

Global honour

Former Miss Universe Harnaaz Sandhu will be honoured in Vietnam for her cultural impact, and role in empowering women

LEISURE | P2



H1B visa row

California and 19 other states file lawsuit seeking to block Trump's \$100,000 fee on new H1B visas for highly skilled foreign workers

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Precious metals shine

Gold and silver prices witness a sharp surge in the domestic market this week, tracking strong gains in global bullion markets

BUSINESS | P11



Third T20I today

Shubman Gill and Suryakumar Yadav in focus as India gear up to play the third T20I against the Proteas Sunday

SPORTS | P12

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FARMERS IN DISTRESS: Demanding immediate procurement of paddy, one of the protesting farmers prostrates before Bargarh Collector Aditya Goyal during his visit to the Padmapur Sub-Collector's office, Saturday

'Unsurprising': Cong on India being left out of US-led 'Pax Silica'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The Congress Saturday said it is perhaps not very surprising that India is not part of a US-led strategic initiative to build a secure silicon supply chain, given the "sharp downturn" in the Trump-Modi ties, and asserted that it would have been to "our advantage if we had been part of this group."

Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the news of India not being part of the group comes after the PM had enthusiastically posted on social media about a telephone call with his "once-upon-atime good friend and a recipient of many hugs in Ahmedabad, Houston, and Washington DC.'

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



changed the name of a scheme named after him - it also has the power to change his name

Iran arrests Nobel laureate Mohammadi

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Dec 13: Iran has arrested Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, her supporters have said. A foundation in her name said Friday that she was detained in Mashhad, some 680 km northeast of Tehran, while

attending a memorial for a human rights lawyer recently found dead under unclear circumstances.

A local official reportedly acknowledged arrests had been made, but did not directly name Mohammadi, 53. It wasn't clear if authorities would immediately return her to prison, where she

ailing economy and the fear of a renewed war with Israel.

had been serving a sentence until her temporary release in December 2024 for medical purposes. However, her detention comes as Iran has been cracking down on intellectuals and others as Tehran struggles with sanctions, an

DSPL-418

Intoxicants at 13 tween May 2018 and June 2019

AIIMS-Delhi has raised serious concerns about rising substance abuse among school-going children, with the average age of initiation found to be just under 13 years. The study, covering nearly 6,000 students across 10 Indian cities, found that tobacco and alcohol were the most commonly used substances, followed by opioids and inhalants. Substance abuse increased sharply in higher classes, with students in Classes XI and XII twice as likely to report usage as those in Class VIII. Despite widespread awareness that drug use is harmful, easy access, family exposure and peer influence were identified as major risk factors, underscoring the urgent need for early, sustained prevention programmes in schools

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 13: School-going children are picking up drugs and smoking habits and engaging in consumption of alcohol, with the average age of introduction to such harmful substances found to be around 13 years, suggesting a need for earlier interventions as early as primary school, a multi-city survey by AIIMS-Delhi said.

The findings also showed sub



stance use increased in higher grades, with grade XI/XII students two times more likely to report use of substances when compared with grade VIII students. This emphasised the importance of continued prevention and intervention through middle and high school.

The study led by Dr Anju Dhawan of AIIMS' National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, published in the National Medical Journal of India this month, looks at adolescent substance use across diverse regions.

The survey included 5,920 students from Classes 8, 9, 11 and 12 in urban government, private and rural schools across 10 cities -- Bangalore, Chandigarh, Delhi, Dibrugarh, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jammu, Lucknow, Mumbai, and Ranchi. The data were collected be-

The average age of initiation for any substance was 12.9 (2.8) years. It was lowest for inhalants (11.3 years) followed by heroin (12.3 years) and opioid

pharmaceuticals (without pre-

scription; 12.5 years). Overall, 15.1 per cent of participants reported lifetime use, 10.3 per cent reported past year use, and 7.2 per cent reported use in the past month of any

substance, the study found. The most common substanc es used in the past year, after tobacco (4 per cent) and alcohol (3.8 per cent), were opioids (2.8 per cent), followed by cannabis (2 per cent) and inhalants (1.9 per cent). Use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids was most common among opioid users (90.2 per cent).

On being asked, 'Do you think this substance is easily available for a person of your age separately for each substance category, nearly half the students (46.3 per cent) endorsed that tobacco products and more than one-third of the students (36.5 per cent) agreed that a person of their age can easily procure alcohol products.

About 95 per cent of the children, irrespective of their grade, agreed with the statement that 'drug use is harmful'

Messi event turns messy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 13: Chaos erupted at the Salt Lake stadium here Saturday as thousands of fans protested after failing to get a clear glimpse of Argentine football icon Lionel Messi during a much-hyped event, prompting police to baton-charge and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to order a high-level enquiry. The event's chief organiser Satadru Datta was detained.

What was billed as a marquee football spectacle turned into anger and disorder as Messi's brief and tightly ring-fenced appearance, his first at the venue since 2011, left large sections of the crowd frustrated despite many having paid hefty sums for tickets.

Messi walked a short distance on the pitch and waved briefly towards the stands amid loud chants of "Mes-

Rare fresco of Jesus as 'Good

si, Messi". Fans, however, soon realised that the footballer remained tightly cordoned off and was barely visible from large sections of the

Frustration mounted when it became evident that Messi would not complete the full lap of the stadium that had been part of the original programme. Instead, he turned back midway and was escorted out well before the scheduled end of his ap-

As word spread that the Argentine star had left the field prematurely, anger spilt over. Bottles and plastic chairs were hurled onto the pitch, sponsor banners and hoardings were torn down, fibreglass seats were smashed, and sections of the crowd attempted to rip open barricades to force their way onto the field.

Hours later, Banerjee expressed shock over the mismanagement and announced the constitution of a high-level enquiry committee.

In a post on X, she apologised to Messi and to sports lovers who had gathered at the stadium.

"I am deeply disturbed and shocked by the mismanagement witnessed today at Salt Lake stadium," the chief minister said.

Once again, I extend my heartfelt apologies to all sports lovers,' Banerjee added.

ଶୀ ନରେଦ ମୋଦୀ ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତୀ



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୧୪ ଡିସେମ୍ବର ୨୦୨୫

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OIPR-04066/13/0054/2526

Shepherd' uncovered in Turkey

Iznik (Turkey), Dec 13: Archaeologists in Turkey have uncovered one of the most important finds from Anatolia's early Christian

Jesus as the 'Good Shepherd.' The painting was discovered in August in an underground tomb near Iznik, a town in northwestern Turkey that secured its place in Christian history as the place where the Nicene Creed was adopted in AD 325. Pope Leo XIV recently visited the town as part

era: a fresco of a Roman-looking

of his first overseas trip. At the time, the region was part of the Roman Empire, and the tomb in the village of Hisardere is believed to date to the third century, a time when Christians

still faced widespread persecution. The Good Shepherd fresco depicts a youthful, clean-shaven



Jesus dressed in a toga and carrying a goat across his shoulders. Researchers say it is one of the rare instances in Anatolia where Jesus is portrayed with distinctly Roman attributes.

Before the cross was widely adopted as Christianity's universal

symbol, the Good Shepherd motif played a key role in expressing faith, indicating protection, salvation and divine guidance. Despite its central role in early Christianity, however, only a few examples of the Good Shepherd have been found in Anatolia and the one in Hisardere is the best preserved.

Lead archaeologist Gulsen Kutbay described the artwork as possibly the "only example of its kind in Anatolia." The walls and ceiling of the cramped tomb are decorated with bird and plant motifs. Portraits of noble men and women, accompanied by slave attendants, also decorate the walls.

Eren Erten Ertem, an archaeologist from Iznik Museum, said the frescoes showed "a transition from late paganism to early Christianity, depicting the deceased being sent off to the afterlife in a positive and fitting manner.'

eisure



SCHUMER ANNOUNCES **DIVORCE FROM FISCHER**

Actress Amy Schumer has announced her divorce from Husband Chris Fischer after 7 years of marriage. In the announcement post dropped by Schemer on her IG, she clarified that she and Fischer still respect one another and will continue to raise their son Gene together.

MINOGUE WANTS ROBBIE TO PLAY HER IN BIOPIC

Pop icon Kylie Minogue wants Margot Robbie to play her in a future biopic but feels the actress is now too famous to portray her on screen. Speaking on BBC Radio 2, Minogue explained that although she answered the question honestly in the moment, she doubts the casting could ever realistically happen, reports femalefirst.co.uk.



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Today ideas will flood your mind, but it is good that you will be able to carry them out efficiently. However, Ganesha warns you not to take brash decisions. Wise people will help you along the way. Pay heed to the advise of experienced people

TAURUS

Ganesha predicts that today, you will be successful in money matters. There is, at best, only an outside chance that any stimulating event or thrilling escapade will occur today. In short, the day may be boring. Fret not as the dreary day may change into an exhilarating evening, feels Ganesha.

GEMINI

It is better for you to swim today's dealings, suggests Ganesha. This will help you effortlessly deal with even the most morbid state of affairs. No need to be a hero, today Pleasure is the key word for you. Your performance will be satisfying at work, and more than satisfying back home.

CANCER

You will not only make plans, but will also act on them. So you can save money, time and energy for creative pursuits. The quality of your work and accomplishments will be high. Your creativity plays a key role in your accom plishments in career or business

Today, Ganesha advises you to keep the Bhagavad Gita's verses in mind, and persist in fulfilling your duties without bothering about the fruits of your labour. Put in some extra effort to finish off whatever you undertake today. Patience bears its fruits and they are always sweet. Also, Ganesha reminds you that anybody can enjoy pleasure, but only few can handle pressure. So, take your pick!

You better identify your worth in the realms of emotions, feelings and sentiments. You shall warm up to and about everything from play to colleagues to family. Simultaneously, you may realise where your limitations are. Ganesha predicts that the artist in you will flourish beginning today.

Ganesha says that today in your office you should be very careful in your work. It is likely that your superiors will not be happy about your work or your ability today. Those of you who are businessmen should try and delay sending off tenders today. Those who have given their job interviews may not get a favorable response to it. There may be a delay in getting your call letters Ganeshii advises to be very careful in each and every undertaking of yours today.

SCORPIO

It is likely that you shall learn an important lesson in life today. Remember that spite and envy beget enemies. Ganesha advises you to display some errors so as to make you seem more human and approachable.

SAGITTARIUS

Today, find yourself driving all your thoughts and actions towards your family. You will also spend some superb time with your dearie and discuss intimate matters. A relaxing day today as you spend time with your friends and family, chilling out and having a good laugh or two.

CAPRICORN

It's time to prove your extraor dinary skills as a professional, says Ganesha. You will go out of your way, and even double your efforts to accomplish set goals, and chances are that you might succeed. Family and friends will be glad that could take out time to spend some happy hours with them. You will also let them know that they mean the world to you, and no matter what, you will be there whenever they need you.

AQUARIUS

The day begins on high note. You work hard, put your best foot forward and at the end get the final output as per your requirements. Romantic and beautiful, the setting Sun will bring the softer side of your personality to the fore as you will spend the evening with your sweetheart, predicts Ganesha.

PISCES

For you, today will be all work and no pay, says Ganesha. This, however, will not stop you from putting in extra efforts to finish your pending projects and to meet your deadlines. Who else but a Virgo to handle the pain nonchalantly without bemoaning the lack of pleasure?



Mumbai: Four years after her Miss Universe win, Harnaaz Sandhu's global influence continues to grow. December, This she has been officially invited to Vietnam as a distinguished international guest by the Miss Cosmo Organisation, one of country's biggest

fluential pageant platforms. Recognised as the first Gen Z Miss Universe, Harnaaz will be honoured for her cultural impact, leadership, and role in empowering young women

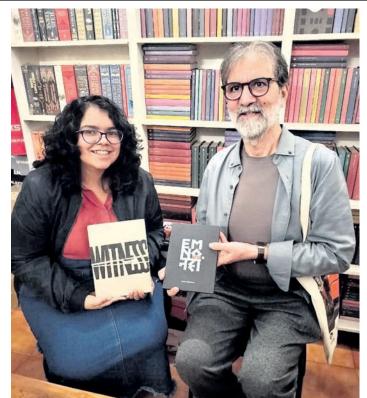
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most in-

worldwide. Her visit includes a formal honorary recognition ceremony, high-profile cultural and ceremonial engagements, and a gala evening celebrating her journey and global influence

Pageantry holds immense cultural importance across Vietnam and the larger Southeast Asian region, where Harnaaz remains a widely admired figure. Her authenticity, confidence, and modern outlook have earned her a devoted following, making her presence at the Miss Cosmo celebrations a moment of significance for the region's pageant and cultural community.

From bringing the Miss Universe crown back to India after 21 years to being honoured internationally as a cultural ambassador, Harnaaz Sandhu's journey reflects a new kind of global reign — one that transcends titles and continues to resonate across borders. Earlier this year, Harnaaz made her much talked-about Bollywood debut as a leading lady in director A Harsha's action thriller Baaghi 4. The film starred Tiger Shroff alongside Sanjay Dutt and Sonam Bajwa.



Acclaimed author and filmmaker Sanjay Kak with a reader during 'Meet & Greet' and book-signing programme held in Bhubaneswar Saturday ahead of Walking BookFairs Travel Writing festival to be organised Sunday. Several distinguished writers including Jerry Pinto, Sampad Patnaik, Ravi Mantha and Orissa POST & Dharitri Chief Executive Advasha Satpathy were in attendance.

Mumbai: Dhurandhar has an ensemble cast, but the one actor who has stood out is Akshaye Khanna. Trade veteran Taran Adarsh said, "I don't have words. I have always maintained that he's one

of the finest actors of Indian cinema. Notwithstanding the fate of his films, the fact is that he has always been very good. In Dhurandhar, no one else could have portrayed the way he portrayed Rehman Dakait. For me, he's not Akshaye. He's Rehman. That song has gone viral and Akshaye Khanna is all over the internet. The irony is, Akshave doesn't have an account on social media (laughs)! He has always been like this and I like this about him. He lets

the work speak for itself." Vishek Chauhan, owner of Roopbani Cinema in Purnia, Bihar, opined, "He's like a single malt - the older he gets, the better he tastes! I have loved him since his first film, *Himalay Putra* and he has been good in every film since then. Look at him as Rehman Dakait! We thought he killed it in Chhaava (2025) and then he

> formance in the form of Dhurandhar. Trade analyst Atul Mohan is not surprised with the feedback he has elicited, "From the teaser itself, we knew that Ak shaye Khanna would rock the show

ends the year with another knockout per-

Girish Johar, producer and eminent film business analyst, agreed, "He's an outstanding actor. It was expected that he would trump as soon as we saw him in the teaser. He has delivered one of the best performances and he always does that. His fan following has increased much more

with this outing." Distributor and exhibitor Raj Bansal predicted, "He'll be flooded with offers. He'll be the new in-demand ac tor." AGENCIES

'Akshaye's like a



SUDOKU

5

6

2 8

9

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a

manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains

9

2

4

5

4

7 9

2

3

8

the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any

4 6

5

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3

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

PEANUTS

would be her dreams?

that I would be successful.'

out on a normal childhood?



Dreams can become

limitations: Sara

Mumbai: Sara Arjun has been making the right noises in her

Hindi debut as a leading actress in the recent blockbuster Dhu-

As her debut movie is already a mega hit, what next, what

"I don't really have "specific" dreams because I feel like even

dreams can become limitations. I like challenging the universe to

give me more and more What I truly want is to keep moving, step

by step, keep growing, keep learning... and work with people whose

Talking about the movie, Sara, the daughter of actor Raj Arjun,

said, "Dhurandhar is not just a project for me; it feels like the

universe gently whispered, 'Pause... don't rush away just yet

there's a story waiting for you here.' I always had a gut feeling

She went on to add: "Besides, working with this incredible

ensemble has been nothing short of a blessing. Aditya (Dhar)

sir is the calm centre of all the storm and magic." Since, she has been working since she was a toddler, does she regret missing

"I honestly don't because I lived it completely. My parents never

let my work touch my school life, my friends, or my playtime. I

grew up exactly like a normal child," Sara shared.

art I admire and genuinely believe in," responded the actress.

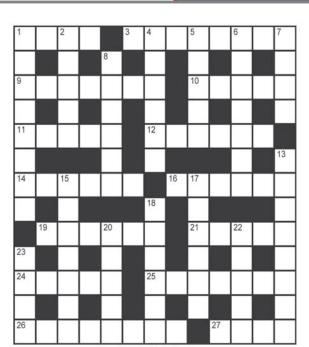
CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



POST **CROSSWORD**



Copyright ©2025 PuzzleJunction.com 25 On the way

(2.5)

26 Promised land

27 Bookie's quote

Across

- 1 Yeats or Keats 3 Tennis team
- award (5.3)
- 9 Space vehicles
- 10 Invalidate
- 11 Bloodsucker
- 12 Bank draft

- 14 Leisurely walk
- 16 One-dimensional
- 19 Beer holder
- 21 Rich cake
- 24 Ill-suited

- immobility, as with fear

Down

2 Toastmaster

1 Cause

- Lorraine

- 5 Fatuous

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

- 20 Hauled 22 Pub order
- 6 Befuddle
 - 23 Witty remark

7 Game on

8 Deadly

13 Ivy and

15 Follow a

(4,3)

17 Lavs to rest

18 Precious stones

horseback

periwinkle, e.g.

favourite team

T A B O O S P P O L A N D 4 8 9 1 2 7 6 5 3

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

SUDOKU

downtown

GIVING WAY

Excavators engaged by BDA raze illegal constructions at Nila Madhav slum in Bhubaneswar. Saturday



Singh Deo: Cold storage units in 58 sub-divisions by 2029-30



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The state government has decided to set up cold storage units in 58 sub-divisions at an investment of Rs 252 crore by 2029-2030, Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Sigh Deo said here Saturday.

Singh Deo said this after inaugurating the 'Cold Storage Conclave and Buyer-Seller Meet 2025' being organised by the Agricultural Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited (APICOL) in association with Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)

"The state government has set an ambitious target to establish cold storage units in 58 sub-divisions by FY30, with a proposed budget outlay of Rs 252 crore," Singh Deo, who is also the Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Minister, said.

Singh Deo said the initiative aims at establishing a robust cold chain infrastructure and creating stronger market linkages for farmers.

The Deputy CM highlighted key policy interventions such as capital investment subsidy and interest reimbursement, aimed at revitalising defunct cold storage units and ensuring long-term viability of new projects.

Urging banks, industry associations, technology providers and large buyers to partner closely with Odisha's farmers and entrepreneurs, he said strong collaboration across the value chain is essential to unlock the full potential of the sector.

Speaking at the event, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department Principal Secretary Arabinda Padhee underscored the state's transition towards market-led agriculture.

He noted that Odisha has been a rice-surplus state for the last 16-17 years, supplying rice to over 12 states, and produced nearly 15 million tonnes of food grains along with an equal volume of horticultural products in the last agricultural year.

