HERE . NOW

OrissaPOST

Power of solitude

Actor Shehnaaz Gill says embracing solitude helped her discover inner peace, and a fulfilling sense of emotional wholeness

LEISURE | P2

Bondi beach shooting

Australia vows stricter gun laws after father-son kill 15 at Sydney Bondi Beach Jewish celebration

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Trade deficit falls

India's exports rebound in November that helped bring down the trade deficit to a five-month low of $24.53 billion

BUSINESS | P11

GOAT Tour ends

The Lionel Messi GOAT India Tour ends in a blaze of glory as the football icon promised to return

SPORTS | P12

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VOLUME 15, ISSUE 255 I www.orissapost.com | BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY | DECEMBER 16, 2025 | 12 PAGES | ₹5.00

Gandhi out, G RAM G in

After days of speculations, finally MGNREGA, the flagship rural employment generation scheme introduced by the Congress-led UPA government in 2005, is set to become a thing of past. The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, which seeks to repeal the programme named after Mahatma Gandhi, has been listed in the Lok Sabha in the supplementary list of business issued Monday. Most importantly, the name of Mahatma Gandhi has been dropped and RAM, even if in an abbreviated form has been added to the name of the scheme. Expectedly, Opposition, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in particular, questioned the proposed removal of name of a person who is considered the tallest leader not just in the country but in the world. It is worth noting that December 12, several news reports stated that the Union Cabinet had renamed the MGNREGA as the Pujya Bapu Gramin Rozgar Yojana. However, the government had not issued any notification regarding this interim name. The initial budget provision for the scheme when it was introduced in 2005-06 fiscal year was ₹11,000 crore while for the 2025-26 fiscal it has been set at ₹86,000 crore. Meanwhile, the TDP, an ally of Centre's ruling coalition, has indicated that the Bill would place an increased financial burden on the state governments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025 that seeks to replace the existing rural employment law MGNREGA is set to be introduced in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Winter session of Parliament.

According to a copy of the Bill, it will provide a statutory guarantee of 125 days of wage employment in every financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work.

Within six months from the date of commencement of the VB-G RAM G Act, states will have to make a scheme consistent with the provisions of the new law.

Under this centrally sponsored scheme, the financial liability would be shared between the Centre and the state governments. It would be 90:10 for the North-eastern states and Himalayan states and 60:40 for all other states and Union territories with legislature. For the UTs without legislature, the whole cost would be borne by the Centre.

The MGNREGS was a 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme.

While MGNREGS was a demand-driven scheme with the Union government bound to allocate more money if demand for work was there, under the proposed scheme, the Centre would determine state-wise normative allocation for each financial year. Any expenditure incurred by a state in excess would be borne by the state government.

The new Act focuses on four major types of works -- water security (conservation, irrigation, rejuvenation of water bodies, afforestation, etc); core rural infrastructure (activities like construction and upgradation of rural roads, Panchayat Bhawans, Anganwadi, etc); livelihood-related infrastructure creation (creation of assets to enhance rural likelihood like training centres, rural haats, grain storage, etc); and climate adaptation (activities related to disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation).

Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said MGNREGA has provided guaranteed wage-employment to rural households over the past 20 years.

However, "further strengthening has become necessary in view of the significant socio-economic transformation witnessed in the rural landscape ," he said.

A DAY TO REMEMBER: Army personnel demonstrate robotic mules during an event organised to commemorate 'Vijay Diwas,' in Kolkata, Monday. The day is celebrated December 16 to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. PTI PHOTO

VFS visa application centre in City soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: In a major relief for international travellers from Odisha, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has approved the establishment of a global visa application centre in Bhubaneswar.

According to a report, VFS Global, a private visa application outsourcing and technology services firm, got the permission to open a visa processing centre in the City.

The proposed centre will operate from the Baba Saheb Ambedkar Bus Terminal building at Baramunda, with the state government providing 3,000 square feet of space for the facility.

Until now, people from the state were required to travel to cities such as Kolkata, Delhi, and Hyderabad to complete visa-related formalities. The absence of a visa application centre in the state had long been a concern for students, professionals, tourists, and business travellers. Responding to this long-pending public demand,

the Chief Minister has taken the decision to set up the centre in the state capital.

