



## Sonakshi slams trolling

Actor Sonakshi Sinha speaks out against rising online attacks, urging stricter cyber laws to address the issue

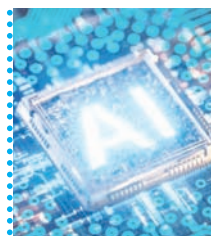
LEISURE | P2



## NATO dilemma

Ukraine Prez Zelenskyy offers to drop NATO bid for security guarantees but rejects US push to cede territory

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## India's AI progress

India ranks third in Stanford's 2025 Global AI Vibrancy Index, highlighting rapid progress

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## Legends meet

Wankhede witnesses history as legends Lionel Messi and Sachin Tendulkar share the spotlight

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## Tech should not replace human judgement: CJI

AGENCIES

**Cuttack, Dec 14:** Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant Sunday said technology should amplify human judgment and not replace it.

He was addressing a symposium on 'Ensuring justice for the common man: Strategies for reducing litigation costs and delays' here.

Justice Kant said technology was very useful during COVID-19 pandemic. He, however, said one cannot afford to forget that technology comes with its own shadows.

"In an age of deep fakes and digital arrests, courts cannot afford naive optimism... A reform that excludes the poor, elderly, or digitally unfamiliar is not reform at all, it is regression. That is why I have always maintained that technology must remain a servant of justice, not its substitute. It should amplify human judgment, not replace it," the CJI said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your timing is impeccable as always, sir. The moment we began our foreign tour, Delhi air worsened

## 15 hurt in Jaipur political clash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Dec 14:** At least 15 people were injured, five of them seriously, in a clash between supporters of Dhamasala MLA and a BJD leader in Jaipur district Sunday, police said.

Several vehicles, including bikes and cars, were vandalised in the clash in the farmhouse of former Dhamasala MLA Pranab Kumar Balabantary near Panturi under Jenapur police limits in the district, the police said.

The injured were admitted to Dhamasala community health centre, and later, five of them were shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, they said.

Over 30 BJD workers, including some women, said to be the supporters of Balabantary, were having a feast at the farmhouse when around

## 11 shot dead during Jewish event in Oz

*The first day of Hanukkah, which should have been a day of joy and celebrations, turned out to be a day of bloodshed when antisemitic attackers opened fire at innocent civilians who had gathered at Bondi beach in Australia's Sydney Sunday. Australia, widely regarded as one of the safest countries in the world, was shaken by the act of terror not seen on this scale in nearly three decades—the last being the 1996 mass shooting in the southern state of Tasmania, where 35 people were killed at a tourist site*

REUTERS

**Sydney, Dec 14:** Gunmen opened fire at a Jewish holiday celebration at Sydney's Bondi beach Sunday, killing at least 11 people in what Australian officials described as a targeted antisemitic attack.

One of the suspected gunmen was also killed. A second was in critical condition and police were investigating whether a third gunman was involved, New South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon told a press conference. Two police officers were among 29 people taken to hospital with injuries, he said.

Authorities said far more people would have been killed were it not for a bystander, identified by local media as fruit shop owner Ahmed al-Ahmed, 43, who was filmed charging a gunman from behind, grappling with him and



## 2 killed, 9 hurt in US univ shooting

**Providence (US):** A shooter dressed in black killed at least two people and wounded nine others at Brown University during final exams on the Ivy League campus, authorities have said, and police were searching for the suspect. University President Christina Paxson said she was told that 10 people who were shot were students. Another person was injured by fragments from the shooting on Saturday, but it was not clear if the victim was a student, she said.

wresting a rifle from his hands.

"There are many, many people alive tonight as a result of his bravery," said Chris Minns, premier of New South Wales state where Sydney is located, calling the bystander "a genuine hero".

A bomb-disposal unit was working on several suspected improvised explosive devices, Lanyon said. Mike Burgess, a top Australian intelligence official, said one of the suspected attackers was known to author-

ities but had not been deemed an immediate threat.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese convened a meeting of the country's national security council and condemned the attack, saying the evil that was unleashed was "beyond comprehension".

"This is a targeted attack on Jewish Australians on the first day of Hanukkah, which should be a day of joy, a celebration of faith," he said.

"At this dark moment for our nation, our police and security agencies are working to determine anyone associated with this outrage," he added.

Witnesses said the shooting at the famed beach, which was packed on a hot summer's evening, lasted about 10 minutes, sending hundreds of people scattering along the sand and into nearby streets and parks. Police said around 1,000 people had attended the Hanukkah event.

"We all panicked and started running as well. So we left everything behind, like flip-flops, everything. We just ran through the hill," said Bondi Junction resident Marcos Carvalho, 38, who had been packing up after a day at the beach when he heard what he estimated were 40-50 gunshots.

Sunday's shootings were the most serious of a string of antisemitic attacks on synagogues, buildings and cars in Australia since the beginning of Israel's war in Gaza in October 2023.

## Elderly farmer dies while burning stubble

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** A 60-year-old farmer was charred to death while burning paddy stubble in his farmland in Puri district Sunday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Gajendra Swain, a resident of Sunamuhin village under Pipili police station.

His charred body was recovered from the field and sent for postmortem, said Souymendu Sekhar Tripathy, inspector-in-charge (IIC) of Pipili police station.

Prima facie, the fire spread to a nearby field where harvested paddy had not been collected. Swain, who was alone, tried to control the flames but was engulfed by the fire, Tripathy said. "He died on the spot. The body had around 90% burns," the IIC stated.



**PLAYFUL MOOD:** A tiger tries to climb a tree in an enclosure at the Gwalior Zoo also known as Gandhi Zoological Park in Madhya Pradesh, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

## Man's death in police custody sparks row

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** The suspicious death of a man in Banpur police custody after his detention Saturday night over illegal liquor trade has triggered a controversy, with his family accusing the police of 'murder'.

The deceased was identified as Chhabindra Nayak, 45, a resident of Poda Sahi in Khurda district.

According to sources, Chhabindra was in Banpur police lock-up Saturday night. However, later in the night, he fell ill following which the police rushed him to Banpur community health centre (CHC) and later to Capital Hospital as his

condition worsened. However, when the police admitted Chhabindra to Capital Hospital, he was declared dead by the doctors.

It was alleged that Chhabindra was rushed to Capital Hospital in a police van, instead of an ambulance, indicating procedural lapses by the police.

Chhabindra's family members have alleged that he was beaten to death by police. "His health condition was fine and we were in Nayagarh while the incident took place. He was beaten to death by the police. We want action against the culprits," said Chhabindra's wife.

Mitu Nayak, chairperson of Banpur NAC, demanded an impartial probe into the incident.

## Nitin Nabin BJP's nat'l working prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** The BJP Sunday appointed Nitin Nabin, a Cabinet minister in the Bihar government, as the party's national working president. The BJP parliamentary board picked Nabin for the post.

"Bharatiya Janata Party's parliamentary board has appointed Nitin Nabin, a minister in the Bihar government, the BJP's national working president with immediate effect," BJP national general secretary Arun Singh said in a notification.



Nabin, 45, who belongs to Kayastha community, is likely to succeed incumbent BJP chief JP Nadda and is one of the youngest leaders to occupy the post, party leaders said.

He has served as a minister in the Bihar government multiple times and is a five-time MLA. At present, he is the PWD minister in Bihar and MLA from Bankipur in Patna.

Nadda was appointed the BJP President in January 2020 and has already completed his full term. He was granted extensions to lead the party through 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

## Lack of snowfall takes sheen off J&K's winter tourism

AGENCIES

**Bhaderwah (J&K), Dec 14:** A prolonged dry spell and lack of snowfall this winter have hit tourism in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, affecting tourist arrivals and the local economy, tourism stakeholders said.

Since the onset of winter, renowned high-altitude tourist destinations such as Guldanda, Chattergala and Padri – which usually start receiving snowfall by mid-October – have not witnessed any significant precipitation activity so far, adversely affecting winter tourism and adventure sports, they said.

The dry weather has resulted in a sharp decline in tourist arrivals, with visitors staying

away from the region's popular snow destinations.

However, tourism stakeholders remain hopeful of a turnaround in weather conditions, expecting fresh snowfall over the next couple of weeks ahead of the Christmas period.

"Compared to the last couple of years, the 9,555-foot-high Guldanda on the Bhaderwah-Pathankot highway has witnessed an 80 per cent drop in tourist arrivals since November," tourism strategist Rashid Choudhary said.

He said the destination, once known for its pristine, snow-covered landscapes, has been hit by an alarming lack of snowfall this year, leading to a sharp decline in tourist arrivals, particularly at Guldanda,



the region's premier winter attraction.

"The situation has triggered economic distress across sectors dependent on tourism, including hoteliers, tourist guides, shopkeepers and local vendors," he said.

Choudhary said stakeholders were hoping for an improvement in weather conditions, with fresh snowfall ahead of the New Year festivities seen as the only possibility for reviving winter tourism in Bhaderwah this season.











# Centre to states: Nominate women, SC/ST officers for Central deputation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** The Centre has asked states to nominate women officers and those from Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) for appointment in key posts on central deputation so that adequate representation can be provided to them.

In a communiqué issued to the chief secretaries of all state governments, the Personnel Ministry sought nominations of only those officers who are not likely to be recalled by them on the grounds of availing promotion for at least two years.

The sponsored officers are to be appointed on deputation to the posts under the Central Staffing Scheme (CSS) and for the posts of Chief Vigilance Officers (CVOs) in central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) and other central government organisations.

CVOs act as a distant arm of the Central Vigilance Commission to check corruption in government departments.

“Sufficient names of women and SC and ST officers may be sponsored so that adequate representation can be provided to them,” read the communiqué dated December 10. Details of any inquiry/complaints/proceedings which may affect the vigilance status of the applicant may also be forwarded, it said.

In the letter, the Personnel Ministry said that such movement of officers from the states to the Centre is crucial for building up the capabilities and contributing towards developing state perspectives in the government of India or national perspective in the state at the decision-making levels.

“I would also like to draw your kind attention to the Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) data for IAS officers, which determines the extent to which officers could be sent on deputation to the Government of India. Proper cadre management requires an adequate number

of officers to be deputed to the Centre under the Central Staffing Scheme,” it said.

This will also ensure that every eligible officer has an opportunity to serve at the Centre at least once at the middle management level, the communiqué said.

Further, it is requested to ensure that an officer, “once placed on the offer list”, continues to be available for consideration throughout the year, it said.

The Ministry said withdrawal of the name of an officer, after his or her name has been recommended, may result in five years of debarment from central deputation, including foreign postings.

“The Government of India has been following a policy of debarment of an officer for five years, if he/she fails to join the central deputation as per orders of DoPT (Department

of Personnel and Training), either on personal grounds or the refusal of the cadre to relieve him.”

“It may be noted that withdrawal of the name of an officer after a panel has been recommended by the Civil Services Board results in debarment for five years,” said the communiqué issued by Manisha Saxena, Establishment Officer and Additional Secretary, DoPT.

It also asked them to ensure the names of officers debarred from central deputation should not be forwarded for appointments.

The DoPT said the nomination process for posts under the CSS, CVO positions in CPSEs, and other organisations will be routed through a dedicated portal from January 1, 2026.

The government, usually invites nominations every year to fill key posts, such as joint secretaries, directors, deputy secretaries, and CVOs. A similar communiqué has been sent to secretaries of all central government departments to recommend officers on central deputation.

The DoPT said the nomination process for posts under the CSS, CVO positions in CPSEs, and other organisations will be routed through a dedicated portal from January 1, 2026



**HOMAGE TO EXEMPLAR:** Dignitaries attend the state-level birth anniversary observation of Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna, organised by I&PR department at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PGIC BIKASH NAYAK

## Capital to hold Odisha Pharma Summit 2025

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** With an aim to bring together pharmaceutical, medical devices manufacturers, startups, innovators, healthcare experts, investors, and industry stakeholders to explore new opportunities in Odisha’s growing pharmaceuticals sector, the state government will host Odisha Pharma Summit 2025 December 16 in the Capital under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

On the occasion, the state will launch ‘Odisha Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Policy

2025’, with an aim to attract investments, improve ease of doing business, and create large-scale employment opportunities in the life sciences sector. In order to strengthen state’s healthcare manufacturing infrastructure and promote industry growth, the state government will also announce development of two dedicated industrial parks –a pharmaceutical park and a medical devices park. The event will also witness signing of MoUs between Government of Odisha and leading companies, marking a significant step towards strengthening the state’s pharmaceutical

and medical devices ecosystem. The summit will be graced by CM, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling, Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, along with other senior officials.

Speaking ahead of the event, Swain said, “Odisha welcomes all pharma, medical devices and related sector industries, investors, and thought leaders to join us at this summit. We are committed to building a strong, future-ready ecosystem that supports growth, innovation, and global competitiveness.”

## IIM Sambalpur hosts POMS India Int’l Conference

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur/Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** IIM Sambalpur hosted POMS India International Conference 2025, bringing together global scholars, industry leaders and academicians to deliberate on the future of operations and supply chain management amid growing global uncertainty. The four-day conference was organised in collaboration with the Production and Operations Management Society (POMS) India chapter.

The conference highlighted how geopolitical tensions, climate change, pandemics

and rapid technological disruption are reshaping global supply chains, making resilience, digital integration and sustainability critical imperatives for businesses worldwide. POMS, a US-based international professional body, represents operations and supply chain professionals across the globe.

Discussions centred on AI-driven operations, Global Capability Centres (GCCs), decarbonisation, regenerative supply chains and the future of operations education.