Padhee said the state government has drafted a comprehensive cold storage policy with 'attractive incentives' to strengthen the ecosystem and woo private investment.

APICOL Managing Director Shubhranshu Mishra said the state government envisions a robust and sustainable cold storage ecosystem. "With new schemes under the Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department, the focus is on reviving defunct units, ensuring sustainability beyond the scheme period and reducing post-harvest losses to ultimately enhance farmers' income," added Mishra.

ASSOCHAM Odisha (Mining, Steel and Agri Council) Chairman Prabodh Mohanty said as Odisha expands production, the next growth leap will come from modernising post-harvest logistics and processing. He emphasised the need for integrated cold storage solutions with pre-cooling, digital quality tracking, grading, sorting and access to organised buyers, noting that market predictability and long-term procurement commitments are key to attracting private capital.



PAY UP: Road rule violators queue up at Traffic Police Station in Bhubaneswar to pay fines, Saturday

PIC: MANORANJAN MISH

Guv: Eastern India to define nation's growth trajectory

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The rise of Eastern India will define country's future growth trajectory, with Odisha poised to spark a new phase of regional development, said Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati here Saturday.

Speaking at the international conference 'Purvodaya Perspective 2025' in the City, the Governor described the event as more than an academic or policy forum.

He said it reflects India's evolving aspirations, growing civilisational confidence, and a collective resolve to unlock the immense potential of Eastern India.

Recalling history, Kambhampati noted that Eastern India was once a hub of prosperity, known for its thriving ports, extensive trade networks, renowned centres of learning, and maritime communities that carried Indian ideas and enterprise across the seas.

Over time, however, historical disruptions, prolonged neglect, and infrastructural

challenges caused the region of to lag behind.

The Governor emphasised that India is now at a historic turning point under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The launch of the Purvodaya Mission, he said, signifies the understanding that the rise of Eastern India is vital not only for regional advancement but also for achieving the national vision

of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. Kambhampati highlighted

Kambhampati highlighted recent rapid progress in the region across connectivity, infrastructure, industry, energy, and human development, driven by major investments in roads, railways, ports, airports, and digital networks.

"The rise of Eastern India will define country's future growth trajectory, with Odisha set to spark a new phase of regional development," he said.

Highlighting Odisha's pivotal role among the Purvodaya states, he underscored the state's inherent strengths, including abundant natural resources, a long and strategic coastline, a skilled workforce, stable governance, and a rich cultural identity.

The Governor pointed to key initiatives such as Odisha's entry into the semiconductor ecosystem, expansion of rail and port infrastructure, development of green hydrogen zones, and largescale tourism and heritage projects as major drivers of sustained growth.

Referring to Odisha's historic identity as Kalinga, he said the revival of ancient maritime and cultural links with Southeast Asia strongly aligns with India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific partnerships.

The Governor expressed confidence that the conference would generate practical strategies to strengthen economic corridors connecting Eastern India with Southeast Asia, fostering sustainable and inclusive regional prosperity.

SAIL posts 14% rise in sales in Apr–Nov

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Stateowned steel maker SAIL Saturday said it recorded a 14 per cent year-on-year growth in sales at 12.7 million tonnes (MT) in April-November 2025, amid 'price pressures and demand volatility'.

The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a leading integrated player in the steel sector, had posted sales of 11.1 MT in the corresponding period last year.

It said, "This resilient performance was possible due to a strong sales strategy...despite many challenges including global price pressures and demand volatility arising from various global trade policy uncertainties and geopolitical tensions."

During the eight-month period, retail sales were also strong. It was at 0.97 MT, up 13 per cent from 0.86 MT in April-November 2024, supported by ongoing nationwide brand promotion campaigns, SAIL said.

In November alone, overall sales rose 27 per cent year-onyear, while retail sales surged by 69 per cent y-o-y.

SAIL, under the Ministry of Steel, owns and operates five integrated steel plants in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal with an overall capacity of over 20 MT per annum.

Tribal student dies in City, kin cry murder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Keonjhar, Dec 13: A 14-year-old tribal student of Kalinga Institute of Social Science (KISS) in Bhubaneswar died under mysterious circumstances, with his family claiming it to be a case of murder,

sources said Saturday.

His family and relatives, who alleged that the Class 9 student was 'murdered', staged a protest with the body in front of the Collector's office in his hometown, Keonjhar, Saturday, demanding a proper investigation into the incident.

The deceased was a resident of Tikargumura village in Keonjhar Town police station area.

His father lodged a complaint with Keonjhar Town police station, suspecting foul play.

"KISS authorities called me up Friday and informed that my son was unwell. They asked me to come to Bhubaneswar immediately. When I reached the hospital, where he was admitted, a doctor informed me that my son was dead," the deceased's father stated in his police complaint.

"They sent the body to the village in an ambulance. I found some scar marks on my son's body. I have not been given any medical report. I do not know how my son died, and due

to which disease," he said.

Keonjhar Town police station inspector-in-charge Srikant Sahu said that a Zero FIR has been lodged and forwarded to Bhubaneswar's Infocity police station, under the jurisdiction of which the incident took place.

Sahu said police will conduct a preliminary investigation and will send the body for post-mortem examination.

The agitators withdrew the

The agitators withdrew the demonstration after the FIR was registered, he said.

Magnyhila, the decased's

Meanwhile, the deceased's aunt, who took part in the agitation, alleged that her nephew was killed and there was a bid to cover it up.

"We demand justice. You cannot mislead us because we are tribals. We demand Rs 1 crore as compensation," she said

Keonjhar's Additional Tehsildar Durgesh Kalyan Pradhan said, "Local police have made elaborate security arrangements to maintain law and order here (Keonjhar)."

The incident sparked massive outrage, with people seeking to know how the boy died despite having no history of illness, and why his father was not informed about the reason or given any medical report.

KISS authorities were yet to respond to queries about the boy's mysterious death.

Mentally unstable woman sets vehicles, shops on fire

hubaneswar: A mentally unstable woman was detained after she set several vehicles and shops on fire in the wee hours of Saturday, at Balianta market on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar The woman has been identified as Geeta Bhoi (44), a resident of Benupur, Chandanbasta area of Khordha district. According to the police sources, as many as 5 vehicles including truck, car and auto rickshaw and four small road side shops were gutted in the incident. On being informed, fire personnel rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire. While the police was reviewing the CCTV footages to find the reason behind the fire, Geeta was spotted setting the properties ablaze. The police sources also informed that eight days ago, Geeta was also involved in similar fire incident reported from her area. The police immediately swung into action and detained Geeta. After finding about her mental condition, she was taken to hospital. "We received similar fire incident cases earlier from the area, and through investigation and reviewing the CCTV footages form the recent case, we came to know that Geeta was behind those fire incidents. She is mentally unstable. and she set those vehicles on fire which were covered. However, she was detained immediately and sent to hospital for her condition. Further procedure will be followed as per the government's guideline," informed Balianta police station inspection in-charge.

Mahanadi dispute: BJD asks state govt five questions

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Ahead of the all-party high-level meeting on the Mahanadi water dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Opposition BJD Saturday asked the BJP government in the state five questions on the issue.

Addressing a press conference here, BJD deputy leader in Assembly Prasanna Acharya described Mahanadi as the lifeline of Odisha.

BJD's five questions are: What are the terms and conditions of the proposed out-of-court settlement? Whether the Odisha government intends to withdraw the case from the Mahanadi Tribunal? Will the government take the major political parties and Mahanadi Bachao Andolan organisations into confidence before negotiations? Will the

The all-party high-level committee for amicable esolution of the water dispute is scheduled to meet Dec 22

Chhattisgarh government halt the construction of barrages on the upstream of the Mahanadi and its tributaries during settlement talks?, and will the state government move the tribunal to expedite the long-pending

Describing Mahanadi as the lifeline of Odisha, the senior BJD leader expressed concern and alleged that there was a continuous attempt to restrict the natural flow of Mahandi for which the people living in the downstream are suffering.

The BJD leader accused Chhattisgarh's BJP government of constructing multiple barrages upstream without Odisha's consent, thus violating interstate river water norms. Acharya said that the people of

Odisha want a clarification from the 'triple engine government' (BJP govt in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Centre) on Mahanadi water dispute.

The Opposition party claimed that the construction of barrages on the upstream of the Mahanadi in Chhattisgarh side has severely impacted agriculture, ecology, and livelihoods of people in Odisha.

"We are worried over the si-

lence of the Central government and the Central Water Commission when Chhattisgarh has been constructing projects in the upstream of Mahandi," he said.

The BJD leader also alleged that a large volume of Mahanadi water is being diverted to private industries under the pretext of irrigation. Replying to

Acharya's allegation, senior BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra said, "What was the previous BJD government doing in the last 24 years when Chhattisgarh constructed barrages on Mahanadi? They have done nothing to prevent Chhattisgarh, and are now raising questions."

Mishra said that the state government was trying to resolve the dispute through both legal and political negotiations.

The Odisha government, December 10, constituted an all-party high-level committee for amicable resolution of the water dispute. The committee, to be headed by Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo, will have one member each from the Opposition BJD and Congress.

The committee meeting is scheduled to be held December 22, sources said.



Will forgo enhanced salary of LoP: Naveen

and allowance of Chief Minister, Speaker, Leader of Oppo-

sition, ministers, and MLAs

Minister Mohan Charan Ma-

jhi, said, "I would like to for-

go the salary and allowances

hiked for Leader of Opposition, which the Odisha Legis-

lative Assembly has recently

passed. I would like to request

you to utilise the same for the

welfare of poor people of our

Patnaik, a five-time former

chief minister, said that he

has been blessed by the love,

affection and support of the

people of Odisha for more

"I am highly indebted to

the people of Odisha and their

love towards me and my late

than 25 years.

Patnaik, in a letter to Chief

December 9.



Bhubaneswar-Ekamra MLA Babu Singh also announces to donate hiked pay and allowance to a poor man in constituency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Assembly Naveen Patnaik Saturday announced to forgo the recently hiked salary and allowances and urged the state government to utilise the amount for the welfare of the poor people.

Patnaik, as LoP, was entitled to receive a monthly salary and allowance of ₹3.62 lakh after the House passed a Bill enhancing the salary

148 grievances heard in 4th National Lok Adalat

Chhatrapur: About 148 grievances were heard by judges during the fourth National Lok Adalat held at Chhatrapur court recently. The grievances were heard by ADJM and Chhatrapur Taluk Legal Services Committee President Pradip Kumar Samal along with the committee members including Senior Civil Judge Pooja Dey, SDJM Pritish Kumar Rath and JMFC Swagatika Swain, Out of the 148 disputes, a total amount of ₹43.65.860 were ordered to settle by the judges from the 61 grievances that were resolved Friday. Two disputes that involved road accidents produced a settlement amount in excess of ₹14 lakh, 7 bounced-cheque cases were settled amounting close to ₹22 lakh and three bank-related disputes were settled for more than ₹5 lakh. Additionally, about 13 civil cases with a settlement amount of nearly ₹2 lakh were closed as well. These apart, eight compoundable criminal, one nuntial and 27 criminal disputes were also settled during the hearings by the judges.

CLASSIFIED

Several lawvers were present in the

hearing process assisting judges to

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate Rayagada dated 13.10.2025 I, Lipi Kondagori, Address Vill-Surupi, PO-Rekhapadar, PS-Chandili, Dist-Ravagada, Pin Code -765029, Odisha, declare that I have changed the name of my Daughter from Kabitha Kandagari to Lipi Kondagori. Henceforth, she shall be known as Lipi Kondagori for all purposes. Lipi Kondagori

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate Rayagada dated 11.12.2025 I, Nanda Kumar Mandangi, Address Vill-Surupi, PO-Rekhapadar, PS-Chandili, Dist-Rayagada, Pin Code -765029, Odisha, declare that I have changed the name of my son from Nal Kumar Mandangi to Nanda Kumar Mandangi. Henceforth, he shall be known as Nanda Kumar Mandangi for all purposes. Nanda Kumar Mandangi

(CM) may kindly be aware that in 2015 our family decided to donate its ancestral property 'Anand Bhawan' in Cuttack to be put for use by the people of Odisha. In the same spirit, I would like to forgo the salary and allowances hiked for the Leader of Opposition, which

late father, Biju Patnaik, when he was the chief minister of Odisha for the second time from 1990 to 1995, used to take Rupee 1 as salary and allowance from the state As-

According to provisions of the Bill passed in the Assem-Chief Whip will get ₹3.62 lakh.

per month. Earlier, MLAs used to get ₹1.11 lakh per month.

Meanwhile, Bhubaneswar-Ekamra BJP MLA Babu Singh has also announced that he would donate the enhanced salary and allowance to a poor man in his constituency.

father Biju Patnaik," he said.

Min felicitates YATS winners



Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Science & Technology Minister Krushna Chandra Patra felicitated the top 30 winners of the 19th edition of the Tata Steel Young Astronomer Talent Search (YATS) 2025 during its Grand Finale here Saturday aims at

Organised nurturing scientific by Tata Steel in collaboration with the commemorating the Pathani Samanta Planeenduring legacy of Odia tarium under astronomer Pathani department of Science and Technology, the initiative seeks to foster scientific curiosity among school students while celebrating the legacy of legendary Odia astronomer Pathani Samanta. This year, 30 winners were chosen from 60 finalists, out of more than 76,700 participants across the state. Since its inception in 2007, YATS has engaged over

Applauding the winners, Patra said, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the young astronomers and wish them success in carrying forward the legacy of Pathani Samanta. Initiatives like YATS inspire students to delve into space science and

bring pride to Odisha and India.' ment's Additional Chief Secretary Chithra Ar-

umugam said, "YATS reflects the strong collaboration between the Government of Odisha and Tata Steel. It celebrates curiosity and scientific inquiry-

qualities that will enable these students to excel in any field they choose. The winners will visit an IS-RO facility, gaining firsthand experience of India's space research, in line with this year's

theme, 'Stargazer Today, Ga-

gannaut Tomorrow.

the Odisha Legislative Assembly has recently passed." Sources said that Patnaik's

bly December 9, the Chief Minister will receive a package of ₹3.74 lakh per month, while the Speaker and Deputy Chief Ministers will get ₹3.68 lakh, Cabinet ministers and the government

MLAs will now get ₹3.45 lakh

Call to strengthen coordinated road safety efforts Labs, which earlier conceptualised the Integrated Road Accident Database (iRAD), the Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The Commerce and Transport denational platform supporting partment reviewed the Intedata-led road safety intervengrated Road Safety Dashboard tions. The State Transport Authority (STA) guided the (IRSD) to strengthen coordinat-

ed and data-driven road safety governance in the state. The review focused on the dashboard's structure, data integration and inter-departmental usability to support informed decision-making, coordinated action and effective monitoring requirements and shared ownof road safety initiatives.

The dashboard has been developed by IIT-Madras's RBG

cial intelligence offer signifidevelopment of the dashboard cant opportunities to further strengthen road safety goverthrough an extensive consultative process involving Ponance, she added. lice, Road Owning Agencies Health department, National Informatics Centre (NIC) and other stakeholders, ensuring alignment with operational

SCIENTIFIC PRESERVATION EFFORT: A team of experts, led by biologist Siba Prasad Parida including the AIIMS-Bhubaneswar forensic team and fores

officials, dig out the skeletal remains of an elephant named 'Ramu' at Bharatpur Forest in the Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of

C&T DEPT REVIEWS IRSD

ership across departments. Commerce & Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee emphasised that the effectiveness of digital platforms depends on their adoption and regular use. Emerging technologies, including artifi-

Attending the review meet, Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur highlighted that the unified dashboard integrates datasets currently spread across departments, en-

abling improved coordination,

monitoring and review of road

Technical Consultant to STA from IIT-Madras Venkatesh Balasubramanian stated that the application has been de signed with a human-centric and intuitive interface to ensure ease of use for officials and citizens.

The dashboard will support systematic analysis of crash data, tracking of road safety interventions and structured review of outcomes, marking an important step towards building an integrated, trans parent and accountable road safety ecosystem in Odisha.

St. Joseph's High School marks 75 yrs of excellence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Saturday

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: St. Joseph's High School, Bhubaneswar, celebrated 75 years of academic excellence with two days of grand Platinum Jubilee Concerts marked by colour, culture and nostalgia. The celebrations began December 12 with the Junior School Concert and concluded December 13 with the Senior School Concert, reflecting the institution's rich legacy.



Madhab Mishra, IRS, Commissioner (GST Kolkata South). was the chief guest at the Junior Concert, while distinguished alumnus Col. Surender Kumar Rohilla, Director (General Staff and War Establishment), graced the Senior Concert as chief guest. Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Most Rev. John Barwa SVD, attended as guest of honour. Several dignitaries, including Sr. Justine G. Senapati, President of SSJA (India), were present. Speakers praised the school's role in shaping disciplined, value-driven individuals. Principal Sr. Archana presented the Jubilee Report.

MITS Rayagada hosts 3-day skill building programme



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 13: The Majhighariani Institute of Technology and Science (MITS), Ravagada successfully organised a three-day IBM AI Skill Building Programme from December 11 to 13 under NASSCOM and IBM national initiative, aimed at equipping students with industry-relevant skills in AI and emerging technologies

The programme saw enthusiastic participation from students of MITS, Majhighariani Institute of Professional Studies (MIPS), and nearby institutions including Rayagada Autonomous College, Vamsi Institute of Manage ment Studies, City College and Model Degree College. Over 800 students attended the sessions.

The programme was inaugurated by Skypostal data analyst and IBM India AI mentor and researcher Suraj Singh Sahi and NASSCOM Zikshaa and Consultant co-founder Rutab Mallick, who joined as chief resource persons. The inaugural session

was held in the presence of MITS Director C V Gopinath, MIPS Dean Santanu Kumar Mohanty and MITS Principal Ramanuja Nayak. Addressing the gathering, C V Gopinath stressed the importance of AI literacy and industry-academia collaboration in preparing students for future careers. Sharing their views, Mohanty and Nayak highlighted the need for continuous upskilling through global platforms such as IBM SkillBuild

The programme featured expert lectures, hands-on lab sessions and interactive discussions on AI fundamentals. real-world applications and career opportunities. It concluded Saturday with a felicitation ceremony for the resource persons. MITS Training and Placement Officer Kalyan Kumar delivered the vote of thanks.

and NASSCOM initiatives.

All participants received IBM digital certificates, reaffirming MITS Rayagada's commitment to industry-aligned, future-focused education.

Man held for brown sugar peddling in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: A pa trolling team from Lingaraj police station arrested a man Friday for allegedly peddling brown sugar and seized 6.14 grams of the contraband from his possession near the Kedar Gauri bus stop here, police said Saturday.

The accused was identified as Niranjan Nayak (37), a resident of BJB Nagar.

