries & Animal Resources Development Minister Gokulananda Mallik Friday submitted a detailed report to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on the recent violence and arson.

The ministerial team Thursday visited MV-26 village, where irate tribals had vandalised the houses of another community after a headless body of a 51-year-old tribal woman was found.

The team also submitted to the CM memoranda submitted by the two communities.

Violence continued December 7 and 8, even as a large number of people from a non-tribal community fled the area.

However, the situation has been brought under control with the deployment of a large number of security forces, Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC), southern division, Sangram Keshari Mohapatra said.

He visited the affected village and monitored relief and rehabilitation work.

Both Singh Deo and Mallik visited the village and spoke to the residents and assured them that the government would ensure non-escalation of violence.

“Maintaining peace is the priority of the government. We met the people of both groups and they assured us of maintaining peace,” Mallik said after submitting their report to the Chief Minister.

The ministers had also held a high-level review meeting at the district headquarters town of Malkangiri to assess the root cause of the violence.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I can never encash this precious ₹10,000 Indigo coupon. I had to buy a ₹4-lakh ticket to get it

## Just like UK's Larry, Belgium PM gets cat Maximus



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Brussels, Dec 12:** It is no secret that a tabby named Larry wields considerable power in Downing Street. Now in Belgium, a rescue cat named Maximus has shot to social media stardom as bewhiskered sidekick and PR weapon of Prime Minister Bart De Wever.

Taken in from a shelter by the Flemish conservative leader over the summer, the grey fluffball has become a fixture on Instagram -- snapped batting at string or loiling around in the boss's office.

But while Larry has risen above politics as Chief Mouser to six British prime ministers, the adventures of De Wever's four-legged friend come with a dose of salty commentary on Belgium's turbulent public life.



**ON WAR FOOTING:** Firemen try to douse a fire that broke out in 'No Limit Air' restaurant at Satya Vihar near Palasuni area of Bhubaneswar, Friday. A major mishap was averted as no loss of life was reported in the incident; however properties worth ₹1.5 crore were gutted **(Report P2)**

PICT: BIKASH NAYAK

## ₹ falls to fresh nadir of 90.49 against \$

**Mumbai:** The rupee depreciated by 17 paise to close at an all-time low of 90.49 against the US dollar Friday, as uncertainty over the India-US trade deal and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment. Forex traders said the rupee is under pressure, largely due to aggressive dollar purchases by importers amid surging global precious metal prices. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.43 against the US dollar, then fell further to a record intraday low of 90.56 against the greenback, registering a fall of 24 paise from its previous close. The unit settled the day at 90.49 against the US dollar, down 17 paise over its last close. On Thursday, the rupee had plunged 38 paise to close at an all-time low of 90.32 against the US dollar.

P9

## Vinesh comes out of her retirement

**New Delhi:** Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat Friday announced that she would be coming out of retirement to take another shot at an elusive Olympic medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Games as the “the fire never left” her and was merely buried under “exhaustion and noise”. The 31-year-old had walked away from the sport after the heartbreak of the Paris Games last year, where she was dramatically disqualified for being 100 grams over the permissible weight limit ahead of her 50kg category gold medal bout. She had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), seeking a joint silver medal, but the verdict remained unchanged, leading her to announce her retirement and join politics to be elected as an MLA from Haryana's Julana constituency.

BACK PAGE

## Villager arrested for ‘poisoning’ leopard

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bonai, Dec 12:** A leopard, estimated to be 12 years old, died from suspected poisoning after a bullock it had killed for food was allegedly laced with poison by its owner in Sundargarh district, forest officials said Friday.

The matter came to light after forest personnel recovered the leopard carcass in the Kusumadihi-Khasada forest under the Tamda forest range of the Bonai forest division in Sundargarh district Friday.

Preliminary findings indicate that the animal died from poisoning, forest officials said, adding that a post-mortem was conducted and the animal's carcass was later buried in compliance with wildlife protection guidelines.

In this connection, forest officials arrested the bullock's owner Nuas Xess, 62, a native of Kusumadihi village. According to officials, during interrogation Xess admitted to have smeared



poison on the carcass of his bullock, which the tiger later consumed and died. His statements were recorded as a case was registered in this connection and further investigations were underway.

A team led by RCCF Ramasamy from Rourkela visited the site and launched an inquiry. Two veterinarians conducting post-mortem confirmed that the leopard died due to poisoning.

Local intellectuals have blamed the Forest department for the incident, alleging negligence and lack of preparedness. They pointed out that the Tamda section has no forester and only one forest guard manages the area.

## Ex-home min Shivraj Patil passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Latur, Dec 12:** Veteran Congressman Shivraj Patil, who served as the Lok Sabha speaker and was Union home minister during the 26/11 attacks, passed away at his hometown Latur in Maharashtra Friday morning, family sources said.

Patil, 90, passed away at his residence 'Devghar' after a brief illness, they said, adding his funeral will be held Saturday. Patil remained a



Congress and Nehru-Gandhi family loyalist till his last days and held several key constitutional and ministerial posts during a public life spanning more than five decades.

The veteran politician faced severe public and media backlash as Union Home Minister in 2008 when he was seen in three different sets of clothes on the night of November 26 when Mumbai was facing unprecedented attacks from terrorists.

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Decorative colored dots and bars at the bottom of the page.



Restaurant gutted in City; charred beer cans found

CM opens eco-retreat near Ramchandi

It was alleged that the restaurant was serving alcohol without possessing a Bar licence



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** A week after the horrific Goa nightclub fire tragedy that claimed at least 25 lives, a massive fire broke out at ‘No Limit Air’ restaurant in Satya Vihar area here Friday morning, destroying properties worth over ₹1.5 crore, though no casualties or injuries were reported in the incident.

Sources said, Fire Services department received information regarding the fire around 9am following which several fire tenders were rushed to the spot. It took almost an hour to control the blaze. “The incident, however, exposed the illegality going on inside the bar when charred beer cans were spotted inside the premises. The restaurant was providing alcohol without possessing

a Bar licence,” said a source.

“A month ago, we received allegations that the restaurant was serving liquor without having a Bar licence. Our squad raided the eatery but did not find any liquor. If we find the restaurant’s involvement in illegal liquor service, we will take strict action,” said Bhubaneswar Excise Superintendent Debashish Patel.

Fire Services DG Sudhanshu Sarangi said, “We have instructed the officials concerned to conduct a review on these kinds of establishments to find out if they are operating with proper fire safety licence and protocol, and submit a report in 10-15 days. Strict action will be taken as per the report.”

Meanwhile, locals have flagged concerns over the operational hours of the restaurant with some saying the bar

operates till dawn and that people go to that restaurant for alcohol and hookah.

“People keep coming to the restaurant even after 12pm. Months ago a fight broke out at the restaurant where a youth was attacked with knife,” said a resident.

However, Faisal Khan, business partner of the restaurant, clarified that the incident occurred when it was closed. “We informed the fire tenders as soon as we came to know about the fire,” he added.

“Properties worth ₹1.5 crore were gutted in this incident. We had fire proof infrastructure, along with necessary licence to run the restaurant. We are yet to know how the fire broke out,” he said. A probe is on to find out the source of the fire and whether the restaurant had a fire safety licence.

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Setting a goal to emerge among the top five eco-cultural tourism hubs in Asia, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday said the state Cabinet and Council of Ministers’ meetings will be held at different eco-retreat centres in the coming days.

Majhi made the announcement after inaugurating the 7th eco-retreat, a tourist facility amidst natural surroundings, organised by the Tourism department near Ramchandi along the Puri-Konark Marine Drive.

He described the eco-retreats as the most attractive part of the state’s eco-tour-



ism promotion.

“I wish to hold state government’s Cabinet and Council of Minister’s meetings at

eco-retreats in various famous tourist destinations of Odisha in the coming days,” he said, adding that the state’s eco-re-

treats have become a model in the tourism sector in India and an inspiration for other states.

The CM said the eco-retreats in Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Darlingbadi, Sonapur and Konark have significantly enhanced the importance of eco-tourism in the state.

“Eco-retreats are a model campaign for creating livelihoods for local people, spreading environmental awareness, and boosting the local economy. Similar initiatives should be implemented in other natural locations across the state,” he said.

Deputy Chief Minister and Tourism Minister Pravatī Parida was also present at the inauguration.

Odisha signs MoU for Gati Shakti State Master Plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** In a landmark move towards preparing a comprehensive Odisha State Master Plan, aligned with the visionary PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan for integrated infrastructure development, Commerce and Transport (C&T) department signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N) here Friday.

The signing ceremony was attended by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, DC-cum-ACS Anu Garg, General Administration and Public Grievance department ACS Surendra Kumar, and C&T Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, along with secretaries from various government departments. BISAG-N DG T P Singh and his team were also present on the occasion. This partnership is set to strengthen digital governance,



enable integrated infrastructure planning, and pave the way for a future-ready Odisha.

BISAG-N is an autonomous scientific society that primarily uses space and geo-spatial technologies for national development, e-governance.

The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan is a transformative initiative aimed at accelerating India’s infrastructure development through a coordinated and integrated approach. Its core objective is to break departmental silos by ensuring

that multiple ministries and agencies work together for seamless project execution, reducing delays and optimising the use of resources such as land, funds, and technology. By enhancing connectivity across road, rail, air, and ports, the plan seeks to lower logistics costs, improve supply chains, and stimulate industrial growth. Leveraging digital tools and geospatial technologies, Gati Shakti enables data-driven planning, real-time monitoring, and better governance.

ABUSIVE REMARKS

BJD urges Guv to expel Nilagiri MLA from House

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The Opposition BJD Friday urged Governor Hari Babu Kam-bhampati to expel BJP MLA Santosh Khatua from the Assembly, alleging that he made abusive remarks against national icons, women, and weaker sections of society.

A BJD delegation submitted a memorandum demanding stringent action against the Nilagiri MLA, over his alleged “highly objectionable and derogatory” remarks against Mahatma Gandhi.

The regional party also accused the legislator of hurling abuses at BJD general secretary (organisation) Lekhasri Samantsinghar in July after she alleged Khatua’s involvement in a poaching case.

The remarks, which went viral on social media, caused severe damage to her reputation, the memorandum stated.

The petition listed a string of complaints against Khatua, including multiple FIRs registered against across Balasore district, protests by BJD workers and civil society organisations, pleas sent to the President, the Odisha State Women’s Commission, the DGP and the Speaker of the Assembly.

The regional party alleged that no tangible action has been taken against the MLA.

“Rather, he is being paraded as the poster boy of BJP and has been seen accompanying the CM, Deputy CMs, and MPs in various programmes,” the party alleged.

The party claimed that the continued inaction has only emboldened Khatua to make further such controversial statement including one in the Assembly targeting Mahatma Gandhi. They urged the Governor to direct authorities to collect all facts and evidence pertaining to the complaints against the MLA and to ensure his expulsion from the Assembly.

Intense cold wave grips state

G Udayagiri records season’s lowest at 3.1 degrees C

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** An intense cold wave swept several parts of Odisha as the state recorded the season’s lowest temperature of 3.1 degrees Celsius at G Udayagiri, a hill station in Kandhamal district, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Friday.

The chill has severely affected normal life as minimum temperature remained below 10 degrees Celsius in at least 15 places in 11 of the 30 districts, an official said.

Semiliguda, another hill station in Koraput, came a close second at 3.6 degrees Celsius, followed by Phulbani and Darlingbadi, both in Kandhamal district, recording 5.5 degrees Celsius and 6.5 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Other places where the mercury plummeted below 10 degrees Celsius include Chipilima in Bargarh (6.6), Rourkela (7.2), Jharsuguda (7.1), Bhawanipatna (7.5), Koraput (8.1), Kirei (8.4), Angul (8.6), Bolangir (9), Nabarangpur (9.2), Sundargarh and Keonjhar at 9.6 degrees Celsius each.

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack record-



ed 12.6 degrees Celsius and 11.8 degrees Celsius, respectively.

In a statement, the IMD said there has been no major change in night temperature across the state for next six-seven days and forecast shallow to moderate fog in Sundargarh, Kandhamal and Kalahandi in the coming days.

A report from Kandhamal said a thin layer of ice was seen on leaves of several trees, and fish were found dead in water bodies due to the intense cold conditions. Persistent cold waves over the past two weeks have forced residents to remain indoors from 6 pm to 9 am.

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The state government is working on a policy to lease out land for renewable energy (RE) projects, as part of its push to meet ‘Net Zero’ commitments, a senior official said Thursday.

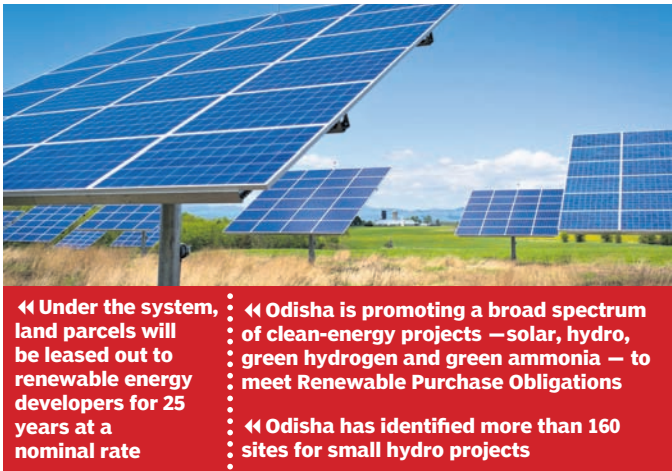
**The policy is in draft stage. After stakeholder vetting, it will be implemented in the next two months**

SATYAPRIYA RATH | GRIDCO LTD MD

Satyapriya Rath, Managing Director of GRIDCO Limited, said land acquisition has emerged as a major hurdle for projects across states, prompting Odisha to frame a dedicated land lease policy to facilitate smoother allotment for renewable ventures.

GRIDCO Limited (formerly the Grid Corporation of Odisha Limited) is the state-designated entity responsible for bulk power procurement on behalf of the DISCOMs in Odisha.

“The policy is in draft stage. After stakeholder vetting, it will be implemented in the



next two months,” Rath told reporters Thursday at a workshop organised by the International Forum for Environment Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST). Under the system, land parcels will be leased out to RE developers for 25 years at a nominal rate, he said.

Rath said the state is promoting a broad spectrum of clean-energy projects — solar, hydro, green hydrogen and green ammonia — to meet Renewable Purchase Obligations

(RPOs). Of the state’s over 9,000 MW installed power capacity, more than 2,150 MW comes from hydro, while another 500-600 MW is sourced from hydro projects in other states, he said.

