



LEISURE | P2



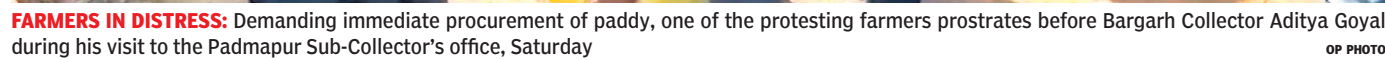
INTERNATIONAL | P10



BUSINESS | P11



SPORTS | P12



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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."

MORE P8

I'm glad the government only changed the name of a scheme named after him - it also has the power to change his name

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Before the cross was widely adopted as Christianity's universal

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, aailing economy and the fear of a renewed war with Israel. P10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

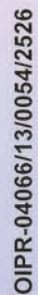
Messi walked a short distance on the pitch and waved briefly towards the stands amid loud chants of “Mes-

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

AGENCIES

The findings also showed sub-

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-





POST NEWS NETWORK

“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’

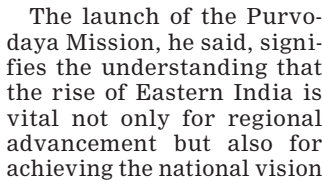
Speaking at the event, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department Principal Secretary Arabinda Padhee underscored the state's transition towards market-led agriculture.

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.



AGENCIES

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



"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.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

“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

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

PNN & AGENCIES

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 BJD leader accused Chhattisgarh's BJP government of constructing multiple barrages upstream without Odisha's con-

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

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

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND SEDITIOUS / FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI or its officials do not involve in any activities of insurance business like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums, refund of amounts. Policyholders or the prospects receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

Will forgo enhanced salary of LoP: Naveen



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

and allowance of Chief Minister, Speaker, Leader of Opposition, ministers, and MLAs December 9. Patnaik, in a letter to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, said, “I would like to forgo the salary and allowances hiked for Leader of Opposition, which the Odisha Legislative Assembly has recently passed. I would like to request you to utilise the same for the welfare of poor people of our state.” 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 than 25 years. “I am highly indebted to the people of Odisha and their love towards me and my late father Biju Patnaik,” he said.

Patnaik further said: “You (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 the Odisha Legislative Assembly has recently passed.” Sources said that Patnaik’s 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 Assembly. According to provisions of the Bill passed in the Assembly 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 Chief Whip will get ₹3.62 lakh. MLAs will now get ₹3.45 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.



SCIENTIFIC PRESERVATION EFFORT: A team of experts, led by biologist Siba Prasad Parida including the AIIMS-Bhubaneswar forensic team and forest officials, dig out the skeletal remains of an elephant named ‘Ramu’ at Bharatpur Forest in the Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Saturday

C&T DEPT REVIEWS IRSD

Call to strengthen coordinated road safety efforts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The Commerce and Transport department reviewed the Integrated Road Safety Dashboard (IRSD) to strengthen coordinated 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 of road safety initiatives. The dashboard has been developed by IIT-Madras’s RGB

Labs, which earlier conceptualised the Integrated Road Accident Database (iRAD), the national platform supporting data-led road safety interventions. The State Transport Authority (STA) guided the development of the dashboard through an extensive consultative process involving Police, Road Owning Agencies, Health department, National Informatics Centre (NIC) and other stakeholders, ensuring alignment with operational requirements and shared ownership across departments. Commerce &Transport de-

partment Principal Secretary Usha Padhee emphasised that the effectiveness of digital platforms depends on their adoption and regular use. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence offer significant opportunities to further strengthen road safety governance, she added. Attending the review meet, Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur highlighted that the unified dashboard integrates datasets currently spread across departments, enabling improved coordination, monitoring and review of road

safety actions. Technical Consultant to STA from IIT-Madras Venkatesh Balasubramanian stated that the application has been designed 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, transparent and accountable road safety ecosystem in Odisha.

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 nuptial and 27 criminal disputes were also settled during the hearings by the judges. Several lawyers were present in the hearing process assisting judges to clarify on various matters.

CLASSIFIED 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-Rayagada, 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

Min felicitates YATS winners



POST NEWS NETWORK

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. Organised by Tata Steel in collaboration with the Pathani Samanta Planetarium under the 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 4.7 lakh students.