Police said the patrolling team received credible information that Niranjan was waiting behind the Kedar Gauri bus stop to sell brown sugar to customers. Acting on the tip-off, the team conducted a swift raid at the spot and appre hended him. During the search police recovered 6.14 grams of brown sugar from his posses sion. During interrogation, the accused reportedly confessed that he had procured the contraband from the Khurda area and was illegally selling it in local areas. A case has been registered at Lingarai police station in connection with brown sugar trade and he was booked under sections 21(b) NDPS Act. The accused was arrested and later forwarded to the court.

Further investigation into the case is underway.

ECoR boosts security with CCTV cameras, drones

Initiative aims to enhance passenger safety, curb trespassing, strengthen monitoring in remote areas, and protect railway property and staff

POST NEWS NETWORK

4.7 lakh students.

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has significantly strengthened its security and surveillance framework by extensively deploving solar-powered CCTV cameras and introducing advanced surveillance drones across its jurisdiction.

These initiatives aim to enhance passenger safety, prevent trespassing, improve monitoring in remote areas, and ensure better protection of railway property and staff.

To ensure uninterrupted surveillance in areas with limited or no power supply, ECoR has installed solar-based CCTV systems at vulnerable and operationally sensitive locations across all three divisions. 113 solar-powered CCTV cameras installed at trespass-prone locations and railway yards in Waltair Division, while



procurement of 115 additional cameras is under process.

Similarly 6 solar-based CCTV cameras commissioned at key points under Khurda Road Division and procurement of 1027 more cameras is in progress.

In Sambalpur Division 46 solar-based CCTV cameras were installed at strategic and critical sites. The deployment of these solar-powered CCTV **E**COR has installed solar-based CCTV systems at vulnerable and operationally sensitive locations including 113 solar-powered cameras at trespass-prone areas and railway yards in the Waltair

Six solar-based CCTV cameras have been commissioned at key locations in Khurda Road Division. while procurement of 1.027 additional cameras is underway

s many as 46 solar-based CCTV Acameras have been installed in Sambalpur Division at strategic and critical sites

systems is expected to greatly benefit passengers and the public by ensuring enhanced safety in vulnerable areas, preventing crimes, reducing trespassing incidents, and enabling more effective monitoring in remote

locations. The cameras also support

better crowd management during peak times, help in swift response during emergencies. improve post-incident analysis. and enhance security for railway staff. Complementing the ground surveillance network, ECoR has further strengthened monitoring capabilities using drones. A total of five surveillance drones are currently operational. Khurda Road and Waltair Divisions operate two drones each and Sambalpur Di vision operates one drone.

These drones are used for real-time monitoring of long track stretches, inspections in remote areas, oversight of railway vards, crowd management during special events, and various security operations.

With the expansion of CCTV coverage and drone-based surveillance, ECoR continues to strengthen its focus on safety, security, and service excellence across the region.



A STATE OF THE STA								
WEATHER								
	BBSR	СТС	FORECA					
lax Temp	28.8°	26.2°	Fog or mis					
lin Temp	12.6°	12.4°	the morning mainly clear later					
lumidity	81%	86%						
ainfall	Nil	Nil						

Road surface peels off days after blacktopping



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 13: Residents of Khunta block in Mayurbhanj district have alleged gross irregularities in the construction of a road, claiming that the asphalt layer is peeling off barely five days after completion of work.

The 9-km long road from Chapaladihi and Bahalada to Sapanachua under Badapathara panchayat, constructed under the Rural Development department in Khunta section of Udala division at an estimated cost of ₹10 crore, has drawn public outrage over substandard work. Locals say the work executed by a Baripada-based special-class contractor was completed hastily with improper metal layering

using low quality materials. Villagers alleged the asphalt layer began coming off merely five days after construction. A bus traveling to Bahalada reportedly caused large patches of the road

Student held for

threatening HM

with gun in class

Kendrapara: Police Saturday took

a 14-year-old boy into custody in

Kendrapara, after he threatened

his school headmaster inside the

which sent him to the Probation

Hostel-cum-Observation Home &

Special Home in Angul, police said

The minor was reportedly scolded

by the headmaster and teachers

School for neglecting studies and

following which the student took

out the revolver, they said. "We

are questioning his parents and

relatives as to how he obtained

the firearm," a police officer said.

been seized and an investigation is

BAL VIVAH MUKT BHARAT

Viswa Yuva Kendra

backs govt's 100-day

campaign in 3 districts

Angul/Dhenkanal/Boudh: With the

commitment to make the country child

marriage free by 2030, Angul, Dhenkanal and Boudh districts marked the first

anniversary of Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat

Kendra has pledged full support to

the government's 100-Day Intensive

Awareness Campaign to accelerate

and Child Development Annpurna Devi to mark one year of Bal Vivah

Mukt Bharat. The initiative aims to

marriage to persist, Prime Minister

and strong grassroots engagement.

is firmly on course to eliminate child

with renewed enthusiasm. Viswa Yuva

efforts to end child marriage across the

districts. The campaign was launched in

New Delhi by Union Minister for Women

disrupt the ecosystem that allows child

Narendra Modi has recently said India,

through clear policies, sustained action

marriage. Following directions from the

Union government, the Odisha government has instructed field officials from

Health, Education, Panchavati Rai and

actively participate to ensure complete

level change. Commending the district

administration's efforts, Manoj Kumai

Rural Development departments to

saturation and visible community

Mohapatra, director of Viswa Yuva Kendra, said,

'The administration in our

district has been proactively

fighting the issue of child

coordination with them,

marriage. Working in close

we have come this far. And

today, as the entire nation

stands united and the high

toward a child marriage-free

est leadership guides us

India, there is no reason

we cannot end this crime

world once believed was

impossible is now becom-

ing India's reality." Viswa

Just Rights for Children, a

national network of more

vented over 1,00.000 child

marriages in the past year.

Day, March 8, 2026, and will

phases focusing on schools.

riage service providers, and

religious institutions, mar-

local governance bodies.

The campaign concludes

Yuva Kendra is a partner of

even before 2030. What the

Government of India reaffirming its

The country-made revolver has

underway, he added.

creating nuisance in the classroom

of government-run Korua High

a country-made revolver. The Class IX student was produced before the Juvenile Justice Board,

classroom by allegedly brandishing

surface to detach on its return. Last week, residents demonstrated how the asphalt layer could be lifted easily by hand, leaving the irregularities exposed.

Locals also alleged that cold mix was used instead of hot asphalt and that a vibratory roller was not used, compromising durability. Several villagers were seen removing and throwing away loose asphalt in protest.

Residents further claimed that a planned stretch from Santal Sahi to Dabak Bhuyan Sahi was not constructed at all.

The complaints prompted villagers, including Badapathara sarpanch Mangal Majhi, to raise the issue during the District Collector's public grievance hearing earlier this month. A district-level inquiry team has since visited the site for inspection.

Superintendent Engineer Satvabrata Navak said the concerned patch of road where the bitumen layer peeled off was

work, leading to the problem. He said the contractor has been instructed to repave the section properly. Citing the report of the executive engineer, he added that the remaining work was found to be satisfactory and no further inspection was carried out.

Mayurbhani District Collector Hemakant Soy said a technical team and a district-level delegation inspected the roadwork. The team included the CDO, a project director (technical), an engineering department official, the BDO and the Udala executive engineer. They reviewed the quality of the construction, he said.

Soy said any deviation from the prescribed standards or contract conditions would be dealt with as per departmental guidelines. If the quality is found unsatisfactory, the matter will be reported to the Vigilance department and the contractor may be recommended for blacklisting by the Rural Development department. Payment for the work has already been withheld.

However, Sarpanch Ludhia Maihi of Sapanchua panchayat and residents Biru Hembram. Nagendra Majhi and Bhagirathi Guddu criticised the executive engineer for declaring the work satisfactory without visiting the site, despite the collector's instructions. They called the situation "unfortunate."

CULTURE FEST: Artistes from Dabugaon perform traditional tribal dance 'Sailodi Dhemsa' on the second evening of the district-level Lok Mahotsav 'Mondei' in Nabarangpur, Saturday

Student drops dead on way to school

POST NEWS NETWORK

Digapahandi, Dec 13: A Class VII student died after collapsing on the way to school in Ganjam district's Digapahandi block Friday, plunging his family and village into deep grief.

The deceased was identified as Akash Kumar Gouda 12, son of Simanchal Gouda, a daily wage labourer of Nimakhandipentha Akash was a student of Radhamohan Nodal High School. He reportedly fell unconscious on the roadside while walking to school, Family members shifted him in an ambulance to the Digapahandi CHC, where doctors declared him brought dead.

Sources said Akash had been undergoing treatment for cerebral malaria for the past few days. As examinations were approaching, he had been studying at home and decided to attend school after feeling slightly better Friday morning. However, he collapsed before reaching the school premises. Police visited the hospital and initiated a preliminary inquiry. However, fearing police formalities and being unable to bear the expenses of an ambulance and post-mortem examination, the grief-stricken family took the body home without conducting a post-mortem

Prohibitory order lifted; internet ban till Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Malkangiri, Dec 13: Malkangiri district administration Saturday withdrew the prohibitory orders imposed in two villages following a violent clash but extended the suspension of internet services across the district till Monday noon, a senior official said.

District Collector Somesh Kumar Upadhyay and SP Vinodh Patil H,

addressing a joint

press conference, said the prohibi-UNREST tory order imposed under Section 163 of the BNS within a 10-km radius of MV-26 village December 7 had

been lifted However, internet services will remain suspended for another 36 hours till Monday noon, they said, adding that the decision was taken after

assessing the ground situation. The restrictions were imposed following violent clashes December 7 and 8 at MV-26 village after the recovery of the headless body of a 51-year-old tribal woman belonging to the Koya tribe from the banks of the Poteru River December 4. Her

head was found six days later. Angry tribal people of

neighbouring Rakhelguda went berserk and damaged houses of Bengali settlers at MV-26 village. "Preliminary estimates suggest that the violence caused

damage worth around ₹4 crore," the Collector said, adding that the administration has been providing cooked food, clothing and tarpaulin sheets, and facilitating res-

toration of water and **MALKANGIRI** electricity supply for residents who have returned.

The Collector and the SP said six persons have been arrested so far in connection with the murder and the violence. They added that discussions have been held with tribal leaders and Bengali settlers to restore peace, and the land dispute believed to be at the root of the incident would be resolved soon.

The Collector said the family of the deceased tribal woman has already been given ₹30,000, while the government has been requested to provide another ₹4 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

as on

interest, costs

and charges

thereon

₹3,81,310/-

₹38,131/-

11.12.2025

Bike-scooter collision leaves 3 dead, 2 hurt

PNN & AGENCIES

Keonjhar, Dec 13: Three people were killed, and two others suffered critical injuries in a headon collision between a motorcy cle and a scooter in Keonjhar district, police said Saturday.

The accident happened or Chandapasi-Pandapada Road near Sarupata Friday evening

The deceased were identified as Dushasana Barik (40) of Asanabahali village, and Lax man Senapati (25) and Manoj Kumar Dalei of Balabhadrapur

The injured persons were identified as Raja Nayak of Bal abhadrapur and Rahul Nayak of Asanabahali village. They are at present undergoing treat ment at the District Headquarters Hospital. Police said they have seized both the two-wheel ers involved in the collision and started an investigation.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

NAME OF WORK : 4TH LINE BETWEE RANITAL LINK JN. CABIN TO BHADRAK STATION : EXECUTION OF BATHWORK IN FORMATION, MINOP BRIDGES, YARDS, SERVICE BUILDINGS, P-WAY LINKING WORK BALLAST SUPPLY, PLATFORM WORK PROTECTION WORKS AND OTHER ALLIED WORKS BETWEEN RANITAL LINK JN. CABIN AND BHADRAK STATION INCLUDING RANITAL AN

Lakh, <u>EMD :</u> ₹ 18,20,700/-, <u>Completio</u> Period of the Work: 15 (Fifteen) Months Tender Closing Date & Time: At 120

against such e-tenders even if these are ubmitted on firm's letter head and eceived in time. All such manual offer

rejected summarily without an Complete information including e-ten documents of the above e-tender available in website: www.ireps.gov.in Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen days before the date of closing of tende to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders nust have Class-III Digital Signature

The tenderers should read all instructions the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions includir form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter 2 of ender documents, submission of Annexo B/G & G1 duly verified and signed by Chartere

Chief Administrative Officer (Con)

E-AUCTION BHADRAK STATION YARDS **SALE NOTICE** Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 3341.41

IREPS Portal. Only registered tender bidder can participate on e-tendering.

PR-188/CI/25-26

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 56/FT/SBP/ ENGG/2025-26, Dated: 08.12.2025 (1) e-Tender No. 57-eT-DENC-SBP-25 NAME OF WORK: EXECUTION OF CESS-REPAIR WORKS AT VARIOUS LOCATION IN SAMBALPUR-DUNGRIPALLI SECTION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT

DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / BARGARI

Approximate Cost of the Work : 86,91,063.36, Bid Security: ₹1,73,900 (2) e-Tender No. 58-eT-DENC-SBP-25 NAMEOFWORK: CONSTRUCTION OF 03 NOS. OF GANG TOOL CUM REST ROOM AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (CENTRAL) SAMBALPUR IN SAMBALPUR

Approximate Cost of the Work : 59,15,865.72, Bid Security: ₹1,18,400/ (3) e-Tender No. 11-eT-SETT-SBP-25 NAME OF WORK: REPLACEMENT OF DILAPIDATED DOORS AND WINDOWS IN ALL SECTOR OF RAILWAY COLON SAMBALPUR SETTLEMEN

UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER SETTLEMENT/SAMBALPUR. Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹91,18,253.66, Bid Security : ₹1,82,400/-

Completion Period for the Work: 12 (Six) Months (for SI. No. 2 & 3). Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 30.12.2025 (for all Tenders).

Hrs. of 30.12.2026 (for all lenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such etenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is

documents of the above e vailable in website : www.ireps.gov.in Note: The prospective tenderers an advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen days before the date of closing of tender to

onle any changes / corrigenda issued for his tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal Dnly registered tenderer/bidder car articipate on extendering. articipate on e-tendering Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.)

PR-896/Q/25-26

Kendrapara: Forest personnel of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, during the early hours of Saturday, intercepted a mechanised fishing vessel and arrested eight fishermen for illegally fishing inside the designated "no-fishing zone" of the sanctuary. The forest officials seized the vessel along with fish catch, fishing equipment, and other related items, said Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary Ranger Kapilendra Pradhan Pradhan stated that surveillance has been intensified in the sanctuary to ensure a safe and congenial environment for the endangered Olive Ridley turtles, as the turtle mating season has begun in the deep sea. He further said that during routine sea patrolling, forest personnel spotted the mechanised fishing vessel inside the restricted zone, follows: lowing which the vessel was seized and the fishermen were arrested. The arrested fisher

8 arrested for illegal fishing in Gahirmatha

Lizard in food: 5 girls fall ill in Koraput school



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bandhugaon, Dec 13: Five girls fell ill Saturday after consuming rice allegedly contaminated with a lizard at the hostel of Baunshput Government Upper Primary School in Bandhugaon block of Koraput district. According to officials, the hostel houses 99

residents. Leftover rice from Friday night's dinner was served to the students around 8 am Saturday. While eating, students reportedly found parts of a lizard in their plates. Two students immediately discarded the rice in a drain and warned others not to eat.

The matter was reported to Warden Lily Mohanty, who informed the hostel-in-charge and headmaster, Sadananda Halwa. The headmaster alerted the medical team, and three ambulances were called to the hostel.

A team led by Dr Nihar Ranjan Sarangi from the Bandhugaon Community Health Center examined the students at the hostel. The affected girls complained of mild discomfort and were treated on site.

Doctors said the students recovered shortly afterward. A few students with itching and

cold symptoms were given medication. All students are reported to be in stable condition.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER NIMAPARA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NIMAPARA **Notice Invitation of Tenders**

e-Procurement Notice No.-07/2025-26 on dated 10.12.2025 E-mail Id: eenidnimapara@gmail.com

Type of Work Canal, Bridge & River Embankment Works Total No. of Work 5 (Five) Nos. Rs.20,700/- to Rs.44,700/-Bid Security (EMD) in Rupees Cost of Bids in Rupees Rs.6.000/-

Period of Completion 4 (Four) Calendar Months to 6 (Six) Calendar Months Bid Identification Bid Amount in Lakh Rs. of Bids online From 16.12.2025 No. Superintending NID-199/2025-26 Rs.20.63 ngineer, Nimapar 11.00 A.M. to NID-203/2025-26 Rs.44.63 Nimapara 5.30 P.M.

numapara | ate of opening of the Bid : 31.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M. ate of lottery : 06.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M. urther details can be seen from the Govt. Website

Class of Contractor

ww.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- Superintending Engineer OIPR-32097/11/0031/2526 Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara Union Bank

Regional Office : Sambalpur 1st Floor, Balaji Midtown, Budharaja,

Sambalpur- 768004, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice of 30/15 days for Sale of Immovable Secured Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial

Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with 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 (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India (Secured Creditor) will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of outstanding dues to the Union Bank of India from the Borrowers and Guarantors mentioned below. The Reserve Price and the Earnesi money deposit is stated in the column respectively For SI, No. 1 Date & Time of Auction: 15.01,2026 between 12.00 Noon, to 5.00 P.M.