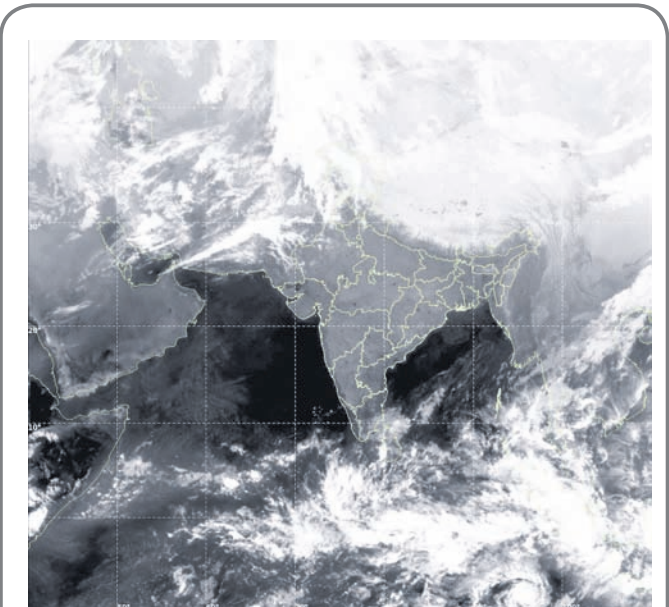
Odisha has also identified more than 160 sites for small hydro projects.

He said subsidies are being offered for rooftop solar systems under the PM Surya Ghar Yojana, while floating solar and agro-PV projects are also being encouraged.

H&UD dept reviews expenditure, budget

**Bhubaneswar:** A comprehensive review meeting on the expenditure and budget of Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department was held Friday under the chairmanship of Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra. The minister reviewed the progress of financial utilisation under various ongoing projects and programmes of the department and directed officials to take appropriate and timely steps to ensure full utilisation of the allocated funds within the stipulated period. “Every rupee allocated in the budget must translate into visible outcomes on the ground. Timely expenditure and effective implementation are essential to accelerate the pace of urban development across the State,” Mahapatra emphasised.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.60 ▲ 0.17	SENSEX	85267.66 ▲ 449.53	GOLD	₹134,359 ▲ ₹1890
EURO	106.25 ▲ 0.29	NIFTY	26046.95 ▲ 148.40	SILVER	₹196,541 ▼ ₹2401



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	29.0°	26.2°	Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later
Min Temp	12.6°	11.8°	
Humidity	90%	82%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

CLASSIFIED

LOST

I, Barendra Patra, S/o.- Rabindra Patra, Residing of At- Maheshpur, P.O.- Sultanpur, Dehurda, Bhograi, Balasore, Odisha, 756036 declare that I have lost my original Register sale deed No.- 783, dated- 31.03.2019 and ROR Khata No.- 21/15, Plot No.- 84/106, Mouza- Chakasana Jaleswarpur, P.S- Bhograi, P.S.- 262 somewhere and unable to trace. If anyone find the above documents kindly contact- 9937112021.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Odisha has emerged as the best-performing state in the country in terms of accuracy in the national digital crop survey, earning high praise from the Central government. The recognition came during the state-level steering committee meeting on Agristack, held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja at Lok Seva Bhavan recently.

Agristack, a unified agricultural information platform developed by the Government of India, digitally consolidates land and crop-related information of farmers. The platform facilitates access to government services, supports farmer identity registration, and provides



GPS-mapped rural data, all securely stored in government repositories.

The meeting was attended by Central government Principal Advisory Officer Rajiv Chawla and Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Additional Secretary Pramod Kumar Meherda, who participated virtually. Senior officials from the state including department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment Principal Sec-

retary Arvind Kumar Padhee, Director of Agriculture Shubham Saxena and department of Cooperatives Commissioner and Secretary Rajesh Prabhakar Patil.

During the meeting, Chawla highly appreciated the outstanding performance of Odisha in digital survey, praising its progress, quality, and field-level implementation. He noted that Odisha’s survey system has become a model

for other states, with the state achieving an impressive survey accuracy of 96.67 per cent and the lowest error rate in the country at 3.33 per cent. The issue of farmer registration was also discussed, with Jharsuguda district recognised as the top performer in this area.

A review of digital surveys for Kharif and Rabi crops in 2024 and 2025 showed remarkable improvement. The survey covers crops like paddy, cotton, maize, mandia, and cashew in Kharif, and moong, beeri, and cinnamon paddy in Rabi. The 2025 census highlighted Bargarh and Jharsuguda districts as the sixth-best performing districts for Kharif land survey, with overall state success rate reaching 94 per cent.



# Centre seeks action on illegal constructions in Similipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Dec 12:** The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change directed the Odisha Additional Chief Secretary to investigate allegations of illegal construction and tree-felling in the eco-sensitive foothills of Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district. The directive was issued through a letter dated 1 December 2025, referencing File No. 7(28)-2025-FCE (Similipal), following a complaint filed by Shantanu Kumar Bhukta of the Youth United for Sustainable Environment Trust.

The Ministry also sought a detailed report on the action taken by the state department regarding these allegations.

According to the complaint, unauthorised commercial structures are rapidly coming up in the eco-sensitive zone of the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR). Numerous resorts are reportedly being built along the Pithabata–Lulung route, while certain stretches within the tiger reserve are being concretised. Tourists visiting the area allegedly litter large quan-



ties of plastic carry bags, bottles and other prohibited materials, leading to widespread pollution. The department is accused of failing to take corrective measures.

Concerns have also been raised about illegal tree-felling and the digging of borewells within the protected zone, in violation of eco-sensitive area guidelines. The complaint highlights that activities with-

in a 10-km radius of Similipal's boundary continue unchecked, despite clear restrictions. The guidelines mandate prior permission for cutting trees and for drawing groundwater within such zones.

The complainant warns that if these activities continue, the region could face severe environmental hazards in the near future, making mitigation extremely difficult.

## 2 held for cheating OAS officials across the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bonai, Dec 12:** Bonaigarh Police under Sundargarh district Friday arrested two men accused of impersonating Vigilance officers and extorting money from Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) officials across the state. The arrested accused have been identified as Ganesh Prasad Nanda and his associate Pradeep Kumar Panda.

Police seized 38 ATM cards, 10 mobile phones, ₹25,000 in cash and a web journalist identity card from the duo. A case (272/25) has been registered.

According to reports, the accused allegedly took money from more than 18 officers since 2021 by introducing themselves as senior Vigilance officials and threatening action unless payments were made. Police said the scam had been running for several years. The latest complaint was filed Thursday by an OAS officer posted in Bonaigarh, who reported being threatened and asked to pay ₹4 lakh to "settle" an alleged case of financial irregularities. Acting on the complaint, a special police team formed under the supervision of the Rourkela SP traced the suspects with the help of cyber cell support.



# 3 students missing from Ashram School



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal/Rasol, Dec 12:** Three male students from the Chilataila Residential Ashram School hostel under Rasol police limits in Hindol block of Dhenkanal district have been reported missing since December 10, according to a complaint filed with police.

The missing students have been identified as Swadhin Murmu (7), a Class-II student and son of Kalia Murmu of Kanasargoda village under Bhuban police limits; and Class VI students Shiba Murmu (10), and Bapi Besra (10). All three were staying in the school hostel.

According to school authorities, the annual sports meet was underway Wednesday when the students are suspected to have wandered off from the playground. Teachers discovered their absence during roll call.

After an extensive search, the school informed the guardians Thursday.

Swadhin's mother, Baijyanti Soren, lodged a written complaint at Rasol police station Friday. Police have registered a case-362/25 and launched an investigation.

District Welfare Officer Rudra Prasanna Parija said the boys went missing during the annual sports event December 10. Their families live in the Bhuban block area. Police teams have started searching in nearby areas as well as outside the district.

Parija added that teachers were responsible for supervising the children and there appears some negligence in their part. The administration has also initiated an inquiry, and action will be taken based on its findings, he said.

# Land fraud: Purushottampur sub-registrar under cloud

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Purushottampur, Dec 12:** A major land fraud case surfaced at the Purushottampur Sub-Registrar Office in Ganjam district, where a man allegedly impersonated a deceased landowner by using a forged Aadhaar card to sell land. The issue triggered public concern as authorities remain silent despite formal complaints.

As per reports, the landowner, Dandapata Bauri Dora, son of Dandapata Krishnama Dora of Badabaragaon in Ranigan mouza, passed away in December 2010. However, an individual identified as P Mahendra Dora, son of P Ramachandra Dora of Kolasingi village allegedly created a fake Aadhaar card in the name of the deceased and sold two plots to Bhrujajalata Mohapatra of Birajagannathpur village under Badakharida panchayat.

The fraud came to light after local residents raised the issue, leading to its publication in the media November 25. Aggrieved citizens filed complaints with the Chief Minister's grievance cell and the Ganjam District Collector through online submissions.



Yet no action has been taken so far, prompting criticism of the administration. Locals questioned whether the district authorities were under pressure or deliberately attempting to suppress the case.

The role of the sub-registrar has also come under scrutiny, as no action has been initiated from the office. When contacted, Sub-Registrar Kaliprasad Dhal said he had reported the matter to the additional district magistrate and sought directions, but had not received any response. He added that a

document recently submitted by the land's current buyer to sell the same property again was cancelled after scrutiny.

Along with the fake landowner, several others — including K Amozhiamma Dora, wife of K Raghunath Dora; K Nisharani Dora, wife of K Lakshminarayan Dora; and K Shriram Dora, son of K Lakshminarayan Dora — were listed as sellers of the land.

Public pressure continues to mount as citizens demand immediate action against those involved in the land scam.

## 2-yr-old girl killed after being hit by municipal vehicle

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Talcher, Dec 12:** A two-year-old girl was killed Friday after being hit by a municipal garbage-collection vehicle in Talcher.

The deceased child was identified as Anwesha Ray, daughter of Bidhan Chandra Ray of Ganesh Vihar in Baghuabola area of the mining town. The tragic incident has cast a pall of grief and mourning in the neighbourhood.

According to police, the incident occurred when Ray stepped outside his residence to dispose of household waste with his little daughter standing

ing near him. Meanwhile, a garbage collection vehicle of the Talcher Municipality, which was reportedly driving in a reckless manner, struck her. The child sustained critical injuries in the mishap and died on the spot.

Talcher Colliery police reached the scene, seized the vehicle involved and sent the body for a post-mortem to the local sub-divisional hospital.

After the post-mortem, the body was handed over to the family members for last rites. Colliery police registered a case (723/25) and arrested the driver identified as Shesa Behera of Bhairabi Sahi in Talcher town.

## Cong slams govt over mandi verification policy

**Koraput:** The Koraput district unit of Congress has sharply criticised the state government, alleging that the current mandi verification system is depriving women of opportunities for self-reliance. The remarks came from District Congress Committee President Rupak Turuk. Turuk claimed that the government's policy has become a tool of harassment for women, especially those depending on mandi-related activities for livelihood.

"Through the mandi verification norms, the government is subjecting women to unnecessary pressure and injustice. This policy is preventing them from becoming self-reliant," he said. He further added, "As the president of the District Congress Committee, I strongly condemn this anti-women policy. The government must reconsider such measures that directly harm women's economic independence." The statement comes at a time when several women's groups and self-help collectives in the district have been raising concerns over the impact of mandi procedures on their earnings and participation in procurement activities. The Congress has urged the government to review the verification system and ensure a more supportive framework for women engaged in rural and agricultural livelihoods.

## School teacher jailed for govt fund embezzlement

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** A Special Vigilance Court in Kandhamal district convicted a teacher of a government-run school on the charges of embezzling government funds and sentenced him to undergo four years of rigorous imprisonment.

"Ramakanta Sethy, former Headmaster-cum-Secretary, Project Upper Primary School (PUPS), Boudh, currently serving as assistant teacher, Gundulia UGHS in Boudh district, who was chargesheeted by Odisha Vigilance in a case under sections 13(2) r/w 13(1) (c)(d) Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988/409/120B IPC for misappropriating government money without executing the construction work of Project Upper Primary School building at Budhibalanda, was convicted by Special Judge, Vigilance, Phulbani and sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of 4 years and fine of ₹20,000," the Vigilance Court said in a statement.

After the Court pronounced the verdict, the convict was sent to jail to serve his sentence. Odisha Vigilance will now move the competent authority for dismissal of Mallick from service following his conviction, it added.

# Senior citizens urge fast tracking of Chhatrapur development plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Dec 12:** Senior Citizen forum led by former MLA Ashok Kumar Choudhury and Retd All India Bank Federations' Secretary Profullo Kumar Patnaik presented a letter to the Ganjam Collector V Keerthi Vasana urging to expedite development of the district headquarter town.

As per the letter, Chhatrapur town has been reeling under fatal road accidents that have claimed innocent lives near the major junctions in the NH-

16 within a week. There was a huge public uproar following which the senior citizens expressed deep concern and urged the district administration to start the flyover construction at both the junctions. The Collector has assured to expedite the process of construction and order the contractors to start the project at the earliest.

The forum also mentioned to include foot over bridge on the NH-16 to facilitate the pedestrians crossing the busy stretch. Apart from that, a bye pass of

Chhatrapur routing the NH through science college square to Gopalpur Port, is slated to begin after the project is handed over to the state government from Adani Enterprises.

The senior citizens forum also emphasized on the problems arising because of monkeys since decades that has kept the locals under severe stress round-the-clock. They urged the Collector to guide the forest department to capture the monkeys and release them in dense forests.

## Frost casts doubt on Daringbadi temperature data

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Daringbadi, Dec 12:** Residents of Daringbadi in Kandhamal district are questioning the accuracy of the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) temperature gauge after the hill town reported visible frost for two consecutive days despite official readings of 7°C Thursday and 6.5°C Friday.

Locals said frost blanketed open fields, coffee plantations and areas near the college campus—conditions they insist are inconsistent with temperatures above freezing. They alleged the IMD-installed thermometer (temperature gauge) at the



Daringbadi block office has been providing inaccurate data for years, creating a persistent mismatch between official readings and ground reality.

Residents and tourists reported extreme cold far beyond what the IMD figures suggest. Observers also pointed out that temperatures in other parts of Kandhamal district routinely drop

by 2°C to 3°C than the numbers being published for Daringbadi deepening suspicion around the accuracy of the local gauge.

Community members and journalists raised these concerns with Kandhamal District Collector Vedbhushan November 10. He assured them the matter would be flagged to the IMD, but residents say no corrective action has yet been taken. "With frost on the ground, a reading of 7°C or 6.5°C does not make sense," a resident said. "The instrument needs to be checked or replaced so the data reflects actual conditions." The IMD has not responded publicly to the latest complaints.

# 'Danda Nacha', 'Prahallad Nata' to be sent for UNESCO recognition

DWARKA PRASAD PATNAIK, OP

**Chhatrapur, Dec 12:** Ganjam district is well-known for its ancient culture and traditions. Out of many cultural forms of art and dance, two of the age-old traditional festivals celebrated are the 'Danda Nacha' and 'Prahallad Nata'. Historians say that these festivals were depicted written in palm leaves or 'Tala Patra' during the ancient times. Now, the Ganjam district administration, led by Collector V Keerthi Vasana, has taken necessary measures to get both the forms recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Danda Nacha is a religious folk dance performed by the participants called 'Danduas', that begin on the Hindu calendar of Chaitra Sankranti and ends on Meru Sankranti, also known as Odia new year's day. The Danduas remain on fast, undertaking penance to worship Goddess Kali and Lord Shiva. Researcher Baya Manu Charchi said that the folk dance began in the era of Kalinga kingdom around the Kalinga capital of Samapa (now Jaugada of Ganjam district near Purushottampur).