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.” Department’s Additional Chief Secretary Chithra Arumugam 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 ISRO facility, gaining firsthand experience of India’s space research, in line with this year’s theme, ‘Stargazer Today, Gannaut Tomorrow.’

Initiative aims at nurturing scientific temper among school students while commemorating the enduring legacy of Odia astronomer Pathani Samanta

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

Bhubaneswar, Dec 13: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has significantly strengthened its security and surveillance framework by extensively deploying 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 are 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

ECoR 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 Division

Six solar-based CCTV cameras have been commissioned at key locations in Khurda Road Division, while procurement of 1,027 additional cameras is underway

As many as 46 solar-based CCTV cameras 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 Division operates one drone. These drones are used for real-time monitoring of long track stretches, inspections in remote areas, oversight of railway yards, 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.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 13: The Majhighariani Institute of Technology and Science (MITS), Rayagada 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 Management 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 Ziksha and Consultant co-founder Rutab Mallick, who joined as chief resource persons. The inaugural session



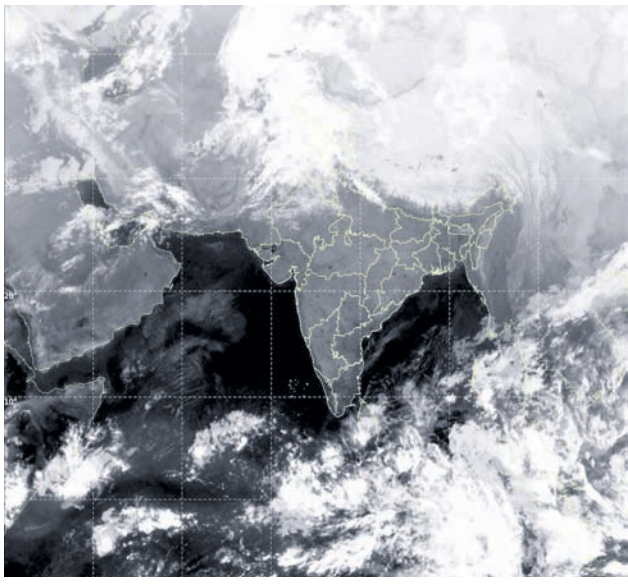
POST NEWS NETWORK

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 and NASSCOM initiatives. 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. 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 patrolling 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 apprehended him. During the search, police recovered 6.14 grams of brown sugar from his possession. 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 Lingaraj 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.



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.8°	26.2°	Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later
Min Temp	12.6°	12.4°	
Humidity	81%	86%	
Rainfall	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 Uda-la 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

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 Satyabrata Nayak said the concerned patch of road where the bitumen layer peeled off was

not cleaned properly before the 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.

Mayurbhanj District Collector Hemakant Soy said a technical team and a district-level delegation inspected the road-work. The team included the CDO, a project director (technical), an engineering department official, the BDO and the Uda-la 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 Majhi 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 prohibitory 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 restoration of water and 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.

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 head-on collision between a motorcycle and a scooter in Keonjhar district, police said Saturday.

The accident happened on Chandapasi-Pandapada Road near Sarupata Friday evening.

The deceased were identified as Dushasana Barik (40) of Asanabahal village, and Laxman Senapati (25) and Manoj Kumar Dalei of Balabhadrapur.

The injured persons were identified as Raja Nayak of Balabhadrapur and Rahul Nayak of Asanabahal village. They are at present undergoing treatment at the District Headquarters Hospital. Police said they have seized both the two-wheelers involved in the collision and started an investigation.

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 classroom by allegedly brandishing a country-made revolver. The Class IX student was produced before the Juvenile Justice Board, 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 of government-run Korua High School for neglecting studies and creating nuisance in the classroom, 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. The country-made revolver has been seized and an investigation is underway, he added.