The inaugural session was graced by IIM Sambalpur Director Mahadeo Jaiswal, Es-

sar Minmet Ltd MD and CEO Sashi Shekhar Mohanty who joined as chief guest, National Educational Technology Forum Chairman Anil Sahasrabudhe and POMS President Subodha Kumar.

Speaking at the event, Jaiswal said, “Global disruption is inevitable. Digitalisation, decarbonisation and democratisation are reshaping operations, and future managers must embrace sustainability and inclusive business strategies. With over 53 per cent of global GCCs located in India, the country is a critical player in the global digital supply chain.”

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** Cold wave conditions were reported in parts of Odisha Sunday, with at least 12 areas recording minimum temperatures below 10 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

G Udayagiri in Kandhamal district was the coldest place in the state, as the mercury plummeted to 4.2 degrees Celsius. It was followed by Daringbadi and Phulbani towns of the same district where a minimum temperature of 6 degrees Celsius each was recorded.

## G Udayagiri shivers at 4.2° Celsius

COLD WAVE GRIPS ODISHA



Semiliguda in Koraput district recorded 6.1 degrees Celsius, while Koraput town recorded a minimum temperature of 7 degrees Celsius, and it

was 8.2 degrees Celsius in Rourkela city, the IMD said.

Similarly, Chiplima recorded the minimum temperature of 8.6 degrees Celsius, followed

by Jharsuguda (8.9), Kalahandi district's Bhawanipatna (9), Angul (9.6) and Boudh and Kirei (9.8 degrees Celsius each), the weather office said.

Nabarangpur, Bolangir, Sundargarh, and Keonjhar recorded temperatures between 10 and 11 degrees Celsius.

State capital Bhubaneswar and neighbouring Cuttack recorded a minimum temperature of 13.2 and 13 degrees Celsius, respectively. The IMD has warned that cold wave conditions are likely to persist in several parts of Odisha over the next one week as there will be no large change in the night temperature.

## INDOCRYPT set to begin today

**Bhubaneswar:** International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Bhubaneswar is set to host INDOCRYPT 2025, a prestigious four-day international conference on cryptography and information security, bringing together leading researchers, academicians, industry experts, and policymakers from across the globe. The conference will be held from December 15, reaffirming India's growing leadership in advanced digital security research. The inauguration ceremony on December 15 will be presided over by Prithviraj Harichandan, Minister of Law, Government of Odisha, and Sampad Chandra Swain, Minister of Skill Development, Government of Odisha, underscoring the state's strong commitment to digital transformation, legal frameworks, and skill development in advanced technologies. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi along with Electronics and Information Technology Minister Mukesh Mahaling will grace the valedictory ceremony December 17. By fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government, INDOCRYPT aims to contribute meaningfully to policy reforms, secure digital infrastructure, and innovation-driven growth. The conference is expected to serve as a catalyst for strengthening India's position in global cyber security research while addressing the pressing security challenges of the contemporary digital age.



**LIFE OF MYSTICAL POET:** Artistes from Nayeeka, Baleswar enacts a drama titled ‘Bhakta Jholiya Kabir’ organised by Natya Dhara at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar Sunday

PGIC BIKASH NAYAK

## ‘Responsible tourism helps in building identity’

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** As societies become more mobile and interconnected, tourism continues to shape how we understand the world and our place within it. Responsible tourism helps in building identity of a place, a community and a society, stated the participants during the 17th monthly discussion of Odisha Manaska at ExtraOrdinari and Safe Odisha For Her (SOFH) head office in Saheed Nagar here Sunday.

The monthly discussion is spearheaded by ‘All Things Odisha’, a Bhubaneswar-based aspiring thinktank and collective wisdom miner. Theme for the 17th edition focused on ‘Does tourism help redefine our Odia identity or put pressure to fit an Image?’

“Tourism is one of the world’s most dynamic sectors, connecting people, cultures, and places. It enables travelers to experience diverse land-



scapes, heritage, and traditions, while contributing significantly to local and global economies. Odisha’s tourism is growing faster than ever—placing our land, people, heritage, ecology, and spirituality on national and global maps. With this rise come economic opportunity, better infrastructure, and new forms of visibility. But alongside it, emerge deeper questions about belonging, authenticity, and who gets to shape the Odia story,” participants noted.

“As sacred landscapes turn into destinations, rituals into performances, and ecosystems

face stress, Odisha stands at a moment of negotiation,” the participants stated, while being encouraged to speak from their lived experiences.

The session was moderated by Sandip Bal and Sonali Priyadarsini, who thoroughly discussed the tourism potential of Odisha, while highlighting the impact it has on local economy, culture, heritage, lifestyle and environment.

The monthly circle is known for its uniquely curated topical subjects related to identity, and lively discussions among its participants.

## CLASSIFIED

### Doctorate Awarded Biswaranjan Mishra

Biswaranjan Mishra has been Awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering GIET University, Gunupur on 17.11.2025. His research title was “Brain Tumor Detection From Premature Symptoms using Machine Learning Techniques”. He conducted the research under the supervision of Guide: Dr. K. M. Gopal (GIET University), Dr. Bijay Kumar Paikaray (SOA University, Bhubaneswar) and Dr. Srikanth Patnaik. Dr. Biswaranjan Mishra's thesis has been reviewed and highly appreciated by Professor Dr. Debabala Swain, Ramadevi University, Bhubaneswar. Dr. Biswaranjan Mishra is the Son of Benudhar Mishra and Bijayanilini Mishra of Aiginia, Bhubaneswar and Son-in-law of Tarakinkar Chatterjee and Gitanari Mukherjee of Jagannathpur, Kendrapara. His research will help in diagnosing difficult diseases like cancer. He gives credit to Lord Jagannath for this success. Above all, he expresses gratitude to his wife Swapna Chatterjee, Assistant Teacher for this success. Currently, he is working as a faculty in AIIMS, NIRTAR and other medical colleges.



## PLOGGING-CUM-SCIENTIFIC WASTE AUDIT AWARENESS DRIVE AT PURI

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Dec 14:** In a welcoming initiative, aimed to promote learning-oriented, data-driven environmental action for the protection of Odisha’s fragile coastline, Eco Walk successfully organised a plogging-cum-scientific waste audit awareness programme at Chakratirtha Beach here, Sunday in collaboration with Junglelore Foundation, Puri; Happiness Foundation, Puri and Eco Warriors Foundation, Ganjam.

The programme was led and hosted by climate activist Jaleन्द्रa Mohalik, who emphasised that environmental action must go beyond symbolic clean-up drives, highlighting the importance of learning from waste through scientific analysis to design long-term, evidence-based solutions for marine pollution.

The initiative uniquely inte-

grated plogging with a scientific waste audit methodology. Participants collected waste from a designated stretch of the beach and systematically segregated, documented, and analysed the materials to understand waste composition, sources, and pollution trends impacting the marine ecosystem.

The workshop witnessed active participation from Akash Ranjan Rath and Pravat Biswal of Junglelore Foundation, Pradipta Pradhan from Happiness Foundation, along with other attendees who collectively raised their voices for the protection of marine biodiversity with utmost care and responsibility.

During the programme, Rath created awareness among participants and the local community about the significance of Blue Flag beaches, their global standards, and the responsibility of citizens in maintaining cleanli-



ness, safety, and ecological integrity. Waste collected during the audit was categorised into single-use plastics, fishing-related debris, multilayer packaging, glass, metal, cloth, daily use essentials and miscellaneous waste. The findings revealed a dominant presence of single-use plastics and fishing gear waste, highlighting the urgent need for improved waste management practices, stronger producer

accountability, and behavioural change at the community level.

The programme also saw the participation of Forest department officials and sanitation workers, who joined hands with climate enthusiasts and local youth, actively learning and applying the scientific waste audit methodology on the ground.

Addressing the gathering, Mohalik stated that such scientific audits transform volunteers into informed environmental guardians, generating credible data that can support policy advocacy, administrative action, and sustainable coastal management. Eco Walk announced that similar plogging-cum-scientific waste audit awareness programmes will be conducted across Odisha’s coastline to build a comprehensive marine waste database and strengthen collective efforts toward ocean and biodiversity protection.

WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.2°	26.0°	Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	13.2°	13.0°	
Humidity	67%	86%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



# Delay in opening mandis fuels illegal paddy trade

Farmers forced to sell paddy to outside traders at throwaway prices



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pattamundai, Dec 14:** Even as nearly 80 per cent of the kharif paddy harvest has been completed in Pattamundai subdivision and adjoining areas of Kendrapara district, the government is yet to open procurement mandis, pushing farmers into distress sale and fuelling illegal paddy trade.

With mandis remaining shut, farmers are unable to sell their produce through official channels and have been forced to store harvested paddy in open spaces, exposed to weather damage. Taking advantage of the situation, outside traders have become active in the area, purchasing paddy at prices far below the government-declared minimum support price (MSP).

Farmers allege that agricultural cooperative societies in Pattamundai have virtually become defunct. Arbitrary functioning by some society secretaries has deprived many cultivators of institutional support, forcing them to depend on private moneylenders for cul-

tivation. To repay these loans, farmers are now compelled to sell paddy at throwaway prices to private traders.

The situation has raised serious questions about the government's agricultural procurement policy and triggered growing resentment among farmers. Several farmer organisations have demanded immediate opening of mandis to prevent further exploitation.

The government had introduced the mandi system through Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) to enable farmers to sell paddy conveniently. In the Pattamundai area, 16 PACS are officially operational. However, the Pattamundai PACS remains closed, while many others are reportedly crippled by mismanagement, loan defaults and administrative negligence.

Farmers say they have faced difficulties since the beginning of the current kharif season. Due to alleged apathy by departmental officials, many cultivators could not avail of benefits under government

schemes. As a result, they borrowed money to meet cultivation expenses and household needs, later being forced to sell their produce to private traders to clear debts.

It is also alleged that due to negligence by cooperative society secretaries, the names of many genuine farmers were not included in official procurement lists. Despite repeated protests and agitations by farmers, the administration has failed to resolve the issue.

Earlier, reports had surfaced in the media regarding irregularities such as the allocation of agricultural loans using fake land records and favouritism in the issuance of paddy tokens. Farmers allege that some society secretaries continue to indulge in corrupt practices by leveraging political connections, while no effective action has been taken despite widespread allegations.

Meanwhile, mandis for the ongoing kharif season are yet to be opened, and officials have not clarified the reasons for the delay. Many farmers have expressed loss of faith in the token-based procurement system and said they no longer trust the mandi mechanism.

The district and block administrations have been urged to intervene immediately and ensure the opening of mandis in Pattamundai block. Leaders of the Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan, including Dasarathi Sahu, Dolagobinda Sahu, Akrur Palai, Sisir Ojha, farmer leader Bijay Das and Prakash Mohanty, have collectively demanded urgent action to safeguard farmers' interests.

## Delhi Police nabs Bhadrak man in cyber fraud case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhadrak, Dec 14:** The Delhi Police has arrested one person from Bhadrak district for his alleged involvement in a cyber fraud case, officials said here Sunday. While investigating the case, personnel of the Delhi Police had found that the SIM card used in the alleged fraud was activated in Bhadrak district, they said.

A team from Delhi Police arrived here and conducted investigation in Bhandaripokhari police station area Saturday and arrested the man. "They have taken the accused to Delhi on transit remand," said Manoj Rout, Superintendent of Police (SP), Bhadrak. Further investigation into the case is underway.

## Labourer killed in freak mishap while threshing paddy

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Dec 14:** A 20-year-old labourer was killed after getting trapped in a paddy thresher machine at Sahajanagar village under Bardhanpur panchayat in Balasure Sadar police limits Sunday. The deceased was identified as Raju Dalai, son of Radhua Dalai of the same village.

According to sources, paddy threshing was underway in the afternoon when the thresher machine developed a jam. While attempting to clear the clogged stalks by pushing them with his foot, Raju slipped and was pulled into the machine, resulting in fatal injuries.

Local residents rushed him to the district headquarters hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. The incident triggered tension in the area, prompting police intervention.

# Deogaon: 600 sacks of paddy gutted

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Deogaon (Bolangir), Dec 14:** A raging fire destroyed nearly 600 sacks of paddy stored on a threshing ground (Dhana Khala) at Jalia village under Udar panchayat of Deogaon block in Bolangir district Sunday morning. The paddy belonged to farmer Suryanarayan Nayak, who cultivates about 10 acres of land.

According to Nayak, the harvested paddy was kept on a threshing ground after threshing and was ready to be processed Monday. However, fire broke out on the stored paddy Sunday morning. While the cause of the fire remains unclear, Nayak alleged that it might have been set by some miscreants.

Deogaon fire department personnel, led by Lalu Munda, rushed to the spot with two fire engines and brought the blaze under control. Nayak suffered significant losses and expressed concern over repaying agricultural loans and supporting his family.



On receiving the news, local volunteers and Ashish Kumar Pandey of Aam Aadmi Party visited the site to reassure the farmer. They demanded immediate compensation and an impartial investigation into the incident. Pandey warned that if authorities fail to provide relief, the party may launch a movement to press for the farmer's rights.

This incident follows similar such cases in the district, including the burning of Padmanabh Bhoi's paddy in Bhimdunguri village under Makundapur panchayat November 28 and Gobind Pradhan's paddy stocks on the threshing ground at Udar village December 7, raising concerns among local farmers about recurring attacks.

# Youth slashes girlfriend's throat over rejection

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, Dec 14:** A youth allegedly attacked his girlfriend with a knife and then attempted to take his own life after she refused to marry him, police said. The incident took place in Peonpada area of Phulbani town in Kandhamal district Saturday night.

Police identified the accused as Shubham Swain, 22, a native of Banipalli under Bhanjanagar block in Ganjam district. The woman, a resident of Peonpada in Phulbani, had been in a relationship with Swain for the past three years, according to police.

another person. Police said Shubham came to know that the woman had agreed to the proposal, which reportedly led to the untoward incident.