For SI. No. 2 to 5 Date & Time of Auction: 30.12.2025 between 12.00 Noon. to 5.00 P.M. (with 10 min unlimited auto extensions)

ш	(With 10 Hill distributed date extendency)					
	SI. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Guarantor	Description of Property to be Auctioned	Total Dues (in ₹)	Reserve Price/ EMD / Bid increment	
	1.		All that part and parcel of the Commercial Building of Area: Ac. 0.008 Dec., Kissam: Gharabari in Khata No.: 368/1708, Plot No.: 1487, situated at Bada Bazar, P.O.: Khetrajpur, Dist.: Sambalpur, Mouza: Sambalpur Town Unit No. 9 Talbhata, Thana: Sambalpur No. 16, Tahasil: Sambalpur No.: 228, esa Bibi, W/o: Saidulla Khan at Bada Bazar, Dist.: erty of Hafiz Khan, North: Govt. Land, South: Property	₹14,71,274.55 as on 12.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	₹20,80,000/- / ₹2,08,000/- / ₹20,800/-	
	2.	Nayak, represented by Pradyumna Kumar Naik / Guarantor: All the Legal heirs of the deceased Kalpana Nayak, represented by Pradyumna Kumar Naik, All are At:	Land with commercial Building thereon situated at Mouza: Barsikiakhol, P.S.: Rampur, Tahasil: Redhakhol, Dist.: Sambalpur bearing MS Khata No.: 39/14, Plot No.: 139/397 having Area: Ac 0.40 Dec., Standing in the name of Pradyumna Kumar Naik, Prithiv Raj Singh Mantri, Khirabdhi Mahima & Jayashree Mahima (Legal heirs of Late Kalpana Nayak), Bounded by North: Vacant Land, South: Road, East: Vacant Land, West: Vacant Land	₹18,89,280.91 as on 05.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	₹32,19,750/- / ₹3,21,975/- / ₹32,198/-	
	3.	DEOGARH BRANCH / Borrower: Mr Arjun Mohan Sahoo, At: N H- 53, Near Traffic Chowk, Dist.: Deogarh - 768108 / Guarantor: Mrs. Gitanjali Sahu, At: Near College Chowk, Matru Niwas, Purunagarh, Dist.: Deogarh-768108	All that piece and parcel of Land situated at Area: 0.06 Dec., Khata No.: 154/209, Plot No.: 508, situated at Nehru Yuva Kendra, Dalmanpada Sahi, Mouza: Unit-9, Thana: Deogarh No.: 137, Tahasil: Deogarh-164, Dist.: Deogarh, Bounded by North: Deogarh Town Unit No.: 8 (Sarhad), South: Land of Mathura Mohapatra, East: Land of Talimbh Nayak, West: Land of Raghav Naik	₹16,95,486.71 as on 05.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	₹8,03,000/- / ₹80,300/- / ₹8,030/-	
	4.	Jenamani Dash, Co-Applicant: Mr. Dinesh Kumar Dash, S/o: Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, Both are At: Telenpali, Brajrajnagar, Dist.: Jharsuguda, Odisha-768216 North: Road, Plot No.: 6026 South: Plot No.: 6 Property No2: Land measuring Area: Ac. 0 6026, Kissam: Gharbari-III, at Telenpali, Mouz. P.S. No.: 39, Tahasil/Dist.: Jharsuguda in the	Property No1: Land measuring Area: Ac. 0.300 Dec., bearing Khata No.: 621/1545, Plot No.: 6014/9452, Kissam: Gharbari-III, at Telenpali, Mouza: Brajrajnagar Town Unit No.: 2, P.S: Brajrajnagar, P.S. No.: 39, Tahasil/Dist.: Jharsuguda in the name of Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, Bounded by 012, East: Plot No.: 6053, West: Plot No.: 6014(P).248 Dec., bearing Khata No.: 621/1543, Plot No.: a: Brajrajnagar Town Unit No.: 2, P.S: Brajrajnagar, le name of Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, Bounded by Road, East: Plot No.: 6027, West: Plot No.: 6015	₹18,22,745/- as on 11.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	Property No1: ₹32,00,000/- / ₹3,20,000/- / ₹32,000/- Property No2: ₹26,50,000/- / ₹2,65,000/- / ₹26,500/-	
	5.	SAMBALPUR MAIN BRANCH / Borrower: 1) H K JWELLERY, At: Badabazar P.O.: Khetrajour, Dist: Sambalour, Pin- 768006.	All the piece and parcel of Land & Building situated at Mouza: Sambalpur Town Unit No. 9, Talabhata, Thana: Sambalpur No. 16, Tahasil: Sambalpur No.	₹34,13,796/-	₹38,13,100/-	

2) Md. Sanaulla Khan, S/o Saidula Khan, At: 228, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, Pin-768006 Mohanty Para, Chitragupta Chowk, Sambalpur, bearing 1) Khata No.: 666 with Plot No.: 1486(P) Guarantor: Md. Iqbal Khan, S/o: Saidula Measuring an Area of Ac. 0.005 dec. in the name

Khan, At: Mohanty Para, Chitragupta Chowk, of Md. Sanaulla Khan, S/o Saidula Khan & 2) Khata No.: 666 with Plot No.: 1488(P) with area of Ac. 0.015 dec in the name of Md. Iqbal Khan, S/o: Saidula Khan, Bounded by North: Road, South: Property Md. Iqbal Khan, East: Road, West: Private Plot.

Date and Time of Inspection of Property for Intending Purchasers : upto 14.01.2026 (For SI. No.1) AND upto 29.12.2025 (For SI. No.2 to 5) during Banking Hours

Details of encumbrances if any: NIL

LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD : On or before the commencement of E-Auction For registration and login and bidding rules visit https://baanknet.com and https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/auction-property/view-auction-property.aspx

STATUTORY 30/15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6)/9(1) OF STATUTORY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 This May also be treated as notice under Rule 8(6)/9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to the borrower/s and guarantor/s of the said loan about the holding of E-Auction Sale on the above mentioned date

For any query please contact: Mob.: 7791865577 (SI. No.1)/9090776601 (SI. No.2)/8847877121 (SI. No.3)/9973164454 (SI. No.4)/

Place: Sambalpur Sd/- Authorized Officer Date: 12.12.2025 Union Bank of India

power post





Live within; be not shaken by outward happenings

SRI AUROBINDO



THINGS THAT

TO DO AND

REQUIRED

WERE FIRST

TAKEN UP

AND THEN

ABANDONED.

THIS WAS TRUE

EVEN WHEN THE

PROJECT WAS

AS HALLOWED

GANGE, TAKEN

IMMEDIATELY

AFTER THE

ELECTION

VICTORY

UP IN JUNE 2014

AS THE NAMAMI

WERE DIFFICULT

PLANNING AND

IMPLEMENTATION

Governance Illusion

overnance is hard and good governance, meaning efficient and effective governance, is harder. Optics is a poor substitute for outcomes, but when outcomes are hard to come by through governance, then optics can be relied upon rather than admitting failure.

When the airline business grinds to a halt and airports across India are an angry mess, the solution is to circulate photographs of an airline CEO folding his hands in supplication before the minister. Problem solved. When dozens die in a fire in a structure that shouldn't have existed, the solution is to bulldoze the remains of the structure. Of course, thousands of such structures remain.

Another satisfactory solution is renaming. In New India, MNREGA will now be called Pujya Bapu Rural Employment Guarantee Act and expanded. Ten years ago, a few months after taking office, prime minister Modi said in the Lok Sabha that MNREGA would be continued only because it would show how poorly Manmohan Singh's government had performed: 'My political instincts tell me that MNREGA should not be discontinued,' he said, mocking the Opposition benches, 'because it is a living memorial to your failures. After so many years in power, all you were able to deliver is for a poor man to dig ditches a few days a month.

Modi would instead let the scheme die naturally as his government

would create better jobs and MNREGA would not be required. After the government had taken office, Nitin Gadkari indicated that MNREGA would be limited to less than a third of India's districts and that wages would be lowered and delayed for beneficiaries to make the scheme unattractive.

The assumption was that job creation under Modi would make the scheme redundant. By December 2014, except for five states, all others had received significantly lower funds from the Union in 2014, compared to 2013. As India's economy began to weaken and unemployment rose, Modi began to invest more and more in the scheme he had called a failure. In 2014-15, MNREGA got Rs 32,000 crore; in 2015-16, Rs 37,000 crore; in 2016–17, 48,000 crore; in 2017–18, Rs 55,000 crore; in 2018–19, Rs 61,000 crore; in 2019-20, Rs 71,000 crore and in 2020-21, Rs 111,000 crore. The memorial under Modi was almost three times the size it had been under Manmohan Singh.

Since then sleight of hand, including keeping the MNREGA budget opaque and denying states access to funding, has ensured there is no transparency on demand. The renamed scheme now will solve all of this no doubt.

That has been our history of good governance: Things that were difficult to do and required planning and implementation were first taken up and then abandoned. This was true even when the project was as hallowed as the Namami Gange, taken up in June 2014 immediately after the election victory. It was given an outlay of Rs 20,000 crore 'to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga'. The Ganga required not so much cleaning—because it flowed

continually into the sea—as ensuring that further pollutants did not enter it. This was a granular problem that had to do with hundreds of places where effluent was being discharged into the river. Once it was learned that cleaning up required substantial effort, enthusiasm

for the project waned.

In February 2017, the National Green Tribunal observed that 'not a single drop of river Ganga has been cleaned so far', and that government efforts were 'only wasting public money'. The next year, the 86-year-old environmentalist G.D. Agarwal, who had been on a fast unto death for 111 days, died, having given up even water. A professor at the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur who had served on the Central Pollution Control Board, Agarwal had been demanding a law to protect the Ganga. A day before Agarwal died, Gadkari (who was Union minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation) said almost all of Agarwal's demands had been met.

Allocations to Namami Gange fell from Rs 2,500 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 2,300 crore in 2017–18 and then to Rs 687 crore in 2018–19. In 2019-20, about Rs 375 crore was spent. That year, the project was folded into a larger one now called Jal Shakti. When the lockdown in March 2020 led to the temporary shutting down of polluting units, the Modi government claimed that the Ganga had been cleaned. The government website for the 'National Mission for Clean Ganga' lists the minutes of the meeting of the council running it. Just two meetings were held over 10 years it seems, one on 14 December 2019 and the second on 30 December 2022

After 10 years and a thick stream of publicity, is the Ganga clean? The Opposition says no. 'Why has Ganga river gotten dirtier despite spending Rs 20,000 crore: Congress asks PM Modi' is a headline from the Press Trust of India from 14 May 2024.

That is the problem of talking about good governance after being in office for more than two terms. The record is before us, and continues to unfold daily. How many Indians are still convinced by optics? Most likely it is those people who want to be convinced that good governance abounds in New India.

WISDOM CORNER

I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.'

I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.

At least with me, the match starts much, much earlier than the actual match.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1503:** Nostradamus, an astrologer, physician, and the most widely read seer of the Renaissance, was born in Saint-Rémy, France.
- **1542:** Mary became queen of Scotland when her father, King James V, died on this day in 1542. She was six days old.

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

THE TRILATERAL

resident Putin came to India to attend the 23rd India-Russia bilateral summit with a heavy Ukraine baggage. He had just finished his marathon meeting with US Special Envoy Witkoff and Trump's sonin-law Kushner in Moscow when he came calling to Delhi for a crisp 27-hours Summit. However, despite the hoopla and din of the visit which was keenly watched by all power blocs with interest, one thing missed everybody's attention, the revival of the Russia-India-China (RIC) grouping.

RIC had found expression in a Kremlin policy paper believed to be authored by then PM Primakov in the late 1990s and after holding a couple of ministerial meetings had quickly slid into oblivion. This could find a new life. Given the tumultuous developments of recent months, and particularly after the second advent of Trump in the White House things have not been good for India badgered by a stiff 50% sanctions and for Modi at the receiving end of humiliation on the supposed ceasefire which was "arranged" by the US President.

Modi government seemed bent upon leveraging the Putin visit to the hilt knowing fully well that the Ukraine peace talks were leading nowhere. The visit therefore gave an opportune moment for Modi to smoke the peace pipe again. India is not neutral, it is on the side of peace, he declared. On the substantive side Delhi had to look for alternatives if the ongoing India-US trade talks did not lead to a satisfactory outcome and thus the elaborate economic talks took place underpinning the multifaceted dimensions of the relationship as part of the Programme for the Development of Strategic Areas of India-Russia Eco



In a recent opinion piece, the Chinese Consul **General in Kolkata advocated that China and India could synergize their efforts for global** peace and prosperity, an allusion to Xi's **Global Governance Initiative**

nomic Cooperation till 2030, and related agreements to trade in national currencies, remove non-tariff barriers, provide more market access on both sides with areas such as fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, mineral resources and critical raw materials brought on board to raise the level of bilateral trade to \$100 billion US on the non-energy side.

Oil imports from Russia having reduced to nearly 40% both in volume and value under sustained US pressure and playing lukewarm to Moscow's entreaties on SU 57s and S-500 (the fear of CAATSA looming large), India needs to play both sides in the muti-alignment mode. And now comes the crux. Can India stand up to the challenge? This was Modi's finest diplomatic hour. Note that China has fully supported India's stand to keep buying oil from Russia.

Delhi had therefore every reason to be cautious and coy on both arms and energy and instead root for the connectivity corridors to the Arctic and Polar regions, sign the RELOS

(Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Support) giving Russia a berth in the Indian Ocean in lieu of the lucrative deals on the Russian Far East with defence, security and minerals exploration being the nodal parameters, and advancing the FTA on the India-Eurasian Economic Union agreement, marking a new phase in the relationship.

The visit had been presaged by a joint op-ed piece sent by Ambassadors of the three leading European powers, France, Germany and UK, denouncing Russia's war with Ukraine which had met with a mild rebuke from the Indian Foreign Office. With his back to the wall Putin has so far played his cards close to his chest, rebuffed US and EU's efforts to stop the war insisting on territory grab, and cautioning Ukraine against joining any European grouping, NATO or EU. Of course, the Ukrainian President has been vocal in resisting such ceding of territories which had been originally favoured by Trump in his 27-point peace plan (now

reduced to 20). The US President has made it the focal point of his peace diplomacy though it is not clear whether India, also a part of the lateral peace efforts, stands party to the Trump plan or not. After playing to the gallery with more optics than content, Modi could pitch the ball to the next level of trilateral cooperation, that which will find favour with both Russia and China.

In a recent opinion piece, the Chinese Consul General in Kolkata advocated that China and India could synergize their efforts for global peace and prosperity, an allusion to Xi's Global Governance Initiative.

The angle of forming a new alternative to US hegemony cannot be missed while the pending bilateral issues can wait. On the other hand, with the current state of no-holds barred relations between Xi and Putin the latter's every move in Delhi would have stood endorsed by Beijing.

While the export of skilled Indian manpower to Russia, information, culture and visa facilitation formed the other elements of the longstanding India-Russia relationship touted as the "polestar" and steadiest of all, India would also have to cater to the vagaries of the White House with the Damocles sword of sanctions hanging overhead. Thus, soon after the Putin visit Modi had a "warm" telephone conversation with Trump as part of the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, a status which Delhi has also accorded to Moscow. The Trilateral, which had found a resurgence at the SCO Summit in Tianjin, could test Delhi's mettle in the days ahead.

> The writer is a retired diplomat and foreign policy analyst. Views expressed are personal.

SPECTRUM

Malay Mishra

WITH THE

CURRENT

RELATIONS

BETWEEN XI

AND PUTIN,

THE LATTER'S

DELHI WOULD

HAVE STOOD

ENDORSED BY

BEIJING

EVERY MOVE IN

STATE OF NO-

HOLDS BARRED

POLITICS

A US war crime in the Caribbean



Allan J Lichtman

THE ONLY **OUESTION NOW IS** WHETHER THOSE **RESPONSIBLE WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE**

TO THE EDITOR

are most welcome to contribute letters

requested to send their contact

address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and

suggestions, preferably by email, to:

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Readers of Orissa Post

(100 words), articles and

words). Contributors are

numbers and full postal

columns (between 600-1000

ecent reporting has revealed that on Sep-L tember 2, 2025, the US Navy launched a missile strike against an alleged drug-smuggling vessel in the Caribbean, killing all but two of the 11 crew members A second strike then killed the survivors, who were clinging to the overturned wreckage. Do those who authorized and carried out the second strike bear responsibility for a war crime? A legal precedent from World War II says they do.

On March 13, 1944, the German submarine U-852 torpedoed the Peleus, a Greek freighter chartered by the British Ministry of War Transport, sinking the vessel. Although most of the 35-man crew initially survived on rafts and debris, members of the submarine subsequently attacked them with machine-gun fire and hand grenades. Only three crewmen lived to recount their harrowing experience.

In the wake of this atrocity, the British captured and prosecuted U-852's commander and four crew members, not for sinking the Peleus, which was a legitimate military target, but for killing the survivors. A military court found all five guilty of a war crime. In rejecting every defense offered by the accused, the court established a firm legal and moral precedent that attacking shipwrecked survivors is a war crime, and that belligerents are obligated to protect those rendered helpless in armed conflict.

The judge advocate recognized the limitations faced by soldiers and sailors, stating that "no sailor and no soldier can carry with him a library on international law or have immediate access to a professor in that subject." But he also emphasized a fundamental truth: "Is it not fairly obvious to you that if, in fact, the carrying out of command involved the killing of these helpless survivors, it was not a lawful command, and that it must have been obvious to the most rudimentary intelligence that it was not lawful?

He then not only highlighted to the submarine crew the accountability enforced by military law, but also issued a timeless reminder that adherence to orders cannot supersede legal obligations in warfare: "To fire so as to kill

helpless survivors of a torpedoed ship was a grave breach of the law of nations. The right to punish persons who broke such rules of war had clearly been recognised for many vears.

Despite the decisive ruling against German commander and his crew, their actions occurred in the context of a declared war between Britain and Germany, where the fear of immediate naval retaliation were realities. By contrast, the September 2025 US strike rested on far weaker factual and legal assertions.

The Trump administrationclaims that drug cartels are effectively at war with the US, but it has not presented evidence linking those killed to organized criminal groups. Nor has it credibly defended its claim that the survivors threatened US security, especially given new revelations that the boat was headed to South America, not to the US.

True, officials speculated that the survivors sought to right the capsized, burning boat in an effort to salvage the alleged drug haul - assuming that the first strike had not destroyed or sunk the containers. But even if these

men - who lacked a radio to call for help -had managed to right the vessel and restart its engines after nearly an hour in the water, they would not have escaped vigilant monitoring by the US Navy. In a subsequent incident, the Navy rescued the survivors of a different missile attack on an alleged drug-smuggling vessel, only to release them to their home countries without charge.

The Peleus case set two clear precedents that the Trump administration has seemingly overlooked. First, it affirms that military personnel must refuse to carry out manifestly unlawful orders. Second, it establishes that killing helpless survivors of a wrecked vessel is a war crime. These principles reinforce the duty of accountability and the obligation of armed forces to comply with the laws of war, even amid the uncertainties and pressures of modern operations. The only question now is whether those responsible will be held accountable.

> The writer is a distinguished Professor of History at American University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Judging judges

Sir, Who's to judge the judges? It's an irony that a qualified judge is judged by politicians who have no prescribed qualifications to enter politics. Good judges won't succumb to pressure or dirty politics; they are their own conscience keepers. It's mind-boggling to review the record of Justice G R Swaminathan of the Madras High Court, who has disposed of 73,505 main cases in the last eight years and doesn't hesitate to start court at 9 a.m. and continue into the evening. Including miscellaneous cases, the judge has delivered verdicts in 120,426 cases so far. It's an irony that a judge of his calibre faces criticism for his judgment on Deepam at Thiruparankundram, given his stellar record of providing relief to thousands of litigants. Such attacks undermine judicial independence and discourage upright judges. Merit should be respected, not maligned by those with vested interests.

A P Thiruvadi, CHENNAI

Messi mess

Sir, Angry fans attending Lionel Messi's tour of India ripped up seats and threw items onto the pitch after his appearance at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium. Thousands of adoring supporters had paid up to 12,000 to catch a glimpse of the football star but were left disappointed when he merely walked around the pitch, obscured by a large group of officials and celebrities. When the Argentina and Inter Miami forward was whisked away by security after about 20 minutes, sections of the crowd turned hostile. West Bengal's Chief Minister was deeply disturbed and shocked, blaming the organisers—just as in Bengaluru's IPL episode. Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, has a large football fan base in an otherwise cricket-crazed country. In the city, it's common to see hundreds of thousands of fans gather for local-club derbies. Far more security personnel should have been deployed to protect the fans and prevent a Messi "mess".