"The people of the state have been demanding the establishment of a visa centre in Bhubaneswar for a long time. Keeping this in mind, the CM has taken this important decision," a release said.

Government reports indicated that the centre will serve as a facilitation point for processing visa applications for multiple countries, including biometric submission and document verification, depending on the protocols of individual foreign missions.

A country's embassy makes the final decision on a visa application, while VFS is a private entity that acts as an intermediary, handling the logistics of submitting and processing applications on behalf of the embassy.

AYURVEDIC, HOMOEO PG STUDENTS GET STIPENDARY HIKE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: In a significant move to encourage higher education in traditional systems of medicine, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has announced a substantial hike in stipends for postgraduate (PG) students studying in government Ayurvedic and Homeopathic medical colleges across the state.

The revised stipend structure will come into effect from January 1, 2026, benefiting around 120 PG students enrolled in these institutions.

As per the new decision, first-year PG students will now receive a monthly stipend of ₹48,000, up from the existing ₹31,000, marking a 55 per cent increase.

Second-year students will see their stipend rise from ₹32,000 to ₹52,000, an increase of 62 per cent, while third-year students will receive ₹55,000 per month, up from ₹33,000, reflecting a 67 per cent hike. P4

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

What is it, "Jai Ram" or "Hey Ram"?

SC miffed over 'spl pujas' for affluent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Supreme Court Monday expressed unhappiness over the practice of allowing people to do 'special pujas' in temples after paying money, disrupting the "resting time" of deity, as it sought a response from authorities on a plea challenging changes in 'darshan' timings and temple practices at the famous Bankey Bihari Ji Temple at Vrindavan.

It issued notice to the SC-appointed high-powered temple management committee and the Uttar Pradesh government and listed the matter for further consideration in the first week of January. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pamcholi took note of the submissions of senior advocate Shyam Divan and lawyer Tanvi Dubey assailing the change in 'darshan' timing of the deity at Bankey Bihari Ji Temple and also stopping of certain essential religious practices.

"These darshan timings are part of tradition and rituals. The timings during which the temple is open to the public are a part of a long tradition," Divan said.

"The change in temple timings has led to a change in the internal temple rituals, including the timings when the deity wakes up in the morning and sleeps at night," he said. "What they do is, after closing the temple at 12 noon, they do not allow the deity to rest even for a second and they exploit the deity like anything. The so-called affluent people, those who can afford to pay hefty amounts, are allowed to do special pujas," the CJI observed orally.

Rupee closes at all time low of 90.78

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 15: The rupee Monday crashed to its lowest-ever level of 90.80 before settling at a fresh all-time low of 90.78 against the US dollar, registering a loss of 29 paise over its previous close, weighed down by uncertainty over an India-US trade deal and persistent foreign fund outflows.

Forex traders said prevailing risk-averse market sentiment, compounded by strong US dollar demand from importers, further dented investor sentiment.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.53 against the US dollar, then lost ground and fell to a record intra-day low of 90.80, registering a 31-paise decline from its previous close. At the end of trade on Monday, the rupee was quoted at a record low of 90.74 (provisional), down 25 paise over its previous close.

Minor gangraped near Dhauli; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: A 17-year-old girl was allegedly gang-raped by five youths near Lingipur under Dhauli police limits here, officials said Monday.

The alleged incident, which took place December 10, came to light Monday, with the arrest of two of the accused by a special squad of the twin city Commissionerate Police.

According to the complaint lodged at Dhauli police station, the alleged incident occurred around 8pm when the girl, along with her male friend, was returning home after visiting Dhauli Shanti Stupa.

"The youths waylaid the girl and her friend and took turns to rape her at a deserted location on Canal Road near Lingipur. Later, they fled the spot," an official said, quoting the complaint. They also robbed a 20-gram gold chain and a five-gram silver ornament from the victim, added the official.

Upon reaching home, the girl narrated her ordeal before her parents following which they lodged a complaint with the police December 11 at around 4 am.