Similarly, the other popular religious act of Ganjam district, known as 'Prahallad Nata', has about 200 Sanskrit verses, in-



Danda Nacha

volving 35 different ragas in music that exist even today. These songs are based on the

dearest devotee of Lord Vishnu's lion-headed incarnation Nrushingha, Prahallad. Several histori-



Prahallad Nata

ans claim that act was originally written by Odissi musician and poet Gourahari Parichha

of Paralakhemundi that dates back to the mid 19th century. Eventually, this iconic play was adapted across the district played by more than 200 troops.

The Ganjam administration has asked the culture department to prepare documentaries on both the cultural forms by 30th of this month. The documentaries will then be presented to the Ministry of Culture in the central government. All efforts must be undertaken to ensure the listing of these popular dance and art forms in the UNESCO along with the Rath Yatra of Puri and Bali Yatra of Cuttack, the documentaries of which are already submitted, the Collector said.



DIPLOMATIC THAW

US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Allison Hooker's visit to India from 7-11 December, day after Russian President Putin left raised the antenna of observers of India-America bilateralism. The purpose and timing of her visit could be interpreted in two ways. One, despite the 'trade face-off' between the two countries, Hooker's visit could be an attempt to keep the political and strategic ties going.

Second, coming immediately, day after, Putin departed could also mean that President Donald Trump was concerned about Putin's footprint in India at a time when he is trying to somehow broker a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, and save his face.

Trump is equally concerned about China's growing military might and capabilities which now rival those of the United States.

In the first term, Trump focussed his attention on China as the main rival. However, there was no Russia-Ukraine war at that time. That is how Quad initiative was taken to counter China. Quad became the main vehicle for deepening India-America relations improving cooperation in defence interoperability, intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and India's integration into US-led initiatives on space cooperation, critical minerals, semiconductor supply chains, and artificial intelligence. So, it is understandable that after finishing 'business' in New Delhi, Under Secretary Hooker will visit the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in Bengaluru.

In fact, the US-India partnership has steadily evolved since the late 1990s after the revocation of sanctions following India's nuclear test, and the landmark 2008 Civil Nuclear Agreement. Since then, bilateral cooperation has expanded across defence, technology,



According to the US perspective, US Under Secretary Allison Hooker's visit marks another step forward in progressing President Trump's priorities for a strong US-India partnership and a free and an open Indo-Pacific

energy and regional security with both countries increasingly aligning their strategic perspective and approach to the Indo-Pacific.

This relationship was based on mutually beneficial economic opportunities in both countries and strategic coordination, particularly in the Indo-Pacific in the wake of China's rise and increasing assertiveness. The latest was the bilateral agenda initiated by Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during their 2025 meeting. The agenda included cooperation through the Quad, in Middle East initiatives and wider global affairs.

Let us assess whether US Under Secretary's visit will lend a thaw in the currently strained relationship between the two countries. Hooker met the senior Indian officials to discuss regional security, economic cooperation and shared priorities in the Indo-Pacific, including through the Foreign Office Consultations with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

According to the US perspective, Hooker's visit marks another step forward in progressing President Trump's priorities for a strong US-Ind

dia partnership and a free and an open Indo-Pacific. From US Administration point of view, it sounds optimistic.

But New Delhi has been cautious and calibrated in its approach towards Washington, mainly owing to Trump's capricious behaviour and his surprising re-embrace of Pakistan.

In Bengaluru, Hooker discussed with ISRO's 'dynamic space leaders', and with energy and technology sectors to foster innovation in US-India research partnerships exploring further opportunities for broader cooperation. The Under Secretary stated that United States' attempt was to deepen cooperation with India in multiple sectors while supporting India's rise as a technology leader. She expressed appreciation for Foreign Secretary's continued partnership as both the United States and India 'pursue shared priorities that deliver tangible benefits for the American people and complement India's national objectives'.

Overlapping US Under Secretary's five-day visit (7-11 December), the new US Deputy Trade Representative, Rick Switzer also arrived in India on December 10. From the US Embassy briefings, it appeared

that Switzer's visit was to familiarise himself with Indian Central Government officials.

On the day of arrival of US Under Secretary on 7 December, New Delhi's viewpoint was articulated by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, "Trump Administration's functioning was radically different from his predecessors; every government and every American President has their own way of approaching the world". However, he expressed confidence that a Balanced Bilateral Trade agreement (BTA) could be secured.

According to him, the potential trade deal could materialise 'soon' while reiterating India's red lines on negotiations which were meant to safeguard the interests of farmers, workers and small businesses. Jaishankar appreciated that US Under Secretary's visit was happily coinciding with joining of hands between Delhi and Washington to cooperate on counter terrorism. He added that Quad grouping joined in Delhi to work on ways to expand cooperation, combat terrorism under the framework of Terms of Reference among Quad members.

Finally, it is interesting to note that Dhruva Jaishankar (son of S Jaishankar), a leading foreign policy expert and the Executive Director of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), America, submitted a statement to the US House Foreign Affairs Committee having a key congressional hearing on Wednesday, 10 December. His statement highlighted the growing concerns that disputes with India suddenly stirred up by Donald Trump could undermine the growing bilateral partnership between the two countries. New Delhi is pursuing a wait-and-watch policy towards America.

The writer is a Professor of Practice, NIIS Group of Institutions

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DK Giri

NEW DELHI HAS BEEN CAUTIOUS AND CALIBRATED IN ITS APPROACH TOWARDS WASHINGTON, MAINLY OWING TO TRUMP'S CAPRICIOUS BEHAVIOUR



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian



“We have every one of us a role to fulfill, a work to do, a place which we alone can occupy.”

THE MOTHER

Unforgiving Skies

The IndiGo incident has once again reminded us of something we often overlook: India operates one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets with a regulator that treats expertise as an optional add-on. Sensible? Not particularly.

Across the world, aviation regulators are led by people who've spent their lives in cockpits, control towers, airline boardrooms, or engineering hangars. The UK trusts a commercial pilot. The US picked a man who ran a major airline. France and China have engineers who know the difference between turbulence and incompetence. These countries don't consider specialised knowledge a luxury, but a prerequisite.

And then there's India, where the DGCA job often goes to a babu whose career highlights include agriculture, health, tourism, and if we're feeling lucky that year, transport. Our system seems to operate on the touching belief that if you've been a district magistrate, surely you can handle flight safety regulations, aircraft airworthiness, and pilot licensing. After all, how different can a Boeing 737 be from a district?

But when something snaps, like in the recent IndiGo imbroglio, we all start asking the same question: did we finally hit the limits of on-the-job learning?

Aviation is unforgiving. It doesn't respond well to guesswork. And it certainly doesn't respect administrative seniority. The DGCA is not just another Sarkari office. It's the country's safety valve for millions of passengers who trust that the person in charge actually understands the job.

Maybe it's time we admitted that running civil aviation needs more than managerial confidence—it needs competence rooted in aviation expertise. The skies may be open, but they're not forgiving of amateurs or generalists in charge.

Prasar Bharati's shake-up

Navneet Kumar Sehgal's abrupt resignation as Prasar Bharati Chairman has thrown the spotlight back on an institution that always seems to be balancing on a tightrope. He had barely completed nine months in office after taking charge in March, filling a post that had been vacant for years. And just like that, with a one-line acceptance from the I&B Ministry, he was out. No reasons offered, no explanation asked for — at least publicly. In Delhi, silence is usually the loudest clue.

What makes this exit controversial isn't just its timing, but the uneasy history of Prasar Bharati itself. For an organisation that is meant to be autonomous, it somehow manages to look perennially supervised. Sehgal's tenure had coincided with a phase of visible churn — from the fresh branding of DD News to rejigs in programming, outsourcing deals and attempts to give the broadcaster a sharper, more contemporary identity. These moves needed steady leadership, not another leadership vacuum. His early departure now risks sending the entire system back into suspended animation.

Naturally, theories are multiplying. Some point to friction with the ministry, others to disagreements over the pace and direction of reforms. And in the current political climate, where every institutional shift is viewed through a magnifying glass, there may or may not be any connections with events in the PMO — but the very fact that this question is even floating around tells you how fragile the trust ecosystem has become.

Until the government explains more clearly why its chairman walked away halfway through his mandate, the speculation will only grow.

A shadow Secretariat in Telangana

The Telangana Secretariat is buzzing again, and not because of any bold policy move. It's a WhatsApp group, allegedly run by a handful of senior IAS officers, that's sparking unrest. In a system built on files, hierarchy and written accountability, the idea that crucial decisions may have been whispered through a private chat is understandably setting teeth on edge.

Now, nobody minds a bit of informal coordination. Bureaucrats aren't monks; they talk. But the reports suggest this wasn't casual chatter. This was a carefully curated circle of officers in powerful posts, including some tied to the Chief Minister's Office, quietly steering file movement and fund approvals outside the formal chain. Add to that the murmurs that the group's membership leans heavily towards officers from outside the Telugu region, and suddenly it stops looking like convenience and starts looking like exclusion.

The political ripples are inevitable. Ministers, we're told, are frustrated that their own referrals sometimes get nudged aside while certain files inside the group move faster. It's not just protocol that suffers — it's trust. And trust is hard to rebuild once officials begin suspecting that governance has been outsourced to an encrypted side-channel.

The real issue isn't technology; it's opacity. Bureaucracy is supposed to leave a trail because public decisions must be traceable. Once those decisions migrate to private chats, no audit, no note and no citizen can ever truly know what influenced the outcome. In a democracy, decision-making shouldn't depend on who's in the secret group chat.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](#). Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

“Iron rusts from disuse; water loses its purity from stagnation... even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind.”

LEONARDO DA VINCI

“If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced.”

VINCENT VAN GOGH

“I think you don't do work for controversy alone, and whenever you do new work which people don't understand and they say it is done to create controversy.”

MF HUSAIN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1294:** After five months as pope, Celestine V resigned. Because he was struggling to fulfill his duties, after many years living as a hermit in a cave, he decided it would be dangerous for the church and for his soul if he continued.

■ **1862:** The Battle of Fredericksburg, a bloody engagement of the American Civil War in which Confederate troops were led to victory by General Robert E. Lee over the Union forces of General Ambrose Everett Burnside, was waged.

■ **1937:** The Japanese Imperial Army seized Nanjing, China, during the Sino-Japanese War, and carried out the Nanjing Massacre, which resulted in the deaths of as many as 300,000 Chinese citizens and soldiers.

SPECTRUM

ECONOMY

Rupee's free fall: How concerned should we be?



Nalinikanta Dhar

A WEAKER CURRENCY RAISES IMPORT COSTS FOR FUEL, ELECTRONICS, MACHINERY, PHARMACEUTICALS, AND CHEMICALS

The Indian rupee slipped to a historic low against the US dollar on December 4, 2025, breaching the psychologically significant level of ₹90 per dollar. The speed of this depreciation has sparked intense concern and debate among policymakers, businesses, and investors. While currency movements are normal in an open economy, the rapid decline of the rupee calls for a closer examination of its causes, implications, and the policy response required to manage potential risks.

In principle, exchange rates are influenced by inflation differentials between countries. However, in reality, many factors affect currency values. In India's case, apart from inflation, key determinants include the current account balance, global crude oil prices, the strength of the US dollar, domestic economic conditions, geopolitical developments, and the monetary policy stance of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Since nearly 60 per cent of global trade is invoiced in US dollars, the focus naturally remains on the rupee-dollar exchange rate.

Historically, the rupee's depreciation has been gradual and consistent. At the time of

India's independence, one dollar traded at ₹3.30. This moved to ₹4.76 in 1960, ₹7.89 in 1980, ₹17.50 in 1990, and around ₹45 in 2000. After the adoption of economic liberalisation in 1991, the rupee depreciated at an average annual rate of roughly 3 per cent. However, the nearly 6 per cent depreciation witnessed in 2025 alone is significantly higher than long-term trends, raising legitimate concerns.

A weaker rupee produces mixed economic outcomes. On the negative side, India relies heavily on imports, particularly crude oil, nearly 70 per cent of which is sourced from abroad. Depreciation raises import costs for fuel, electronics, machinery, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals. Higher costs filter into transportation and manufacturing, increasing inflationary pressures. A weaker currency also raises the burden of servicing external debt and increases government expenditure on interest payments. Indian students studying overseas and citizens travelling abroad also face higher financial strain.

The financial markets often react cautiously to currency weakness. Foreign portfolio investors may reduce their exposure, leading to increased

volatility in equity markets. If the RBI raises interest rates to protect the currency or curb inflation, domestic demand and investment could slow, impacting overall economic growth.

However, currency depreciation also carries advantages. Indian exports become more competitive, supporting manufacturing and services exports. Remittances from non-resident Indians rise as each dollar earns more rupees, providing crucial support to the balance of payments. These benefits partially offset the adverse effects of a weaker currency.

Several factors explain the rupee's recent decline. Elevated US interest rates, currently averaging around 4.5 per cent, have attracted global capital towards dollar-denominated assets. Post-pandemic liquidity tightening has intensified this trend. In 2025, foreign investors reportedly withdrew nearly ₹1.5 lakh crore from Indian markets. Additionally, higher tariffs imposed by the US on Indian exports have weakened export growth and intensified uncertainty over trade relationships.

Competing emerging economies such as South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Indonesia

have delivered stronger capital market performance, diverting foreign funds away from India. Foreign direct investment inflows and external commercial borrowings have also moderated, adding pressure on the capital account.

Despite these challenges, India's macroeconomic fundamentals remain relatively robust. Inflation is projected to stay low, foreign exchange reserves remain adequate, and fiscal indicators compare favourably with other large economies. Corporate earnings are healthy, structural reforms are progressing, and long-term growth prospects remain intact. The RBI's decision to avoid aggressive currency intervention, while cutting interest rates to support growth, reflects confidence in economic resilience.

In conclusion, the rupee's depreciation deserves close monitoring but not panic. With prudent policy management, export promotion, and continued structural reforms, India is well positioned to manage currency volatility while sustaining long-term growth.

The writer is an expert in Economics. Views are personal.

Debatable decision

Sir, Children's involvement with the social media has always been debatable and contentious. Many nations have delved deep into finding ways to put a lid on social media use by teenagers. Excessive use of social media, and feeding on harmful contents, are prone to affect the physical and mental health of children. Besides the dangerous repercussions of yielding to unwanted influences, more and more children are on the brink of nervous breakdown due to anxiety, insomnia and depression. Parental advice is discarded with disdain by a lot of youngsters. That said, the implementation of social media ban on children up to 16 years of age in Australia has evoked mixed reactions. While it is convenient for everyone to advise a government to institute age-appropriate apps and digital literacy, these are easier said than done. Policing the borderless internet demands global tech cooperation, constant algorithmic audits, resilient age-verification tech and honest dialogue with the very minors we seek to shield..