After learning that no other family members were present at the woman's house Saturday night, Shubham went there and again pressed her to marry him. When the girl refused, he allegedly attacked her with a knife, slashing her throat.

Police received information from local sources and rushed to the spot. On seeing the police, Shubham allegedly tried to kill himself by cutting his hand and slashing his own throat.

Both the woman and the accused were immediately shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Phulbani. Hospital sources said both are currently out of danger and undergoing treatment.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the incident.

ON SEEING THE POLICE, THE YOUTH ALLEGEDLY TRIED TO KILL HIMSELF BY CUTTING HIS HAND AND SLASHING HIS OWN THROAT

## 18 ARRESTED FOR MV-26 VIOLENCE

**MALKANGIRI:** Police have arrested 18 people so far in connection with the violent clash that occurred in MV-26 village of Malkangiri district. According to police, nine people were arrested Saturday midnight, while three more were taken into custody Sunday. With these arrests, the total number of accused apprehended in the case has risen to 18. Nabarangpur MP Balabhadra Majhi visited Malkangiri district and reviewed the situation at a meeting held at the circuit house. He was briefed about the incident in the presence of District Collector Somesh Kumar Upadhyay and Superintendent of Police Vinodh Patil H. During the visit, discussions were held with office-bearers of the Zilla Adivasi Samaj Mahasangh and the District Bengali Samaj to restore normalcy and maintain communal harmony.

# Abandoned wetland turns lively with migratory birds



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mahakalapara, Dec 14:** The abandoned World Bank wetland inside the Gahirmatha forest area of Kendrapara district have emerged as a major winter haven for migratory birds arriving from distant regions, prompting conservationists to call for greater awareness to protect them from poaching and poisoning.

Birds from the Himalayan foothills, Siberia and other cold regions of Asia migrate thousands of kilometres to the World Bank Point coastal stretch every winter in search of food and a safe habitat. The wetland, comprising hundreds of abandoned ponds, provides abundant food such as small fish, crabs, snails and shellfish, making the area ideal for their seasonal stay of nearly three months.

While the birds forage in the ponds during the day, they take shelter at night in the nearby dense mangrove and salt-tolerant forests. Large flocks can be seen gathering in the wetlands before sunset.

The area has a unique history. In the 1990s, more than 500 hectare of forest land was excavated under a shrimp farming project funded jointly by the state Fisheries department and the World Bank, with an estimated cost of Rs 25 crore, aimed at improving local livelihoods. However, the project was abandoned after the 1999 Super Cyclone and the ponds have remained unused ever since. Over the past few years, the deserted wetland has nat-

urally transformed into a safe haven for birds.

Several species of migratory birds, including bar-headed geese, ruddy shelducks, pintails, shovelers, gadwalls, sandpipers, stilts and other waterfowl, are now regularly sighted in the area. Similar congregations of resident and migratory birds are also reported from nearby forest and delta regions such as Hukitola, Lunchghola, Batighar, Madali, Heta Mundia, Kandara Patia forest, Kantilo reserve forest and Tanda casuarina forests in the Mahanadi delta.

Local intellectuals and environmentalists, including Subas Swain, Laxmikanta Swain and Biranchi Narayan Das, have expressed concern that the birds could fall victim to illegal poisoning and poaching. They have urged authorities to strengthen vigilance and promote awareness among local communities.

Rajnagar Divisional Forest Officer Varadaraj Gaonkar said the Forest department would take special measures to ensure the protection of migratory birds and their habitats in the region.

## BAR-HEADED GEESE FILL HUMMA SALT BEDS

**CHHATRAPUR:** A large flock of the migratory bar-headed geese has been spotted near Humma salt beds in Ganjam district. Native birds of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Tibet, Russia and parts of Central Asian countries migrate southwards to various Indian states including Odisha during peak winters. They are recognised as one of the highest flying birds, reaching an extreme altitude of about 25,000 feet above sea level, migrating over the Himalayas, said environment expert Subrat Debata. They migrate towards south-east Asia primarily in search of food in winters as foraging gets difficult during this season in their native habitats. The geese spend their days on the salt beds near Humma, sandy plains of Rushikulya estuary and Potagada starting November every year. Environmentalist Rabindranath Sahu said that the geese have arrived a little late this year.



## Rescued jumbo calf shifted to Chandaka

**KEONJHAR:** A rescued elephant calf, earlier found in Sukudala village under the Suakati forest section of the Bhuyan Juang Pirth range in Keonjhar district, was shifted to the Chandaka Elephant Care Centre Sunday morning, forest officials said. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Dhamdhare Dhanraj Hanumant said the calf had been rescued 12 days ago and was initially housed at the Padmapur elephant rescue centre. According to officials, the calf is in good health and the transfer was carried out in accordance with all prescribed protocols as per the directions of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF). The animal was transported in a specially equipped closed cruiser vehicle and escorted by Forest department vehicles. A veterinary team accompanied the calf during the transfer under the leadership of range officer Nayakanta Sahu. Officials said the Chandaka facility is better equipped for specialised care and long-term monitoring of rescued elephants. It may be noted that the elephant calf was rescued 12 days ago from a forest near Sukudala village under the Suakati section of the Bhuiyan Juang Pidh range. After the rescue, the forest department made efforts to reunite the calf with its mother. However, despite repeated attempts, the herd did not accept the calf. Following these unsuccessful efforts, the forest department shifted the calf to the Padmapur Elephant Rescue Centre in Sadar block of the Keonjhar forest division, where it is being kept under care and nurtured.

## IndianOil

### CORRIGENDUM

In reference to the advertisement published on **09.11.2025** in the newspapers regarding **ENGAGEMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDER FOR ITS CORPORATION OWNED AND CORPORATION OPERATED RETAIL OUTLETS (COCO) IN ODISHA**. It is to inform that the last date to submit applications has been extended till **19.12.2025**. Other terms and conditions shall remain the same. Applications already received shall be considered valid and such applicants need not apply again.

## PUBLIC NOTICE OF M/S EVOS BUILDCON PRIVATE LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha has accorded Environmental Clearance to Group Housing Project named and styled as "EVOS ALCHEMY" being developed over Plot No- 2159/2582 and 50 others and Khata No- 729/1024 and 35 others located in Mouza- Raghunathpur, Thana- Chandaka, Tahasil- Bhubaneswar, Dist- Khordha, Odisha by M/S EVOS BUILDCON PRIVATE LIMITED.

The copies of Environment Clearance vide EC Identification No. EC23B039OR192123 dated 26/09/2023 are available for the reference with the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha and Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) and may also be seen at website of the authority/board.

The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) has accorded the environmental clearance for the said project under the provision of EIA Notification, 2006.

**For Evos Buildcon Private Limited**  
**Kalinga Keshari Rath (Managing Director)**  
**Authorized Signatory**

## ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION

(A Statutory Body of the Government of India)  
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110 070  
Ph. No. : 011-2958-1000/1050, Website : [www.aicte.gov.in](http://www.aicte.gov.in)

## PUBLIC NOTICE

**Subject: Verification of AICTE Approval status of an Institution-reg.**

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), a statutory body under the Ministry of Education, Government of India, was established by an Act of Parliament (Act 52 of 1987). It is mandatory for all institutions to obtain prior approval from the AICTE to offer any technical program.

It has been observed that parents, students and other stakeholders often face difficulty in confirming the AICTE approval status of institutions. To facilitate this, stakeholders are advised to verify approval details directly through the AICTE website [www.aicte.gov.in](http://www.aicte.gov.in).

It is clarified that, as per the AICTE Act, 1987, and the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated 24th September 2001 in Bharathidasan University vs. AICTE, Universities do not require prior approval of AICTE to conduct technical programmes. However, technical institutions affiliated to Universities, Institutions deemed to be Universities and Institutions offering PGDM programmes do require such approval.

AICTE also maintains a list of unapproved institutions based on information received from various sources. This list is published on the AICTE website.

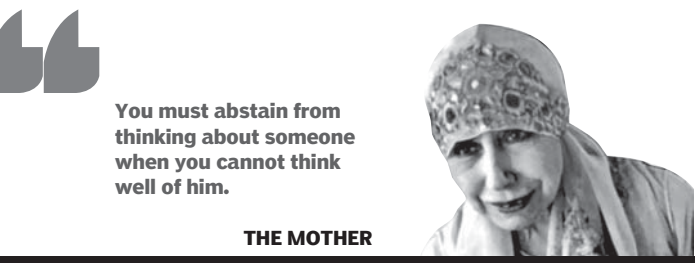
Institutions found conducting unapproved courses are regularly notified through public notices and individual communications, under intimation to the respective State Governments, with directions to either seek AICTE approval or discontinue such programmes. State Governments are also advised to take appropriate action against such erring institutions. Please visit the AICTE website for the detailed Public Notice at [www.aicte.gov.in](http://www.aicte.gov.in).

This notice is issued for the information and interest of the public and all stakeholders.

**Advt. No. :**  
Regulation Bureau/AICTE/12(01)/2025  
**cbc 21300/12/0011/2526**

**(Prof. Shyama Rath)**  
Member Secretary, AICTE





## Left Out

The United States on 11 December unveiled a new strategic initiative 'Pax Silica' aimed at building a secure and trusted supply chain spanning critical minerals, emerging technologies, advanced manufacturing and semiconductors. The members of the grouping are the US, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Australia. The exclusion of India from this alliance has raised eyebrows in New Delhi and sparked questions about the trajectory of India-US economic and strategic ties. The omission comes at a time when an India-US trade agreement remains elusive despite multiple rounds of high-level political engagement and prolonged technical negotiations while Indian exporters are subjected to harsh 50 per cent tariff by the Trump administration.

Pax Silica has been positioned by Washington as its flagship initiative on artificial intelligence and supply-chain security, and is seen as an initiative to counter Chinese dominance in these fields. The alliance is designed to reduce dependence on China, which currently dominates nearly 70 per cent of global rare-earth mining and plays a central role in several critical technology supply chains. At its core, it seeks to lock down the full technology ecosystem that underpins modern AI — from access to rare minerals and energy inputs to semiconductor fabrication, AI infrastructure, logistics and advanced manufacturing. The symbolism behind the name is deliberate. "Pax" suggests order and stability, while "Silica" is a direct reference to silicon chips and computing power. Together, the initiative signals an effort to shape who controls the key inputs and strategic choke points of the AI-driven global economy.

Pax Silica's stated objectives include jointly identifying vulnerabilities and opportunities across AI supply chains; promoting joint ventures and co-investment arrangements; protecting sensitive technologies and critical infrastructure from access by "countries of concern". If implemented aggressively, these goals risk isolating countries outside the framework, such as India, from critical technology flows and investment.

The US leaving out India from the alliance has triggered a political debate at home and a deeper strategic conversation about Washington's intentions. Is this merely a matter of timing, a reflection of unresolved trade frictions, or a more pointed signal about how the US is redrawing the global technology map? The answer may partly lie in a series of recent developments that suggest rising pressure on India to widen its market access, particularly in agriculture, to American companies. However, the major US and allies' concern regarding India could be the trust factor. The US seems unable to believe India would keep key secret advancements secure and safe.

On 10 December, Mexico announced tariffs of up to 50 per cent on imports from India, China and other countries, affecting products ranging from textiles and footwear to automobiles and auto components, effective January 2026. This move is striking because Mexico does not feature among India's top 20 trading partners, raising questions about broader geopolitical alignments rather than purely trade-based considerations. Many believe that Mexico could be doing this at America's behest. This is similar to the US imposing an additional 25 per cent punitive tariff on India for New Delhi's purchase of Russian crude oil. Here, the Russian oil was just a ruse while the real intent was to punish New Delhi.

Just days earlier, President Trump threatened fresh tariffs on Indian basmati rice following allegations by an American agricultural delegation that India was "dumping" rice in their market.

All these emerging developments underscore the need for renewed diplomatic engagement by New Delhi which it seems currently incapable of. As global supply chains fragment and technology alliances harden, India will have to carefully navigate trade negotiations, protect market access, and strengthen its position in critical technology ecosystems to safeguard its long-term economic and strategic interests.

However, these things appear to be easier said than done as New Delhi's misguided foreign policy has left the country virtually friendless.



Vivek Agarwal & Alexander George

### THE PARTNERSHIP REPRESENTS A MODERN-DAY EQUIVALENT TO THE OLD SPICE ROUTES

The recent Middle East Investment Forum in Sharjah underscored the deepening economic relationship between India and the Gulf states. As US President Donald Trump's tariffs erode the competitiveness of Indian exports, Indian firms are increasingly turning to the UAE as a bridge to American markets, strengthening cross-regional ties. As a result, what was once a relationship based on the exchange of oil for labour has evolved into a partnership spanning technology, finance, and security. The Gulf and India are no longer merely trading partners; together, they are spearheading a geo-economic realignment and redrawing the map of global trade.

The relationship between India and the Gulf has deep historical roots. For centuries, caravans and merchant ships, carrying spices and textiles, established enduring cultural and commercial ties between the two regions. Moreover, under the British Raj, much of the Gulf was administered from New Delhi. In the decades following India's independence, ties became largely transactional: oil flowed one way, labour the other, and wealth moved in both directions. Only recently have India and the Gulf states rediscovered the strategic value of their historic partnership and begun to reimagine it for the 21st century.

By the mid-2010s, the two sides' strategic priorities began to align. In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the UAE — the first such visit in 34 years — as Gulf leaders like UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched ambitious plans to diversify their economies beyond hydrocarbons.