Police registered a case and launched a manhunt. Later, they managed to nab two of the accused. Efforts were on to arrest others involved in the crime, the official further said.

Meanwhile, a forensic team visited the spot and collected evidence for further investigation.

Moquim expelled from Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Senior Odisha Congress leader and former MLA Mohammed Moquim was expelled from the party after he challenged its state leadership, an OPCC leader said Monday.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das said Moquim was removed for "anti-party activities."

"This is for the information of all concerned that AICC (All India Congress Committee) has approved the proposal for the expulsion of Sri Md. Moquim from the primary membership of the party, due to anti-party activities," he said in a statement.

Moquim, a former MLA from the Barabati-Cuttack assembly segment, had recently challenged the OPCC leadership and written a letter to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi.

Moquim said, "I have no regret about writing a letter to Sonia Gandhi and raising pertinent issues. They have expelled me from the party, but cannot distance me from the Congress ideology which I follow in letter and spirit."

OPCC media cell chief Arabinda Das, in a statement, said that Moquim's communication was "not intended to reform the party, rather to create disturbance in the organisation."

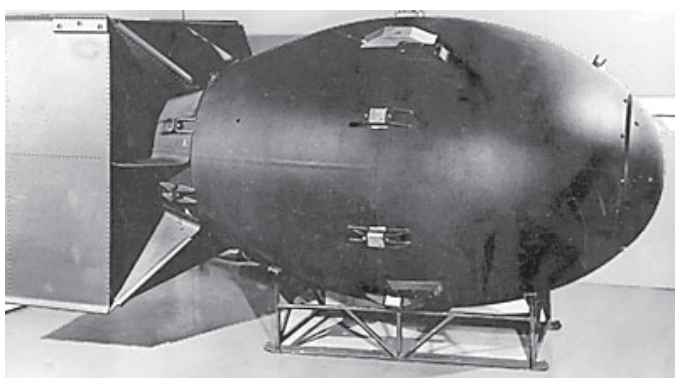
60 yrs on: CIA's lost nuclear device still in Himalayas

AGENCIES

New York, Dec 15: At the height of the Cold War in 1965, China had just tested an atomic bomb. The CIA wanted to spy on Chinese missile tests using a nuclear-powered antenna placed high on Nanda Devi, overlooking the country's border.

American and Indian climbers prepared their cargo: an antenna, cables, and a 13 kg generator called the SNAP-19C. Inside it was plutonium. As the climbers readied for the final push, a blizzard swept in, swallowing the mountain, The New York Times reported.

From the advanced base camp below, Captain MS Kohli, the Indian officer leading the mission, watched in



Plutonium nuclear device PIC: CCDC.CAM.AC.UK

fear. He grabbed the radio and instructed: "Camp Four, this is Advance Base. Can you hear me? ... Come back quickly... don't waste a single minute."

"Secure the equipment. Don't bring it down."

The climbers hid the equipment on an icy ledge near Camp Four and fled downhill to save their lives. They left behind a nuclear device containing nearly a third of the plutonium used in the Nagasaki bomb. It has never been seen again.

The mission was a failure. The secret remained buried until 1978. A young reporter named Howard Kohn uncovered the story and published it in Outside magazine. The scandal exploded. Protesters in India waved signs that read, "CIA is poisoning our waters."

Behind closed doors, governments moved quickly to quiet the storm. President Jimmy Carter and former Prime Minister Morarji Desai worked together in secret.

In a private letter, Carter praised Desai for how he handled "the Himalayan device problem," calling it an "unfortunate matter." Publicly, both countries said little.

Today, the men who carried it up the mountain are old or gone. Jim McCarthy, now in his 90s, still trembles with anger.

"You can't leave plutonium by a glacier feeding into the Ganges!" he shouted. "Do you know how many people depend on the Ganges?"

Captain Kohli, before his death, looked back with regret.

"I would not have done the mission in the same way," he said. "The CIA kept us out of the picture," he said. "Their plan was foolish, their actions were foolish, whoever advised them was foolish. And we were caught in that." "The whole thing," he said quietly, "is a sad chapter in my life."