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

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](#)

OrissaPOST  
B-15, Rasulgargh Industrial Estate,  
Bhubaneswar-751010







DELHI



GUJARAT

SIX MONTHS OF AI CRASH

UK dreams shattered following loss of loved ones



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Dec 12:** The tragic crash of Air India flight AI 171 in June has compelled some of the victims' kin to abandon their dreams of a life in the United Kingdom.

Surat-resident Hiren Dayani's mother Kailashben was one of the 260 persons who were killed when the Boeing 787-8 aircraft on its way to London crashed into a medical hostel complex shortly after it took off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport here June 12.

After her mother's death, Dayani, who lost his father to cardiac arrest some time ago, left his high-paying job in London and permanently shifted to

Surat with his wife Namrata to start a new life.

In London, he was working as a clinical research scientist, while his wife worked as a dental therapist.

"I went to London in 2020 after finishing my M Pharm, and had planned to acquire a PR (permanent residency) so that my wife and I can easily travel between two countries and stay for a longer period in India with my mother. She was travelling to London alone when the tragedy struck," said Dayani.

After his father's death, Kailashben was the sole caretaker of Dayani's intellectually disabled younger sister.

"Now, since there is no one

Father of deceased filmmaker clears debt, buys house as wished by son

Days before the Ahmedabad plane crash snuffed out his life in June this year, local filmmaker Mahesh Jirawala had made a promise to his ailing father that he would buy a house for the family after clearing all the debt. Now, months after the tragedy, his 61-year-old father Girdharbhai Jirawala feels that even after his death, Mahesh ensured dignity for his family as the compensation they received following his death enabled them to clear off the mounting debt and purchase a house. Mahesh Jirawala, 34, was one of the 260 persons who were killed. Jirawala, who used to live in the Naroda area of the city, was one of the 19 individuals who were killed on the ground. He was passing from a road near the hostel in Meghani Nagar area when the plane crashed and burst into flames. When the incident took place, his father Girdharbhai, who is now retired, was resting on a bed at their rented house in Naroda as he had suffered a heart attack nearly two weeks prior to that. "I used to work as a diamond worker at a polishing unit. When I suffered a heart attack nearly two weeks before the air crash, Mahesh told me to retire and stay at home. Mahesh promised me that he will clear the debt and buy our own house before Diwali as he was expecting high income from his recent works," he said. When the tragedy struck, the family of six used to live at a rented house in the Naroda area of the city. Mahesh, his wife Hetal, Girdharbhai and his wife along with Mahesh's younger brother Kartik and his five-year-old daughter were part of the family. Mahesh had married Hetal just three months before the tragedy struck, said Girdharbhai, adding that Kartik had divorced his wife some time before that. Following the incident, both Air India and its parent firm Tata Group disbursed Rs 1.25 crore to the Jirawala family. In addition, the state government paid Rs 4 lakh to Hetal as widow's compensation. "From Rs 1.29 crore we received, Hetal took Rs 54 lakh and went to her parents house. From the Rs 75 lakh left with us, I cleared a debt of Rs 15 lakh and bought a house for Rs 45 lakh and fulfilled my son's wish. I spent Rs 10 lakh on furniture and kept Rs 5 lakh aside for Kartik's daughter," Girdharbhai said. He added that Mahesh had planned to legally adopt Kartik's daughter when she turns six. "Now, I am left with nothing out of that Rs 75 lakh, but I am happy that even after his death, my son ensured dignity for his family because I am not able to work any more due to my health, and we are dependent on Kartik's income of Rs 20,000 per month at present," he said.

back here to look after my sister, I have decided to come back to Surat and start from scratch. My wife and I were offered some jobs, but the salaries were too low compared to what we used to get in the UK," he said. "So my wife has opened a dental clinic, and I am in the process of starting my own pharmacy," he added.

Harish Godhaniya from Bhanvad town in Devbhumi Dwarka district lost his wife Riddhi and three-year-old son in the crash as they were returning to London following

her dental surgery.

Godhaniya, who now lives in Jamnagar with his parents, said he is not going back to the UK where he was working as a data analyst for the last three years. "I am not going back. I had planned to settle in the UK to have a better future for my son.

But now, it has no meaning because my wife and son are no more," he said. "My wife and I were doing jobs in London and we had planned to settle there. But everything is over. I have not planned anything yet because I am yet to get over the loss," he added.

Capital's air toxic for trees; hampers oxygen production: DU study

Pollution exposure disrupts plant physiology and structure by altering chlorophyll, water content, pH and leaf form

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The capital's toxic air could be detrimental for plant life, reducing chlorophyll levels that are "directly proportional" to the amount of oxygen produced by a tree, a Delhi University (DU) study has found.

Researchers at DU's Acharya Narendran Dev College examined ten species of trees found widely in the city. These include 'Bael' (Aegle marmelos), 'Saptarni' (Alstonia scholaris), 'Neem' (Azadirachta indica), 'Amaltas' (Cassia fistula), 'Bargad' (Ficus benghalensis), 'Pipal' (Ficus religiosa), 'Pilkhan' (Ficus virens), 'Mango' (Mangifera indica), 'Champa' (Plumeria alba) and 'Jamun' (Syzygium cumini).

The study, titled 'Seasonal variation of biochemical and morphological traits of selected tree species in polluted urban areas of Delhi City' was conducted across four zones, with Ashram marked as a polluted road stretch, Tughlaqabad as an industrial hotspot, Dwarka as a moderately polluted residential area, and the Kamla Nehru Ridge as the least polluted urban biodiversity park.



The methodology section of the study states that leaf samples were collected during monsoon (August-September) and winter (November-December) in 2023. The researchers examined biochemical indicators such as chlorophyll, proline, water content and pH, along with structural traits like thickness and dry matter content.

Delhi notifies new law to regulate private school fees, cap charges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The Delhi government has notified the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fee) Act, 2025, bringing into effect a new framework for regulating fees in private schools.

The legislation was notified Wednesday, four months after it was passed by the Assembly, following approval from Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena.

The Act lays down detailed provisions on permissible fee heads, accounting practices and restrictions on additional charges, while prohibiting capitation fees and any collection beyond what is approved under the law. Schools will be required to disclose fee components clearly and maintain separate accounts for each category, the notification read.

Under the Act, private unaided recognised schools will be allowed to levy only itemised fees under specific heads such as registration, admission charges, tuition fees, annual charges and development fees.

Registration fees have been capped at Rs 25, admission charges at Rs 200, and caution money at Rs 500, which will be refundable with interest. Development fees cannot exceed 10 per cent of the annual tuition fee.

The law also mandates that all user-based service charges must be collected strictly on a no-profit, no-loss basis and cannot be imposed on students who do not use the service.

Any fee not expressly permitted in the Act will be treated as an "unjustified fee demand". Collection of capitation fee, direct or disguised, is strictly prohibited.

Schools must follow transparent accounting standards, maintain fixed asset registers and ensure proper provisioning for employee benefits. The transfer of any student-collected funds to another legal entity, including the school's managing society or trust, has also been barred. Surplus funds must either be refunded or adjusted against future fees.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER  
WATCO PROJECT DIVISION

Email: gmprojectsbp@gmail.com, Tel. No.: 0663-2411911

No. C-1772 e Procurement Notice

Bid Identification No. 6 Project/WATCO/SBP/2025-26 Dtd.08.12.2025

- Name of the Work : Sludge storage shed
- Estimated Cost : Rs.27.36 Lakhs
- Period of Completion : Referred to DTCN
- No. of Works : One (1)
- Tender Paper Cost : Referred to DTCN
- Class of Contractor : "B or C" Class
- Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal : 11.00 Hrs. of 15.12.2025 to 17.00 Hrs. of 30.12.2025
- Date of opening of Bid : 12.30 Hrs. on Dtd.31.12.2025
- Name and address of the O.I.T. : General Manager, WATCO Project Division, Sambalpur, At: 40 MLD STP Campus, Bhatra, Dhanupali, Sambalpur-768005

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

Sd./- General Manager

OIPR-13236/11/0015/2526 WATCO Project Division, Sambalpur

ODISHA CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LIMITED, BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA

PIN: 751012, Tel. No.: (0674) 2562020, e-Mail: theoccltd@odishaconstruction.com, GSTIN - 21AAAC02571K2ZM

No. CAD-2669 e-Procurement Notice No. 54/OCCL/2025-26 (Online)

Sl. No.	Name of Assignment	Bid Identification No.	Cost of Bid Document (including GST) (through Online transfer) (In Rs.)	Bid Security (through Online transfer) (In Rs.)	Period of Completion	Availability of tender (Online)
1	Request for Proposal (RFP) for engagement of Consultant for Implementation of Indian Accounting Standards (IND AS) in Odisha Construction Corporation Ltd.	OCCL FACA/OI/1/2025-26	Rs.2360/-	Rs.10,000/-	45 (Forty Five) Days	From 15.12.2025, 03.30 P.M. to 29.12.2025 5.30 P.M.

Procurement Officer - Managing Director, OCCL  
Date of Opening of the Technical Bid - 30.12.2025, 12.00 Noon onwards  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>.  
OIPR-34120/11/0075/2526 Sd./- Managing Director

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Expression of Interest for Development of Green cover patches in Railway Station approaches

● Chakradharpur Division of South Eastern Railway invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from Individuals, NGO's, Trusts, Charitable Institutions, Corporates, Government Bodies and Self-help groups for the Development of Green cover patches in Railway Station approaches for beautification of Railway area/premises. ● The project is intended to improve the aesthetic appearance of open spaces along the track in the approaches of station. The scope of the project includes, development of green cover/patches by planting low height plants, shrubs, creepers, Aromatic plants, herbs/medicinal plants, climbers, ornamental plants, flowering plants etc., as found suitable to the local soil and climatic condition, in vacant spaces/area in the Railway Station approaches along the track, and any other works allied with the project. ● The project will be implemented on MoU Basis. The MoU shall be signed between the Railway administration (DRM/Engg/CKP, Chakradharpur Division and the party) and will be initially valid for one year and may be extended after one year up to 3 years with mutual consent of both the parties. Extension of MoU will be based on the performance by the party and fulfilling the conditions mentioned therein. The responsibility for maintaining plants/green patches will lie with the party. ● The Applicant shall note that the project, which is to be carried out in the existing station area, should do so without hindering, or in any way, affecting the railway operational activities, in and around the station. In case, there are more than one Proposal in developing such green patch, the area will be divided among the interested parties. In Case, it is not possible to divide the area, the selection may be done on draw of lots. ● Policy guidelines on beautification of Railway area/premises shall be applicable as per Railway Board's letter No. 2022/LML-II/15/1, dated 23.09.2022. MOU shall also govern as per this guideline. [Link:https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/director/land\_amen/downloads/2022/Revised-Policy-Guidelines-280922.pdf]. ● The Applicant shall submit the general information about them in the prescribed formats enclosed along with this EOI as per format Annexure - A for different stations as detailed below. It is desirable that Applicants submit the photos, details of similar works executed by them, if any along with this EOI. Sl. No., EOI No. as per Annexure-A, Station are as follows : 1. EOI No. CKP-ENGG-EOI-CENTRAL-BEAUTIFICATION-25-26-01, Chakradharpur. 2. EOI No. CKP-ENGG-EOI-WEST-BEAUTIFICATION-25-26-01, Rourkela & Jharsuguda. 3. EOI No. CKP-ENGG-EOI-EAST-BEAUTIFICATION-25-26-01, Tatanagar. 4. EOI No. CKP-ENGG-EOI-SOUTH-BEAUTIFICATION-25-26-01, Chaibasa, Closing Date: 05.01.2026 at 15.00 hrs. for Sl. No. 1 to 4 each and Opening Date : 05.01.2026 at 15.30 hrs. for Sl. No. 1 to 4 each. ● Locations - Railway Area/Premises at Station Approaches along the track at TATANAGAR, ROURKELA, JHARSUGUDA, CHAKRADHARPUR and CHAIBASA stations over Chakradharpur Division. ● For any query/details, parties may contact Office of the Sr. Divisional Engineer (Co-ord)/CKP of Chakradharpur Division during working hours. The EOI in a sealed envelope along with details as per Annexure A, which is available in link mentioned below with any other suggestions, if any to be reached within 05.01.2026 at 15.00 hrs. in the office of Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-Ord/CKP and opened on 05.01.2026 at 15.30 hrs., Engineering Department, DRM Office Complex, At/Post - Chakradharpur, Dist -West Singhbhum, Pin -833102 Jharkhand. M No.-9771467081, 7319936830, Email Id- [tender.ckp@gmail.com](mailto:tender.ckp@gmail.com) All the intended agencies/parties are requested to visit the site location before submission of EOI. ● Link of EOI notice [[https://ser.indianrailways.gov.in/view\\_section.jsp?lang=0&id=0.6.400.2325](https://ser.indianrailways.gov.in/view_section.jsp?lang=0&id=0.6.400.2325) or follow ● <https://ser.indianrailways.gov.in/> →Divisions → Chakradharpur →NOTIFICATIONS → Publication of EOI notice to SERCKP web portal (PR-950)

Divisional Railway Manager/Engg/Chakradharpur



South Eastern Railway  
We serve with a smile

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Auction Catalogue No. NFR-KUR-MOB-25

(1) Lot No./Category: ADVT-EFF-142429-2-25-1 (Advertising-Train Exterior (Full Face))

**DESCRIPTION :** ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS THROUGH VINYL WRAPPING ON EXTERIOR SURFACE (FULL FACE) OF AREA 989.76 SQ. MTR. OF TRAIN NO. 68411 (BHUBANESWAR-BRAHMAPUR) MEMU.

(2) Lot No./Category: ADVT-EFF-298995-1-25-1 (Advertising-Train Exterior (Full Face))

**DESCRIPTION :** ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS THROUGH VINYL WRAPPING ON EXTERIOR SURFACE (FULL FACE) OF AREA 742.32 SQ. MTR. OF TRAIN NO. 68433/34 (CUTTACK-GUNUPUR-CUTTACK) MEMU.

(3) Lot No./Category: ADVT-EFF-155973-2-25-1 (Advertising-Train Exterior (Full Face))

**DESCRIPTION :** ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS IN TRAIN NO. 68421/22 ANGUL-PURI-ANGUL MEMU (TRAIN EXTERIOR-FULL FACE).

(4) Lot No./Category: ADVT-EFF-298969-1-25-1 (Advertising-Train Exterior (Full Face))

**DESCRIPTION :** ADVERTISEMENT THROUGH VINYL WRAPPING IN FULL EXTERIOR SURFACE OF TRAIN NO. 68425 (K H U R D A R O A D -KENDUJHARGARH) MEMU OF AREA 494.88 SQ. MTR.

(5) Lot No./Category: ADVT-EFF-168058-1-25-1 (Advertising-Train Exterior (Full Face))

**DESCRIPTION :** ADVERTISEMENT THROUGH VINYL WRAPPING IN FULL EXTERIOR SURFACE OF TRAIN NO. 68415 (CUTTACK-PURIA-CUTTACK) MEMU OF AREA 742.32 SQ. MTR.