This convergence was driven by domestic shifts. The Gulf states recognised the risks of fossil-fuel dependence and began



### The India-Gulf nexus could become a new center of gravity in an increasingly multipolar world – and a template for other emerging economies seeking open-source technology, resilient trade, and broad-based prosperity without subordination

channeling resources into renewables, tech, and tourism. Meanwhile, India – racing to industrialise and digitise – found eager partners in the Gulf with the necessary capital and ambition. India sought investment and expertise, and the Gulf sought scale and new avenues for growth.

What followed was a period of intense economic and diplomatic engagement, from the establishment of the I2U2 partnership – which includes India, Israel, the UAE, and the US – to Gulf leaders honoured at India's national celebrations. The numbers speak for themselves: India-UAE trade has risen to \$100 billion this year, while India-Saudi trade reached \$43 billion in 2023-24.

Equally important is where that capital is flowing. Sovereign wealth funds like Abu Dhabi's Mubadala and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund have invested heavily in Indian startups, infrastructure, and green-energy projects. These are not one-off transactions but long-term bets on the future of the geopolitical alliance.

Building on this momentum, the revitalised India-Gulf axis is now looking outward. The proposed India-Middle East-Europe

Economic Corridor promises to reshape global trade routes, linking Indian ports to the Mediterranean through Gulf rail networks and establishing modern, resilient supply chains alongside the Suez Canal.

In this sense, the partnership represents a modern-day equivalent to the old spice routes. But the spices have been replaced by advanced technologies, and the caravans have given way to container ships, fiber-optic cables, and digital payments. India's Unified Payments Interface is crossing borders, while under-sea power cables and green-hydrogen projects are laying the groundwork for a shared energy and digital ecosystem. The fledgling partnership is now expanding into Africa. The UAE has pledged over \$100 billion in investments across the continent, while Saudi Arabia has announced \$41 billion in development initiatives. India, for its part, brings decades' worth of goodwill – built through peace-keeping missions, development projects, and a vibrant diaspora network – that complements Gulf capital and amplifies the bloc's influence.

Emerging trilateral ventures, with Emirati capital

financing infrastructure built by Indian firms in Africa, represent a compelling alternative to the great powers' projects on the continent, which often lead to debt traps and come with political strings attached. For medium-sized economies wary of being caught in the middle of the US-China rivalry, the India-Gulf alliance offers infrastructure without unsustainable debt, technology partnerships without hidden agendas, and security cooperation without foreign interference.

The India-Gulf partnership also shows how digital tools can drive development. By combining India's affordable, open-source digital architecture with Gulf capital, the partnership is delivering modern infrastructure, inclusive digital IDs, and climate-conscious ventures that generate well-paid local jobs. But this is not non-alignment 2.0. Instead, the India-Gulf story is one of multi-alignment – a pragmatic geopolitical strategy rooted in shared interests, mutual benefit, and autonomy.

To be sure, the alliance faces powerful headwinds: regional rivalries, domestic frictions, and global volatility. Yet the confidence is unmistakable: no longer bound by others' strategies, India and the Gulf states are charting their own course.

If their partnership endures, it will be more than a bilateral success. The India-Gulf nexus could become a new center of gravity in an increasingly multipolar world – and a template for other emerging economies seeking open-source technology, resilient trade, and broad-based prosperity without subordination.

Vivek Agarwal is Country Director for India at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Alexander George is Senior Director at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

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### SPECTRUM INDIGO CRISIS

## Market dominance, weak oversight

The December collapse of IndiGo's flight network was not an accidental systems failure. It was the logical outcome of months of deliberate under-preparation by a monopoly airline fully aware of what was coming. With complete knowledge of the DGCA's new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules—and a long, generous runway to comply—IndiGo chose not to build the pilot capacity essential to operating under the revised safety norms. The result was predictable: a self-inflicted crisis that disrupted half a million travellers, paralysed airports across the country, and exposed the soft underbelly of India's regulatory ecosystem, which looked on even as the country's largest airline flew into turbulence of its own making.

The economic damage was significant. Delhi alone, according to the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), suffered nearly Rs 1,000 crore in losses across business events, tourism, hospitality, and exhibitions as passenger movement collapsed. For IndiGo, independent estimates peg the financial impact at roughly Rs 1,800 crore, driven by mass refunds, waived fees, and the evaporation of peak-season revenue. Between December

1 and 8, IndiGo cancelled 905 flights—and many more thereafter—crippling mobility during a period when demand is normally at its highest. But summarily IndiGo gains Rs 1400 crore and passengers lose Rs 25 billion.

India calls air travellers, passengers; IndiGo calls them "customers." It is a subtle but meaningful shift: a customer can be refunded and dismissed; a passenger is a stakeholder in safety, punctuality, and reliability.

Public anger remained acute. Surveys showed that 87% of affected passengers supported a class-action lawsuit under the Consumer Protection Act. The fiasco revived demand for a National Air Passenger Rights Charter with statutory compensation norms and strict enforcement, instead of the toothless advisories currently in place. What makes the episode even more troubling is the fact that IndiGo, a carrier that commands nearly 60% of India's domestic aviation market, could have foreseen everything. Nothing about the crisis was unforeseeable or unpreventable. And the uncomfortable truth is that the lapse was not only predictable but—arguably—profitable for the airline. It was a rational, cost-saving choice.

IndiGo's Board of Directors

is composed of corporate heavyweights—people who understand regulation, scheduling mathematics, and the direct operational consequences of FDTL changes. These norms were announced 18 months earlier. In that time, IndiGo expanded its operations by adding roughly 200 new daily flights in 2025, taking its total to nearly 2,500. Yet it hired only 418 pilots, when internal assessments—and public statements by pilot unions—suggested the airline needed at least 1,000 additional pilots to comply with the new FDTL roster limits.

The economics are simple: hiring those 1,000 pilots at about Rs 60 lakh per year each would have cost roughly Rs 600 crore annually. Over 18 months, IndiGo saved an estimated Rs 1,400 crore by not hiring them. This was not an oversight. It was a strategic decision with predictable consequences. Even as the FDTL deadline approached, IndiGo continued accepting bookings at full capacity. When the collapse occurred, it triggered a second financial pipeline. IndiGo's opaque delay-management practice involves extending delays in small increments—two hours, then another two—until passengers, exhausted and helpless, cancel their tickets them-

selves. Only airline-initiated cancellations qualify for full refunds. Passenger-initiated cancellations incur penalties.

IndiGo's apology referencing "serious operational failures" avoided acknowledging its structural failure from deliberate cost minimisation at the cost of safety. The DGCA, for its part, had 18 months to monitor staffing, enforce phased compliance, and prevent a meltdown. Instead, it overlooked basic indicators, allowed timeline extensions, and failed to ensure readiness. A regulator operating with 53% staff vacancies cannot enforce safety standards effectively.

India's aviation system cannot be held hostage to one airline's decisions. Structural reforms are essential. The DGCA and Civil Aviation Ministry must be held accountable for lax oversight. Competition laws must be strengthened and public-sector aviation revived to ensure real competition. Nearly 18 crore passengers who fly annually in India cannot remain vulnerable to corporate decisions and regulatory complacency that threaten safety. The IndiGo crisis is not a one-off collapse. It is a warning of what happens when market dominance collides with weak oversight.

INFA

### WISDOM CORNER

- Not only does God play dice, but... he sometimes throws them where they cannot be seen.

STEPHEN HAWKING
- You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.

JIM ROHN
- Reflect upon your present blessings of which every man has many - not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.

CHARLES DICKENS

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1791: The first 10 amendments to the US Constitution—the Bill of Rights, traditionally defined as a collection of mutually reinforcing guarantees of individual rights and limitations on federal and state governments—were adopted as a single unit.
- 1890: The Lakota (Teton) chief Sitting Bull was killed on the Grand River in South Dakota by Native police and soldiers who had been sent by the U.S. government to arrest him so as to prevent him from leading an insurrection.
- 1939: A citywide celebration accompanied the premiere of Gone with the Wind in Atlanta, Georgia, on this day in 1939. Actresses Vivien Leigh and Hattie McDaniel and director Victor Fleming were among those who won Academy Awards for their work on a film that has a controversial legacy.
- 1978: US recognizes China. 30 years after the creation of the People's Republic of China, President Jimmy Carter announced that the United States would formally recognize the communist country starting January 1, 1979. The announcement also called for the severing of relations with Taiwan, a position that was quickly reversed under protests.
- 1997: Janet Jagan was elected president of Guyana, becoming the first elected female president in South America and the first white president of Guyana.

### LOL

#### 'GLAD I QUIT DRINKING'

A juggler, driving to his next performance, was stopped by the police. "What are those knives doing in your car?" asked the officer. "I juggle them in my act." "Oh yeah?" says the cop. "Let's see you do it." So the juggler starts tossing and juggling the knives.



guy driving by sees this and says, "Wow, am I glad I quit drinking. Look at the test they're making you do now!"



Shivaji Sarkar

### THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH IS THAT THE LAPSE WAS NOT ONLY PREDICTABLE BUT—ARGUABLY—PROFITABLE FOR THE AIRLINE

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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



## Letters

Sir, India's first-ever digital census marks a transformative shift in the way the nation collects and manages demographic data. Moving away from the paper-based enumeration, the digital census leverages mobile applications, cloud storage and real-time data validation to improve accuracy, efficiency and transparency. Enumerators equipped with handheld devices can instantly upload information, reducing delays, duplication and human error that plagued earlier exercises. The digital format also enables faster data processing, allowing policymakers to access timely insights for planning welfare schemes, infrastructure development and targeted social interventions. Features such as geo-tagging and automated checks help ensure better coverage and inclusion, especially in remote and urban migrant populations. However, the transition is not without challenges. Concerns over data privacy, cybersecurity and digital literacy must be addressed through strong safeguards and training. If implemented responsibly, the digital census can become a powerful tool for evidence-based governance, marking a significant step toward a more data-driven and responsive administration.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA



MESSI  
MESS

# Int'l media criticises City of Joy

Kolkata's image takes serious hit after Lionel Messi's much-hyped visit to the Salt Lake Stadium Saturday lasted 22 minutes, just enough to underline the state administration's mismanagement that led to chaotic scenes

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Dec 14:** After the chaos at Yuva Bharati Krirangan, also known as Salt Lake Stadium, in Kolkata during Lionel Messi's event, the image of Kolkata has taken a beating on the international stage as the vandalism made headlines in major newspapers and media houses across the world.

From the US 'The New York Times' to the UK's 'The Guardian' and 'BBC', the chaos and vandalism found a mention there. The incident was also reported in the Spanish and French media.

The headline in the New York Times read, 'Lionel Messi's India tour organiser 'detained', says police after 'deeply disturbing chaos'. When that report was written, the organiser of Messi's 'Goat India Tour', Satadru Dutta, had not yet been arrested. The police had only detained him at first. Later, Satadru was arrested.

In a lengthy report, the 'New



York Times' described the events at Yuva Bharati. They wrote that Messi was barely visible. Where he was supposed to be at Yuva Bharati for more than an hour, security guards quickly escorted him off the field.

West Bengal Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar's statement and Governor CV Ananda Bose's press conference were also included in their re-

port. The report also mentioned Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's apology regarding the incident and the formation of an inquiry committee.

The New York Times also noted state Sports Minister Arup Biswas's comment, "I will not say anything."

The American newspaper also included a reference to cricket in its report, writing that Kolkata, the capital of

West Bengal, has a significant number of football fans. Yet, cricket is the most popular sport in India.

The BBC's headline read, "Angry fans throw chair and bottles at Messi event in Kolkata." In its report, the BBC wrote that officials and politicians surrounded Messi to such an extent that he became annoyed after a short time.

After being on the field for

only 22 minutes, Messi was taken away for security reasons. This caused the crowd at Yuva Bharati to become aggressive, and they started throwing chairs and bottles.

The BBC report stated that Messi's visit to India was marked by chaos in Kolkata. Some people had bought tickets for Rs 12,000 just to catch a glimpse of Messi, but he was barely visible from most parts of the stadium.

The BBC report also mentioned Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's apology, stating that she was "deeply saddened and shocked" by the incident.

The Yuva Bharati incident also made headlines in the media of Spain and France, the two countries where Messi has played club football. The Spanish sports daily 'Marca' ran the headline, "Absolute Chaos". They wrote that the Inter Miami player entered the field but left within just 22 minutes. The fans had spent thousands of rupees just to see him.

The French daily 'L'Equipe' headlined the Yuva Bharati incident as "Disturbing". They wrote that Messi was on a promotional tour. The crowd surrounding him led to extreme frustration among the spectators. The experience at the stadium was traumatic for the fans.

Many are saying that West Bengal, and Kolkata in particular, has become a topic of discussion on the international stage after a long time and for the wrong reasons.

NEW DAWN

# Rajasthan sees solar revolution

The desert state contributes over 27% to national solar capacity



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Dec 14:** Once known primarily for its forts, folklore, and vast deserts, Rajasthan is rapidly redefining its identity, this time as the beating heart of India's clean energy revolution.

Powered by abundant sunshine, decisive governance, and bold policy reforms, the desert state is steadily emerging as the country's foremost solar energy hub.

At the centre of this transformation is Pugal in Bikaner, where India's largest solar park is taking shape.

With a planned capacity of 2,450 megawatts and a massive 5,000 megawatt-hours of battery energy storage, the project is a landmark not just for Rajasthan, but for India's renewable energy ambitions.

Complementing it are four large battery energy storage projects, together offering nearly 6,000 megawatt-hours of storage at an investment of Rs 6,000 crore.

Remarkably, these projects have secured the lowest tariffs in the country and are expected to be operational by November 2027, officials from the Chief Minister's Office confirmed.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel informed that the Cabinet has approved the conditional allocation of land for major renewable energy initiatives.