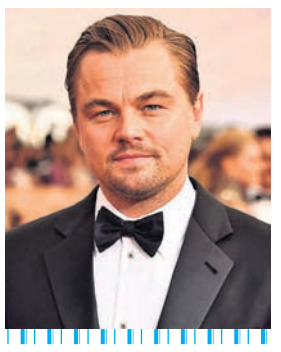
leisure

ROB REINER, WIFE MICHELE FOUND DEAD IN LA HOME

Renowned actor and director Rob Reiner and his wife, Michele, were tragically found dead in their Los Angeles home, reportedly victims of a stabbing. While police are investigating the incident as an apparent homicide, sources close to the family suggest their son, Nick, who has a history of drug addiction, may be involved in it

DiCAPRIO RULES OUT DIRECTING PLANS

Leonardo DiCaprio has revealed he has no aspirations to direct, citing his admiration for filmmakers like Martin Scorsese. He expressed that he could never match Scorsese's directorial prowess. Despite this, DiCaprio cherishes his collaborations with Scorsese, calling them profound learning experiences and regretting not observing the director's process more closely



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, a romantic link-up is about to be delivered at your doorstep, all wrapped in silver and tinsel! So, Ganesha hopes you are prepared. Don your best attire, check your breath and practice some sweet-talking. After all, who knows what the evening will lead to?

TAURUS

Chaos will reign supreme as unexpected things occur and expected ones are missed out on, says Ganesha. Luck will favour you and nothing is powerful enough to hamper you other than you own thoughts. You will dodge any trouble that is headed your way and escape easily, much to the embarrassment of others.

GEMINI

If you have children, they will be a pampered lot today, says Ganesha. Your affection, however, may not have its desired impact. Children are known to be unpredictable, but keep an eye on their activities, especially today. You may entertain your loved ones with a sumptuous dinner tonight.

CANCER

Today, you will need to rise above your emotional leanings and will have to choose between doing the right thing and keeping your loved ones happy. So far, you have managed to strike a balance. It is about time that you learn to deal with your fears, suggests Ganesha. Always keep in mind that your emotions cloud your reasoning.

LEO

Friendships are supposed to last forever. But it all depends on whether or not the friend is around when most needed. Today, your pals may turn to you for help, and sure enough, you will be there to extend all the support you can, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

You are the banner carrier for those around you today, giving hope and inspiring. Clad yourself in robes of the perfect family man. This should spread warmth and love, and will work wonders in improving relationships.

LIBRA

Call it two sides of the same coin, but today, you shall have the uncanny desire to be your own master and servant. But this day is all set to be animated and eventful and full of life. Expect a few run-ins with the opposite sex, as you are bound to attract quite a few of them, mainly because of your killer good looks. Hitting the gym pays its dividends, says Ganesha.

SCORPIO

You may find yourself sulking in your shell today, feels Ganesha. One event or another may lead you to shut out work. Hindsight and bitterness will not lead you anywhere, so Ganesha advises that you must steer clear of negativity. Soul searching and inner cleansing may best be complimented with meditation and yoga.

SAGITTARIUS

A nice, easy and pleasant day is on the cards. Your professional approach will bring you much appreciation, especially in the way you handle complicated problems. The way you balance people's opinions will help you make many friends.

CAPRICORN

Recognition and rewards are awaiting you at work, and unlike in most cases, colleagues won't be envious of your success. They will, in fact, provide the much-needed motivation for taking up new and challenging projects, says Ganesha. For those of you looking to switch jobs, wait awhile, this may not be the right time. You will be showered with better job opportunities, but it will be wise of you to wait till you strike the right deal.

AQUARIUS

Today, you social butterflies will set hearts fluttering! Also, whatever you have been working on will reach completion now. You do have a great vision, but you're lost when it comes to executing your plans. Ganesha assures success if only you are a little more practical!

PISCES

The focus today is on touching base with your near and dear ones, says Ganesha. It is likely that you will renew some old associations in a social function, or in matters related to business. You are likely to surge ahead of your competitors when it comes to work related matters.

SHEHNAAZ embraces solitude

MUMBAI: Actress Shehnaaz Gill opened up about the importance of solitude as she shared that being alone has helped her find a sense of wholeness.