(6) Lot No./Category: ADVT-EFF-198650-1-25-1 (Advertising-Train Exterior (Full Face))

**DESCRIPTION :** ADVERTISEMENT THROUGH VINYL WRAPPING IN FULL EXTERIOR SURFACE OF TRAIN NO. 68454/46 (CUTTACK-PALASA-CUTTACK) MEMU OF AREA 742.32 SQ. MTR.

Lot Start Date & Time : 26.12.2025 at 1100hrs. (for all Sl. Nos.)

Lot End Date & Time : 26.12.2025 at 1130 hrs (for Sl. No. 1), 1140 hrs (for Sl. No. 2), 1150 hrs (for Sl. No. 3), 1200 hrs (for Sl. No. 4), 1210 hrs (for Sl. No. 5), 1220 hrs (for Sl. No. 6).

Complete details available at website: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Sr. Divl. Commercial Manager / PR-899/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No.: Sr.DMM/SBP/Stores/ Tender Publication/2025, Date: 09.12.2025

Tender No. 40256476

**DESCRIPTION OF ITEM :** 6MM THICK NYLON CORD REINFORCED GRSP.

Tender Value ₹ 1,93,37,250/-, EMD @ 2%: ₹ 3,86,750/-

Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1500 hrs. of 05.01.2026.

E-Tender is not transferable and the same is to be submitted with DSC by the pre authorized personnel of the tenderer who are already registered in the website. The Railway deserves the Right to cancel the tender or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Complete details available at : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Sr. Divisional Materials Manager / PR-893/Q/25-26 Sambalpur

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Auction Catalogue No. SDCM-KUR-EMR

Lot No./Category: MSS-KUR-BBS-MedStn-107-25-1 (Misc-Static-Services-Medical facilities at station)

**DESCRIPTION :** OPERATION OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL ROOM (EMR) AT BHUBANESWAR RAILWAY STATION FROM LEADING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS i.e. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSPITAL/ NURSING HOME/ POLYCLINIC/ CLINICS/ PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS/ COMPANIES/ FIRMS/ INSTITUTIONS/ NGO'S INVOLVED IN HEALTHCARE FOR PROVIDING ROUND THE CLOCK EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES IN EMERGENCY MEDICAL ROOM (EMR) BY CHARGING OF CONSULTATION FEES TO THE RAILWAY PASSENGERS/ VISITORS/ PERSONS WHO NEEDS EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AT RAILWAY STATION ALSO PROVIDING OF SETTING UP MEDICAL STORE, ROUND THE CLOCK AMBULANCE SERVICES AND ENGAGING OF MEDICAL PRIVATE PRACTITIONER AT EMERGENCY MEDICAL ROOM (EMR) FOR RAILWAY PASSENGERS/ VISITORS ON PAYMENT BASIS.

Auction Start Date & Time : 29.12.2025 at 1100hrs., Auction End Date & Time : 29.12.2025 at 1130 hrs.

Complete details available at website: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Sr. Divl. Commercial Manager / PR-900/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

DR. SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

(ESTABLISHED AS A SECTION 8 COMPANY UNDER THE AEGIS OF DR. SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES & RESEARCH FORUM)  
Regd. Off.: BALARAMPUR, IIT, KHARAGPUR CAMPUS, PASCHIM MEDINIPUR, WB - 721301

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Superspeciality Hospital invites Online Applications from Indian Nationals for the following 'Full-Time' contractual positions -

Advt. No.	Posts
R/13/2025 Dt.14.11.2025	(i) Consultant/Senior Registrar
R/15/2025 Dt.21.11.2025	(ii) Junior Registrar Medical Superintendent

Last date of online application: 24.12.2025

For details, visit: <http://www.iitkgp.ac.in/no-teaching-positions>

cbc 21255/12/0017/2526 निदेशक / Director

EAST COAST RAILWAY

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR ENERGIZATION OF OVER HEAD TRACTION WIRES

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railways lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the East Coast Railway, that the 25,000 volts, 50 Hz, AC Over Head Traction Wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date, the overhead traction lines shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead lines.

SECTION	DIVISION	DATE OF CHARGING
Energization of Electrification with 25,000 volts, AC OHE in connection with Sason-Sarla 3rd & 4th line (including all new lines, X-overs, Ballast Siding, TM Siding, Shunting Neck, Rack Stabling line, etc.) of East Coast Railway in Sambalpur Division.	SAMBALPUR	05.01.2026

INTRODUCTION OF AC 25 KV TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25,000 volts AC Electric Traction over the sections of SASON-SARLA 3RD & 4TH LINE (including all new lines, X-overs, Ballast Siding, TM Siding, Shunting Neck, Rack Stabling line, etc.) of East Coast Railway in Sambalpur Division, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear height of 4.78 Meter above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire (contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5m above the rail level crossings.

Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.

The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows :-

- Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the railway line.
- Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.
- Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Chief Electrical Engineer (Con-II), Bhubaneswar

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया  
Bank of India

Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Mob.: 7978330922

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**  
E-Auction Sale Notice Under Rule 8(6) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

(E-Auction) Sale of secured movable / immovable Assets under SARFAESI Act, 2002

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE / IMMOVABLE ASSETS UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH PROVISIO TO RULE 8(6) / 9(1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/Co-Applcant/Mortgagor that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Bank of India, the possession of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of India, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis on Auction Date mentioned hereunder, for recovery of balance due to the Bank of India from the Borrower as mentioned in the table. Details of Borrower/Co-Applcant/Mortgagor, amount due, short description of the immovable properties and encumbrances known thereon, possession type, reserve price, earnest money deposit and Bid increment amount are also given as under.

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Co-Applcant/Mortgagor/ Total Dues	Description of the Properties	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	<b>CHAKEISIANI BRANCH, PH.: 8895885135 / 7978330922 / Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Sanjay Kumar Mallick, S/o.: Mr. Dusanan Mallick, Address: At: Brahmanpada, PO.: Rench, Nimapara, Dist.: Puri-752114 / Total Dues: ₹11,10,000/- + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid.</b>	Equitable Mortgage of Vacant Land pertaining to Plot No.: 434/7456, Khata No.: 686/1415, having Land Area: Ac.0.027 Dec. i.e. 1176.12 Sqft, KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Adalia, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar (No.: 47), Tahasil: Cuttack (No.: 275), Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mr. Sanjay Kumar Mallick, S/o.: Mr. Dusanan Mallick, Bounded by East: Sub Plot No.: 3, West: Sub Plot No.: 1, North: Plot No.: 433, South: Internal 20 feet wide Road	₹18,00,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹1,80,000/- / ₹ 50,000/-
2.	<b>CHAKEISIANI BRANCH, PH.: 8895885135 / 7978330922 / Borrower: Mr. Durga Sankar Parida, S/o.: Mr. Dharendraanath Parida / Co-Applcant: Mrs. Baisakhi Parida (Mortgagor), W/o.: Mr. Durga Sankar Parida, Both are At: Meria Bazar, Near UP School, Cuttack, Odisha-753001 / Total Dues: ₹19,30,000/- + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid.</b>	Equitable Mortgage of Residential Land & under construction Building pertaining to Plot No.: 434/7546, Khata No.: 686/1527, having Land Area: Ac.0.0221 Dec. i.e. 962.67 Sqft., KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Adalia, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar (No.: 47), Tahasil: Cuttack (No.: 275), Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha, in the name of Mrs. Baisakhi Parida, W/o.: Mr. Durga Sankar Parida, Bounded by East: Sub Plot No.: 25, West: Sub Plot No.: 5, North: Plot No.: 433, South: Internal 20 feet Wide Road	₹21,65,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹2,16,500/- / ₹ 50,000/-

Date & Time of E-Auction: 28.01.2026 From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

Last Date & Time for submission of EMD & Documents: 28.01.2026 upto 4.00 P.M.

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 27.01.2026 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

\*Successful Bidder to deposit 25% of the bid amount by next working day which includes EMD money. The balance amount to be paid on or before 15th Day of confirmation of sale.

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. This is also a 30 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com>

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 13.12.2025 Authorised Officer, Bank of India



of the day

quote

MLAs from various constituencies have come for the session; it is a rare opportunity for all of us to meet. During the session, we meet each other. We had dinner together. What's there in that? Can having food together be called a show of strength?




IQBAL HUSSAIN | K'TAKA CONG MLA

Rajasthan is writing a new chapter of technological progress. Innovation is the engine of our economic and societal development. Youth must come forward the government is standing shoulder to shoulder with them. Together, we will position Rajasthan as a global leader in technology and innovation



BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

Savarkar fought a great battle for the eradication of untouchability. He worked to raise awareness against all the evils of Hindu society



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Suspected infiltrator nabbed with AK rifle

**Jammu:** The Border Security Force (BSF) foiled an alleged infiltration bid along the Indo-Pak border in Jammu district Friday and arrested a “suspected person” with a modified AK-type rifle and ammunition, police officials said. The accused -- identified as Abdul Khalik -- was arrested over alleged suspicious movement near the International Border (IB) in the Pargwala area, they said.

35 rescued after fire at hotel

**Ahmedabad:** At least 35 people were rescued after a fire broke out at a hotel located in a commercial complex in Ahmedabad Friday afternoon, but no casualties were reported, officials said. The blaze started at around 3 pm at Hotel Citizen Inn, located on the second floor of the Parishram Elegance commercial complex off Science City Road in the Sola area, said Thaltetj Fire Station Officer Pravinsinh Solanki.

12-yr-old found dead in Rohtas


**Sasaram (Bihar):** A 12-year-old girl was found dead in Bihar's Rohtas district under mysterious circumstances Thursday night, officials said. Family members of the deceased alleged that the girl was “raped and strangled to death while she was returning from tuition” in Nasriganj police station area of Rohtas district.

Woman, two sons found dead in home

**New Delhi:** Three members of a family were found dead inside their home in southeast Delhi's Kalkaji Friday, with police suspecting it to be a case of suicide, officials said. Police said the incident came to light around 2.47 pm when a police team reached the premises to execute a court order related to possession of the property. When repeated knocks went unanswered, the staff used a duplicate key to open the door.

10 Naxals surrender

**Sukma:** Ten Naxalites including six women, collectively carrying a reward of ₹33 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Friday, police said. With this, a total of 263 Maoists have quit violence in the district this year, said Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan.



I am proud to say that Madhya Pradesh has become Naxal-free ahead of schedule

MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

META INDIA APPOINTS AMAN JAIN AS POLICY HEAD

Meta India Friday named Aman Jain as the new head of public policy, tasking him with steering policy strategy and engagements in a market the US-headquartered social media giant considers strategic



A gull flies above its flock perched on a handrail beside Ana Sagar Lake on a winter morning, in Ajmer, Rajasthan

PTI PHOTO

Cabinet approves Bill to hike FDI in insurance sector to 100%



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** In a bid to expand insurance penetration in the country, the Union Cabinet Friday approved a Bill to raise foreign direct investment in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, according to sources.

The Bill may be introduced in the ongoing Winter session of Parliament, which is slated to conclude December 19. According to a Lok Sabha bulletin, the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill 2025, which seeks to deepen penetration, accelerate growth and development of the insurance sector and enhance ease of doing business, is part of the 13 legislations listed for the ongoing session of Parliament.

The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025, may be introduced in Parliament Monday, sources said. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in this year's Budget speech, proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent from the existing 74 per cent in the insurance sector as part of new-generation financial sector reforms.

So far, the insurance sector has attracted ₹82,000 crore through foreign direct investment (FDI). The finance ministry has proposed amending various provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938, including raising FDI in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, permitting the

merger of a non-insurance company with an insurance company, and creating a dedicated policyholder fund.

According to sources, the proposed bill also provides a provision for at least one among the top management, like the Chairman, Managing Director, or CEO, to be an Indian citizen as part of the guardrails.

The Cabinet has retained the net worth requirements for insurance companies, sources added.

As part of a comprehensive legislative exercise, the Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956 and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act 1999 will be amended, alongside the Insurance Act 1938. The amendments to the LIC Act propose empowering its board to take operational decisions, such as branch expansion and recruitment.

The proposed amendment primarily focuses on promoting policyholders' interests, enhancing their financial security, and facilitating the entry of additional players into the insurance market, thereby driving economic growth and employment generation.

Such changes will help enhance the efficiency of the insurance industry, enable ease of doing business, and enhance insurance penetration to achieve the goal of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

The Insurance Act of 1938

Cabinet nod to repeal 71 laws that outlived utility

**New Delhi:** The Union Cabinet Friday cleared a Bill to repeal 71 laws which have outlived their utility in the statute books, officials said. Out of the 71 laws, 65 are amendments to principal Acts and six are principal laws. At least one law proposed to be repealed is of the British era, the officials said. The proposed repeal and amendment Bill is not aimed at striking off colonial laws but to remove Acts which have outlived their utility, an official said.

MGNREGA gets a name change

**New Delhi:** The Union cabinet Friday approved a Bill to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and increase the number of work days, sources said. According to the sources, the scheme will now be renamed as 'Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojna', and the number of workdays under it would be increased from 100 days at present to 125 days.

serves as the principal Act to provide the legislative framework for insurance in India.

Commenting on the proposed legislation, Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance MD and CEO Kamlesh Rao said the move may encourage more global players to explore India, translating that interest into meaningful scale will depend on how effectively new entrants can navigate this distribution landscape.

“Over the past few months, we have seen growing interest from several global insurers who are actively evaluating India as a long-term market, and greater clarity on ownership norms will help in moving those conversations forward,” Deloitte India partner Debashish Banerjee said.

ACTRESS SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE

Court sentences six to 20-year RI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Dec 12:** A court here Friday sentenced six people convicted in the 2017 actress sexual assault to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment, days after acquitting top Malayalam cinema star Dileep in the same case.

The prosecution said this was the “least punishment” given for the crime and that an appeal would be preferred.

Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Court Judge Honey M Varghese sentenced Sunil NS, also known as Pulsar Suni, Martin Antony, Manikandan B, Vijesh VP, Salim H, and Pradeep to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for the offence of gang rape.

They were sentenced and imposed with different sums as fine under various IPC sections, including criminal conspiracy, assault or criminal force in an attempt to wrongfully confine a person and abduction.

The first accused Suni received additional sentences of three years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and a fine of ₹1 lakh under different sections of the IT Act Section, including publishing or transmitting sexually explicit material.

The second accused, Martin, was also sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed with a fine of ₹25,000 under Section 201 of the IPC (destruction of evidence). The court ordered that all sentences will run

‘Train accidents hit record low, just 11 incidents this year’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The number of train accidents has come down significantly from 135 in 2014-15 to 11 in 2025-26 till November as safety is accorded the highest priority, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a written statement in the Rajya Sabha Friday.

While responding to questions about whether the Union government has taken adequate safety measures to ensure zero accidents in railways, Vaishnaw said that as a consequence of various safety measures taken over the years, there has been a steep decline in the number of accidents.