This includes 161.45 hectares in Karni Sar, Bhatiyar village (Pugal tehsil, Bikaner) and 356.25 hectares in Kharnai village (Rawatbhata tehsil, Chittorgarh) for the development of solar power projects.

Additionally, 70.6 hectares in Sokharu, Barmer district, have been allocated to Powergrid Barmer-1 Transmission Limited for establishing a 765 KV substation.

These measures will enhance the state's renewable energy transmission network and ensure a reliable power supply to citizens, he said.

These storage facilities are game-changers. They will help meet peak electricity demand, reduce dependence on expensive power purchases, and ensure round-the-clock energy availability—bringing India closer to true energy self-reliance, officials added.

Also, Rajasthan's renewable energy capacity has now increased to an impressive 41,189 megawatts, with solar power alone accounting for 35,337 megawatts. This means the state contributes 27.2 per cent of India's total solar capacity and 16.43 per cent of the country's overall renewable energy capacity, firmly establishing itself as a national leader.

What makes this growth even more striking is its pace. In just the last two years, Rajasthan has added 17,820 megawatts of renewable energy capacity - 17,326 megawatts of it solar.

Additionally, projects totalling 45 gigawatts are currently under various stages of development. Together, these figures position Rajasthan as the backbone of India's solar energy future.

Desert state's solar success is not confined to large-scale parks in remote deserts.

Rajasthan has also emerged as a national leader in decentralised solar energy, driven by the effective rollout of flagship central schemes such as PM-KUSUM and PM Suryaghar Yojana.

Under Components A and C of PM-KUSUM, more than 1,470 grid-connected small solar power projects with a combined capacity of over 2,345 megawatts have been established in villages and hamlets over the past two years, ranking Rajasthan first in the country.

Under the PM Suryaghar Yojana, Rajasthan has installed 1,09,209 rooftop solar systems with a total capacity of 441 megawatts in less than two years.

Based on installations, the state ranks fifth nationally, helping families reduce electricity bills while contributing to environmental sustainability. From powering homes and farms with affordable electricity to anchoring India's clean energy goals, solar energy is transforming lives across Rajasthan.

What was once seen as a harsh desert landscape is now being reimagined as a vast, natural powerhouse. New dawn, new identity, Rajasthan is not merely witnessing India's solar revolution. It is leading it, said officials.

## POLARISATION VS FRAGMENTATION

# Identity politics to change Bengal's electoral landscape



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), led by five-time Lok Sabha MP from Hyderabad Asaduddin Owaisi, has again set its focus on the Muslim dominated constituencies in West Bengal after the Bihar mandate.

In 2020-21, following the party's five-seat toehold in the 243-member Bihar Assembly, AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi had turned his attention towards West Bengal election.

But he later learnt that Hyderabad Biriyani, a delicacy from the region where his party is based, cannot be served in a state that favours the Avadhi variety.

Thus, he sought out a local chef who could tweak it to suit local palate. The AIMIM leadership approached Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui, founder of the just-launched India Secular Front (ISF).

The meeting went well, but the Pirzada was intent on allying with the Congress and Left Front against the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal.

This grouping was not too hopeful of AIMIM finding favour among Bengali Muslims whose language and culture were different.

Owaisi decided to pull back; and in the days that followed, his party witnessed an erosion in both Bihar and West Bengal.

But now, after a Bihar poll redux, Owaisi may have a new alliance in sight in the adjacent state. The recently suspended Trinamool MLA Humayun Kabir has positioned himself as a new minority leader in West Bengal.

His contentious "Babri Masjid" project has catapulted him into national recognition.

He claims strong grassroots support and has already declared his political plans. He will soon launch a political party to contest 135 of West Bengal's 294 seats in next year's

Assembly election.

His strategy centres on assertive minority mobilisation and symbolic projects like the mosque foundation-laying event to consolidate a distinct constituency base.

Reports indicate substantial donations running into crores and outreach beyond the state, which Kabir may find convenient through the AIMIM.

Both follow identity-based minority politics, driven by a singular personality with religious overtones; yet, there may be compatibility differences, mainly on strategy and local issues.

Kabir is a rising regional actor with clear ambitions to be a "kingmaker" where he has predicted that no political party will come close to the halfway mark in the Assembly.

As things stand now, tactical seat adjustment with AIMIM seems a possibility in a few seats, but a full statewide tie-up is still uncertain.

At this time, Kabir appears to be seeking allies, and the AIMIM state unit is reportedly open, but the latter's central leadership still exhibits some caution.

Meanwhile, the AIMIM, upbeat from another, similar, Bihar mandate, is building up its base in Murshidabad district, where Muslim population is said to be some 70 per cent of the demography.

In adjacent Malda, a district with over 50 per cent Muslim population, Owaisi's party is hunting for new offices and office-bearers. In the case of an electoral fragmentation, with at least three Muslim-centred outfits - led by Owaisi, Siddiqui, and Kabir - along with the Trinamool, Congress, and the Left coalition vying for the spoils, anti-BJP votes will be widely split in several constituencies.

Anticipating that, as some on-ground reports suggest, Kabir may try to woo the ISF, Congress and the Left leadership to agree to a seat sharing equation - at least in crucial seats - so that he can evolve as the "kingmaker" he aspires to be. However, he should know that the leaders he has to indulge are more experienced and astute than he probably assumes. One thing is certain, West Bengal's Assembly election 2026 will witness identity politics and polarisation to an extent that the sundry Bengali people may not have imagined.



People ride bicycles across a mustard field against the setting sun, in Nadia, West Bengal, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

# Flamingos paint Rajasthan's Sambhar Salt Lake pink

India's largest inland saltwater gem turns into a natural wonder as migratory birds flock in

AGENCIES

**Jaipur, Dec 14:** A spectacular winter display has transformed Rajasthan's Sambhar Salt Lake into a sea of pink as thousands of migratory flamingos have arrived for the season, attracting birdwatchers and tourists from across the region.

The annual migration along the Central Asian Flyway has brought an unusually large number of flamingos to the lake near Jaipur, turning its shallow saline waters into a vibrant spectacle.

Experts say favourable conditions this year, including good water levels and abundant food, have encouraged large flocks to settle at the lake. It is a key stopover and wintering ground for both Greater and Lesser Flamingos, which travel long distances to reach this habitat. Spanning approximately 240 square kilometres, the lake attracts exotic birds from countries like Russia, Sibe-



ria, and Mongolia.

Bird expert Gaurav Dadhich said that the annual migration to Sambhar Lake typically begins in October and lasts until March,

with the peak arrival usually seen in October. The lake sees large flocks of Lesser Flamingos and Greater Flamingos, along with several species of ducks and other migratory

birds. Having studied the area for over 12 years, Dadhich shared that he has documented more than 300 bird species at Sambhar. He added that this year's higher rainfall

has created ideal conditions, leading to a significant rise in bird numbers. "At present, around 2 to 2.5 lakh flamingos can be spotted in the lake area," he said.

The stunning scenery and the vibrant birdlife have become a major draw for tourists, birdwatchers, photographers, and nature lovers. "The lake offers a breathtaking panoramic view that makes the presence of the flamingos even more magical," he added.

The striking sight has drawn photographers, nature enthusiasts, and researchers eager to witness the migratory birds feeding, resting, and flying across the pink-tinged landscape. With winter underway, the large numbers of flamingos also highlight the ecological importance of Sambhar Salt Lake, India's largest inland salt lake and a designated Ramsar wetland site that supports diverse birdlife.








I want to openly welcome all Congress workers and supporters who are fed up with the repeated collusion of Congress with the BJP. If you truly want to defeat the BJP and bring honest governance to Goa, only AAP can do it. This fight is not about parties, it is about saving Goa



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP CHIEF

The rupee becoming the weakest against the dollar in history shows that all the data and claims made by the BJP government about the economy are entirely untrue and concocted



AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

The university must focus on innovation, employability and entrepreneurship, while ensuring that academic initiatives respond to local and regional developmental needs



MANOJ SINHA | J&K LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

X

POST

OF THE DAY



BIG BREAKING NEWS

Delhi BJP Govt to begin Privatisation of Government Hospitals built by AAP Govt. Delhi

Govt under CM @gupta\_rekha to adopt PPP Model and privatise the 1 Under construction Hospitals in Delhi using Private Funding. These 11 World Class Hospitals are in final stages of completion by AAP Govt under @ArvindKejriwal. BJP and Modi working against the interests of Delhi

@DaaruBaazMehta

SHORT TAKES

**Police give permission for Vijay's meeting**

**Erode, (Tamil Nadu):** Police gave permission Sunday for TVK chief Vijay's Erode public meeting scheduled for December 18, officials said. The party's chief coordinator K A Sengottaiyan, submitted a petition with the Police and Revenue department three days back seeking permission to hold Vijay's meeting between 11 am and 1 pm at Vijayamangalam near here. The land belonged to a private temple under the control of HR&CE department.

**Two killed in road accident**

**Lohardaga:** Two persons died and another was injured when a speeding four-wheeler hit them in Jharkhand's Lohardaga district Sunday, police said. The accident occurred near Block More under the jurisdiction of Kudu police station. The deceased were identified as Satyendra Sahu (39), a local general store owner from Kudu Masjid Chowk, and Rajesh Yadav (45), a driver from Kewla in Gaya district, Bihar. "Two people were killed in the accident, while another suffered injuries," said Ajit Kumar, officer-in-charge of Kudu police station.

**4 killed after multiple vehicles collide**

**Jaipur:** Four people were killed and at least four others injured in a road accident in Rajasthan's Udaipur Sunday evening, police said. The accident occurred on the Pindwara National Highway when multiple vehicles collided. Girva Deputy Superintendent of Police Gopal Chandel said four people died in the accident. Those trapped inside the vehicles were rescued with great difficulty.



On behalf of the people of India, I extend my sincere condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. We stand in solidarity with the people of Australia in this hour of grief

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

T'GANA GRAM PANCHAYAT POLLS: OVER 85% TURNOUT

Over 85 per cent of eligible voters exercised their franchise in the second phase of gram panchayat elections in Telangana Sunday, the SEC said. The elections concluded peacefully, and the counting of votes was underway as of 8 pm



Never allowed use of our territory against B'desh: India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** India Sunday asserted that it has never allowed its territory to be used for activities inimical to the interests of Bangladesh and pressed for holding the upcoming parliamentary polls in that country in a peaceful atmosphere.

India's reaction came hours after the Bangladesh foreign ministry summoned Indian envoy to Dhaka, Pranay Verma, and conveyed its concern over former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's "incendiary" statements from Indian soil.

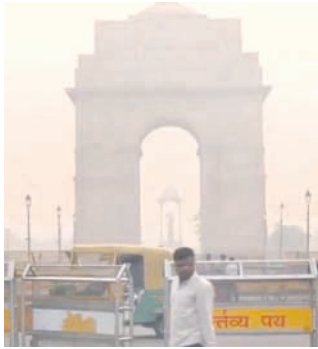
According to a readout released by Dhaka, the foreign ministry also brought to Verma's notice the activities of some members of Hasina-led Awami League while staying in India. "India categorically rejects the assertions made by the interim government of Bangladesh in its press note," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

It said India has consistently reiterated its position in favour of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections in Bangladesh in a peaceful atmosphere.

"India has never allowed its territory to be used for activities inimical to the interests of the friendly people of Bangladesh," the MEA said.

"We expect that the interim government of Bangladesh will take all necessary measures for ensuring internal law and order, including for the purpose of holding peaceful elections," it said in a statement.

The parliamentary elections in Bangladesh will be held on February 12. It will be the first general election after the collapse of the Hasina government in August last year following massive protests. The Awami League has rejected the elections saying the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus will not be able to hold the polls in a free and normal environment.



breaching the 450 mark, people should avoid outdoor walking or exercise, particularly in the morning hours.

She said while physical activity should not be stopped, it must be shifted indoors, as exposure to polluted air can cause fine particulate matter such as PM2.5 to penetrate deep into the lungs. Yadav advised people to step out only when necessary, preferably later in the day when sunlight improves dispersion, and said wearing masks was essential for those who must go out for work.

She also cautioned against strenuous activities that involve heavy breathing and stressed the importance of a healthy diet, adequate hydration and consumption of seasonal fruits to help the body flush out toxins.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) Saturday invoked the strictest measures (Stage IV) under its air pollution control plan, Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), including a ban on all construction and demolition activities in Delhi-NCR after pollution levels rose sharply amid unfavourable meteorological conditions.

The Sub-Committee on GRAP decided to invoke Stage III of the GRAP earlier Saturday across the entire NCR with immediate effect as air quality continued to worsen.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** The AQI in Delhi climbed to 461 Sunday and marked the city's most polluted day this winter and the second-worst December air quality day on record, as weak winds and low temperatures trapped pollutants close to the surface.

The air quality monitoring station at Wazirpur recorded the maximum possible Air Quality Index (AQI) value of 500 during the day, beyond which the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) does not register data. By 4 pm, 38 of Delhi's 39 active air quality monitoring stations reported 'severe' pollution levels, according to the CPCB's Sameer app, with only Shadipur remaining in the 'very poor' category.

Rohini also touched 500 during the day, while Ashok Vihar, Jahangirpuri and Mundka recorded AQI readings of 499.

Dense smog engulfed the national capital, and the AQI rose from 432 a day earlier to set the record – since the AQI monitoring system was introduced in April 2015. The only instance of higher pollution in the month was December 21, 2017, when the average AQI reached 469.

Although wind speeds are expected to increase after noon Monday, forecasts suggest that any improvement in air quality will be gradual.