In her latest post on Instagram, the *Honsla Rakh* actress and singer emphasised that embracing alone time can be empowering, allowing one to reconnect with themselves and discover inner strength. Monday, Gill shared her few candid monochrome images and wrote, "To be alone is to be whole……"

The first black-and-white shot shows the actress sitting and posing candidly. She wears a black tank top paired with an open shirt and shorts. In the next, Gill is seen tying her hair into a bun.

Shehnaaz frequently shares photos, offering a glimpse into both her personal and professional life.

On the professional front, Gill's latest project, *Ikk Kudi*, revolved around a woman from a family marked by heartbreaks, who started doubting her arranged marriage and embarked on a journey to uncover her fiancé's hidden past.

Shehnaaz began her career as a model with the 2015 music video *Shiv Di Kitaab* and made her acting debut in the 2017 Punjabi film *Sat Shri Akaal England*. Her breakthrough came with her participation in the 13th season of *Bigg Boss*, which catapulted her to fame and earned her a popular household name. IANS

TERE ISHK MEIN CONTROVERSY

Kriti addresses 'toxic' debate

MUMBAI: Kriti Sanon's latest film *Tere Ishk Mein* has generated intense discussion since its release, drawing mixed reactions from audiences and critics alike. The Dhanush-starrer has been widely debated on social media, with many viewers describing the film and its central relationship as "toxic" because of its emotionally charged narrative. Addressing the criticism and backlash surrounding her character Mukti, Kriti shared her perspective during an interview.

The actress spoke about how terms like "toxic" and "red flag" are increasingly used in modern conversations. She noted that reactions to such films are highly subjective and depend largely on individual moral viewpoints. Kriti said, " It is great that these terms are being discussed. Debate is a great part of it. At the end, a lot of people are feeling like both are right and wrong at some points." She further explained that human beings are inherently flawed and capable of making mistakes, adding that intent and emotional complexity often get overlooked when labels are applied too quickly.

Talking about Mukti's controversial decision in the film to give her child to her husband, Kriti highlighted the deep emotional turmoil her character experiences. She described Mukti as an empathetic person who is completely shattered by guilt, especially after believing her actions unintentionally caused irreparable harm. AGENCIES

Alia's boldest decision

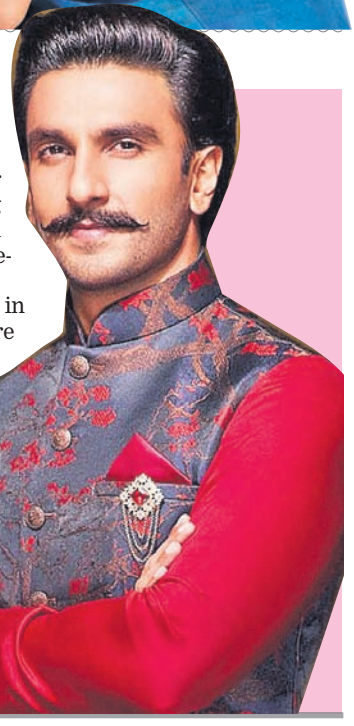
MUMBAI: Alia Bhatt has built an impressive body of work over the years, with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi* standing out as a defining milestone in her career. While attending the Red Sea International Film Festival in Saudi Arabia, the actress reflected on portraying the powerful Kamathipura matriarch and described the role as the boldest decision of her acting journey.

Speaking candidly at the event, Alia admitted that despite being an established performer, she was unsure whether she could fully meet the demands of such a complex and layered character. She revealed that taking on Gangubai was a major risk, one that came with a sense of fear and uncertainty. However, her confidence stemmed from her unwavering trust in director Bhansali. Alia shared that she chose to completely surrender to his vision, knowing there was no middle ground; the performance would either work completely or not at all.

The emotional intensity of the role left a lasting impression on her, with Alia noting that *Gangubai Kathiawadi* is the character that has stayed with her the longest on an emotional level. The portrayal earned widespread critical acclaim and marked a turning point in her career, culminating in a National Film Award for Best Actress.