“Consequential train accidents have reduced from 135 in 2014-15 to 31 in 2024-25. It may be noted that the consequential train accidents during the period 2004-14 were 1711 (average 171 per annum), which has declined to 31 in 2024-25 and

further to 11 in 2025-26 (upto November, 2025),” the railway minister said. He added, “Another important index showing improved safety in train operations is accidents per million train kilometer (APMTKM) which has reduced from 0.11 in 2014-15 to 0.03 in 2024-25, indicating an improvement of approximately 73 per cent during the said period.” Vaishnaw detailed various measures taken to enhance the safety in train operations, including significant increase in the expenditure on safety-related activities over the year.

He added, “Interlocking of level crossing (LC) gates has been provided at 10,098 level crossing gates up to 31.10.2025 for enhancing safety at LC gates. Complete track circuiting of stations to enhance safety by verification of track occupancy by electrical means has been provided at 6,661 stations up to 31.10.2025.”

International Janmangal Conference begins in Delhi



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The two-day International Janmangal Conference began Friday at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, with the launch of the ‘One Fast Every Month’ movement. The event, guided by Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev and Jain Saint Acharya Prasanna Sagar, focused on promoting fasting, meditation, yoga, and indigenous thought for public welfare.

Rajat Sharma, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief of India TV, highlighted the importance of fasting during his speech. He spoke about his long association with Baba Ramdev, noting that the Yoga Guru “eats only to live.” Sharma also praised the work of Acharya Prasanna Sagar, calling it a “miracle” and emphasizing that fasting is a form of discipline. He referenced Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on tackling obesity and said that fasting provides a new direction for the country. Sharma also shared a personal anecdote from his childhood about his connection to the Jain community and their immense contributions to society. Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav, also attended the event and spoke about the government's efforts to address air pollution in Delhi. He highlighted the implementation of BS6 and BS4 norms and plans to introduce 240 PNG-based industries.

The event was attended by various prominent figures, including Baba Ramdev, Acharya Prasanna Sagar, and Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav.

URGENT CALL TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Extreme heat and changes to land-use could put nearly 8,000 animal species around the world at a threat of extinction by the end of this century, according to a new study.

An international team, led by researchers at the UK's University of Oxford, looked at nearly 30,000 species of amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles.

“By the end of the century, up to 7,895 species are expected to face extreme heat events and/or unsuitable land use changes across their entire range, and thus potentially go globally extinct,” the authors wrote in the

study published in the journal Global Change Biology.

Suitable habitats for each species were taken from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) database, and maps of future habitat types for the species from the ‘Land-Use Harmonisation 2’ (LUH2), managed by the US’ University of Maryland.

Lead researcher Reut Vardi, postdoctoral researcher, school of geography and the environment at the University of Oxford, said, “Our research highlights the importance of considering the potential effects of multiple threats together to get a better estimation of their potential impact. It further



stresses the urgency of conservation and mitigation actions globally to prevent immense losses to biodiversity.”

Under the most severe of the

four scenarios modelled, species could be expected to face unsuitable conditions across 52 per cent of the range across which they are distributed --

- A new study forecasts nearly 8,000 animal species could face extinction by 2100 due to extreme heat and land-use changes
- Led by the University of Oxford, researchers examined 30,000 species, finding severe risks, especially in regions like the Sahel and Brazil
- It emphasizes urgent conservation efforts

under the best case scenario, 10 per cent of the species' range could be affected.

The combined effects of climate and land-use change are projected to be particularly

acute in regions including the Sahel (for example, Sudan, Chad and Niger), the Middle East, and Brazil.

The findings are in line with those from previous studies that show the most extensive land-use changes under a future emissions scenario marked by high challenges in mitigating and adapting to climate change, the researchers said.

The study can help guide conservation policymaking and underlines how future environmental changes could dramatically reshape global biodiversity. It also highlights the importance of identifying and mitigating these interacting threats, the team said.







# international

## of the day quote

We are carrying out extensive work aimed at transforming our neutral country into a powerful, democratic, and rule-of-law state where citizens live happy lives

SERDAR BERDYMUKHAMEDOV | PRESIDENT, TURKMENISTAN

Brussels will step over the Rubicon today, with a written voting starting which will cause irreparable damage to the Union

VIKTOR ORBAN | PRIME MISTER, HUNGARY

Had an engaging conversation on India's AI Goals and AI Impact summit with industry representatives at a round table organised by the Al-bright Stonebridge Group. Invited US industries to become valuable partners in India's AI journey

VINAY MOHAN KWATRA | AMBASSADOR TO THE US, INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Pre-poll attack in Bangladesh

**Dhaka:** A youth leader of a right-wing cultural group and a candidate at the February 12 general elections was Friday shot at by unidentified gunmen in Bangladesh capital. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus expressed deep concern over the shooting and serious injury of Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson of Inqilab Manch, and said the incident is “completely unacceptable.” The Inqilab Mancha was on the forefront of a campaign to disband deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League. Police said three assailants on a motorbike shot Hadi as he initiated his election campaign at central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area -- from where he stood as an independent candidate -- in the afternoon.

### Pak-Iraq boost joint security collaboration

**Islamabad:** Pakistan and Iraq Friday agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in various fields including security, counterterrorism, and enhanced pilgrim facilitation, state media reported Friday. The discussions took place during a meeting between Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi and his Iraqi counterpart General Abdul Ameer al-Shammari in Brussels. According to the AP of Pakistan, the two leaders discussed measures to enhance bilateral relations and improve facilities for Pakistani pilgrims travelling to Iraq. The two ministers held a detailed exchange of views on strengthening cooperation between the interior ministries of both countries on a sustainable and effective basis.

### Ex-PM Khaleda placed on ventilator support

**Dhaka:** Former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia's health condition has deteriorated and she was placed on ventilator support, doctors said. “Her breathing difficulties increased, her oxygen level fell, and carbon dioxide levels rose,” according to a statement Thursday by the chief of the medical board cardiologist Shahabuddin Talukdar. It said the 80-year-old former premier was previously being treated with “High Flow Nasal Cannula and BiPAP support, but as there was no improvement, she was placed on elective ventilator support to give rest to her lungs and other vital organs. Nepal's Karki govt gets 4 new ministers Kathmandu: Nepal's Prime Minister Sushila Karki Friday inducted four new ministers in her cabinet, bringing the strength of the council of ministers to 14.

# Washington faces historic floods

Torrential rains unleash widespread flooding, evacuations in Pacific Northwest

REUTERS

**Snohomish, Washington, Dec 12:** Heavy rains drenching the Pacific Northwest triggered flooding Thursday across much of the region from Oregon north through Washington state and into British Columbia, closing dozens of roads and prompting the evacuations of tens of thousands of people.

The intense downpours began earlier in the week, swept into the region by a storm system meteorologists call an atmospheric river, a vast airborne current of dense moisture funneled inland from the Pacific Ocean.

Western Washington state bore the brunt of the storm, with flood watches posted across the Cascade and Olympic mountains and Puget Sound, as well as for a northern slice of Oregon, a region home to some 5.8 million people, according to the US National Weather Service.

The same storm system brought heavy showers and flooding to western Montana and an edge of northern Idaho.

## India, China hold new round of consultations on bilateral ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, Dec 12:** Senior officials from the foreign ministries of India and China have held a new round of consultations in Beijing, affirming positive progress in bilateral ties after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in August.

Sujit Ghosh, Joint Secretary of the East Asia Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, and Liu Jinsong, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, held consultations Thursday, a press release by the Chinese Foreign Ministry here said.

The two sides affirmed the recent positive progress in China-India relations and expressed their commitment to fully implementing the important common understandings reached between Modi and Xi during their meeting in Tianjin in August, it said.

Ghosh later called on Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong. During their meeting, Sun said PM Modi and President Xi had a successful meeting in Tianjin on the sidelines of the SCO summit, providing guidance on elevating China-India relations to a new level.

He expressed hope that both sides will effectively deliver on the important common understandings reached between their leaders, embrace a broader vision, build mutual trust, make solid efforts, work steadily to advance cooperation, respect each other, properly manage differences, and promote the continuous development of China-India relations, the release said.

The acrylic and airbrush painting by the artist and movie poster designer Tom Jung first appeared in newspaper advertisements May 13, 1977, a little less than two weeks before the space epic created by George Lucas opened

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, Dec 12:** The painting that introduced “Star Wars” to the world nearly 50 years ago -- and was reproduced in an iconic movie poster -- sold at auction Wednesday for \$3.875



Roughly 100,000 residents in western Washington were under “Level 3” evacuation orders urging them to immediately move to higher ground, the bulk of them in rural Skagit County north of Seattle, said Karina Shagren, spokesperson for the state emergency management division.

About 3,800 evacuees were believed to be in need of temporary shelter, Skagit County emergency chief Julie de Losada said.

Shagren said swift-water rescue teams had been deployed across the region, but there were no reports of casualties or of people missing or stranded in the flooding.

- Heavy downpours triggered by atmospheric river storm
- Tens of thousands under evacuation orders in Washington state Dozens of roads, rail lines closed and washed out
- Most major Canadian highways to Vancouver cut off

The worst flooding was reported along the Skagit, Snohomish and Puyallup rivers. More than 30 highways and dozens of smaller roads were closed due to flooding across the region, state officials said.

Several lengthy segments of the BNSF Railway, a major freight line serving the Pacific

Northwest, were washed out or closed due to flooding, the company said, citing reported rainfall of 10 to 17 inches or more in many areas.

So far, the walls of flood-control levees and dikes were holding firm.

But officials said they were bracing for the Skagit River to crest at 2 feet above record levels on Thursday night near the Skagit County towns of Mount Vernon and Burlington, potentially topping levees and testing their strength for the first time since repairs were made following the last major flood in that area in 2021.

**VANCOUVER HIGHWAYS SHUT DOWN**

In British Columbia, five of the six Canadian highways leading to the Pacific port city of Vancouver were shut down due to floods, falling rocks and the risk of avalanches, local authorities said Thursday.

“This situation is evolving and very dynamic,” said the Transport Ministry of British Columbia, the province where Vancouver - the country's largest port - is located.

Access to Vancouver relies largely on a limited highway and railway network that crosses the Rocky Mountains, making it vulnerable to severe weather.

# Thailand's Parl dissolved for new polls



Displaced people queue for food at a school turned temporary shelter, amid clashes between Thailand and Cambodia along a disputed border area in Surin province, Thailand

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Bangkok, Dec 12:** Thailand's Parliament was dissolved Friday for new elections early next year as the country engaged in deadly fighting with Cambodia.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul dissolved the House of Representatives after getting approval from King Maha Vajiralongkorn, whose endorsement became effective Friday with its publication in the Royal Gazette.

Anutin had signalled the move with a Facebook post late Thursday saying, “I'd like to return power to the people.”

The election must be held 45 to 60 days after the royal endorsement, a period during which Anutin will head a caretaker government with limited powers that cannot approve a new budget. The move comes at a tricky

political moment, as Thailand is engaged in large-scale combat with Cambodia over a longstanding border dispute.

Warring parties are waiting for calls with Trump

With Thailand now again engaged in heavy combat against Cambodia, Anutin has embraced an aggressive military posture to appeal to nationalistic public sentiment, and has said Thailand will keep fighting until its sovereignty and safety are guaranteed.

After the five days of border fighting in July, US President Donald Trump pushed the two countries to agree on a ceasefire by threatening to withhold trade privileges from them.

Trump has vowed again to make peace between them after widespread fighting flared up again this week. If he employs the cudgel of high tariffs on

Thai exports should Thailand fail to comply with his peace-making effort comply, it could cause serious damage to its already sluggish economy.

Trump said twice this week that he expects to speak by phone with the Thai and Cambodian leaders, expressing confidence that he would persuade them to stop the fighting.

Anutin on Friday confirmed that he is scheduled to speak with Trump on Friday night, saying he would brief him on the latest situation along the border.

As of Thursday, about two dozen people had been reported killed in this week's fighting, while hundreds of thousands have been displaced on both sides. The Thai military estimates that 165 Cambodian soldiers have been killed, though no number has been officially announced by Phnom Penh.

# Iconic first ‘Star Wars’ poster sells for \$3.9mn

The acrylic and airbrush painting by the artist and movie poster designer Tom Jung first appeared in newspaper advertisements May 13, 1977, a little less than two weeks before the space epic created by George Lucas opened

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, Dec 12:** The painting that introduced “Star Wars” to the world nearly 50 years ago -- and was reproduced in an iconic movie poster -- sold at auction Wednesday for \$3.875

million.

The acrylic and airbrush painting by the artist and movie poster designer Tom Jung first appeared in newspaper advertisements May 13, 1977, a little less than two weeks before the space epic created by George Lucas opened. It also adorned billboards, magazine ads and theatre programmes.

“For most of America, this was the first time they got a glimpse of the galaxy far, far away,” said Charles Epting, the director of pop culture and historical consignments at Heritage Auctions.

“Star Wars” producer Gary Kurtz kept the original painting and hung it on his office wall before passing it down to his daughter. The Kurtz family later put the work up for sale at



the Dallas headquarters of Heritage Auctions, where bidding started at \$1 million.

The sale set records for highest selling piece of memorabilia from the film franchise, and in general, for any movie poster artwork, Epting said. The buy-

er, whose winning bid came in through the website, has chosen to keep his identity private.

Prior to this, the highest price for franchise memorabilia was Darth Vader's lightsaber which sold at auction for \$3.6 million.

# London council appeals to UK ministers over paan spitting stains



Brent Council has called for an urgent ban on the sale of paan products containing tobacco or betel nut, saying that it has reached the limit of what can be achieved through local enforcement alone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Dec 12:** The local authority in charge of a north-west London borough with a considerable South Asian heritage population has written to British government ministers this week over the “escalating issue of paan spitting”, both a public health concern and a littering issue.

Brent Council has called for an urgent ban on the sale of paan products containing tobacco or betel nut, saying that it has reached the limit of what can be achieved through local enforcement alone.

In its letter addressed to ministers in charge of public health and consumer protection, the council set out the scale of harm caused by paan chewing and spitting, from rising cancer rates to significant damage to town centres and the growth of illegal tobacco supply chains.

“We write on behalf of Brent Council to raise urgent concerns about the escalating issue of paan spitting in our borough,” reads the letter.

“Paan is a mixture of ingredients, including betel nut,

herbs, spices and often tobacco, wrapped in betel leaf. The mixture is chewed and then spat out, giving the user a narcotic effect. The use of both tobacco and betel nut poses serious cancer risks and is especially prevalent within South Asian communities, resulting in a disproportionate health burden for residents in Brent,” it states.

The letter, addressed to Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention Ashley Dalton and Minister for Employment rights and Consumer Protection Kate Dearden, goes on to point out the “unsightly, blood-red staining” when paan is spat onto pavements and shopfronts which often cannot be removed even with high-pressure cleaning.

Areas including Wembley and Ealing Road within the council are said to experience routine staining.

“The council is calling on the government to introduce a ban on the sale of paan products containing tobacco and betel nut, and to fund a pilot scheme to boost the capacity of our Trading Standards Team to crack down on the illicit tobacco products related to paan, alongside targeted support for our public realm teams to remedy existing damage to streets and buildings,” the letter notes.