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

Health experts warned of serious public health risks due to the prolonged exposure to hazardous air.

Shila Yadav, a health expert, said that with the AQI hovering between 300 and 400 and even

MESSI EVENT CHAOS

Inquiry panel members inspect Salt Lake stadium

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Dec 14:** A day after spectators went on a rampage during Argentine football icon Lionel Messi's event at Salt Lake stadium here, members of an inquiry committee visited the venue Sunday and took stock of the damage, officials said.

Chief Secretary Manoj Pant, one of the members of the panel, told reporters the committee was hopeful about submitting the report after 15 days.

The three-member team examined broken plastic chairs, twisted metal barricades and littered galleries during their on-ground inspection of the stadium, one of India's largest football arenas, they said.

Led by Calcutta High Court retired judge Justice Ashim Kumar Ray, the committee members started their inspection from the point where Messi had entered the stadium, and tried to trace his movement, the officials said.

"We are hopeful about submitting the report after 15 days. The incident took place yesterday, and we are here the next day to take stock of the situation. Give us some time," he said. Pant said videography of different parts of the venue was conducted during the day and will be done as per the requirements of the investigation later on.

Justice (Retd) Ray said, "Today we came and did the inspection. We cannot share any details with media immediately."

The panel, also comprising Home Secretary Nandini Chakravorty, inspected entry corridors, security arrange-



Chief organiser sent to 14-day police custody

**Kolkata:** A court here Sunday sent Satadru Datta, the chief organiser of the Lionel Messi football event at Salt Lake stadium where chaos erupted a day ago, to 14-day police custody. Datta was arrested by the Bidhannagar Police Saturday for alleged mismanagement of the event from Kolkata airport, where he had gone to see off Messi and his entourage on their way to Hyderabad. During the hearing, Datta's counsel questioned the basis of the arrest, stating that his client had been "victimised".

ments during the December 13 event and adjoining galleries, they said.

Cleaning and restoration work were halted to allow the panel to assess the scale of damage and reconstruct the sequence of events that led to the chaos, one of the officials said.

Scattered footwear, torn banners, broken railings and damaged fibreglass seats were visible across several blocks of the stadium gallery, while police personnel guarded sections of the venue as the panel examined security arrangements and crowd flow patterns, another official said.

Officials accompanying the committee members carried out videography and photography throughout the inspection to gather evidence on the extent of vandalism for the investiga-

tion, he said.

What was supposed to be a marquee football spectacle turned into widespread violence and disorder at the stadium on Saturday after Messi's brief and tightly ring-fenced appearance, his first at the venue since 2011, left large sections of the crowd frustrated, as they failed to catch a glimpse of their superstar despite having travelled from far and wide, paying hefty sums for tickets.

An FIR has been registered, and the police have arrested the main organiser on charges of mismanagement and public disorder.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had on Saturday apologised to Messi and football fans and announced the formation of the high-level committee to ensure accountability.



People walk along the Amarnath track as fresh snowfall blankets the area, in Baltal, Jammu and Kashmir

PTI PHOTO

PARTY OVER

Goa nightclubs face crackdown ahead of Xmas, New Year

As the state, famous for its scenic beaches, gears up for its busiest fortnight spanning Christmas and New Year, the crackdown has already forced some nightclubs to shut, while the fate of others hangs in the balance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, Dec 14:** Goa's nightlife faces a crackdown ahead of the Christmas and New Year season, with the state government launching an intensive drive to inspect and seal the establishments flouting norms after a deadly nightclub fire claimed 25 lives.

As the state, famous for its scenic beaches, gears up for its busiest fortnight spanning Christmas and New Year, the crackdown has already forced some nightclubs to shut, while the fate of others hangs in the balance.

A team of personnel from the district administration, fire and

emergency services and police have been inspecting all the nightclubs in the North Goa tourism belt, officials said on Sunday.

The drive began after the fire incident at Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub at Arpora in North Goa on December 6 left 25 persons dead.

"We are inspecting all the nightclubs, checking their licences and permissions. Any club found to be violating the norms is sealed," government officer Kabir Shirgaonkar, who is heading the inspection team, told PTI.

The team has the power to seal a club flouting norms immediately, another official said.



So far, the team has sealed two prominent nightclubs -

Goya Club and Cafe CO2 Goa - both located at Vagator. Cafe

CO2 Goa was situated on a cliff overlooking the Arabian Sea in North Goa.

Shirgaonkar said that Goya Club was built on agricultural land, while Cafe CO2 Goa did not have the No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Fire and Emergency Services Department and lacked structural stability.

The Fire and Emergency Services Department has also ordered revocation of the NOC granted to Diaz Pool Club and Bar at Anjuna in North Goa, another official said.

A surprise inspection was conducted at the premises on Saturday, during which it was observed that the exist-

ing fire prevention and safety arrangements installed there were inadequate and required upgradation, as per the order issued by Divisional Fire Officer Shripad Gawas.

Meanwhile, A magisterial inquiry committee has questioned original landowner Pradeep Ghadi Amponkar and Arpora-Nagao sarampanch Roshan Redkar in connection with the devastating fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in North Goa.

Amponkar was summoned at 3.30 pm Saturday and questioned till 10.30 pm, his lawyer Prasenjeet Dhage said, adding that the panel wanted to know "why this incident happened".



of the day

quote

Good to see UK DPM @ David Lammy on the sidelines of Sir Bani Yas Forum 2025

SA JSHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

When we promulgated the Constitution in 2015, some elements didn't like that, as we took a stance which invited sharp reactions. When we have reached an agreement (with China) to convert the land-locked country into a land-linked one, many couldn't digest that

K P SHARMA OLI | DEPOSED NEPAL PM

Iraq is now a normal country, and relations between the UN and Iraq will become normal relations with the end of UNAMI

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL

SHORT TAKES

Unrest grips B'desh; EC demands security

**Dhaka:** The Election Commission (EC) has demanded extra security for its chief, other commissioners and officials as fresh unrest visibly gripped Bangladesh after gunmen shot an upcoming parliamentary polls candidate and frontline leader of last year's violent street movement dubbed 'July Uprising'. "The EC has written to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) urging comprehensive security arrangements for the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Election Commissioners (ECs), senior officials of the Election Commission Secretariat," the state-run BSS news agency reported on late Saturday. "

PIO among 4 killed in temple collapse

**Johannesburg:** A 52-year-old Indian-origin man is among four people killed after a four-storey Hindu temple under construction collapsed in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, officials have said. The New Ahobilam Temple of Protection, situated on a steep hill in Redcliffe in north of eThekweni (formerly Durban), was being expanded when a section of the building gave way Friday while workers were on site.

Indian envoy in Nepal stable

**Kathmandu:** Indian ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava, who had taken ill during a hike in Nepal's Lalitpur district, is stable, officials said Sunday. Srivastava was airlifted to Kathmandu in a Nepal Army helicopter Saturday after he experienced sudden health problems during the hike at Champadevi hill in the district situated north of Kathmandu. He was admitted to Grande Hospital in Kathmandu, where he is currently recuperating.

SL to revive tourism after Cyclone Ditwah

**Colombo:** Sri Lankan authorities will reopen most tourist destinations and roll out a series of recovery measures to revive its tourism industry affected by Cyclone Ditwah, as the peak tourism season approaches, officials said. Deputy Minister of Environment Anton Jayakody told journalists that the botanical gardens, which were temporarily closed due to landslides and safety concerns triggered by the cyclone, will reopen soon. He ordered relevant authorities to implement measures to address landslide risks in these areas, Xinhua News Agency reported.



The news that the Bondi beach attack was an antisemitic terrorist attack against Jewish families at a Chanukah event is sickening

KEIR STARMER | BRITISH PM

CHILE HOLDS ELECTION

Chileans are set to vote in a closely watched presidential election run-off Sunday, with pre-poll surveys showing far-right opposition candidate Jose Antonio Kast leading over his centre-left rival, Jeannette Jara



Bondi shooting inevitable for Australia's Jews

AGENCIES

**Sydney, Dec 14:** Days after Hamas attacked Israel in 2023, killing some 1,200 people and sparking the war in Gaza, an inverted red triangle was spray-painted on the front of a Jewish bakery in Sydney, the first of a string of antisemitic incidents in Australia.

Sixteen months and thousands of arson, firebombing, graffiti and hate-speech incidents later, the head of the nation's main intelligence agency declared that antisemitism was his number one priority in terms of threat to life.

Sunday's shooting attack on a Hanukkah celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach, which killed at least 11 people and wounded dozens, brought to reality a fear that many Australian Jews say they have been living with: that they are no longer safe in the country that was supposed to protect them. "This is the worst fears of the Jewish community," Alex Ryvchin, co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, told Sky News. "It's been bubbling under the surface for a long time, and now it's actually happened."



Australian antisemitic incidents have surged during Gaza war

Country's intel chief called Antisemitism a priority threat

'Now it's actually happened,' Jewish council exec says

Australia's Jewish diaspora is small but deeply embedded in the wider community, with about 150,000 people who identify as Jewish in the country of 27 million. About one-third of them are estimated to live in Sydney's eastern suburbs, including Bondi.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, calling the Hanukkah shootings a devastating terrorist attack targeting Jewish

people, said his government would "dedicate every resource to making sure you are safe and protected".

Amid constant reports of Jewish parents afraid to take their children to daycare and Jewish schools hiring extra security, the government last year appointed its first special envoy to combat antisemitism.

"Being Jewish, it's been a very challenging few years," said Terry, who gave only his first name and was at a nearby Hanukkah event that was put into lockdown.

"Maybe we need to move to Israel one day. The irony is that that's looking like the only real safe place in the world we can

Police hold person of interest after Brown varsity shooting

Providence police have detained a "person of interest" in connection with the Brown University shooting that left two students dead and another nine people wounded at the US Ivy League school. Kristy DosReis, chief information officer for public safety, told Reuters that a person of interest was in police custody following the shooting. Oscar Perez, Providence's police chief, told reporters a suspect was taken into custody early Sunday and they are not seeking anyone else at this time.

be as Jews." Ryvchin's organisation logged some 1,600 anti-Jewish incidents in the year to September 30, about three times the number in any year before the Hamas attack and Israel's response, according to a report it published this month. One of those incidents was antisemitic graffiti on Ryvchin's former home near Bondi Beach in January, the report said.

Bangladesh summons Indian envoy over Hasina remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Dec 14:** Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry Sunday summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma to express its "serious concern" over the "incendiary statements" made by deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who is currently in India.

Hasina, 78, fled to India in August last year after her Awami League government was toppled in a violent student-led street protest and continues to stay there.

She was sentenced to death by a special tribunal last month after being convicted on charges of crimes against humanity. Bangladesh has been demanding her extradition. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Indian High Commissioner today to convey the Government of Bangladesh's serious concern

to the Government of India for allowing fugitive Sheikh Hasina to continue to make incendiary statements calling upon her supporters to engage in terrorist activities in Bangladesh, aiming to thwart the upcoming parliamentary elections," a foreign office statement said.

Bangladesh reiterates its call for her "expeditious extradition" alongside former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to face death sentences handed down by the special tribunal last month, it added.

The envoy's attention was drawn as well to "anti-Bangladesh activities" by other fugitive Awami League members staying in India, the statement said, claiming that they were "planning, organising and helping to carry out terrorist activities inside Bangladesh" to disrupt the upcoming elections.

Hamas slams Israeli 'escalation'

REUTERS

**Cairo/Gaza City, Dec 14:** Israel's assassination of a senior Hamas commander threatens the viability of the Gaza ceasefire, the chief negotiator of the militant group said Sunday, calling on US President Donald Trump to demand Israel comply with the terms of the truce.

Thousands of Hamas supporters rallied in central Gaza City at a funeral for senior commander Raed Saed and three associates killed alongside him Saturday. The mourners chanted "Martyrs are dear to God" and carried the bodies in coffins draped in green Hamas flags, in one of the group's biggest displays of its presence since a US-backed ceasefire deal came into effect in Gaza in October.

In a televised address, Hamas chief negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, who lives in exile, confirmed the killing of Saed, the



Thousands of Hamas supporters gather for funeral of commander in Gaza

Negotiator calls on Trump to demand Israel abide by truce

highest-profile assassination of a senior Hamas figure since the truce.

"The continued Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement... and latest assassinations that targeted Saed and others threaten the viability of the agreement," Hayya said.

"We call on mediators, and especially the main guarantor, the US administration and

Zelenskyy offers to drop NATO bid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Berlin, Dec 14:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy Sunday voiced readiness to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees, but rejected the US push for ceding territory to Russia as he arrived in Berlin for talks with US envoys on ending the war.

Zelenskyy arrived at the Chancellery ahead of the expected talks with US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, part of a series of meetings in Berlin between Ukrainian, US and European officials.

Responding to journalists' questions in audio clips on a WhatsApp group chat before the talks, Zelenskyy said that since the US and some European nations had rejected Ukraine's push to join NATO, Kyiv expects the West to offer a set of guarantees similar to those offered to the alliance members.

"These security guarantees are an opportunity to prevent



another wave of Russian aggression," he said. "And this is already a compromise on our part."

Zelenskyy emphasised that any security assurances would need to be legally binding and supported by the US Congress, adding that he expected an update from his team following a meeting between Ukrainian and US military officials in Stuttgart, Germany.

He said that he will meet separately with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and, possibly, other European leaders later in the evening. Washington has tried for months to navigate the demands of each side as Trump presses for a swift end to Russia's war and grows increasingly exasperated by delays.

US to screen social media of H-1B, H-4 applicants from Dec 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New York/Washington, Dec 14:** The Trump administration will begin Monday enhanced screening and vetting of H-1B and its dependent H-4 visa applicants, including checks of their social media profiles.