Dorai Ramani Suresh, GHAZIABAD



TWO STATES





NAFED to open 50 urad procurement centres



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 13: The Uttar Pradesh government Friday said the NAFED is set to open 50 urad procurement centres across 17 districts of the state, where farmers will be able to sell their produce at a minimum support price of ₹7,800 per quintal.

Registration has already started, and procurement will begin shortly, it said in a statement.

Payments will be transferred directly to the farmers' bank accounts within three working days of the sale, it said.

Under the Aatmanirbhar Dal Yojana of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), direct procurement from farmers will continue until January 29, 2026. The initiative guarantees fair price and eliminates middlemen from the process,

Prayer meet held

for Dharmendra

Mathura(UP), Dec 13: People

gathered in large numbers here Saturday to offer prayers for legendary actor Dharmendra

at a prayer meet organised by Mathura MP and actor Hema

Dharmendra died November 24, just weeks shy of his 90th birthday after prolonged

Addressing the gathering in an emotional speech, Hema

Malini said she never imag-

ined she would have to orga-

nise a prayer meeting for her 'beloved Dharm ji". "It was an

inconsolable shock. We shared

an association of 57 years and worked together in 45 films,

more than 25 of which were

Describing him as simple,

humble and joyful, Hema Mali-

ni said Dharmendra remained

deeply connected to his roots despite immense stardom. "I still

feel surprised and happy that my

onscreen love became my life

partner in real life. Since our

love was true, we faced challeng

es together and got married,'

she said, calling Dharmendra a

loving husband, devoted father

to daughters Esha and Ahana,

and an affectionate grandfather

to his five grandchildren. Hema

Malini's daughters Esha and Ah-

ana Deol could not attend due to

Recalling his illustrious

career, the Mathura MP said

Dharmendra was passionate

about acting and appeared

in over 300 films, excelling in

action, romance, comedy and

intense roles, though comedy

remained his favourite. She al-

so highlighted his lesser-known

talent as an Urdu poet and said

she would ensure the publica-

tion of a book of his Urdu sha-

yari, a project he had planned.

personal reasons.

super hits," she said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the statement said.

NAFED state head Rohit Jaiman said that under the guidance of its Managing Director Deepak Agarwal, the entire system is being implemented swiftly, simply and with a strong farmer-first approach, ensuring that every eligible farmer benefits.

Procurement preparations are complete in Lalitpur, Jhansi, Mahoba, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Badaun, Bareilly, Hardoi, Unnao, Lucknow, Rampur, Sambhal, Bulandshahr, Moradabad, Sonbhadra, Sitapur and Shahjahanpur.

The farmers can bring their produce directly to the designated market centres for sale, Jaiman said. He also said the farmer-friendly procurement system ensures complete transparency. Payments will be credited to farmers' bank accounts within three working days, guaranteeing timely and fair compensation, he added.

Only registered farmers will be eligible under this scheme.

Registration can be completed through the e-Samridhi app or at any nearby NAFED centre, and details can be gathered from the farmer helpline 1800-210-1222, according to the statement.

In 2024, stray dogs bit over 1.2L people in Mumbai: Govt



Nagpur, Dec 13: More than 1.28 lakh people in Mumbai were bitten by stray dogs in 2024, raising concerns about the safety of citizens and prompting authorities to undertake measures like sterilisation and vaccination of free-roaming canines to control their population.

This information was shared by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in the state legislative council Friday in a written reply to queries by MLCs Sunil Shinde, Vasant Khandelwal, Sandip Joshi and others.

a similar menace in Nagpur. Shinde stated that more than 9,400 people were bitten in Nagpur, the second capital of Maharashtra, in 2024.

These legislators raised

concerns about the increas-

ing number of stray dogs in

the Brihanmumbai Municipal

Corporation (BMC) limits and

He said that a survey conducted by the BMC via Human Society International, as per the Animal Welfare Board rules, revealed that the number of stray dogs had come down from 95,172 in 2014 to 90,757 in 2024.

tion (NMC) limits, 9,427 people were bitten by stray dogs, while 1,28,252 people suffered dog bites in Mumbai as per the 2024 figures, Shinde added.

Several steps and programmes, like sterilisation and vaccination of stray dogs and rabies eradication, are being undertaken to control their population, he said.

Similarly, an independent portal has also been started to resolve citizens' grievances re lated to the issue.

Land parcels are being searched to set up shelters for aggressive and rabid dogs, he said. These figures are factored in in over 30 lakh cases of dog bites reported across Maharashtra in the last six years, an alarming number that averages to approximately 1,369 such incidents every day across the state.

Shinde had told the legislative assembly on Wednesday that there has been a significant increase in dog bite cases both in rural and urban parts of the state. Besides these cases, as many as 30 people have died due to rabies between 2021 and 2023.

World record for 'largest display

of posters' set in Pune Book Fest



Pune, Dec 13: A world record in 'largest display of posters' category has been set in Pune, an adjudicator of Guinness World Records confirmed Saturday.

"India has now surpassed the US to claim the record for the longest display of posters", said Guinness World Records adjudicator Swapnil Dangrikar. The record was achieved at a book festival organised at Ferguson College with the display of 1,678 posters featuring tribal words, surpassing the previous record of 1,365 posters set in the US in February 2025, organisers said.

The certificate mentions that the world record for the largest display of posters was achieved by Pune Book Festival, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University and RISE Foundation at Pune December 12.

Organisers said the record

is a tribute to tribal leader and freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda, whose life and work are being highlighted through a special pavilion as the festival.

The Pune Book Festival, or ganised by the National Book Trust (NBT), is being held from December 13 to 21.

"A dedicated Birsa Munda gallery has been set up to honour his contribution to tribal society and India's freedom movement. The Guinness World Record was created as part of this initiative by show casing posters containing tribal vocabulary," said festival

convenor Rajesh Pande. Social activist and Padma Shri awardee Girish Prabhune said Birsa Munda's work was multi-dimensional.

He said dying dialects needed to be preserved. Documenting tribal languages in the Devanagari script could help disseminate the knowledge embedded in them, he added

Earlier released vultures

guide new batch at Pench

People visit the Taj Mahal amid dense fog, in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, Saturday

released earlier in the wild were seen interacting and feeding with newly released birds during the soft release of critically endangered vultures at Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, marking a positive milestone in the state's vulture recovery programme.

Nagpur. Dec 13: Vultures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The State Forest department, in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Thursday initiated the second phase of captive-bred vulture release at Pench, according to an official statement.

A total of 13 vultureseight White-rumped Vultures (Gyps bengalensis) and five Long-billed Vultures (Gyps indicus)—were released after undergoing a structured acclimatisation process in a pre-release aviary.

The vultures were brought from Pinjore in Haryana in April 2025 and were trained to feed independently on carcasses and adapt to local environmental conditions before their release in the wild.

The aviary gate was kept open as part of the soft-release protocol, allowing the birds to leave voluntarily.

Friday, vultures released in an earlier batch in August 2024 were observed feeding

birds at the designated feed

BNHS Director Kishor Rithe said the interaction was a strong positive behavioural indicator, reflecting successful integration of the current batch into the local vulture

population. PTR and BNHS had earlier released 10 long-billed vultures in August 2024, two of which were later recorded moving across Pench landscapes in Maharashtra and

Madhya Pradesh. All released vultures have been fitted with GPS transmitters to monitor their movement, habitat use and survival. One white-rumped vulture remains under medical treatment and will be released once declared fit,

officials said. The Forest department and BNHS plan to carry out similar releases in Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserves in the coming months.

Scindia releases commemorative stamp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 13: The department of Posts Saturday released a commemorative stamp to mark the 150th anniversary of the Bombay Gymkhana, with Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia calling it a tribute to the institution's storied sporting legacy.

Scindia, who formally released the commemora-

150 YRS OF BOMBAY GYMKHANA

tive postage stamp at the Bombay Gymkhana here, expressed hope that it would act as a travelling messenger in the palm of



every individual as it journeys from envelope to envelope and hand to hand.

Much like sport itself, he said, the stamp carries stories and values, inspiring young boys and girls to take up sports,

remain active, and believe in the power of institutions to positively shape lives

Drawing a parallel between India Post and the Bombay Gymkhana Club, Scindia said that both institutions are root-

gagement, the statement said. The commemorative stamp will be available for the public through Philatelic Bureaux and available online through www.

ed in conveying emotions, con-

necting people, and bridging

generations, according to the

release. Established in 1875.

the Bombay Gymkhana has

stood as a distinguished pillar

of India's sporting and social

heritage, nurturing genera-

tions of athletes while serving

as a vibrant hub for cultural

and sporting pursuits, it said.

The institution has played a

vital role in fostering sports-

manship, camaraderie, and a

strong sense of community en-

epostoffice.gov.in, it added.

Kite prices surge up by 40% ahead of Makar Sankranti

RESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhaiinagar, Dec 13: A sharp increase in raw material costs has led to a nearly 40 per cent rise in kite prices this year, affecting manufacturers ahead of the Makar Sankranti festival

The minimum price of a kite, which was ₹5 last year, has increased to ₹7, a manufacturer

The Rajput family from the Buddi Lane area of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar has been engaged in the kite-making business for over 60 years. They supply kites across Maharashtra and to neighbouring states. Every year, both local and outstation buyers flock to



their shops during the festive season. At present, kite manufacturing is in full swing at the Rajput brothers' workshops.

Speaking about the price hike, kite manufacturer Anil Rajput said there has been a significant rise in the cost of raw materials compared to last year. "Last year, the paper rim cost us ₹900, which has increased to ₹1,100 this year. A bundle of 1,000 bamboo sticks

earlier cost ₹1,050, but the price has almost doubled to

around ₹2,000," he said. He added that the increase in production costs has directly impacted kite prices.

"The minimum price of a kite was ₹5 last year, which has gone up to ₹7 this year. We now have to convince customers about the revised rates, he said. Rajput also expressed concern about the future of the traditional family business.

"Kite making involves heavy physical labour. Our younger generation is not interested in continuing this work. At our age, we cannot switch professions, so we continue to run the business to support our family," he said.

Lucknow, Dec 13: Lucknow will host the 13th edition of the Repertwahr Festival from December 18 to 21, bringing together theatre, music, comedy, literature and contemporary cultural experiences at Janeshwar Mishra Park.

Held annually, the Repertwahr Festival has over the vears emerged as one of the prominent multi-arts platforms in Uttar Pradesh, attracting performers and audiences from across the country.

The four-day event this year will feature a mix of established names and diverse formats spanning multiple art forms, according to a statement issued by the event organisers.

According to the organisers, the theatre segment will be a key attraction, with productions such as "Mohan Ka Ma-



Repertwahr festival returns to Lucknow

sala", featuring actor Pratik Gandhi, "Jo Dooba So Paar' by Manav Kaul, "Vodka and No Tonic" starring Lillete Dubey, and "Ambaa" directed by Atul Kumar, scheduled across the festival evenings.

The music lineup will include singer-songwriter Anuv Jain, DJ Nikhil Chinapa and Indian rock band Euphoria, while

the comedy segment will feature stand-up artistes Aakash Gupta, Gauray Gupta and Gurleen Pannu, the statement added. According to the organisers, the literature programme titled "Shabd" will host poetry and spoken-word sessions by noted Urdu poet Waseem Barelvi, along with Badal Sharma, Himanshu Bajpai,

Pragya Sharma and other writers

and performers.

The organisers said a silent disco format curated by Chinapa has been introduced this year and will run alongside other performances on select evenings. A separate food arena showcasing traditional Lucknow cuisine will also be part of the festival, along with an artisanal bazaar, workshops for different age groups and a children's activity zone, the statement said.

The festival, the organisers noted, aims to reflect Lucknow's cultural traditions while engaging contemporary audiences through a wide range of performances spread across multiple stages.

Tickets for the festival are available on online platforms, and the event is scheduled to conclude on December 21 with a live performance by Euphoria. the statement added.

national



Today handed over appointment letters to NoKs of terror victims from **Kashmir Division. For these** families, today the long wait for justice has ended. With concrete steps for rehabilitation, we have restored their dignity and faith in the system

MANOJ SINHA | LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

CONG TO HOLD RALLY AT RAMLILA MAIDAN SUNDAY

The Congress will step up its campaign over the "vote chori" issue with a rally at the Ramlila Maidan here Sunday and seek to put the government and the Election Commission in the dock for "colluding" to allegedly rig elections. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi are expected to address the gathering





necessity to have a Leader

state assemblies, and Parlia-

ment. It is also a Constitutional SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER



'seva yatra' (service journey), my heart is filled with immense emotions. These two years have been the most significant of my life, because this time was not just about governance, but about service and dedication VISHNU DEO SAI

CHIEF MINISTER, CHHATTISGARH



aage kisne dekha hai (indulge

in merry making, who has seen the future

JP NADDA | BJP CHIEF

SHORT **TAKES**

Retired IAF personnel held for Pak links

Tezpur: A retired Indian Air Force personnel has been arrested in Assam's Sonitpur district for alleged links with Pakistani intelligence operatives, police said Saturday. Additional Superintendent of Police Haricharan Bhumij said preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had shared sensitive documents and information with Pakistani operatives over social media. Police have seized his laptop and mobile phone. The devices have been sent for forensic examination, though some data has been deleted, Bhumij said. The accused was a junior warrant officer in the IAF and had retired in 2002 from Tezpur's Salonibari base. He had later joined the electronics department of Tezpur University, but quit.

Portugal-bound family kidnapped in Libya

Mehsana (Gujarat): A couple from Gujarat's Mehsana district and their three-vear-old daughter were allegedly taken hostage in Libya for a ransom of Rs 2 crore while trying to immigrate to Portugal, officials said Saturday. Kismatsinh Chavda, his wife Heenaben and daughter Devanshi were kidnapped in the North African nation, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, en route to Portugal. where the man's brother is settled. Mehsana Superintendent of Police Himanshu Solanki said. He said that the family from Badalpura village in the district was travelling with the help of a Portugal-based agent with the plan to settle in the European country. The official said Mehsana Collector SK Prajapati has been informed about the

3.9 magnitude

tremor hits Kutch Ahmedabad: A 3.9 magnitude tremor was recorded in Kutch district of Gujarat Saturday afternoon, the Institute of Seismological Research (ISR) said. No casualties or damage to property were reported, a district disaster management official said. The tremor was recorded at 2:47 pm with its epicentre 13 km North North East (NNE) from Gadhshisha in the district, the Gandhinagar-based ISR said. This is the fifth tremor of over 3 magnitude recorded in Kutch this month.

KERALA CIVIC POLLS RESULTS

Boost for UDF, Lotus



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec **13:** In a morale-boosting show ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls, Congress-led UDF Saturday secured a decisive victory in Kerala's local body elections, dealing a blow to the LDF while the BJP wrested the city civic body from decades of Left control in what Prime Minister Narendra Modi described as the state politics' "watershed moment."

Interestingly, it was the "beauty of democracy" remarks of Congress Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvanathapuram, Shashi Tharoor, congratulating the BJP that took the cake Saturday during the counting of polled votes across the state.

Tharoor said he campaigned for a change from 45 years of the LDF "misrule", but the voters have ultimately rewarded another party that also sought a clear change in governance.

"That is the beauty of de-

mocracy. The people's verdict the UDF overall or for the BJP in my constituency," Tharoor said. A year after getting its first MP from the southern state known for its largely left of the Centre politics and dominated by the Congress and CPI (M) led blocs, the BJP wrested Thiruvananthapuram Corporation from the CPI (M), breaching the 45 year-old stronghold of the Left party.

The victory opened up the possibility of BJP getting its first Mayor in Kerala, with the state's first woman IPS officer, 64 year-old R Sreelekha being tipped for the post.

While the opposition highlighted the Sabarimala gold loss and other governance-related issues that swayed the voters away from the CPI (M)-led LDF, the ruling party announced introspection, with months to go for the general elections

The UDF's campaign, which focused on a range of issues, including the politically sensitive Sabarimala gold missing case, seems to have resonated with voters across urban and rural landscapes. The coalition won control of a majority of municipal corporations, municipalities, block panchayats, and gram panchayats, marking a clear shift in local governance.

The final results of the local body polls, which were held in two phases in the state earlier this week, came as a huge setback for the LDF, which lost control of four out of the five municipal corporations where it was in power.

Assets worth ₹92cr seized blooms in state capital in anti-Naxal action: Govt

Giving exhaustive details of action taken against the Maoist extremists, the government said only three districts remain 'most-affected' by Naxalism in 2025 compared to 36 in 2014



New Delhi, Dec 13: The Centre has significantly constricted the financial lifelines of Naxals with seizure of assets worth Rs 92 crore through a multi-agency coordinated action, inflicting severe moral and psychological damage to "urban naxals" by tightening control over their information networks, a government statement said Saturday.

To meet the firm target of making the country completely Naxal-free by March 2026, the government has created a dedicated vertical in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which has seized Rs 40 crore, state authorities have seized an additional Rs 40 crore, while the Enforcement Directorate has attached assets worth Rs 12 crore.

"Simultaneous action has in-

In 2025 so far, 317 **Naxals have been** neutralised, 862 arrested and 1,973 surrendered

flicted severe moral and psychological damage on urban Naxals and tightened control over their information warfare networks,' the statement said. Giving exhaustive details of

action taken against the Maoist extremists, the government said only three districts remain "most-affected" by Naxalism in 2025 compared to 36 in 2014.

In 2025 so far, 317 Naxals have been neutralised, 862 arrested and 1,973 surrendered, it said.

"A total of 28 top Naxal leaders have been neutralised, intee Member in 2024 and five in 2025," it said.

Listing out major successes by security forces, the government said 27 hardcore Naxals were killed in Operation Black Forest, 24 surrendered in Bijapur May 23, 2025, and 258 surrendered in October 2025 across Chhattisgarh (197) and Maharashtra (61), including 10 senior Naxals "Total Naxal-affected districts

have been reduced from 126 in 2014 to just 11 in 2025. Fortified police stations increased from only 66 until 2014 to 586 constructed in the last 10 years," it said. Police stations recording Naxal incidents dropped sharply from 330 across 76 districts in 2013 to merely 52 in 22 districts by June 2025.

In addition, 361 new security camps have been established in the last six years and 68 night-landing helipads have been built to strengthen operational reach.

'The government has adopted a unified, multi-dimensional and decisive strategy against Naxalism, replacing the scattered approach of previous governments," the statement said.

The government has also given a parallel push to improve infrastructure in the Naxal-infested zones with 12,000 km of roads constructed in the areas between May 2014 and August 2025.

Projects for a total of 17,589 km have been approved at a cost of Rs 20,815 crore, ensuring all-weather connectivity and mobility in previously inaccessible areas, it said.