BAL VIVAH MukT BHARAT

Viswa Yuva Kendra backs govt's 100-day campaign in 3 districts

Angul/Dhenkanal/Boudh: With the Government of India reaffirming its commitment to make the country child marriage free by 2030, Angul, Dhenkanal and Boudh districts marked the first anniversary of Bal Vivah MukT Bharat with renewed enthusiasm. Viswa Yuva Kendra has pledged full support to the government's 100-Day Intensive Awareness Campaign to accelerate efforts to end child marriage across the districts. The campaign was launched in New Delhi by Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annpurna Devi to mark one year of Bal Vivah MukT Bharat. The initiative aims to disrupt the ecosystem that allows child marriage to persist. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has recently said India, through clear policies, sustained action and strong grassroots engagement, is firmly on course to eliminate child marriage. Following directions from the Union government, the Odisha government has instructed field officials from Health, Education, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development departments to actively participate to ensure complete saturation and visible community-level change. Commending the district administration's efforts, Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, director of Viswa Yuva Kendra, said, "The administration in our district has been proactively fighting the issue of child marriage. Working in close coordination with them, we have come this far. And today, as the entire nation stands united and the highest leadership guides us toward a child marriage-free India, there is no reason we cannot end this crime even before 2030. What the world once believed was impossible is now becoming India's reality." Viswa Yuva Kendra is a partner of Just Rights for Children, a national network of more than 250 NGOs that prevented over 1,00,000 child marriages in the past year. The campaign concludes on International Women's Day, March 8, 2026, and will be implemented in three phases focusing on schools, religious institutions, marriage service providers, and local governance bodies.

8 arrested for illegal fishing in Gahirmatha

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, following which the vessel was seized and the fishermen were arrested. The arrested fishermen were booked under Sections 9, 27, 29, and 31 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

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

1. Type of Work
2. Total No. of Work
3. Bid Security (EMD) in Rupees
4. Cost of Bids in Rupees
5. Class of Contractor
6. Period of Completion

Canal, Bridge & River Embankment Works.

5 (Five) Nos.

Rs.20,700/- to Rs.44,700/-

Rs.6,000/-

"B" & "C" Class

4 (Four) Calendar Months to 6 (Six) Calendar Months

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount in Lakh Rs.	Availability & Submission of Bids online
Superintending Engineer, Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara	NID-199/2025-26 to NID-203/2025-26	Rs.20.63 to Rs.44.63	From 16.12.2025 11.00 A.M. to 30.12.2025 5.30 P.M.

Date of opening of the Bid : **31.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M.**
Date of lottery : **06.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M.**
Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- Superintending Engineer

OIPR-32097/11/0031/2526 Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया

Union Bank of India

A Government of India Undertaking

Regional Office : Sambalpur
1st Floor, Balaji Midtown, Budharaja, Sambalpur- 768004, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

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 Earnest money deposit is stated in the column respectively.

For Sl. No. 1 Date & Time of Auction: 15.01.2026 between 12.00 Noon. to 5.00 P.M.
For Sl. 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)