In a new order, the State Department said that from December 15, a review of the online presence for all H-1B applicants and their dependents will be conducted. Students and exchange visitors were already subject to this review and now the department has expanded this requirement to vet social media profiles to include H1-B applicants and their dependents on H-4 visas. The State Department requires H-1B, H-4, F, M, and J visa applicants to set their social media profiles to "public" for vetting.

WEEK'S BEST PICS



A drone view shows a kayaker floating in front of a home flooded by the Snohomish River, as an atmospheric river brings rain and flooding to the Pacific Northwest, in Snohomish, Washington, December 11



US Marines wading ashore after disembarking from a US Navy Landing Craft Utility (LCU) during amphibious operations in Arroyo, Puerto Rico, December 9



Golden Retrievers play in a muddy puddle during a meetup seeking to break the world record for the largest gathering of the breed, in Buenos Aires, Argentina December 8



A flyboard performer during the opening ceremony of the Southeast Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand, December 9



of the day

quote

We were growing at about 13-14 per cent. Our average growth rate post-Covid has been about 15 per cent, and we would like to continue with the momentum that has been built over the last four or five years, and would like to further grow on that

**HARDEEP SINGH BRAR** | PRESIDENT AND CEO, BMW



India has very significant potential to emerge as an export hub for Sustainable Aviation Fuel. We can start exporting on the East Coast to Southeast Asian countries, where Singapore is a major aviation hub. Similarly, on the West Coast to countries like Dubai

**SAMEER SINHA** | CEO (SUGAR BUSINESS), TRIVENI ENGINEERING AND INDUSTRIES



This week features an active domestic data calendar, with the release of India's Wholesale Price Index inflation and trade balance figures. Developments related to India-US trade discussions will remain in focus, while globally, the performance and macro cues from US markets are expected to influence near-term sentiment

**AUT MISHRA** | SVP, RESEARCH, RELIGARE BROKING



SHORT TAKES

SBI aims to double YONO app users to 20cr

**New Delhi:** State Bank of India Chairman CS Setty has said that the bank is targeting to double its YONO app user base to 20 crore over the next two years with the launch of a new version Monday. YONO 2.0 is a significant upgrade, offering a better experience for customers and a robust digital platform for the bank, and fully fledged features will be rolled out over 6-8 months, he told PTI in an interview. "From a bank perspective, YONO 2.0 is a key anchor of digitalization, with a common code for internet banking and mobile banking. This allows for seamless integration across channels, enabling SBI to launch new products and processes quickly. The bank aims to leverage YONO 2.0 to enhance its digital presence and customer engagement," he said. For example, he said, YONO 2.0 developed a common core for customer journeys, which will ensure a seamless experience across internet banking, mobile banking, and branch channels for account opening or any other transaction. "Today, we have almost 10 crore customer base there and our objective is to bring 20 crore customers to YONO mobile banking, or internet banking. Together, about 20 crore customer base is something that we are building for which means that you have to invest in your infrastructure in a significant manner...so our idea is that in the next two years, we should have at least 20 crore customer base," he said.

Copper industry flags cheap imports

**New Delhi:** Cheap imports of copper under multiple free trade agreements are "severely damaging" Indian manufacturing, industry body IPCPA said and sought immediate government interventions in the form of a safeguard duty and quantitative restrictions on inbound shipments from overseas. According to the Indian Primary Copper Producers Association (IPCPA), a surge in zero-duty copper imports is eroding the country's domestic smelting and downstream manufacturing sector, even as over ₹20,000 crore has been invested in recent years to achieve self-sufficiency. "Zero-duty imports from FTA partners are severely damaging Indian smelting and refining," the ICPA said.



India is building trust in every molecule of hydrogen. The Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme (GHCI), launched in April 2025, ensures hydrogen is genuinely green -- produced using renewable power with emissions below 2 kg carbon dioxide per kg

**HARDEEP SINGH PURI** | PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS MINISTER

OLA FAST-TRACKS EV DELIVERY

Ola Electric Sunday said it has commenced same-day registration and delivery of its 4680 Bharat Cell powered vehicles in Bangalore. This offering is a part of the company's umbrella Hyperservice initiative to deliver a transparent, convenient, and customer-first service experience, the firm said



India ranks third in AI competitiveness

The country has climbed four steps, leaving behind the United Kingdom and leading Asian economies -- South Korea, Singapore, and Japan -- on AI progress

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** India has been ranked third in Stanford University's 2025 Global AI Vibrancy tool, which shows progress made across seven pillars comprising research and development, talent, infrastructure, in a year.

The country has climbed four steps, leaving behind the United Kingdom and leading Asian economies -- South Korea, Singapore, and Japan -- on AI progress, according to the report released in November.

The Visual Capitalist chart, based on Stanford's data, shows the United States clearly leading the world in AI competitiveness with a vibrancy score of 78.6 while China is placed second with a score of 36.95.

India ranks third in the 2024 Global Vibrancy Index (score of 21.59), followed by South Korea (17.24) and the United Kingdom (16.64). India made a notable leap from seventh place in 2023 to third, while the United Kingdom rose one spot from sixth to fifth.

Both countries have recently renewed major initiatives to strengthen their positions in the global AI ecosystem, the report said.

The 2025 release of the Global AI Index report of Stanford



India now trails only behind the US and China in AI progress despite multi-billion funds put in place by leading nations

University released in November has presented countries' ranking based on 2024 Global AI Vibrancy Ranking.

India now trails only behind the US and China in AI progress despite multi-billion funds put in place by leading nations.

According to Stanford University's AI Index Report, governments are investing at scale in AI.

Canada has pledged \$2.4 billion, China launched a \$47.5 billion semiconductor fund, France committed 109 billion euro, India pledged \$1.25 billion, and Saudi Arabia's Project Transcendence represents a \$100-billion initiative.

The report has measured AI vibrancy mapped on seven parameters or pillars of AI vibrancy comprising R&D (research and development), responsible AI, economy, talent, policy and governance, public

opinion, and infrastructure.

Performance of India in AI has improved on the basis of research and development measured based on innovative output such as patenting activities and journal publications, building AI systems that adhere to ethical standards is important for gaining public trust and preventing harm as part of responsible AI commitment, economic pillar, which includes trends in investment volumes and job markets.

India has also improved upon the talent pillar that is measured on the basis of various AI-related education programmes. Public perception of AI influences its adoption and development and infrastructure availability for the development of technology.

The country slipped on policy and governance score by five positions as per the report.

Amid volatility, gems-jewellery exports zoom 20% to \$2.5bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 14:** India's gems and jewellery exports grew 19.64 per cent to \$2.5 billion in November compared to the same month last year, according to the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). Total exports stood at \$2.1 billion during the corresponding month of the previous year, according to GJEPC data.

The overall exports of gems and jewellery were flat at \$18.86 billion during April-November period as compared to \$18.85 billion in the same period of last year.

The overall gross export of Cut & Polished diamonds was at \$919.74 million in November as compared to \$666.34 million in the same period of the previous year.

Provisional gross export of Polished Lab Grown Diamonds witnessed a 10.55 per cent rise in November at \$76.09 million



Markets are stabilising and demand in many export markets is picking up including Hong Kong, China and the Middle East. Even as the performance in the US is slow, robust demand in other markets is adding on to the growth. Exports of gold studded jewellery surged as job work demand has gone up in India

KIRIT BHANSALI | CHAIRMAN, GJEPC

over \$68.83 million a year ago. Meanwhile, volatile prices affected gold jewellery exports

FPIs' exodus from equities continues

Foreign investors withdraw ₹17,955 cr from Indian equities in Dec; total outflow at ₹1.6L-cr in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** Foreign investors pulled out ₹17,955 crore (\$2 billion) from Indian equities in the first two weeks of this month, taking the total outflow to ₹1.6 lakh crore (\$18.4 billion) in 2025.

This sharp withdrawal follows a net outflow of ₹3,765 crore in November, extending the pressure on domestic equity markets.

The current trend comes after a brief pause in October, when Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) infused ₹14,610 crore, snapping a three-month streak of heavy withdrawals. FPIs sold equities worth ₹23,885 crore in September, ₹34,990 crore in August, and ₹17,700 crore in July.

According to data from the National Securities Depository Ltd (NS-DL), FPIs withdrew a net ₹17,955 crore from Indian equities between December 1-12. Market experts attributed this sustained outflow to several factors including sharp depreciation of the rupee and rich Indian valuations.

Explaining the outflow, Himanshu Srivastava, Principal Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said elevated US interest rates, tighter liquidity conditions, and a preference for safer or higher-yielding developed-market



assets have weighed on investor sentiment.

In addition to these concerns, Vaqarjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst at Angel One, pointed to weakness in the Indian rupee, global portfolio rebalancing, year-end effects, and lingering macroeconomic uncertainty as key reasons behind the continued pullout.

Despite this persistent foreign selling, the impact on markets has been largely offset by strong domestic institutional investor (DII) participation. DIIs invested ₹39,965 crore during the same period, effectively eclipsing FPI outflows.

Looking ahead, some market experts believe the selling pressure may ease. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, noted

that sustained selling appears unsustainable given India's strong growth and earnings outlook, suggesting that FPI selling is likely to decline going forward.

Khan added that an expedited US-India trade deal could potentially trigger a reversal in foreign investment trends.

Meanwhile, in the debt market, FPIs withdrew ₹310 crore under the general limit but invested ₹151 crore through the voluntary retention route during the same period.



Alumni during reunion of 2003 batch of Vivekananda Sikshya Kendra

Parl Panel for diversification of crude sources to cut geopolitical concerns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** A parliamentary committee has flagged India's heavy dependence on crude oil imports and rising geopolitical risks as major challenges for the country, and urged the government to step up diversification of supply sources and strengthen risk management mechanisms.

In its report tabled in Parliament last week, the Public Undertaking Committee not-

Mcap of 8 of top-10 most valued firms erodes by ₹79,129cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued domestic firms eroded by ₹79,129.21 crore last week, with Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank taking the biggest hit, amid a largely bearish trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark index declined by 444.71 points or 0.51 per cent.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries and Larsen & Toubro were the only gainers, while HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) faced erosion from their valuation.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Bajaj Finance dropped by ₹19,289.7 crore to ₹6,33,106.69 crore.

ICICI Bank's valuation tumbled ₹18,516.31 crore to ₹9,76,668.15 crore.

The mcap of Bharti Airtel tanked ₹13,884.63 crore to ₹11,87,948.11 crore and that of State Bank of India diminished by ₹7,846.02 crore to ₹8,88,816.17 crore.

Infosys lost ₹7,145.95 crore from its market valuation which stood at ₹6,64,220.58 crore.

The mcap of TCS declined by ₹6,783.92 crore to ₹11,65,078.45 crore and that of HDFC Bank dipped by ₹4,460.93 crore to ₹15,38,558.71 crore.

The valuation of LIC eroded by ₹1,201.75 crore to ₹5,48,820.05 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and LIC.

ed that India imports nearly 89 per cent of its crude oil requirements, making the country vulnerable to global disruptions arising from conflicts, sanctions, civil unrest in oil-producing nations and disruptions in key shipping routes such as the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

Recent events, including the Russia-Ukraine war and tensions in West Asia, have highlighted the fragility of India's energy supply chain.

Memory chips crunch, weak ₹ to make TVs dearer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 14:** Prices of televisions are expected to rise by 3-4 per cent from January next year on account of the rising cost of memory chips and depreciation of the rupee, which recently crossed the 90-to-a-dollar mark for the first time.

The falling rupee has put the industry in a precarious position, as the domestic value addition in an LED TV is around 30 per cent only, and major components like the open cell, semiconductor chips and motherboard, are imported.

Moreover, this is coupled with the memory chip crisis, where a severe global shortage is driven by massive demand for High-Bandwidth Memory (HBM) for AI servers, causing prices for all memory types (DRAM, flash)

to surge. Chipmakers are focusing on high-profit AI chips, tightening supply for legacy devices like TVs.

Haier Appliances India President NS Satish told PTI that prices of LED TV sets will increase by 3 per cent because of shortage of memory chips and weak rupee. Some TV manufacturers have already communicated to their dealers about the expected hike in prices. Super Plastronics Pvt Ltd (SPPL), a TV manufacturing company having licences of several global brands including Thomson, Kodak, and Blaupunkt, said, "Memory chip prices have gone up by 500 per cent in the last three months."

According to its CEO Avneet Singh Marwah, there could be 7-10 per cent price hike in televisions from January, predominantly due to memory chip crisis



and the impact of depreciating rupee. He also warned that if memory chip prices in the next two quarters remain the same, "then there could be further hike in TV prices." According to experts, this upcoming hike may mitigate the boost received on sales of smart TVs, after the rationalisation of GST. The gov-

ernment has slashed GST on TV screens of 32 inches and larger sizes to 18 per cent from the previous 28 per cent, reducing price by around ₹4,500.

Similarly, Videotex, a home-grown ODM (Original Design Manufacturer) for several brands, and which has its own brand Daiwa, said it is also fac-

ing sustained pressure due to sharp increase in memory chip prices, with availability emerging as a critical challenge.

"We are currently facing sustained pressure due to sharp increase in memory chip prices, with availability emerging as a critical challenge. Flash memory and DDR4 prices at the sourcing level have risen by up to 1,000 per cent, driven largely by supply being diverted to AI data centres," said Arjun Bajaj, Director of Videotex.

This pressure is anticipated to continue until at least Q2 of the coming year, after which some stability may return depending on global memory chip supply dynamics. "The situation is further exacerbated by the depreciation of the rupee, which has significantly increased import costs. These increases will be

reflected in the market in the coming weeks as older inventory moves out," said Bajaj.