No conspiracy by **Dileep proved in** actress assault case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Dec 13: The prosecution had "miserably" failed to prove the conspiracy charge against Dileep in the sensational 2017 actress sexual assault case, a local court has observed while citing inconsistencies and lack of sufficient evidence against the Malayalam star.

The full judgement of En nakulam District and Principal Sessions Court Judge Honey M Varghese was released late Fri day, and has revealed the judge also pointing out at unsustain able arguments put forth by the prosecution.

"The prosecution miserably failed to prove the conspiracy between accused No.1 (Pulsar Suni) and accused No.8 (Dileep) in executing the offence against the victim," the court held. It examined in detail, the

prosecution's allegation that Dileep had hired the prime accused to sexually assault the survivor and record visuals, including close-up footage of a gold ring she was wearing, to establish her identity.

On page 1130 of the judgment, under paragraph 703, the court framed the issue as whether the prosecution's contention that NS Sunil (Pulsar Suni recorded visuals of the gold ring worn by the victim at the time of the occurrence, so as to clearly disclose her identity, was sustainable.

The prosecution contended Dileep and Suni had planned the recording so that the actress' identity would be unmistakable, with the video of the gold ring intended to convince Dileep that the visuals were genuine.

'Surya Kiran' aerobatic team of the Indian Air Force performs during the Combined Graduation Parade of the 216th course at the Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, near Hyderabad, Telangana, Saturday

Cong slams PM over India's absence from 'Pax Silica' group

New Delhi, Dec 13: The Congress Saturday said it is perhaps not very surprising that India is not part of a US-led strategic initiative to build a secure silicon supply chain, given the "sharp downturn" in the Trump-Modi ties, and asserted that it would have been to "our advantage if we had been part of this group".

Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the news of India not being part of the group comes after the PM had enthusiastically posted on social media about a telephone call with his "once-upon-a-time good friend and a recipient of many hugs in Ahmedabad, Houston, and Washington DC".

In a lengthy post on X, Ramesh said, "According to some news reports, the US has excluded India from a nine-nation initiative it has launched to reduce Chinese control on high-tech supply chains. The



and Australia." "Given the sharp downturn in the Trump-Modi ties since May 10th, 2025, it is perhaps not very surprising that India has not been included. Undoubtedly, it would have been to our advantage if we had been part of this group.'

Korea, Singapore, the Nether-

lands, the United Kingdom, Is-

rael, the United Arab Emirates,

"This news comes a day after the PM had enthusiastically posted on his telephone call with his once-upon-a-time good friend and a recipient of many hugs in Ahmedabad, Houston, and Washington DC," the Congress leader asserted.

The new US-led strategic initiative, rooted in deep co operation with trusted allies has been launched to build a secure and innovation-driven

silicon supply chain. According to the US State Department, the initiative called 'Pax Silica' aims to reduce coercive dependen cies, protect the materials and capabilities foundation al to artificial intelligence (AI), and ensure aligned nations can develop and deploy transformative tech nologies at scale.

How competitive faith politics is recasting Bengal's 2026 poll battle

MANDIR-MASJID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 13: As West Bengal heads into an election year, a spate of temple-mosque announcements, scripture spectacles and date-sensitive symbolism is pushing the state's politics into unfamiliar territory, sharpening communal polarisation in a borderland shaped by partition memories, demographic anxieties, and a coexistence periodically tested by political mobilisation.

From bordering Murshidabad district to the planned township of Salt Lake, on the eastern fringes of Kolkata, faith has emerged as the most audible idiom of political mobilisation, often drowning out conversations on migration, jobs,

December 6, which marks the anniversary of the Babri Masiid demolition.

Suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir pressed ahead with laying the foundation stone of a mosque "modelled on the original Babri structure" in Murshidabad's Rejinagar, under unprecedented security cover. Kabir argued that the polit-

ical moment itself had shifted. "People are trying to pretend that faith has no place in Bengal's politics. That phase is

over. Whether one likes it or not, questions of identity, dignity and religious rights will shape the next election. The next elections will be fought on questions of honour and Kabir told PTI.

belonging. Anyone denying that is not reading the ground,' In nearby Banjatiya in Murshidabad, BJP leaders also



the party's political tightrope als for a Ram temple, framing managing a minority base that it as resistance to what they called minority appeasement. accounts for nearly 30 per cent Elsewhere, the saffron party of the electorate, while arrestmassive Bhagavad Gita recital projected as "five lakh voices chanting together" December 7.

Senior BJP leaders and nationally known monks filled the dais, even as organisers insisted the event was spiritual rather than political.

Kabir was quick to announce a similar Quran recital event in Murshidabad district.

For decades, Bengal's political mobilisation rested largely on class, language and welfare, with religion operating as a secondary identity marker. Even during earlier communal flare-ups, mainstream parties avoided sustained, competitive religious symbolism.

However, Murshidabad. where Muslims form a numerical majority and memories of

In Salt Lake, posters appeared announcing an Ayodhya-style Ram temple complex with a hospital, school and old age home. The proposed foundation ceremony is slated for Ram Navami next year, signalling how religious symbolism is now being projected deep into spaces associated with gover nance and power.

Bengal is a border state born of Partition, its social fabric shaped by refugee influx, demographic churn and episodic violence. While it never fully followed the Hindi heartland's template of sustained religious polarisation, the scars remain real and politically exploitable

With the assembly elections months away, Bengal appears headed into a season of competitive symbolism, where mosques and temples are no longer merely places of faith, but strategic markers on a po-

prices and governance, as rival ing signs of Hindu drift amid Partition displacement remain sharpened its pitch around culplayers test how far religious tural assertion, while the TMC intensifying identity politics. alive, has emerged as the epicentre with 'mandir-masjid' polassertion can stretch Bengal's moved quickly to distance itself Kolkata's Brigade Parade Grounds, the most politically electoral grammar ahead of the itics increasingly dominating from Kabir's actions. The response underlined assembly polls. conducted groundwork rituloaded public stage, hosted a public conversation. larised political map.

national



The trainees have undergone quality training. I am confident that they will discharge their duties with integrity, honesty, sensitivity and discipline

EX-BUREAUCRAT RAJ KUMAR GOYAL TO TAKE OATH AS CIC

Former IAS officer Raj Kumar Goyal will be sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) by President Droupadi Murmu Monday, officials said. A threemember panel headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recommended Goyal's name, they said Saturday



Organisation a pivotal role in while making significant contributions to the socio-economic development of people living in

PEMA KHANDU I CM. ARUNACHAL PRADESH

participate in pic 2024, again in 2025, and I promise

arrive for the Bastar Olympic in 2026, Naxalism will have been wiped out from Chhattisgarh and the entire country AMIT SHAH I UNION HOME MINISTER



DEVENDRA FADNAVIS CM, MAHARASHTRA





2 and below are total hell-holes are people level. Hyper religious, orthodox, communal, backward, STUPID ...!!! As bad as Pune is, I would take it over almost any place in India even today to live in.

@_amitbehere

SHORT TAKE

90% of IndiGo's flight op returned to normal

Pune: About 90 per cent of returned to normal. Unior Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said Saturday. He was speaking to reporters in the city, where he attended the inauguration of the Pune Book Festival at Fergusson College. Asked about the recent crisis faced by carrier IndiGo, Mohol said, "Air services will resume gradually in the country. Prime Minister Modi ii has issued instructions. and an explanation has been sought from IndiGo. About 90 per cent of their flight operations have returned to normal." IndiGo had earlier cancelled thousands of flights nationwide after failing to plan for tighter safety regulations. The cancellations had peaked on December 5 before declining.

Congress slams govt over MGNREGA name change

The scheme will now be renamed as 'Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojna', and the number of work days under it would be increased from 100 days at present to 125 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: With the Cabinet approving a Bill to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). the Congress Saturday questioned the need for renaming the scheme and asked "what is wrong with the name Mahatma Gandhi" that the government had to take this step.

Reacting to the development, Congress general secretary incharge communications Jairam Ramesh said the Modi government is a "master" at renaming schemes and laws.

"They renamed the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and the rural LPG distribution programme to Ujjwala. They are experts in re-packaging and branding," he

"They hate Pandit Nehru but it seems they also hate Mahatma Gandhi. What's wrong with the name Mahatma Gandhi, why rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to Pujya Bapu Employment Guarantee Scheme?" Ramesh said.

The Union Cabinet Friday approved a Bill to rename the MGNREGA and increase the number of work days, sources said. According to them, the scheme will now be renamed as 'Pooiva Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojna', and the number of work days under it would be increased from 100 days at present to 125 days.

Congress general secre-



Bharat Abhiyan to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and the rural LPG distribution programme to Ujjwala. They are experts in re-packaging and branding

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY IN-CHARGE COMMUNICATIONS

tary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal said the PM, who once called MGNREGA a "monument of failure", is now renaming it to claim credit for the revolutionary scheme.

"It's yet another way of erasing Mahatma Gandhi from our national psyche, especially from the villages, where, he said, India's soul resides," he alleged. "This move is also nothing

but a cosmetic change to paper over the deliberate neglect being meted out to this scheme,' Venugopal said on X.

MGNREGA workers have been demanding higher wages, but the Centre has been reducing allocated funds for the scheme year after year, he said.

"The arrears keep piling up, and it seems to be a carefully planned strategy to engineer a slow death for the scheme. In reality, this government has no intent of delivering welfare - and is merely putting up a pretence when it has run out of ideas," Venugopal alleged.

"But Mr Modi, rename it all you want, the people know it was Dr Manmohan Singh ji and Smt Sonia Gandhi ji who brought this transformative scheme to every village of India," he said.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, better known as MGNREGA or NRE-GA, is a flagship scheme of the government aimed at enhancing livelihood security of households in the rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It was

Omar throws open Asia's longest ski drag lift in Gulmarg

Srinagar, Dec 13: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Saturday threw open Asia's longest ski drag lift at Gulmarg, widely known as the 'skiing capital of India', officials

Abdullah also inaugurated the world's highest revolving multi-purpose hall in the Affarwat area of Gulmarg, which also houses a restaurant, they said.

Abdullah said the ski drag lift at Kongdori in Gulmarg in Baramulla district will significantly enhance the skiing infrastructure in the hill station and strengthen its standing on the international

This landmark addition will significantly enhance skiing infrastructure and further strengthen Gulmarg's stand ing on the international winter sports map," the chief minister's office (CMO) said in a post on X.



The 726-metre-long ski drag lift, a device that takes one to higher ground while skiing by holding on to a moving bar, has been built at a cost of ₹3.65 crore, officials said.

Abdullah also dedicated a series of tourism infrastructure projects worth more than ₹17 crore to the people of Gulmarg and its adjoining areas, marking a significant milestone in strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's position as a premier global winter tourism destination,

The chief minister inaugurated the Integrated Skiing Training and Adventure Tourism Centre in Gulmarg and launched integrated ski training courses to strengthen winter sports training facilities in the area.

TMC, BJP, Congress slam organisers for chaos at Messi event



CPI(M) calls it 'black day' for Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 13: Both ruling Trinamool Congress and opposition BJP lashed out at the organisers of an event featuring Lionel Messi in Salt Lake stadium Saturday, which ended in chaos as irate spectators went on a vandalisation spree for not having a proper view of the football icon.

Demanding action against the organisers, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said in a statement that the "overzealousness" of the organisers and people close to them to crowd Messi and take selfies with him prevented the spectators from the gallery, who shelled out hefty amounts for the event, from having a proper view of the football star, and it infuriated them. "Why should no action be

taken against the organisers for this mess? Why was there no proper planning? Why did chaos break out? It forced Messi to leave the stadium and the chief minister of West Bengal could not attend and accord him a warm welcome

state," the TMC state general secretary said.

Describing the incident as a big let-down for the sport-lov ers of the state, Ghosh said that in 2011, when Messi came to the stadium for the first time, the event was so well-organised.

"I remember there was a match and Messi took the cor ner kick 50 metres from my press gallery seat. Everything went off so smoothly and Kolkata held its head high then,' he said.

BJP state president and Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya alleged that "some fraudsters, in their greed to mint money, created this situ ation". Stating that the entire responsibility for this mess lies with the state government he alleged that TMC leaders indulged "greedy organisers who were busy with self pub licity, depriving people, who bought tickets, to have a proper view of the football icon"

Bhattacharya said that the incident tarnished the image of the state.

Union minister and senior

BJP leader Sukanta Majumdar slammed the TMC and the state administration for the chaos.

Vice Prez, PM, MPs pay tributes to fallen heroes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Vice President CP Radhakrishnan Saturday led Parliamentarians in paving floral tributes to those who died fending off terrorists who attacked the Parliament House in 2001.

On the 24th anniversary of the attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Radhakrishnan, who is also the Raiva Sabha Chair, were among the first to offer tributes.

A brief function was held outside the now old Parliament building (Samvidhan Sadan) every December 13 to mark the day.

Separately, President Droupadi Murmu paid tributes to the "courageous heroes" who laid down their lives while protecting Parliament, and said the country remains indebted to them and

"On this day, we reaffirm India's commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms,' Murmu said in a post on X.

CISF personnel presented a salute or "samman guard at the venue, after which a moment of silence was observed to mark the anniversary. Till 2023, the CRPF used to offer 'salami shastra' (present arms).

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, a senior party leader, were also present at the event. Union ministers Kiren Rijiju, Jitendra Singh and Arjun Ram Meghwal also lined up to offer flower petals at the photographs of the personnel who went down foiling the attack.



Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel pay tribute during a ceremony marking the 2001 Parliament

attack's 24th anniversary, at the Samvidhan Sadan, in New Delhi, Saturday

AQI HITS SEASON'S WORST AT 431

GRAP Stage IV curbs invoked in Delhi-NCR

Schools are required to run classes in a hybrid mode (online and physical) not only for primary students but also for higher classes (VI to IX and XI) in Delhi and the most affected NCR districts, with students given the option to attend online where feasible

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) Saturday invoked the strictest measures under its air pollution control plan, GRAP, including a ban on all construction and demolition activities in Delhi-NCR after

pollution levels rose sharply amid unfavourable meteorological conditions.

The Sub-Committee on GRAP had earlier in the day decided to invoke Stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) across the entire NCR

with immediate effect as air quality continued to worsen. However, noting a further

sharp rise in pollution levels since morning, the sub-committee held an urgent meeting at 6.30 pm to review the situation and weather forecasts by the IMD and IITM.

It observed that Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI), which stood at 401 at 10 am in the 'severe" category, continued to rise steadily due to very low wind speed, a stable atmosphere and unfavourable weather conditions that prevented dispersion of pollutants.

The AQI climbed to 431 at 4 pm, 436 at 5 pm, 441 at 6 pm and 448 at 7 pm, the panel said. It said these conditions, along

with calm winds and mist or haze during the night, are likely to persist, further trapping pollutants over the region. This is in addition to the ac-

tions under Stages I, II and III of GRAP already in force in NCR, the statement added.

the strictest in Delhi-NCR.

Stage IV of GRAP brings restrictions

Under this stage, the entry of trucks into Delhi is stopped,

except those carrying essential commodities or providing essential services. However, CNG, LNG, electric and BS-VI diesel trucks are allowed.

The plying of Delhi-registered diesel heavy goods vehicles (BS-IV and below) is banned, again with exceptions only for essential services.

All construction and demolition activities are banned, including even linear public projects such as highways. roads, flyovers, power transmission lines, pipelines and telecom works, which are otherwise allowed in lower stages.

classes in a hybrid mode (online and physical) not only for primary students but also for higher classes (VI to IX and XI) in Delhi and the most affected NCR districts, with students given the option to attend online where feasible.

Schools are required to run

Under Stage IV, state governments are asked to consider additional emergency steps, such as closing colleges and educational institutions, shutting non-essential commercial activities and even introducing odd-even rules for vehicles if the pollution situation worsens further. During winters, the Del-

hi-NCR region enforces restrictions under GRAP, which categorises air quality into four stages - Stage I (Poor, AQI 201-300), Stage II (Very Poor, AQI 301-400), Stage III (Severe, AQI 401-450), and Stage IV (Severe Plus, AQI above 450).

Unfavourable meteorological conditions, combined with vehicle emissions, paddy-straw burning, firecrackers and other local pollution sources, lead to hazardous air quality levels in Delhi-NCR during winters.

Bill for single higher edu regulator likely in Parl next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: A Bill regulator for institutions of higher education is required to facilitate universities and other higher educational institutes become independent and self-governing, officials said.

The Bill is likely to be intro duced in Parliament next week after it got the Union Cabinet's nod Friday.

The proposed legislation, which was earlier christened the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill, has now been named Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill.

A single higher education regulator, which was proposed in the new National Education Policy (NEP), looks to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Educa tion (AICTE), and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

"The Bill proposes to set up a Higher Education Commission of India to facilitate universities and other higher educational institutes become independent and self-governing institutions and to promote ex cellence through a robust and transparent system of accreditation and autonomy. It is like ly to be introduced (in Parlia ment) in the coming week," ar official said. While the UGC presently

oversees non-technical higher education in the country, the AICTE oversees technical edu cation, while the NCTE is the regulatory body for teachers education.

The Commission is proposed to be set up as a single higher education regulator, but medical and law colleges will not be brought under its ambit.

It is proposed to have three major roles -- regulation, accreditation and setting professional standards. officials said.

international



After this meeting with Putin, we hope to have the opportunity to discuss the peace plan with US President Trump as well. Peace is not far away; we see

KING CHARLES SHARES GOOD NEWS

King Charles III said Friday that his cancer treatment will be reduced in the new year because of early diagnosis, effective intervention and adherence to doctor's orders



Thailand rejects Trump's ceasefire, strikes continue

Bangkok, Dec 13: Thailand's

leader vowed Saturday to keep

fighting on the disputed border with Cambodia as fighter jets

struck targets hours after US

President Donald Trump said he

Caretaker Thai Prime Minis

ter Anutin Charnvirakul said

the Southeast Asian nation

would "continue to perform

military actions until we feel

no more harm and threats to

Trump, who brokered a

ceasefire in the long-running

border dispute in October,

spoke to Anutin and Cambodi-

an premier Hun Manet Friday

and said they had agreed to

agreement in statements after

their calls with Trump, and An-

utin said there was no ceasefire.

actions this morning already

spoke," Anutin posted on Face-

book. The White House did not

respond to a request for com-

ment on the continued fighting.

Saturday on Facebook, said he

welcomed a proposal by Ma-

laysian Prime Minister Anwar

Ibrahim, who has been a media-

tor in peace talks, to cease hos-

tilities from Saturday evening.

ASEAN grouping, in a Facebook

post urged both sides to "refrain

from any further military ac-

tions including the use of force

or forward movement of armed

He said an ASEAN observer

team led by the Malaysian chief

of defence forces would be de-

ployed to the border and the US

government would provide sat-

ellite monitoring capabilities.

Anutin said "there has

units" starting at 1500 GMT.