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Guarantor	Description of Property to be Auctioned	Total Dues (in ₹)	Reserve Price/ EMD / Bid increment
1.	UMFB SAMBALPUR 2 BRANCH / Borrowers: 1) M/s. R. K. Food Industries, Prop: Md. Sanaulla Khan, 2) Sanaulla Khan / Guarantor: Kuresa Bibi, W/o: Saidulla Khan, Address of all- At: Bada Bazar, P.O.: Khetrajpur, Dist.: Sambalpur	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, Dist.: Sambalpur standing in the name of Kuresa Bibi, W/o: Saidulla Khan at Bada Bazar, Dist.: Sambalpur, Bounded by East: Road, West: Property of Hafiz Khan, North: Govt. Land, South: Property of Kalim Khan	₹14,71,274.55 as on 12.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	₹20,80,000/- / ₹2,08,000/- / ₹20,800/-
2.	REDHAKHOL BRANCH / Borrower: M/s. Mahima Indane, through Legal heirs of the deceased Prop. Kalpana Nayak, represented by Pradyumna Kumar Naik / Guarantor: All the Legal heirs of the deceased Kalpana Nayak, represented by Pradyumna Kumar Naik, All are At: Sakasingha, P.S.: Angul Sadar, Tahasil: Banarpal, Dist.: Angul-759123	Land with commercial Building thereon situated at Mouza: Barsikiakhhol, 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, Prithvi Raj Singh Mantri, Khirabdhni 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.	BRAJRAJNAGAR BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, S/o Late Jenamani Dash, Co-Appllicant: Mr. Dinesh Kumar Dash, S/o: Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, Both are At: Telenpali, Brajrajnagar, Dist.: Jharsuguda, Odisha-768216	Property No.-1: 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 North: Road, Plot No.: 6026 South: Plot No.: 6012, East: Plot No.: 6053, West: Plot No.: 6014(P) Property No.-2: Land measuring Area: Ac. 0.248 Dec., bearing Khata No.: 621/1543, Plot No.: 6026, 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 North: Plot No.: 6025 South: Plot No.: 6014, Road, East: Plot No.: 6027, West: Plot No.: 6015	₹18,22,745/- as on 11.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	Property No.-1: ₹32,00,000/- / ₹3,20,000/- / ₹32,000/- Property No.-2: ₹26,50,000/- / ₹2,65,000/- / ₹26,500/-
5.	SAMBALPUR MAIN BRANCH / Borrower: 1) H K JWELLERY, At: Badabazar P.O.: Khetrajpur, Dist: Sambalpur, Pin- 768006, 2) Md. Sanaulla Khan, S/o Saidulla Khan, At: Mohanty Para, Chitragupta Chowk, Sambalpur, / Guarantor: Md. Iqbal Khan, S/o: Saidulla Khan, At: Mohanty Para, Chitragupta Chowk, Sambalpur	All the piece and parcel of Land & Building situated at Mouza: Sambalpur Town Unit No. 9, Talabhata, Thana: Sambalpur No.16, Tahasil: Sambalpur No. 228, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, Pin-768006 bearing 1) Khata No.: 666 with Plot No.: 1486(P), Measuring an Area of Ac. 0.005 dec. in the name of Md. Sanaulla Khan, S/o Saidulla 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: Saidulla Khan , Bounded by North: Road, South: Property Md. Iqbal Khan, East: Road, West: Private Plot.	₹34,13,796/- as on 11.12.2025 + interest, costs and charges thereon	₹38,13,100/- / ₹3,81,310/- / ₹38,131/-

Date and Time of Inspection of Property for Intending Purchasers : upto 14.01.2026 (For Sl. No.1) AND upto 29.12.2025 (For Sl. 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 (Sl. No.1)/9090776601 (Sl. No.2)/8847877121 (Sl. No.3)/9973164454 (Sl. No.4)/8260489595 (Sl. No.5)**

Place: Sambalpur
Date: 12.12.2025

Sd/- Authorized Officer
Union Bank of India

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. ETCECONIIBBS 2025056, Dated : 10.12.2025

NAME OF WORK : 4TH LINE BETWEEN RANITAL LINK JN. CABIN TO BHADRAK STATION : EXECUTION OF EARTHWORK IN FORMATION, MINOR 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 AND BHADRAK STATION YARDS.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 3341.41 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 18,20,700/-, Completion Period of the Work : 15 (Fifteen) Months.

Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1200 hrs. of 09.01.2026.

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders 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 available in website : www.irops.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

The tenderers should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions including check lists, para 3.1 (additional check-list) of Tender form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter 2 of Tender documents, submission of Annexure-B/G & G1 duly verified and signed by Chartered Accountant.

Chief Administrative Officer (Con)/ Bhubaneswar

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 56/ET/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-DUNGIRPALLI SECTION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / BARGARH ROAD.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 86,91,063.36, Bid Security: ₹ 1,73,900/-

(2) e-Tender No. 58-eT-DENC-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : CONSTRUCTION OF 03 NOS. OF GANG TOOL CUM REST ROOM AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (CENTRAL) / SAMBALPUR IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

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 COLONY AT SAMBALPUR SETTLEMENT 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 (Twelve) Months (for Sl. No.1) and 06 (Six) Months (for Sl. No. 2 & 3).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 30.12.2025 (for all Tenders).


No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders 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 available in website : www.irops.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg./ PR-896/Q/25-26) Sambalpur

Live within; be not shaken by outward happenings.



SRI AUROBINDO

Governance Illusion

Governance 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 Babu 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.'

MUHAMMAD ALI

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.

BRUCE LEE

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

SACHIN TENDULKAR

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



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

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 son-in-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. The 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 Economic 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 multi-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

POLITICS

A US war crime in the Caribbean

Recent reporting has revealed that on September 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 years." 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 administration claims 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.
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ALLAN J LICHTMAN

THE ONLY QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER THOSE RESPONSIBLE WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com



B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

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



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,

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



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Khandel-

wal, Sandip Joshi and others.