“After a decade of efforts to discourage the use of paan, the council has hit the limit of what it can do without national policy change,” it adds, inviting the ministers to visit the impacted areas to “witness firsthand the scale and impact of this issue”.

## PAK MAY BAN 'UNCOOPERATIVE' SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

**Islamabad:** A Pakistan minister has warned that the government may consider banning social media platforms if they do not cooperate with authorities. Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik made these remarks Thursday, according to a Dawn report. The social media platform X, which around 4.5 million people in Pakistan use, was blocked in February 2024, around 10 days after the general elections. Speaking on Dawn News programme, Barrister Malik, responding to a question about a possible ban on incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan's X account, said “investigations are ongoing.” He added that while the government has contacted X, the platform has shown the least cooperation compared to other social media networks. Criticising X, the minister said the platform should not operate with double standards. “Posts related to Palestine are removed, and accounts blocked, within 24 hours. Here, we are talking about a matter of terrorism,” he said. He further noted that the government has issued reminders to social media platforms and warned that those that fail to cooperate or coordinate could face a ban, similar to actions taken by Brazil. “Brazil's courts had issued orders, which were then accepted, and a fine of \$5.2 million was paid. All content taken out of context was removed,” Barrister Malik said. X had 22 million users in Brazil before it was blocked on August 30 by Brazilian Supreme Court Judge Alexandre de Moraes for failing to comply with a series of court orders aimed at combatting disinformation. Barrister Malik said that today the government again issued a reminder, emphasising that it had already warned that these platforms are being used for terrorism, misinformation, and disinformation. “We have asked them to open offices here in Pakistan, but there has been no response. Some social media platforms are cooperating well, but X is cooperating the least,” he added.

“Star Wars” is one of the highest-grossing movie franchises of all time since its 1977 debut, starring Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker. The original was followed by sequels and prequels, and spawned offshoot books, movies and other series. Its fans span the globe.

One side of the painting shows Skywalker holding up a lightsaber behind Princess Leia. Darth Vader looms over them in the background. On the other, a team of X-wing starfighters is launching an attack. Han Solo and Skywalker are depicted receiving medals.

In the lower right hand corner are R2-D2 and C-3PO, which were added at the last minute, Epting said. The droids are absent from the early reproductions of the painting and

later appeared when the movie poster and the billboard were produced. The exact date of the latter is unknown but it was around June or July 1977, Epting said.

“You can watch the evolution of this piece and how they were figuring out what was important to include, what are we going to represent, what's going to draw people in,” Epting said.

The painting is not just film memorabilia but is also a cultural artifact and part of American history, Epting said. The emotional connection that people form with “Star Wars” movies also helps explain the sales price, he said.

“Anyone who's seen these movies or the marketing materials around it — you see this piece, your heart starts racing,”



of the day

quote

Cryptocurrencies have no intrinsic value. Since they do not have any underlying cash flows, they are not financial assets as well

T RABI SANKAR | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

India is a strategic market for Meta. As the country's digital economy accelerates across areas such as AI, emerging tech and the creator economy, Meta aims to help build a more inclusive, trusted, and future-ready internet ecosystem for India

SIMON MILNER | VICE PRESIDENT OF POLICY, ASIA PACIFIC (APAC), META

By charging different tariffs to different WTO members, Mexico undermines the most-favoured-nation principle, even as similar actions by the US have gone largely unchecked

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

SHORT TAKES

Forex kitty jumps to \$687.26 billion

**Mumbai:** India's forex reserves jumped by \$1.033 billion to \$687.26 billion during the week ended December 5, the RBI said Friday. In the previous reporting week, India's forex reserves had dropped by \$1.877 billion to \$686.227 billion. For the week ended December 5, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$151 million to \$556.88 billion, the data released showed. Value of the gold reserves increased by \$1.188 billion to \$106.984 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$93 million to \$18.721 billion, the apex bank said.

India now home to over 2L startups

**New Delhi:** India is now home to over 2 lakh government-recognised startups, with over 44,000 entities recognised this year alone, the highest in a year since the inception of the Startup India initiative, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Friday. Under the Startup India initiative launched in 2016, the recognised units are eligible to avail incentives such as income tax relief. So far this year, More than 16,400 new patent applications filed by startups.

Russian crude imports hit five-month high

**New Delhi:** India's imports of Russian crude oil rose 4 per cent in November to a five-month high of Euro 2.6 billion, with a large part of the refined fuels produced from it being exported to Australia, a European think tank said. India remained the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in November behind China, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). It had spent Euro 2.5 billion on buying Russian oil in October.

After BMW, Benz to hike vehicle prices

**New Delhi:** Mercedes-Benz India Friday said it will hike vehicle prices by up to 2 per cent from January in order to offset the impact of weakening rupee value against the Euro. On Thursday, BMW India announced that it mulls hiking vehicle prices from January as the Indian rupee weakens against the Euro.



The real pink slip in this new AI era is not automation. That is what we are worried about. The real pink slip is refusal to learn

PUNEET CHANDOK | PRESIDENT (INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA), MICROSOFT

NOVO NORDISK DEBUTS OZEMPIC

Danish pharma major Novo Nordisk Friday launched its blockbuster type 2 diabetes treatment injection Ozempic, globally popular for its weight-loss benefits. Ozempic is now available in India as 0.25 mg, 0.5 mg and 1 mg in 'FlexTouch Pen' - an easy-to-use, once-weekly pen device, at a starting cost of Rs 2,200 per week, the company announced



FRESH HIGH

Silver soars ₹5,100 to ₹1.99 lakh/kg

Rising for the fourth consecutive day, spot silver rose over 1% to scale a fresh peak of \$64.57 per ounce in the overseas trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Silver prices strengthened for the third straight day and jumped Rs 5,100 to hit a new peak of Rs 1,99,500 per kilogram in the national capital Friday, amid sustained global demand for the safe-haven asset, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The white metal closed Rs 2,400 up at Rs 1,94,400 per kilogram Thursday, a day after surging Rs 11,500 Wednesday.

"In the domestic market, spot silver prices once again recorded a new high, while gold prices also appreciated significantly, trading near the record level," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

In the local bullion market, gold of 99.9 per cent purity increased by Rs 1,110 to Rs 1,33,600 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) compared to the previous close of Rs 1,32,490

per 10 grams, as per the association.

"Gold prices commenced an upward trajectory following a period of consolidation over the past few days. This surge in the precious metal was primarily supported by a weakening rupee and sustained investment demand," he added.

In the international markets, spot gold appreciated by \$58.61, or 1.37 per cent, to \$4,338.40 per ounce.

"Gold and silver have responded with strong gains after a 25 basis points rate cut by the US Federal Reserve at a time when inflation risks are tilting higher. This has amplified concerns about faster dollar debasement," Anindya Banerjee, Head Currency and Commodity, Kotak Securities, said.

Rising for the fourth consecutive day, spot silver rose more than 1 per cent to scale a fresh peak of \$64.57 per ounce in the overseas trade.

GOLD & SILVER



'CoalSETU' launched for auction of coal linkages without end-use curbs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The government Friday approved the 'CoalSETU' window for the auction of coal linkages for diverse industrial uses and exports to ensure fair access and optimal utilisation of the resource.

The Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Policy for Auction of Coal Linkage for Seamless, Efficient & Transparent Utilisation (CoalSETU), according to an official statement.

The policy will allow allocation of coal linkages on an auction basis for long-term for any industrial use and export by adding a separate window named 'CoalSETU' in the NRS (Non-Regulated Sector) Linkage Auction Policy of 2016.

Any domestic buyer requiring coal can participate in the linkage auction, irrespective of the end use, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, briefing the media about the Cabinet decision.

Inflation rises from record low

Retail inflation rises to 0.71% in Nov on higher food prices

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** India's retail inflation rose in November from a record low in the prior month but stayed below the central bank's target range for the third straight month, data showed Friday, leaving scope for another interest rate cut.

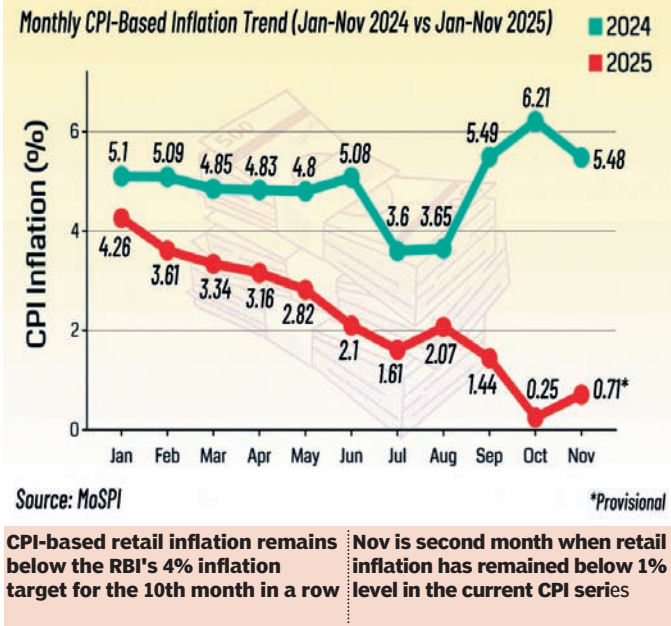
The print suggests that retail price rise may undershoot the Reserve Bank of India's 2% inflation forecast for this fiscal year by about 15 to 20 basis points, opening space for another 25 basis point rate cut, economists said.

Annual inflation quickened to 0.71% in November from 0.25% a month ago as the pace of decline in food prices slowed. The print was in line with a Reuters poll of economists.

The Reserve Bank of India cut interest rates by 25 basis points earlier this month, saying the Indian economy is in a "rare goldilocks" phase of strong economic growth and moderate inflation. In 2025, the RBI's rate-setting panel has lowered rates by 125 bps.

Whether growth slows in the second half of the fiscal year due to steep US tariffs will be the focus for the central bank going forward, Paras Jasrai, an economist at India Ratings and Research, said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies, including consumer tax cuts and labour reforms, are expected to limit the impact of US tariffs on the South Asian economy.



Earlier this month, the RBI lowered its inflation projection for the fiscal year ending March 31 to 2% from 2.6% earlier and raised the growth forecast to 7.3% from 6.8%.

In November, food prices fell 3.91% year-on-year after a decline of 5.02% a month ago. Vegetable prices fell 22.20% after a 27.57% decline in the previous month.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile items such as food and energy and is an indicator of demand in the economy, was at 4.2%-4.3% in November compared with 4.4% in October, according to two economists. Core inflation stayed elevated partly because of firm gold prices, they said.

Cereal prices increased 0.1% in November against a 0.92% rise in October, while prices of pulses dropped 15.86% after a

decline of 16.2% in the previous month. The impact of consumer tax cuts and ample food supply could lead to inflation averaging below 3% in the remaining part of the fiscal, said Sakshi Gupta, principal economist at HDFC Bank.

"This should provide room for the RBI to deliver another rate cut in the February policy if growth shows signs of losing momentum post the festive season," Gupta said.

The RBI's next policy meeting is February 4-6.

India will start publishing retail inflation data based on new base year, with updated data sources, from February 2026, which is expected to lower the weight of food, and raise it for non-food components.

Currently, food and beverages have a weight of 46% on the index.

₹ slumps 17 paise to close at all-time low of 90.49 against \$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 12:** The rupee depreciated by 17 paise to close at an all-time low of 90.49 against the US dollar Friday, as uncertainty over the India-US trade deal and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment.

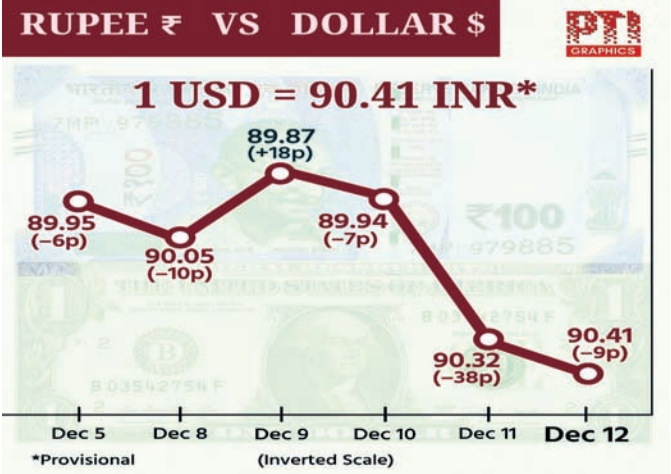
Forex traders said the rupee is under pressure, largely due to aggressive dollar purchases by importers amid surging global precious metal prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.43 against the US dollar, then fell further to a record intraday low of 90.56 against the greenback, registering a fall of 24 paise from its previous close.

The unit settled the day at 90.49 against the US dollar, down 17 paise over its last close.

On Thursday, the rupee had plunged 38 paise to close at an all-time low of 90.32 against the US dollar.

The rupee is expected to trade with a negative bias as the delay in the trade



deal between India and the US may weigh on the domestic unit.

India and the US Thursday concluded two days of talks, during which both sides exchanged views on trade-related issues, including the ongoing negotiations for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement.

Meanwhile, the dollar index,

which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent higher at 98.41.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.02 per cent higher at \$61.27 per barrel in futures trade.

Foreign Institutional Investors sold equities worth Rs 1,114.22 crore Friday, according to exchange data.

Passenger vehicles ride demand wave

PV despatches rise 19% YoY in Nov as demand remains strong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Passenger vehicle despatches from companies to dealers increased 19 per cent year-on-year in November as demand remained robust post festive period, industry body SIAM said Friday.

Total passenger vehicle sales stood at 4,12,405 units last month, up 18.7 per cent as compared with 3,47,522 units in the year-ago period.

Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India dispatched 1,70,971 units to dealers last month as compared with 1,41,312 units in the same month last year, an increase of 21 per cent.



Mahindra & Mahindra despatched 56,336 units last month as compared with 46,222 units in the year-ago period, an increase of 22 per cent.

Hyundai Motor India billed 50,340 units to dealers, up 4 per cent as against 48,246 units in November last year.

Two wheeler despatches to dealers rose 21 per cent year-on-year to 19,44,475 units in November as against 16,04,749 units in the same month last year, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said in a statement.

Scooter sales rose 29 per cent

year-on-year to 7,35,753 units in November as against 5,68,580 units in the year-ago period.

Motorcycle despatches on the other hand increased 17.5 per cent to 11,63,751 units last month as against 9,90,246 units in November 2024.

Moped sales, however, witnessed a dip of 2 per cent at 44,971 units last month as against 45,923 units in the year-ago period.

Total three wheeler sales rose 21 per cent year-on-year to 71,999 units in November.

Passenger vehicles, two-wheelers and three-wheelers marked the highest-ever sales of November in 2025.

FED-FUELED REBOUND

Equities trim weekly losses

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Dec 12:** Indian shares advanced Friday, extending the previous session's US Federal Reserve-led rebound that helped cap weekly losses.

Focus is now on the domestic retail inflation data due after market hours. According to a Reuters poll, retail inflation for November is expected to have inched up from October's record low.