Anwar, chair of the 10-nation

Hun Manet, in a statement

"I want to make it clear. Our

Neither mentioned

our land and people'

"cease all shooting".

had brokered a new ceasefire.

instructions of President Trump, we, the United States, will on potash



JOHN COALE | ENVOY, USA

Pakistan **Army remains** fully focused on both internal and external challenges, including hostile hybrid campaigns, extremist ideologies.



ASIM MUNIR | CHIEF OF DEFENCE

undermine national stability

The government is going to start the second phase of **Operation Devil** Hunt to help ensure public safety

and combat the growing threat of illegal arms JAHANGIR ALAM CHOWDHURY

SHORT TAKES

Pak fishermen's kin seek release

Karachi: The families of 11 Pakistani fishermen, including two teenage boys, who have been arrested by Indian maritime authorities this week, have appealed for their release, pleading they are just poor fishermen. The families urged the Pakistan government to get them released through diplomatic channels. Ahmed Brohi, the father of one of the arrested fishermen, Ghulam Mustafa, said they all lived close to each other in Ibrahim Hyderi, a fishing village in west Karachi. "We are all poor people, and we earn our livelihood through fishing. I urge the government to do something because we have already suffered a lot in the past," he said Saturday. Pakistan and Indian governments regularly exchanged prisoners, and most of them were poor fishermen. However, the process has slowed down since last year due to the ongoing tensions between the two countries.

Dhaka high-rise fire: 42 rescued

Dhaka: A massive fire broke out early Saturday on the ground floor of a 12-storev mixed-use building in a market in Bangladesh's capital city, officials said. However, no casualties were reported in the blaze at Jabal E Nur Tower in the Babu Bazar area of Keranigani, and fire service officials rescued at least 42 people from the building, the state-run BSS news agency reported. The incident marks the second major fire in a multi-storey building in Dhaka in two months. On October 14. a massive blaze ripped through a chemical warehouse and an adjacent garments factory in the capital, killing at least 16 people. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel were also deployed at the site to assist in maintaining law and order, controlling crowds and ensuring the smooth movement of emergency responders, BGB public relations officer Shariful Islam said.

Nepal sees huge pro-Oli rally

Kathmandu: Tens of thousands rallied for the party of Nepal's ousted prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, Saturday, in the largest gathering in the Himalayan country since youth-led anti-graft protests forced him out three months ago. Police estimated 70,000 attended the rally in Bhaktapur near the capital Kathmandu to launch a three-day convention of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). Organisers had said before the rally they would bring out 300,000 people. The event "is the biggest mobilisation of supporters" by any party in the capital since the anti-graft protests, said political analyst Puranjan Acharya.

Trump admin faces lawsuit

Washington, Dec 13: California and 19 other US states filed a lawsuit Friday seeking to block President Donald Trump's \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visas for highly skilled foreign workers.

The lawsuit in federal court in Boston is at least the third to challenge the fee announced by Trump in September, which dramatically raises the cost of obtaining H-1B visas. Currently, employers typically pay between \$2,000 and \$5,000 in fees. California Attorney Gener-

al Rob Bonta's office said in a release that Trump lacks the power to impose the fee, opens new tab and that it violates federal law, which allows immigration authorities to collect only fees necessary to cover the cost of administering visa programs

The H-1B program allows US employers to hire foreign workers in specialty fields. The tech industry, with many companies headquartered in California, is particularly reliant on workers who receive the visas

Bonta, a Democrat, said the

EU to indefinitely freeze Russian assets

REUTERS

Brussels, Dec 13: The European Union agreed Friday to indefinitely freeze Russian central bank assets held in Europe, removing a big obstacle to using the cash to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia.

The EU wants to keep Ukraine financed and fighting as it sees Russia's invasion as a threat to its own security. To do so, EU states aim to put to work some of the Russian sovereign assets they immobilised after Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

A first big step, which EU governments agreed Friday, is to immobilise 210 billion euros (\$246 billion) worth of Russian sovereign assets for as long as needed instead of voting every six months on extending the asset freeze.

This removes the risk that Hungary and Slovakia, which have better relations with Moscow than other EU states, could refuse to roll over the freeze at some point, forcing the EU to return the money to Russia.

The indefinite asset freeze is meant to help convince Belgium to support the EU's plan to use the frozen Russian cash to extend a loan of up to 165 billion euros to Ukraine to cover its military and civilian budget needs in 2026 and 2027.

The loan would be paid back by Ukraine only when Russia pays Kyiv war damages, making the loan effectively a grant that advances future Russian reparations payments.





\$100,000 fee would create unnecessary financial burdens for providers of vital services such as education and healthcare, exacerbating labor shortages and threatening to cut services.

The states joining California in the lawsuit include New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, New Jersey and Washington.

The White House, in response to other lawsuits, has said the new fee is a lawful exercise of Trump's powers and will discourage employers from abusing the H-1B program.

California says fee violates immigration law, threatens

White house claims fee will prevent H-1B program abuse

Two other legal challenges are pending

Critics of H-1B visas and other work visas say they are often used to replace American workers with foreign employees who will work for less. But business ers on H-1B visas are a critical

means to address a shortage of qualified American workers.

......

merce, the country's largest business lobby, and a coalition of unions, employers and religious groups have filed separate lawsuits challenging the fee. A judge in Washington DC is set to hold a hearing in the

Trump's order bars new H-1B recipients from entering the United States unless the employer sponsoring their visa has made the \$100,000 payment. The administration has said the order does not apply to existing H-1B holders or those who applied before September 21.

Trump in the order invoked would be detrimental to US in terests.

Bonta's office said Friday the \$100,000 fee far exceeds the cost of processing H-1B petitions, rendering it unlawful. It added the US Constitution bars Trump from unilaterally that is reserved for Congress.

The US Chamber of Com-

Chambe's lawsuit next week.

his power under federal immigration law to restrict the entry of certain foreign nationals that

been no agreement on halting anything", when asked by reporters about the Malaysian proposal. Thailand's foreign minister told a press conference the country would cooperate with the observer team, but any ceasefire would need to

"We can't just announce a ceasefire while the fighting is going on," he said. Cambodia and Thailand have

be preceded by talks.

been exchanging heavy-weapons fire at multiple points along the 817-km (508-mile) border since Monday, in some of the heaviest fighting since a five-day clash in July. Trump halted that fighting, the worst in recent memory, with calls to both leaders. Trump, who has repeatedly said he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize, has been keen to intervene again to rescue the truce. Thailand suspended it last month after a Thai soldier was maimed by a landmine, one of many that Bangkok says were newly laid

Cambodia, which nominated Trump for the peace prize in August, rejects the landmine allegations. Thai Defence Ministry spokesman Rear Admiral Surasant Kongsiri said Saturday that clashes had taken place across seven border provinces and Cambodia had fired heavy weapons, "making it necessary

by Cambodia.

for Thailand to retaliate". The army said two civilians had been seriously injured after a rocket landed in Sisaket province. Cambodia's Information Ministry said Thai forces had struck bridges and buildings and fired artillery from a naval vessel.

Hundreds of thousands of people on both sides of the border have been displaced since the fresh fighting broke out.



A member of the Palestinian Civil Defense participates in a search and rescue operation in a destroyed house that collapsed amid heavy rains, in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza strip

Iran arrests Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Dec 13: Iran has arrested Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, her supporters have said.

A foundation in her name said Friday that she was detained in Mashhad, some 680 km northeast of the capital, Tehran, while attending a memorial for a human rights lawyer recently found dead under unclear circumstances.

A local official reportedly acknowledged arrests had been made, but did not directly name Mohammadi, 53. It wasn't clear if authorities would immediately return her to prison, where she had been serving a sentence until her temporary release in December 2024 for medical purposes.

However, her detention

comes as Iran has been cracking down on intellectuals and others as Tehran struggles with sanctions, an ailing economy and the fear of a renewed war with Israel. Arresting Mohammadi may spark increased pressure from the West at a time when Iran repeatedly signals it wants new negotiations with the United States over its nuclear program — something that has yet to happen.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said it was "deeply concerned" by Mohammadi's arrest. The committee "calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately clarify Mohammadi's whereabouts, ensure her safety and integrity, and to release her without conditions," it said in a statement.

Her supporters Friday de-



scribed her as having been "violently detained earlier today by security and police forces." They said other activists had been arrested as well at a ceremony honoring Khosrow Alikordi, a 46-year-old Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate who had been based in Mashhad.

"The Narges Foundation

calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained individuals who were attending a memorial ceremony to pay their respects and demonstrate solidarity," a statement read. "Their arrest constitutes a serious violation of fundamental freedoms.'

Alikordi was found dead earlier this month in his office, with provincial officials in describing his death as a heart attack. However, a tightening security crackdown coincided with his death, raising questions. Over 80 lawyers signed a statement demanding more information. What we witnessed today is the Islamic Republic's latest assault on the most basic human freedoms — where even mourning a slain lawyer becomes a punishable act," said Hadi Ghaemi,

the executive director of the New York-based Centre for Human

Rights in Iran. "When peaceful citizens cannot mourn without being beaten and dragged away, it reveals a government terrified of truth and accountability. It also reveals the extraordinary bravery of Iranians who refuse

to surrender their dignity." Footage purportedly of the ceremony showed Mohammadi with a microphone, calling out to the crowd gathered without wearing a hijab, or headscarf She started the crowd chanting the name Majidreza Rahnavard, a man whom authorities hanged from a crane in a public execution in 2022. Footage published by her foundation also showed her without a hijab, surrounded by a large crowd.

Trump appears in newly released photos from Jeffrey Epstein's estate

Washington, Dec 13: Congressional Democrats released 19 new images from the estate of the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein Friday, including photos of now-President Donald Trump, as a deadline for an extensive release of documents related to the disgraced financier nears.

Trump is featured in three of the photos shared by House Oversight Committee Democrats, who said they are reviewing more than 95,000 images produced by the estate.

A second image shows Trump standing beside Epstein, and a third, less-clear image shows him seated alongside another woman, whose face is also redacted, with his ed tie loosened. It was not clear when or where the photos were taken.

"Everybody knew this man," Trump told reporters at the White House Friday. "He was all over Palm Beach. He has photos with everybody. I mean, almost - there are hundreds and hundreds of people that have photos with him. So that's no big deal."

White House spokeswoman



TRUMP FANNED EPSTEIN "It's time for the media to CONSPIRACIES

Bannon, Gates, Summers and

pepublicans accuse Democrats of **politicizing investigation

ustice department to release Epstein files by December 19

about Epstein to his own supporters. Many Trump voters believe Trump administration officials have covered up Epstein's ties to powerful figures and obscured details surrounding his death, which was ruled case, and that it had found no "client list" or people who might have been involved in sex trafficking, or any evidence that Epstein had blackmailed anyone.

any third parties in the Epstein

A Reuters/Ipsos poll this week found that just half of Re publicans approve of Trump's handling of the Epstein case, well below his overall 85% ap proval rating in his own party

Trump and Epstein were friends during the 1990s and early 2000s, but Trump says he broke off ties before Epstein pleaded guilty to prostitution charges. Trump has consistently denied knowing about Epstein's abuse and sex traf

stop regurgitating Democrat a suicide, in a Manhattan jail In one black-and-white photo, Abigail Jackson said Trump's talking points and start asking The Epstein scandal has been The Justice Department said Trump is seen smiling with sevadministration "has done more Democrats why they wanted to a political headache for Trump for months, partly because he eral women — whose faces are for Epstein's victims than Demin July that there was no evihang around Epstein after he redacted — on each side of him. ocrats ever have.' was convicted," she said. amplified conspiracy theories dence to justify investigating ficking of underage girls.

business



The whole magic of competition may turn out to be a curse if market players start colluding. cartelising, and abusing their market power or dominance

KD SINGH | DIRECTOR. CC

ICC DEAL: JIOSTAR REBUFFS RUMOURS

Leading media firm JioStar said it is fully committed to honour its contractual obligations with the International Cricket Council (ICC) in letter and spirit. The clarification comes after reports that the leading broadcaster plans to move away from the \$3-billion contract ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026





around it on the grounds of privacy. They have no concerns about giving it internally to an independent office or whatever we establish inside Sebi for this. But, putting it out as a matter of thing to the public domain,

they have issues TUHIN KANTA PANDEY | CHAIRMAN, SEBI

This winter season. Goa, Kerala Raiasthan and the **Himalavan states** dominate domestic travel interest on Airbnb, owing to their beaches. backwaters, heritage, winter

weather and outdoor experiences AMANPREET BAJAJ COUNTRY HEAD, INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, AIRBNB

We would end up at around 22 per cent growth in 2025, January to December, with a revenue of ₹11.000 crore.



NS SATISH | PRESIDENT, HAIER

SHORT **TAKES**

SBI passes rate cut

benefit to borrowers New Delhi: The State Bank of India (SBI) has announced marginal reductions in key lending benchmarks and select term deposit rates, effective from December 15. The bank reduced the rate on 2 to less than 3 years tenor to 6.40 per cent from 6.45 per cent. Senior citizens will receive a 50 bps premium over it, and their rate was cut to 6.90 per cent from 6.95 per cent. Other retail term deposit slabs were kept unchanged, a statement said. The changes affect domestic retail term deposits below ₹3 crore, the Marginal Cost of Funds-based Lending Rate (MCLR), the External Benchmark Linked Rate (FRI R) and the Base Rate. The bank reduced the popular 444-day "Amrit Vrishti" denosit rate to 6.45 per cent from 6.60 per borrowing costs of home, auto and MSME loans by reducing or Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) rates across all tenors by 5 basis points. The MCLR rate overnight and one-month was reduced to 7.85 per cent, three months to 8.25 per cent, six months to 8.60 per cent, one year to 8.70 per cent, two years to 8.75 per cent and three years to 8.80 per cent. Earlier this week, the government informed that there has been no capital infusion by the government in public sector banks since the financial year 2022-23, as they have significantly improved their financial performance to turn profitable and

Wipro, Microsoft ink 3-year AI partnership

strengthened their capital

position.

New Delhi: IT services major Wipro Friday announced a strategic partnership with technology giant Microsoft and the launch of Microsoft Innovation Hub at its Partner Labs in Bangalore, aimed at helping enterprises accelerate adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) solutions across sectors. Wipro said the three-year collaboration seeks to help enterprises transform into frontier firms - early leaders in AI adoption that are redefining work and unlocking value by embedding AI into core operations. The alliance combines Wipro and Microsoft will co-develop industry-specific AI solutions for financial services, retail, manufacturing, healthcare and life sciences, airports and other verticals.



GOLD, SILVER SPARKLE

Yellow metal surges by ₹4,000 per 10 grams

White metal jumps by ₹17,000 per kilogram

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 13: Gold and silver prices witnessed a sharp surge in the domestic market this week, tracking strong gains in global bullion markets. Gold prices rose by around ₹4,000 per 10 grams, while silver prices jumped by nearly ₹17,000 per kilogram.

According to data from the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), the price of 24-karat gold increased by ₹4,188 to ₹1,32,710 per 10 grams, compared to ₹1,28,592 a week ago.

The price of 22-karat gold climbed to ₹1,21,562 per 10 grams from ₹1,17,777, while 18-karat gold rose to ₹99,533 per 10 grams from ₹96,444.

Silver prices outperformed gold, registering a sharper weekly rise.

The price of silver surged by ₹16,970 to ₹1,95,180 per kilogram, up from ₹1,78,210 per kilogram a week earlier.

Earlier Friday, silver touched the ₹2 lakh mark to hit an all-time high of ₹2,013,88 per kilogram on the Multi-Commodity Exchange (MCX) during the intraday



The rally in domestic bullion prices is largely driven by continued strength in international markets, with both precious metals hovering close to their all-time highs

trade.

The price of the future contract expiring on March 5, 2026, rose over ₹2,400 during the day before settling at ₹2,00462, up ₹1,520 against the previous session's closing of ₹1,98,942.

"Gold and silver ETFs have been quiet heroes of the year, delivering standout returns even as equity markets saw bouts of volatility. Silver, es-

pecially, stole the spotlight a rare combination of booming industrial demand from solar. EVs and electronics, alongside tightening global supply, pushed prices sharply higher," said Nikunj Saraf, CEO, Choice Wealth.

Gold too held its ground and climbed steadily, supported by persistent central-bank buying and investors seeking safety amid geopolitical and inflation

Gold and silver ETFs have been quiet heroes of the year, delivering standout returns even as equity markets saw bouts of volatility. Silver, especially, stole the spotlight - a rare combination of booming industrial demand from solar. EVs and electronics, alongside tightening global supply, pushed prices sharply higher

NIKUNJ SARAF | CEO, CHOICE WEALTH

worries, he added.

The gold future contract expiring February 5 surged 1.87 per cent to close at ₹1.34.948 per 10 grams on MCX Friday. In the retail market, the 24-carat gold price settled at ₹132,710 per 10 grams, up over ₹4,600 from the previous day's closing of ₹1,28,596 per 10 grams, according to the IBJA.

The rally in domestic bullion prices is largely driven by continued strength in international markets, with both precious metals hovering close to their all-time highs. On the COMEX, gold was trading at \$4,328 per ounce, while silver stood at \$62 per ounce.

Nifty 50, Midcap 150 emerge as top indices

New Delhi, Dec 13: Nifty 50 and Nifty Midcap 150 emerged as best-performing indices in November, with a growth of 1.87 per cent and 1.59 per cent, respectively, a report said Saturday.

Meanwhile, Nifty 50 outperformed with a return of 7.27 per cent, 5.87 per cent, and 8.59 per cent over the last 3 months, 6 months, and 1-year period, respectively.

At the same time, the Nifty Midcap 150 continued to show steady traction with gains of 7.93 per cent, 6.01 per cent, and 7.12 per cent across the same 3-month, 6-month, and 1-year periods, Motilal Oswal Mutual Fund said in its report.

The broader market also delivered healthy gains, with the Nifty 500 gaining 0.94 per cent in the previous month, with large and midcap stocks up about 1-2 per cent and smallcaps corrected by around 1-3 per cent. Over the last 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year, the index has consecutively given positive returns of 6.55 per cent, 4.96 per cent and 5.94 per cent, the report noted.

The Nifty Smallcap 250 Index showed mixed momentum, declining 3.36 per cent during the month, while recording a moderate 1.37 per cent gain over the



past 3 months.

However, returns remained subdued over longer periods, with the index slipping 0.60 per cent over 6 months and 5.55 per cent over the 1-year horizon. The Nifty Microcap 250 In

dex also reflected volatility registering a 2.83 per cent de cline in November. According to the report, the Nifty Next 50 Index ended the month with a marginal decline of 0.98 per cent but maintained positive momentum over the medium term with gains of 5.16 over 3 months and 3.56 per cent over 6 months, while delivering -2.25 per cent over the 1 year.

Sector performance remained mixed with IT delivering an increase of 4.74 per cent, Auto 3.60 per cent, Banks 3.42 per cent and Healthcare 2.30 per cent in November. The Defence sector delivered the stronges annual performance with an impressive 19.43 per cent return, emerging as the best-performing segment over the year.