These legislators raised concerns about the increasing number of stray dogs in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) limits and a similar menace in Nagpur.

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

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.

In Nagpur Municipal Corporation (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 related 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



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Birsra Munda, whose life and work are being highlighted through a special pavilion at the festival.

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

"A dedicated Birsra 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 showcasing posters containing tribal vocabulary," said festival convenor Rajesh Pande.

Social activist and Padma Shri awardee Girish Prabhune said Birsra 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.

Prayer meet held for Dharmendra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Malini.

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

Addressing the gathering in an emotional speech, Hema Malini said she never imagined she would have to organise a prayer meeting for her "beloved Dharm ji". "It was an insoluble shock. We shared an association of 57 years and worked together in 45 films, more than 25 of which were super hits," she said.

Describing him as simple, humble and joyful, Hema Malini 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 challenges 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 Ahana Deol could not attend due to personal reasons.

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 also highlighted his lesser-known talent as an Urdu poet and said she would ensure the publication of a book of his Urdu shayari, a project he had planned.



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

PTI PHOTO

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 commemorative 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-

ed in conveying emotions, connecting 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 generations of athletes while serving as a vibrant hub for cultural and sporting pursuits, it said. The institution has played a vital role in fostering sportsmanship, camaraderie, and a strong sense of community engagement, the statement said.

The commemorative stamp will be available for the public through Philatelic Bureaux and available online through www.epostoffice.gov.in, it added.

Earlier released vultures guide new batch at Pench

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 13: Vultures 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.

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 vultures—eight 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



alongside the newly released birds at the designated feeding site.

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.

Kite prices surge up by 40% ahead of Makar Sankranti

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, 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 told PTI.

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.

Repertwahr festival returns to Lucknow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Janshwar Mishra Park.

Held annually, the Repertwahr Festival has over the years 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-



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, Gaurav 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 Bareilvi, 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.

of the day

vote

It is a democratic necessity to have a Leader of Opposition in municipal corporations, state assemblies, and Parliament. It is also a Constitutional requirement

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

Dear brothers and sisters of Chhattisgarh. Jai Johar. Today, as I complete two years of my '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

Congress government in Himachal Pradesh is working with a mindset of "Khao Piya Mauj karo, aage kisse 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-year-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 incident.

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 Gadshisha 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 blooms in state capital



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 Thiruvananthapuram, 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 must be respected, whether for 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.

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, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Assets worth ₹92cr seized 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



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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, in-

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

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-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



agreement is called Pax Silica, clearly as a counter to Pax Sinica. The nations included (for the moment at least) are the US, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, 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."

"This news comes a day after the PM had enthusiastically posted on his telephone call with his once-upon-a-time good

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 Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Court Judge Honey M Varghese was released late Friday, and has revealed the judge also pointing out at unsustainable 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

PTI PHOTO

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

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, prices and governance, as rival players test how far religious assertion can stretch Bengal's electoral grammar ahead of the assembly polls.

The immediate spark came December 6, which marks the anniversary of the Babri Masjid 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 political 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 belonging. Anyone denying that is not reading the ground," Kabir told PTI.

In nearby Banjatiya in Murshidabad, BJP leaders also conducted groundwork ritu-



als for a Ram temple, framing it as resistance to what they called minority appeasement. Elsewhere, the saffron party sharpened its pitch around cultural assertion, while the TMC moved quickly to distance itself from Kabir's actions.

The response underlined

the party's political tightrope - managing a minority base that accounts for nearly 30 per cent of the electorate, while arresting signs of Hindu drift amid intensifying identity politics.

Kolkata's Brigade Parade Grounds, the most politically loaded public stage, hosted a

massive 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 Partition displacement remain alive, has emerged as the epicentre with 'mandir-masjid' politics increasingly dominating public conversation.