The Nifty 50 rose 0.57% to 26,046.95, while the BSE Sensex added 0.53% to 85,267.66, after gaining about 0.5% Thursday.

However, the indexes logged 0.5% weekly fall, as investors booked profits near record highs in the first three sessions this week.

Metals led the charge Friday, climbing 2.6%, on demand optimism after top consumer China pledged a fiscal boost for 2026 and the Fed cut interest rates.

The Fed's 25-basis-point rate cut Wednesday came with a less-hawkish tone and rising concern over slowing growth and a softening labour market.

"The Fed signalled precedence to the labour market over still somewhat elevated inflation, and the market could be staring at a more dovish tilt in the months ahead, which is positive for emerging markets such as India," said Ankita Pathak, macro strategist and global equities fund advisor at Ionic Asset.

Meanwhile, uncertainty over India-US trade talks and persistent foreign selling dulled risk appetite and dragged the rupee to a record low against the dollar.

Eleven of the 16 major sectors logged weekly losses. Small-caps and mid-caps declined 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively.

BIZ BUZZ

Tata Steel, Constructsteel inaugurate steel-based zero energy building in City

Bhubaneswar:

Tata Steel, in collaboration with Constructsteel—the steel construction market development initiative of the World Steel Association—has inaugurated a state-of-the-art steel-based 'zero energy building' (ZEB) in Bhubaneswar. The 1,836 sq ft structure, built using advanced light-gauge steel frame (LGSF) technology, was completed in just three and a half months. The building was inaugurated by Tata Steel CEO & Managing Director TV Narendran, in the presence of Edwin Basson, Director General of the World Steel Association. The project marks a significant step toward India's push for low-energy, net-zero, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Speaking on the occasion, Narendran said, "The steel-based Zero Energy Building reflects the future of construction. Our collaboration with Constructsteel demonstrates how modern, energy-efficient, low-carbon solutions can be scaled widely across India and integrated into mainstream infrastructure." Constructed with LGSF technology, the building uses precision-engineered steel sections that create a tight structural envelope, reducing air leakage and energy loss. The lightweight steel framework allows rapid construction, high durability, and recyclability, significantly lowering environmental impact. Designed to generate as much energy as it consumes, the ZEB incorporates high-performance glazing, insulated wall and roof panels, and natural ventilation. It is equipped with rooftop solar panels, Building-Integrated Photovoltaics (BIPV), rainwater harvesting systems, and low-flow water fixtures, ensuring efficient resource use and annual net-zero energy performance.

Omfed bags 'Trust Brand of Odisha' award

**Bhubaneswar:** Odisha State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited (Omfed) has been honoured with the 'Trust Brand of Odisha' award by Network18 at its 'Atmanirbhar Odisha' event held Thursday. The award was presented in the presence of Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, Minister of Commerce & Transport, Mines & Steel. Omfed President Kishore Chandra Pradhani and Deputy Manager Biswaranjan Tripathy received the award on behalf of the organisation.

Speaking on the occasion, Pradhani said the recognition reflects the trust Omfed has earned over the years through consistent quality and service. "This award is a symbol of the hard work of lakhs of farmers and the love of countless customers. We are grateful to the people of Odisha for their trust in Omfed," he said. Omfed, popularly known as the milk of Odisha, has grown into a household name with a strong presence in and outside the state. Its products—including ghee, curd, paneer, ice cream, flavoured milk and milk powder—are widely consumed and appreciated for purity. Omfed Managing Director Vijay Amrit Kulange said the federation remains committed to delivering safe and hygienic dairy products. "Our products undergo multiple stages of testing. There will be no compromise on quality," he asserted. Kulange added that the award belongs to the "lakhs of farmers, countless customers and hardworking employees who have helped Omfed earn the trust of the people of Odisha."





TEST  
COLLAPSE

India slip to sixth in WTC standings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Dec 12:** India Friday slipped a rung to sixth position in the World Test Championship standings after New Zealand's comprehensive nine-wicket victory against the West Indies in Wellington propelled them to the third place. Runners-up in the first two WTC cycles, India were placed fifth after they were blanked 2-0 by South Africa at home last month with New Zealand occupying the sixth position. However, the table saw a major turnaround after the Kiwis' big win in the second Test at Basin Reserve Friday. Former champions Australia

lia continue to hold the top position with 100 percentage points (win-loss percentage) with South Africa in second place with 75 percentage points. Sri Lanka (66.67) and Pakistan (50) occupy the fourth and fifth position respectively. New Zealand have so far accumulated 66.67 percentage points, while India have a win-loss percentage of 48.15. India can drop further down to seventh if England stage a comeback against Australia in the Ashes. The Aussies lead the series 2-0 with three more matches to play. With the latest result, New Zealand have also boosted their prospects of a second appearance in the World



Test Championship Final.

The Black Caps' bowlers did the damage on the third day at Basin Reserve, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul helping the hosts dismiss the West Indies for just

128 in their second innings.

That left New Zealand requiring 56 for victory and a 1-0 series lead and Devon Conway (28 not out) and Kane Williamson (16 not out) guided them home

**India can drop further down to seventh if England stage a comeback against Australia in the Ashes**

**The team's next assignment is against Sri Lanka in August next year**

after the early loss of skipper Tom Latham for nine. The victory saw New Zealand earn 12 valuable WTC points and allowed the 2021 winners to jump in front of Pakistan and India and join Sri Lanka in third place on the standings. The third Test between New Zealand and West Indies will commence in Mount Maunganui December 18.

ANOTHER CRACK AT OLYMPIC GLORY

Phogat returns to mat

*18 months after Paris heartbreak, the star wrestler comes out of retirement as she targets 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat Friday announced that she would be coming out of retirement to take another shot at an elusive Olympic medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Games as the "the fire never left" her and was merely buried under "exhaustion and noise". The 31-year-old had walked away from the sport after the heartbreak of the Paris Games last year, where she was dramatically disqualified for being 100 grams over the permissible weight limit ahead of her 50kg category gold medal bout. She had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), seeking a joint silver medal, but the verdict remained unchanged, leading her to announce her retirement and join politics to be elected as an MLA from Haryana's Julana constituency. "People kept asking if Paris was the end. For a long time, I didn't have the answer. I needed to step away from the mat, from the pressure, from the expectations, even from my own



**In that silence, I found something I'd forgotten 'the fire never left'. It was only buried under exhaustion and noise. The discipline, the routine, the fight... it's in my system. No matter how far I walked away, a part of me stayed on the mat**

VINESH PHOGAT

ambitions. For the first time in years, I allowed myself to breathe," Vinesh posted on her social media accounts. "I took time to understand the weight of my journey the highs, the heartbreaks, the sacrifices, the versions of me the world never saw. And somewhere in

that reflection, I found the truth, I still love this sport. I still want to compete." She along with her husband Somvir Rathee welcomed a baby boy into their family in July. "In that silence, I found something I'd forgotten 'the fire never left'. It was only buried under

ODISHA MASTERS

Strong show by Indian shuttlers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Dec 12:** Indian shuttlers Unnati Hooda, Tasnim Mir, Isharani Baruah, Kiran George and Rounak Chouhan maintained their strong run at the Odisha Masters to secure semi-final spots here Friday.

In the men's singles, second seed Kiran stayed solid with a commanding 21-11, 21-17 win over Rithvik Sanjeevi in 33 minutes. He will next face Rounak, who shocked seventh seed and compatriot Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian 21-19, 22-20 in a tight 41-minute battle.

Indonesia's Muhammad Yusuf got the better of top seed Tharun Mannepalli 21-9, 22-20 in 49 minutes.

The women's singles quarterfinals also saw shocks, with Tanya Hemanth defeating third seed and World Junior Championships silver medallist Tanvi Sharma 21-18, 21-17 in 39 minutes to reach the semifinals.

She will face fellow Indian Isharani Baruah, who has been in top form this week.

Baruah, who began her campaign with a major upset over second seed Pornpicha Choeikeewong and received a walkover in the next round, extended her fine run by beating sixth seed Annol Kharb 21-16,

21-14 in 41 minutes.

Top seed Unnati Hooda maintained her dominance with a 21-16, 21-15 win over Anupama Upadhyaya and advanced to the semifinals.

Tasnim Mir also produced a strong performance, easing past seventh seed Tung Ciou-Tong of Chinese Taipei to complete an all-Indian semifinals lineup in women's singles -- assuring India multiple medals.

In women's doubles, Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam delivered a strong performance to outplay sixth seeds Kavipriya Selvam and Simran Singhi 21-12, 21-14 and secure a semifinal berth.

However, in men's doubles, pairs Bhargav Ram Arigela/Viswa Tej Gobburu and Pruthvi Krishnamurthy/Sai Pratheek fell to their respective opponents. In mixed doubles, Sathwik Reddy Kanapuram and Reshika Uthayasooryan advanced with a confident 21-15, 21-19 win over Indonesia's Nawaf Khoiriyansyah and Nahya Muhyifa in 38 minutes.

The fourth-seeded duo of Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh, however, suffered a defeat to Thailand's Tanadon Punpanich and Fungfa Korphammakit, going down 21-7, 21-8.

SQUASH WORLD CUP

Unbeaten India move to semis with win over SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Dec 12:** The Indian juggernaut rolled on at the Squash World Cup as the hosts stormed into the semifinals with a commanding 3-0 win over South Africa here Friday. Veteran Joshna Chinappa, rising star Anahat Singh and world No 29 Abhay Singh delivered dominant performances in the quarterfinals to set up a last-four clash with defending champions Egypt. The seasoned Joshna, who had received a walkover against Brazil Thursday, gave India the ideal start by outclassing Teagen Russell 3-0 (7-4, 7-4, 7-2) in the first women's singles in just 13 minutes, in front of a partisan crowd at the Express Avenue Mall. Abhay doubled the lead with an assured 3-0 (7-1, 7-6, 7-1) victory over Dewald van Niekerk.



Anahat, the youngest competitor in the tournament, then sealed India's spot in the semifinals with a composed 3-0 (7-3, 7-3, 7-4) win against Hayley Ward. Earlier in the day, top seed Egypt eased into the semifinals with a 3-0 sweep of Australia. India had defeated Switzerland and Brazil in their pool games. Their best-ever finish at the World Cup came in 2023, when they clinched a bronze medal.

*Vaibhav Suryavanshi hit a sensational century as India register mammoth 234-run win over UAE*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Dec 12:** Vaibhav Suryavanshi was at his imperious best while smashing a 171 off 95 balls, powering India to a mammoth 234-run win over hosts UAE in the inaugural match of the U19 Asia Cup here Friday. The 14-year-old from Samastipur, Bihar, unleashed a stunning display of batting, hitting 14 sixes -- the most by any batter in a single innings in the U19 level -- en-route to his breathtaking innings.

Half-centuries from Vihaan Malhotra (69) and Aaron George (69) further bolstered India's charge as they piled up 433 for 6 in 50 overs. The 400-plus total is India's highest-ever in U19 ODIs and is the highest in the U-19 Asia Cup's history. In reply, UAE were never



in the contest despite fighting fifties from Prithvi Madhu (50) and Uddish Suri (78 not out), as they could only manage 199/7 in their allotted 50 overs. Suryavanshi's blistering knock, studded with nine boundaries, is now the second-highest score by an Indian in youth ODIs, behind Ambati Rayudu's

unbeaten 177 against England in 2002 and the ninth-highest score by a batter in a men's U19 ODI. Sent into bat, the young opener looked a class apart as he pummelled the UAE bowlers into submission, racing to his fifty off just 30 balls and bringing up his hundred in only 56 deliveries. He then shared a 212-run

RECORDS SHATTERED

- Suryavanshi is now the second-highest score by an Indian in youth ODIs, behind Rayudu
- The 14-year-old smashed 14 sixes -- the most by any batter in a single innings in the U19 level
- 400-plus total is India's highest-ever in U19 ODIs and is the highest in the U-19 Asia Cup's history
- India now holds world record for most 400+ innings totals in Youth ODIs, with three such scores

stand with George to completely flatten the hosts' attack. His fiery innings finally came to an end in the 33rd over when he was bowled by spinner Suri.

BRIEF SCORES

**India** 433 for 6 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 171, Vihaan Malhotra 69, Aaron George 69; Yug Sharma 2/75 beat UAE 199 for 7 in 50 overs (Uddish Suri 78 not out, Prithvi Madhu 50; Deepesh Devendran 2/21) by 234 runs

Messi's G.O.A.T. India Tour set to dazzle sans football magic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Dec 12:** Argentine superstar Lionel Messi's long-awaited return to India, after a magical maiden visit back in 2011, will be high on glitz but low on actual football, promising a spectacle that may not recapture the raw sporting frenzy that once shook the Salt Lake Stadium here. His artistry in a competitive match will be missing this time. It would be quite unlike 2011 when more than 85,000 fans packed the stadium, some even perched on terrace edges, to watch Argentina edge Venezuela

1-0 in a FIFA friendly.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner is not scheduled to play serious football on the 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025'. It is a fully promotional, and commercially-curated event which will begin Saturday here and wind up Monday in New Delhi.

Yet, for a city that once worshipped Maradona, Pele, dazzled Dunga and embraced Ronaldinho, the arrival of Messi even without football is unmissable because Kolkata cannot ignore him.

The superstar's last appearance in India remains etched



in memory when September 3, 2011, he danced past defenders, mesmerised with his left-footed grace and triggered waves of ecstasy in a packed stadium. Though he didn't score, fans

left believing they had witnessed greatness.

Messi will spend less than 72 hours in India but will traverse four metropolises -- Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi -- in what has increasingly begun to resemble a high-profile roadshow involving chief ministers, corporate heavyweights, Bollywood celebrities and even a scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill, a self-confessed Messi admirer, is also expected to meet him after the Dharamshala T20I December 14.

**'Handshake visit'; ex-footballers snubbed**

Not everyone is swept by the frenzy though and former footballers feel "hurt and insulted" for not being invited.

Former India and Mohun Bagan mid-fielder Gautam Sarkar, who famously man-marked Pele during the 1977 exhibition match, minced no words.

"These are nothing but gimmicks. Messi is coming only to do a handshake... Pele had come here and actually played with us," the 75-year-old told PTI.

Ironically, Messi arrives at a time when Indian football is

grappling with serious uncertainty.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has failed to secure a commercial partner for the Indian Super League (ISL), and with the season already deep into December, its resumption remains unclear.

"Instead of bringing Messi, our focus should be on how to improve football in the country. We must give utmost priority to Indian football and bring back the glory of the past," Sarkar said

Former India defender Subrata Bhattacharya too felt "insulted".



In the 14th minute, Spain were awarded the first penalty corner of the match, which was again denied by Nidhi.

In the early moments of the second quarter, Spain launched a quick counterattack as Sara Carmona Ramos dribbled skillfully around the circle and played a pass inside, successfully deflected by Natalia Vilanova (16') into the net to claim the lead.

India had a couple of bright chances in the following minutes but Spain hardly made any mistakes and didn't give any penalty corner to maintain their advantage.