Though Videotex is adjusting production schedules and optimising inventories to manage the impact, the "prolonged nature of this cycle makes it challenging to fully absorb the cost escalation". Videotex manufactures smart TVs for Reliance Group (BPL & Reconnect), Havells (Lloyd), Vijay Sales (Vise), Hyundai, Toshiba, Compaq, Daiwa and over 25+ other prominent Indian and international brands. According to the latest report from Counterpoint Research, India's smart TV shipments decreased 4 per cent YoY in Q2 2025. The slowdown was driven by saturation in the smaller-screen segment, limited new demand catalysts, and weaker consumer spending.



# Pacers skittle Proteas

Arshdeep, Harshit shine bright as Men in Blue beat SA in third T20I to take 2-1 lead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dharamsala, Dec 14:** Abhishek Sharma played a sparkling little innings after the pacers produced a riveting exhibition of swing bowling, powering India to a smooth seven-wicket victory in the third T20I here Sunday.

Chasing a modest 118 for a 2-1 lead in the five-match series, vice-captain Gill (28, 28 balls) and his opening partner Abhishek (35, 18 balls) added 60 runs in 5.2 overs as India achieved their target without much effort in 15.5 overs.

The lone point of interest in India's chase was whether the South African pacers could emulate their Indian counterparts with the new ball, and make the opponents' task tougher.

However, Abhishek and Gill never allowed the South African bowlers to settle, as the former carted Lungi Ngidi for 16 runs in the first over.

In fact, the very first ball of the chase went for a six -- an early indicator of the Indian openers' intention.

In the second over, Gill too joined his partner to garner 16 runs as India sped to 32 for no loss in the initial two overs.

Abhishek, as is his wont, batted in a single gear and it required a gem of a catch by Aiden Markram in the deep off Corbin Bosch to snap his stay.

Once the left-hander was dismissed, India's chase of the remaining 58 runs settled into a much more sedate rhythm as Gill, who was saved by a DRS call early in his innings, and Tilak Varma (26 not out) did not look for any adventure.

Gill's run-a-ball 28 will certainly not rank among his fluent ones, but it might have boosted his confidence after two lukewarm outings in the first two matches of the series.

He eventually dragged a Marco Jansen delivery back on to his stumps, and skipper



Suryakumar Yadav too failed to remain till the end. But those were the minor aberrations on the night. All the credit for this canter should go to India's pacers, who produced a mesmerizing spell of swing bowling to bundle out South Africa for a below-par 117.

Leading India's show with early wickets were Arshdeep Singh (2/13), Harshit Rana

(2/34) and Hardik Pandya (1/23) after the hosts chose to bowl.

Skipper Markram offered a tiny spark for South Africa with a spirited 46-ball 61.

Undoubtedly, the brightest stars under a cool sky were India's quick bowlers, who procured lethal swing and lateral movement with the new ball.

It had its effect on the low-key power play effort of South

Africa -- 25 for three -- and the phase contained just two fours.

Arshdeep, who had a horror outing at Mullanpur a couple of days back, redeemed himself with a dream first spell (3-0-9-1).

Spinner Varun Chakravathy (2/11 in 4 overs) too reached a milestone, capturing his 50th T20I wicket while flattening the stumps of Donovan Ferreira (20, 15 balls).

#### Brief Scores:

**South Africa:** 117 all out in 20 overs (Aiden Markram 61; Arshdeep Singh 2/13, Harshit Rana 2/34, Varun Chakravathy 2/11, Hardik Pandya 1/23, Shivam Dube 1/21) lost to **India:** 120 for 3 in 15.5 overs (Abhishek Sharma 35, Shubman Gill 28, Tilak Varma 26 not out; Corbin Bosch 1/18) by 7 wickets

#### Hardik third Indian bowler to reach 100 men's T20I wickets

Seam bowling all-rounder Hardik Pandya has become the third Indian bowler to claim 100 wickets in men's T20I, a landmark he achieved during the ongoing match against South Africa at the HPCA Stadium Sunday. Before Sunday's game, Pandya had 99 wickets from 122 matches at an average of 26.81 and an economy rate of 8.24. His best figures in T20Is are 4-16, coming against New Zealand in Ahmedabad in 2023, after making his debut in the format against Australia in Adelaide in January 2016. With this, Pandya has followed pacers Arshdeep Singh and Jasprit Bumrah into entering the 100-wicket club in men's T20Is. Pandya, 32, is also the first Indian men's player and seam-bowling all-rounder to be a member of a rare club - picking 100 wickets and amassing 1000 runs in T20Is.



## ODISHA MASTERS

# UNNATI, KIRAN REIGN SUPREME

Shuttlers clinch singles titles



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Dec 14:** Top seed Unnati Hooda and Kiran George delivered commanding performances to clinch the women's and men's singles titles respectively in the Odisha Masters Super 100 tournament here Sunday.

Hooda was a picture of composure as she defeated compatriot Isharani Baruah 21-17, 21-10 in just over half an hour.

The 18-year-old controlled the rallies from the outset, denying Baruah the momentum that had powered her impressive run in the BWF World Tour event.

Despite the loss, Baruah capped a memorable week with a well-earned silver medal after a series of standout performances at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

The men's singles final witnessed a gripping contest with



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

second seed George prevailing over Indonesia's Muhamad Yusuf 21-14, 13-21, 21-16 in a hard-fought battle that lasted 65 minutes.

George took the opening game before Yusuf fought back to level the match. Showing resilience and tactical clarity, George closed out the decider to secure the title.

Indonesia enjoyed success in the mixed doubles, where Marwan Faza and Aisyah Pranata defeated compatriots Dejan Ferdinansyah and Bernadine Wardana 21-15, 21-10.

In women's doubles, Bulgaria's top seeds Gabriela and Stefani Stoeva overcame Malaysia's Ong Xin Yee and Carmen Ting 21-19, 21-14.

The men's doubles crown went to Indonesia's Ali Faathir Rayhan and Devin Artha Wahyudi, who rallied past Malaysia's Khang Khai Xing and Aaron Tai 15-21, 21-12, 21-16.

# Odisha to host FIVB Beach Pro Tour for three years



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 14:** The four-day Volleyball Mahakumbh concluded at KIIT and KISS here today, marking a significant milestone for the promotion of volleyball and women's empowerment in Odisha. Organised jointly by KIIT-KISS and the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), the mega event was inaugurated on Saturday in a colourful ceremony witnessed by nearly 40,000 students.

The event was graced by FIVB President Fabio Azevedo, whose presence underscored the global importance of the initiative. Volleyball Mahakumbh, held from December 11 to 14, was organised as part of KIIT & KISS's flagship Kanya Kiran initiative, aimed at empowering women and strengthening grassroots sports development.

Addressing a press conference here Sunday, Azevedo said the initiative reflects FIVB's commitment to inclusive growth and gender equity through sport. He announced that the prestigious FIVB Beach Pro Tour will be hosted in Odisha for three consecutive years—2026, 2027 and 2028—in partnership with KIIT and KISS. He noted that Odisha's conducive sporting environment and the extensive infrastructure developed by KIIT & KISS make it an ideal destination for international volleyball events.

As part of the Kanya Kiran initiative, a series of workshops were organised during the event for women volleyball coaches from Odisha, other parts of India, and abroad. The workshops focused on training and empowering women coaches, who will in turn train players in their respective regions.

Over 500 participants from Odisha and more than 200 coaches, players and experts from India and across the world took part in the programme, which is expected to benefit over 50,000 volleyball players in the long run.

Internationally renowned volleyball coaches John Kessel and Jana Kulan led the training sessions, which included on-court practical coaching, advanced skill development modules, coach-education workshops and public participation programmes. These sessions were conducted across four major indoor courts and more than 40 outdoor courts on the KIIT and KISS campuses.

Speaking on the occasion, KIIT and KISS Founder Dr Achyuta Samanta said the collaboration with FIVB has brought world-class volleyball expertise to Odisha. "Through these workshops, thousands of girls and women will get the opportunity to experience the transformative power of volleyball," he said.

The event also featured special sessions and panel discussions on the role of volleyball in education, social transformation and youth empowerment, grassroots development of the sport, and issues related to women's empowerment and equality. Eminent speakers included Fabio Azevedo, Dr Achyuta Samanta, Abhijit B, Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra, John Kessel and Jana Kulan.

During the event, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between FIVB, KIIT and KISS. Azevedo also inaugurated the FIVB-KIIT/KISS Centre of Excellence and launched a new Sports Zone in the presence of Samanta, further strengthening Odisha's position on the global volleyball map.

## FIRST ASIAN COUNTRY TO LIFT TITLE

# India script Squash WC feat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Dec 14:** India scripted history, clinching its maiden Squash World Cup title to become the first Asian country to achieve the feat after overwhelming Hong Kong 3-0 in the summit clash here Sunday.

The historic win at the Express Avenue Mall here marked an improvement on India's previous best finish of a bronze medal at the 2023 edition.

The title win will surely be good news for Indian squash as the sport is set to make its

Olympic debut at Los Angeles 2028. The Indian team's performance in the mixed-team event has been nothing less than spectacular. Seeded second in the tournament, India clinched the title without losing a single tie.

On Sunday, veteran Joshna Chinappa, 79th in the PSA rankings, stunned world No 37 Lee Ka Yi 3-1 (7-3, 2-7, 7-5, 7-1) in the opening women's singles to give India a perfect start.

The triumph also made India only the fourth country after Australia, England and Egypt to win the Squash World Cup title.



## U19 ASIA CUP

# Young Men in Blue outplay Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Dec 14:** A disciplined bowling performance, led by all-rounder Kanishk Chouhan and seamer Deepesh Devendran, powered India to a comprehensive 90-run victory over Pakistan in their Group A match of the Under-19 Asia Cup, here Sunday.

After being put in to bat, India posted a competitive 240 all out in 46.1 overs, riding on a fluent 85 from Aaron George and useful contributions from captain Ayush Mhatre (38) and Chouhan (46).

Pakistan were then bundled out for 150 in 41.2 overs, never quite recovering from the early setbacks in a chase of 241.

The Indian team maintained 'no-handshake' policy against Pakistan.

AGENCIES

**Washington, Dec 14:** WWE icon John Cena brought an end to his legendary professional wrestling career Saturday night, closing the curtain on a 24-year run with his final match at Saturday Night's Main Event at Capital One Arena.

The 48-year-old competed in his farewell bout against Gunther, ultimately losing after being forced to submit to a sleeper hold in a match lasting just under 25 minutes.

The conclusion shocked fans in attendance, as Cena; renowned throughout his career for rarely submitting, tapped out for the first time, prompting an emotional reaction from the crowd.

## TWO GOATS IN ONE FRAME

# Messi, Tendulkar come together

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Dec 14:** He came, he saw, and he conquered hearts -- all in one hour. In one Messi-merising hour spent at the iconic Wankhede Stadium as part of his GOAT India Tour 2025, Lionel Messi interacted with cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, some current India and former football players, film stars, celebrities and politicians.

By the time he left, exactly one hour after making a grand entry into the stadium at 5.30 pm, the crowd was satisfied, unlike his 20-odd-minute appearance in Kolkata, which left ardent fans fuming and led to chaotic scenes, including rioting by some angry fans and forced the West Bengal government to initiate a judicial inquiry.

Mumbai was the third stop on his GOAT India Tour 2025, and the Argentine World Cup winner spent the most time with



the fans after making a brief appearance at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata and a slightly longer stay at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal.

He spent some time talking to Tendulkar with the help of his translator. Tendulkar presented his signed India jersey and was seen pointing to the No 10 on the back, a number he shared with the Argentine great.

In an iconic moment, the

**When it comes to Leo, what does one talk about him? He has achieved everything. We really admire his dedication, determination, commitment**

SACHIN TENDULKAR

crowd chanted for Messi's name alongside that of Tendulkar and Luis Suarez, who, along with Rodrigo, are accompanying Messi on this GOAT India Tour 2025. Through Messi, the crowd also tried to send a message to FC Barcelona for a visit to Mumbai, chanting 'Barca, Barca'.

He reached the Wankhede Stadium halfway through the Celebrity Football Match involving India XI, versus Mitr XI, which involved Bengaluru FC players like Sunil Chhetri, Rahul Bheke, Jayesh Rana and Ashutosh Mehta, along with India woman star Bala Devi.

The Argentine football captain is scheduled to depart for Delhi Monday morning.

## 24-YEAR IN-RING CAREER

# John Cena's final bell from WWE

The wrestling great holds the record for winning the world title the most number of times - 17



Following the match, several WWE superstars emerged from the locker room to honour Cena's career.

Cena retires as a 17-time world champion, the most title reigns officially recognised by WWE. He headlined WrestleMania on six occasions and is widely regarded as one of the greatest performers in professional wrestling history.

He made his WWE debut in 2002 against Kurt Angle and initially struggled to find his footing before reinventing himself with the "Doctor of Thuganomics" persona, a transformation that propelled him to superstardom.

Beyond the ring, Cena successfully transitioned into Hollywood, becoming one of the few WWE stars to achieve sustained success as a film actor.

Tributes flooded in on social media while the entire arena

stood up to applaud the man who brought curtains down on an iconic 24-year career. The entire WWE locker room came out to the ringside to pay their tributes to the retiring legend. Cena bowed in all directions as he humbly accepted the applause.

WWE's official X account posted the video of the wrestling titan leaving the arena for the very last time and posted these words: "One final goodbye. Thank YOU, @JohnCena."

The crowd chanted "Thank you Cena" as the man who has defined an entire era of professional wrestling took off his shoes, wristbands, and the trademark armband, and left them in the ring to symbolize the end of his career.