UCO holds awareness camp



Bhadrak: UCO Bank organised an awareness camp titled "Your Money, Your Right" at RCM Conference Hall in Bhadrak recently. In this camp, information was provided to facilitate the settlement of unclaimed bank deposits to their legitimate claimants and aiming to reunite people with forgotten money by encouraging proactive claims and reducing funds. This initiative has been taken on the instructions of Union Department of Financial Services (DFS) to ensure that the public has full rights over their money. DM-cum-Collector, Bhadrak, Dillip Ku Routroy, RBI AGM Soumya Ranjan Sahoo, SLBC In-charge Lingaraj Nayak, UCO Bank Zonal Manager of Balasore Sudeep Dakua, OGB RM Asish Nayak and DDM NABARD Bhadrak Deepak Sahoo were present on this occasion. The meeting was coordinated by Manoranjan Panda, Senior Manager, UCO Bank. LDM Bhadrak Rajeev Kumar Ranjan gave vote of thanks.

Election of Bank of Baroda Retired Officers' Association

Bhubaneswar: Bank of Baroda Retired Officers' Association. Odisha Election of Bank of Baroda Retired Officers' Association for different portfolios has been completed recently. From Odisha Kulamani Behera has been elected as Vice-President of the Zonal committee. Fakir Ch Swain has become one of the committee members. Umesh Ch Pat has been elected as National vice-President. The newly elected members will have a general body meeting in Odisha shortly.

Malabar launches 15th edition of 'Brides of India' campaign in City

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveiled the 15th edition of its flagship 'Brides of India' campaign, celebrating the diversity and cultural richness of Indian bridal traditions Saturday.

The campaign was launched at the brand's Saheed Nagar store here in the presence of actress Lumraina Satpathy and members of the Malabar management team.

Recognised as one of India's largest bridal jewellery campaigns, the 2025 edition features 22 brides and 10 celebrities, including Sabyasachi Mishra, Alia Bhatt, Kareena Kapoor Khan, NTR, Karthi and Anil Kapoor, reflecting the scale and emotional depth of the initiative. As part of the campaign, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is offering up to 30 per cent discount on making charges of



gold, uncut and gemstone jewellery, and up to 30 per cent off on diamond value.

Speaking on the occasion, MP Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said the 15th edition marks a significant milestone, highlighting how Indian brides honour tradition while expressing individuality, backed by the brand's commitment to transparency and quality.

The Brides of India collection spans regional bridal styles across the country, from Rajasthani polki and South Indian temple jewellery to Kerala and eastern Indian traditions, with pan-India accessibility

Malabar continues to position itself as a one-stop bridal jewellery destination, offering culturally rooted and contemporary designs across gold, diamond and gemstone jewellery.

Cancellation chaos: **IndiGo estimates** over \$55mn payout

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 13: India's Indi-Go Friday estimated a payout of more than ₹5 billion (\$55.19 million) in total to customers impacted by the carrier's mass cancellations last week.

The airline had scrapped around 4,500 flights last week because of poor pilot roster planning, leaving tens of thou sands of passengers stranded following which it was directed by the civil aviation regulator to cut 10% of its domestic win

ter schedule. The budget airline said in a post on X it was in the process of identifying flights where customers were severely impacted and stranded at airports

IndiGo will compensate customers whose flights were "cancelled within 24 hours of departure time and/or to customers severely stranded at certain airports," it added.

December 3, 4 and 5.

UPDATED PAPERS

Shiprocket eyes ₹2,342cr via IPO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Temasek-backed e-commerce enablement platform Shiprocket has filed updated draft papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise a little over ₹2,342 crore through its initial public offering (IPO).

The IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to ₹1,100 crore along with an offer for sale of ₹1,242.3 crore by the selling shareholders, according to the updated draft red herring prospectus (UDRHP).

As part of the OFS, Lightrock, Tribe Capital, Bertelsmann, Arvind Ltd, Gautam Kapoor, Saahil Goel, and Vishesh Khurana will be diluting their stakes. Going by the papers filed Friday, the company plans to use the proceeds to support the growth of Shiprocket's platforms by investing in marketing initiatives and strengthening its technology infrastructure for both its core and emerging businesses.

Also, a portion of the funds will be used to repay or prepay certain borrowings, along with the related interest. In addition, the company intends to deploy part of the proceeds towards inorganic growth through potential acquisitions and for general corporate purposes.

Kalyan Jewellers unveils new showroom in Bhubaneswar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: Kalyan Jewellers, one of India's most trusted and leading jewellery brands, has strengthened its presence in Odisha with the launch of its all-new showroom in Bhubaneswar Saturday.

The grand inauguration was graced by Bollywood and the recently launched Lila collection. Speaking at the event, Ak-

Apoorva, Antara, Hera, Rang

shay Kumar said, "I am truly delighted to be part of the inauguration of Kalyan Jewellers' new showroom. It is an honour to represent a brand that has consistently championed trust, transparency and a strong customer-first philosophy. I am confident that patrons in this city will appreciate the brand's exceptional service standards and diverse jewellery

Commenting on the expansion, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director, Kalyan Jewellers, said, "With the inau guration of our new showroom in Odisha, we aim to create a comprehensive shopping destination that caters to the evolving needs of our customers. while staying firmly rooted in our timeless values of trust and transparency."

To mark the launch, the brand announced special inaugural offers, including flat discounts on making charges and value addition across gold, premium, studded, temple and antique jewellery. The showroom also offers Kalvan Jewellers' Special Gold Board Rate for a limited period.

Indriya opens 2nd store in Odisha, expands presence in Cuttack



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 13: Indriya, the jewellery brand from the Aditya Birla Group, has strengthened its footprint in Odisha with the opening of its second store in the state, located in Cuttack.

The new store has been designed to offer an immersive retail experience, celebrating Odisha's rich jewellery heritage while blending it with contemporary design aesthetics.

Spread across thoughtfully curated zones, the outlet features a dedicated bridal lounge, a karigari room, and a vast collection of over 28,000 intricately crafted jewellery designs, reflecting both tradition and modern elegance.

With the launch of the Cuttack store, Indriya has expanded its nationwide presence to 41 outlets across major cities in India, including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune, Bangalore, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar, among others.

The expansion underlines the brand's focus on making fine craftsmanship and timeless designs accessible to customers across culturally

significant regions. Commenting on the launch, Sandeep Kohli, CEO, Indriya, said, "Odisha holds a special place in our expansion journey. The encouraging re sponse to our Bhubaneswar store inspired us to further deepen our presence in the state. With Cuttack, we aim to celebrate the region's rich artistic legacy while offering contemporary jewellery that resonates with today's cus

Franchise owners Sanjeev Hans, Sangeeta Hans and Amit Dharap, along with senior Indriva officials, were present at the inauguration.

actor and brand ambassador

The newly opened show-

room showcases an extensive

range of jewellery collections

across Kalyan Jewellers' pop-

ular house brands, including

Muhurat (wedding jewellery),

Mudhra (handcrafted antique

jewellery), Nimah (temple

jewellery), Glo, Ziah, Anokhi,

Akshay Kumar.

SUNDAY | DECEMBER 14, 2025 | BHUBANESWAR

GOAT Tour Messi-ed up in Kolkata

For a city that prides itself on its deep footballing culture, the scenes of broken chairs, ripped banners and angry fans stood in stark contrast to the promise of the day, as a muchanticipated Messi appearance ended in chaos at one of India's largest football arenas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 13: Chaos at the Salt Lake stadium here during a Lionel Messi event Saturday escalated into a major law-andorder episode with police detaining the prime organiser for alleged mismanagement, even as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ordered a high-level inquiry and apologised to fans who failed to see the football icon.

What was billed as a marquee sporting spectacle unravelled into disorder as thousands of spectators protested after being unable to get a clear glimpse of Messi, triggering vandalism inside the stadium and sharp political and administrative reactions later in the day.

Accompanied by long-time strike partner Luis Suárez and Argentine teammate Rodrigo De Paul, Messi, the World Cup-winning captain, arrived at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan around 11.30 am.

His vehicle was parked near the touchline and, as he stepped onto the field, he was quickly encircled by VIPs, organisers, celebrities and security personnel, leaving spectators in the galleries straining for a view.

Messi walked a short distance on the pitch and waved briefly towards the stands amid chants of "Messi, Messi". Fans,



however, soon realised that he remained tightly cordoned off and barely visible from large sections of the stadium.

As word spread that the football star had left prematurely, anger spilt over. Bottles and plastic chairs were hurled onto the pitch, sponsor banners and hoardings were torn down, fibreglass seats smashed, and sections of the crowd attempted to breach barricades to force their way onto the field.

The chaos forced an abrupt curtailment of the programme,

with several invited dignitaries, including Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, unable to participate as

City of Nizams shows the way

Messi's programme in Hyderabad was in stark contrast to the mayhem in Kolkata as the second leg of the GOAT India Tour ended on a positive note thanks to thorough preparations, sound planning, and



About 50,000 spectators, many of whom had paid ₹4,000 to ₹12,000 -- and in some cases up to ₹20,000 in the black market -- watched helplessly as a swarm of politicians, VVIPs, security personnel, and assorted hangers more interested in selfies than crowd control surrounded Messi. leaving the fans at the Salt Lake Stadium angry



People pose for pictures near the newly unveiled 70-feet statue o Argentine footballer Lionel Messi, in Kolkata, Saturday. Messi virtually unveiled the statue as part of his 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025'

> the event, posing for photographs in front of the sponsorship hoardings. The CM presented a memento to Messi while Gandhi gave one to Saurez. He took a tour of the stadium, waving to the

trio of players and Reddy at the

felicitation towards the end of

Messi will reach Mumbai Sunday for his third leg of the

GOAT Tour 2025. He will wind up his visit on Monday in New Delhi where he will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

SHORT **TAKES**

PCB miffed after ICC ignores Pak skipper

Karachi: The Pakistan Cricket Board is unhappy with the International Cricket Council after the global governing body released a promotional poster of next year's T20 World Cup ticket sales without the country's captain Salman Ali Agha on it. A reliable source in the PCB said the matter had been taken up with the ICC as the promotional poster featured on five captains - Survakumar Yadav (India), Aiden Markram (South Africa), Mitchell Marsh (Australia), Dasun Shanaka (Sri Lanka) and Harry Brook (England), "We faced the same issues when the Asia Cup was held a few months back and that time the broadcasters had started a promotional campaign without our captain featuring in it." the source said. He said it was only after the PCB spoke to the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), the situation changed. He said while Pakistan was not in the top five teams in the ICC T20 rankings but it had a rich legacy and remains one of the top draws in the World Cup.

Salah back in squad after talks with Slot

Liverpool: Mohamed Salah returned to Liverpool's squad for the Premier League match against Brighton Saturday after holding talks with manager Arne Slot. Salah was named as a substitute for the game at Anfield. The Egypt forward's future was thrown into doubt last weekend when, in an explosive outburst to reporters, he said his relationship with Slot had broken down after being dropped for three straight games and that he felt like "someone doesn't want me in the club." Salah was then left at home when Liverpool traveled to Inter Milan for a Champions League match Tuesday, with Slot saying he did not know if Salah would play again for the club. Salah was an unused substitute for the 3-3 draw with Leeds last Saturday, after which he opened up on his frustrations. Before that, he'd been an unused sub in a win at West Ham and came on at halftime of a home draw against Sunderland, Salah is Liverpool's biggest star and also the club's record scorer in the Premier League. He has four league goals in 13 appearances this season.

ODISHA MASTERS

Isharani, Unnati, Kiran enter finals after gritty semis battles



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 13: Top-seeded Unnati Hooda and compatriot Isharani Baruah set up the women's singles final while second seed Kiran George set up the men's singles title showdown against Indonesia's Muhamad Yusuf in the Odisha Masters Super 100, here Saturday. The 18-vear-old Hooda, a winner of the 2022 edition and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters, was

stretched by former junior world No. 1 Tasnim Mir before prevailing 18-21, 21-16, 21-16 in a hard-fought semifinal that

After conceding the opening game, Hooda controlled the rallies better and showed supe rior temperament in the closing stages of the next two games to book her place in the final. In the other semifinal, Assam's

Isharani produced a strong comeback to defeat Tanvi Hemanth 18-21, 21-7, 21-7. In the men's singles, Geroge

progressed to the final after beating Rounak Chouhan 21-19, 8-21, 21-18 in a clash that lasted 53 minutes.

In the mixed doubles semifinals, India's S Kanapuram and R. Uthayasooriyan bowed out after going down 16-21, 19-21 to fifth seeds Dejan Ferdinansyah and B Wardana of Indonesia, while Sathwik Reddy and Reshika Uthayasooryan too bowed out in the other last-four clash.

The women's doubles pair of Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam too lost at the semifinal stage.

Gill, SKY's poor form under scanner

The five-match series between India and South Africa is currently tied 1-1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharamsala, Dec 13: The countdown to save his place in the playing XI begins for a beleaguered Shubman Gill, who is likely to get three matches against South Africa to prove his worth before the Indian team management switches to a Plan B' ahead of the T20 World Cup, starting in six weeks.

As India gear up to play the third T20I against the Proteas Sunday in sub-10-degree temperatures in the lap of the iceclad Dhauladhar range, things are suddenly heating up in the Indian dressing room, with the prolonged poor form of skipper Suryakumar Yadav coming under the scanner.

Worse, his deputy Shubman Gill, who was pushed into the XI at the expense of a settled Sanju Samson, is not inspiring

much confidence. The South African pace attack featuring Anrich Nortje, Marco Jansen, Lungi Ngidi, Ottniel Baartman and Lutho Sipamla — has shown how to bowl on Indian tracks, and the HPCA Stadium strip, offering extra bounce and some movement off the surface, will cer-



tainly keep them interested. Among all T20 sides, South Africa, in terms of personnel, appears to have the requisite balance to win the trophy in the Indian subcontinent this time. Quinton de Kock's return, along with the likes of Aiden Markram, Dewald Brevis, Donovan Ferreira, David Miller and all-rounder Jansen, gives their batting an intimidating look.

With only eight games,

starting from the third T20I, left before the start of the T20 World Cup title defence, India's under-fire head coach Gautam Gambhir won't be able to afford, two out-of-form top-order batters in the starting line-up.

discipline.

translator.

"I am very happy to be in

Hyderabad in the midst of all

the love and affection shown by

you all," Messi said through a

Messi and his Inter Miami

team-mates Luiz Saurez and

Rodrigo de Paul took part in a

GOAT Cup penalty shootout, with Reddy also turning up in

football attires, and conducted

football clinics with children

Senior Congress leader Ra-

before leaving the stadium.

Being the skipper of the side, Surya will certainly have immunity going into the T20 World Cup despite being completely out of form for the past one year but same can't be said about Gill, who wasn't the original choice as an opener.

Gill's entry into the T20 setup was a classic case of trying to fix something that ain't broken and things haven't looked good so far. In this backdrop, Gill would need to bat out of his skin to prove that Ajit Agarkar-led committee wasn't wrong in throwing Samson under the bus for one bad series against England.

The stylish Indian Test and ODI skipper will have to find his T20 game and at least score in two of the three matches if he doesn't want Samson to get his rightful place back or for that matter, find Yashasvi Jaiswal, with a fabulous T20I strike-rate of 165, enter the fray during New Zealand series

MAIDEN APPEARANCE

India storm into Squash WC final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 13: India came up with a spirited performance to beat two-time champions Egypt 3-0 and make their maiden appearance in the Squash World Cup final, here Saturday.

Seeded second, India will take on Hong Kong China, who got the better of Japan in the other topfour clash, in the summit clash.

National champion and 45th ranked Velavan Senthilkuman swiftly got India off the blocks by defeating world No. 96 Ibrahim Elkabbani 7-1, 7-3, 7-6 be fore the country's top-ranked women's player Anahat Singh (world No. 28) made it 2-0 with a tough 6-7, 7-5, 7-3, 3-7, 7-3 win over 44th-ranked Nour Heikal

Abhay Singh, who had part nered Anahat to win bronze at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023, then overcame Adam Hawal 7-5, 6-7, 7-5, 7-6 as the hosts stunned powerhouse Egypt, who had won the title in 2012 and 2023.

This was India's best showing in the tournament after they reached the semifinals in 2023 when they had lost to Malaysia to settle for bronze.

WINTER DREAM INDIAN SKIER CHASES OLYMPIC

Himalayan mountaineering instructor quits job to **chase Olympic dream**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milan, Dec 13: Most of Bhavani Thekkada's competitors grew up on skis. She grew up on a coffee farm — in southern India. So as a cross-country skier, she's a little behind.

Thekkada has been hitting European tracks in recent weeks trying to keep her Olympic dream alive. She's a long shot to qualify for the Milan Cortina Winter Games, but she's reaching some other goals along the way.

"I will be really grateful and happy if even one person out there in India is inspired by my journey and wants to do skiing. which already people are — I've been getting a lot of messages,' the 30-year-old Thekkada told The Associated Press in an interview.

Thekkada is chronicling her journey on social media and making headlines back home. Her bronze medal in a 5-kilometer race in Chile in September, even though just a handful of athletes competed, was hailed as India's first international medal in women's cross-country skiing.

Last month's 10-kilometer World Cup race in Finland was a reality check. In an elite field, Thekkada finished last among



81 athletes, more than 16 minutes behind the winner. Frida Karlsson of Sweden. US star

ful and happy if even one person out there in India is inspired by my journey and wants to do skiing, which already people are — I've been getting a lot of BHAVANI THEKKADA

Jessie Diggins finished fifth. 'The top 80 girls who were competing with me had a whole team with them. They had coaches, they had wax technicians, they had managers," said Thekkada, who has won several national titles in India. "I was standing there with a few years of skiing (experience)... a

couple of hours of training with

some coaches.' Being an Olympic qualification season, eligibility is flexible enough that Thekkada could get on the start line. The goal is not beating opponents rather it's closing the time gap to improve her score.

"I may not be the best in the world but I'm really trying to be there," she said. "I might be a couple of minutes behind the top athletes, but then I'm also a couple of years behind (in the) training they've had.'

Thekkada didn't see snow until she was 20. She had become interested in mountaineering "after watching some Bollywood movies," she said. As a mountaineering instructor in the Himalayas, she also picked

up Alpine skiing.

And then she watched the 2018 Pyeongchang Games, where Marit Biørgen become the most-decorated Winter Olympian. The Norway great had given birth a couple of years before.

"Her journey fascinated me," Thekkada said. "I've seen in the Indian community that 'women can't do that. Once you have a baby, once you are 30-plus, you can't do this.' It really motivated me so much.'

After Milan Cortina there's the 2030 French Alps Olympics. Besides media coverage in India, a member of Parliament from her Karnataka region, Tejasvi Surya, wrote on X: "Her feats make her an inspiration for the young generation."

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