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 governance 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 polarised political map.

of the day

quote

The Border Roads Organisation continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening national security while making significant contributions to the socio-economic development of people living in border regions

PEMA KHANDU | CM, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

I came here to participate in the Bastar Olympic 2024, again in 2025, and I promise I will come in 2026 as well. When I arrive for the Bastar Olympic in 2026, Naxalism will have been wiped out from Chhattisgarh and the entire country

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The Maharashtra government has decided to shift high-frequency radar centres from Dahisar and Juhu in Mumbai to technically suitable alternative sites

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | CM, MAHARASHTRA

X POST OF THE DAY

India's paradox. Tier 1 cities are total hell-holes at lifestyle level. Pollution, congestion, noise, stray animals, traffic, comfort etc. Tier 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 IndiGo's flight operations have returned to normal, Union 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 ji 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.

AQI HITS SEASON'S WORST AT 431

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

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



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

NITISH KUMAR | CHIEF MINISTER, BIHAR

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 three-member panel headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recommended Goyal's name, they said Saturday



Congress slams govt over MGNREGA name change

The scheme will now be renamed as 'Poojya Babu 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 in-charge 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 told PTI.

"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 Babu 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 'Poojya Babu Grameen Rozgar Yojna', and the number of work days under it would be increased from 100 days at present to 125 days. Congress general secretary 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. 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

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY IN-CHARGE COMMUNICATIONS



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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 NREGA, 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 enacted in 2005.

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 paying 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 Rajya 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

their families. "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

GRAP Stage IV curbs invoked in Delhi-NCR



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 actions under Stages I, II and III of GRAP already in force in NCR, the statement added. Stage IV of GRAP brings the strictest restrictions in Delhi-NCR. 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. 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.

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 Delhi-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, pad-dy-straw burning, firecrackers and other local pollution sources, lead to hazardous air quality levels in Delhi-NCR during winters.

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 vandalism 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

on behalf of the people of the state," the TMC state general secretary said. Describing the incident as a big let-down for the sport-lovers 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 corner 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 situation". 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 publicity, 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.

Bill for single higher edu regulator likely in Parl next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: A Bill which seeks to set up a single 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 introduced 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 Education (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 excellence through a robust and transparent system of accreditation and autonomy. It is likely to be introduced (in Parliament) in the coming week," an official said. While the UGC presently oversees non-technical higher education in the country, the AICTE oversees technical education, 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.

of the day

quote

There are concerns 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, Rajasthan and the Himalayan 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. Next year, we are looking at ₹14,500 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 (EBLR) and the Base Rate. The bank reduced the popular 444-day "Amrit Vrishti" deposit rate to 6.45 per cent from 6.60 per cent. The SBI also eased 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 strengthened their capital position.

Wipro, Microsoft ink 3-year AI partnership

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.



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

ND SINGH | DIRECTOR, CCI

ICC DEAL: JIOSTAR REBUFS 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



GLOBAL BULLION WAVE

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 ₹2,00,462, 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.

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 Daku, 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.

UPDATED PAPERS

Shiprocket eyes ₹2,342cr via IPO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Te-masek-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, Light-rock, 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.



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

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

POST NEWS NETWORK

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.

Nifty 50, Midcap 150 emerge as top indices

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

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 Index also reflected volatility, registering a 2.83 per cent decline 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 strongest annual performance with an impressive 19.43 per cent return, emerging as the best-performing segment over the year.

Cancellation chaos: IndiGo estimates over \$55mn payout

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 13: India's IndiGo 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 thousands of passengers stranded, following which it was directed by the civil aviation regulator to cut 10% of its domestic winter 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 December 3, 4 and 5.

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.

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 response 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 customers."

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

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 much-anticipated 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-and-order 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, fireglass 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 planned.

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-foot statue of Argentine footballer Lionel Messi, in Kolkata, Saturday. Messi virtually unveiled the statue as part of his 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025'

PTI PHOTO

discipline.

"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 translator.

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 before leaving the stadium.

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi joined the visiting

tro of players and Reddy at the felicitation towards the end of 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 crowd.

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 only five captains — Suryakumar 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 Muhammad Yusuf in the Odisha Masters Super 100, here Saturday.

The 18-year-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 lasted an hour.

After conceding the opening game, Hooda controlled the rallies better and showed superior 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 Hemant 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 Kanapurem and R. Uthayasooryan bowed out after going down 16-21, 19-21 to fifth seeds Dejan Ferdinandasyah 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 ice-clad 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, Ottneil 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.

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 set-up 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.

INDIAN SKIER CHASES OLYMPIC WINTER DREAM

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



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 Bjørgen 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."