Alia is now set to reunite with Bhansali for *Love and War*, co-starring Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal, slated for release in March 2026. AGENCIES

Ranveer on fate, patience



MUMBAI: Ranveer Singh, who tasted his share of failures with films such as *83*, *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* and *Cirkus*, has taken the box-office by a storm with his latest release *Dhurandhar*. The livewire star penned a reflective note on fate and patience amid the buzz.

Taking to his Instagram Stories, Ranveer, known for his infectious energy and who went through a long lull following the release of *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* in 2023, penned a note that struck a chord as he spoke about trusting the process and waiting for the right moment.

"*Kismat ki ek bohut khoobsurat aadat hai, ki woh waqt aane par badalti hai... Lekin filhal...Nazar aur sabr,*" wrote the actor, who is basking in the success of *Dhurandhar*, as he shared his thoughts on destiny, patience and perseverance.

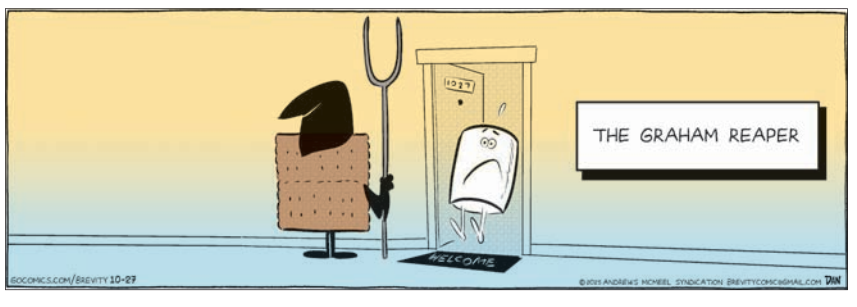
Dhurandhar made history at the box office in its second weekend, minting over Rs 100 crore in just two days. The spy thriller saw a meteoric rise. The film as of now has raked in Rs 351 crore overall, as per reports.

Dhurandhar is directed by Aditya Dhar. The film stars Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi, Manav Gohil, Danish Pandor, Saumya Tandon, Gaurav Gera and Naveen Kaushik. IANS

PEANUTS

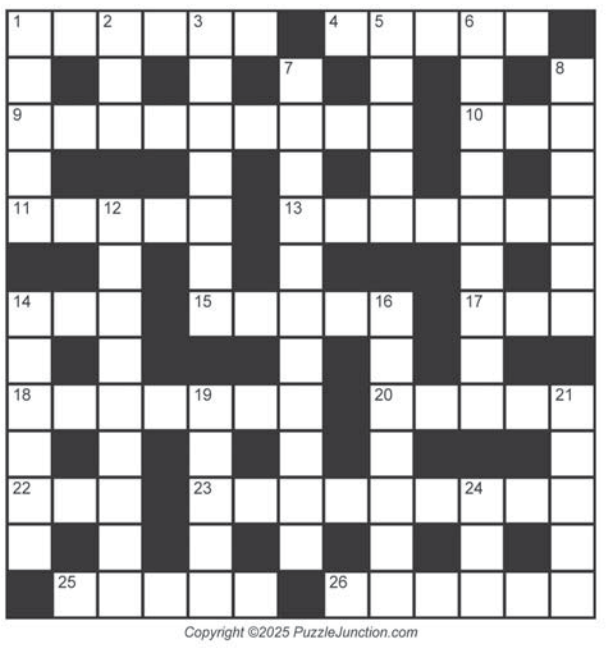
CALVIN AND HOBBES

BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across
1 Morsels
4 Weeper of myth
9 Joke's conclusion (5,4)
10 WWW address
11 Tempest
13 Wet blanket
14 Auction unit
15 Fashion
17 Word on a dipstick
18 First part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*
20 Ziti, e.g.
22 Airport posting, in brief
23 Lake Eyre locale
25 Bakery supply
26 Fruity frozen dessert

Down
1 Sleeveless garments
2 Ornamental vase
3 West Indies islands
5 Utopian
6 Casual wear (4,5)
7 Disney character (6,5)
8 Cavorted
12 Passé (3-2-4)
14 Hang around
16 Kind of penguin
19 Lion sounds
21 In the know
24 Mouth piece

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

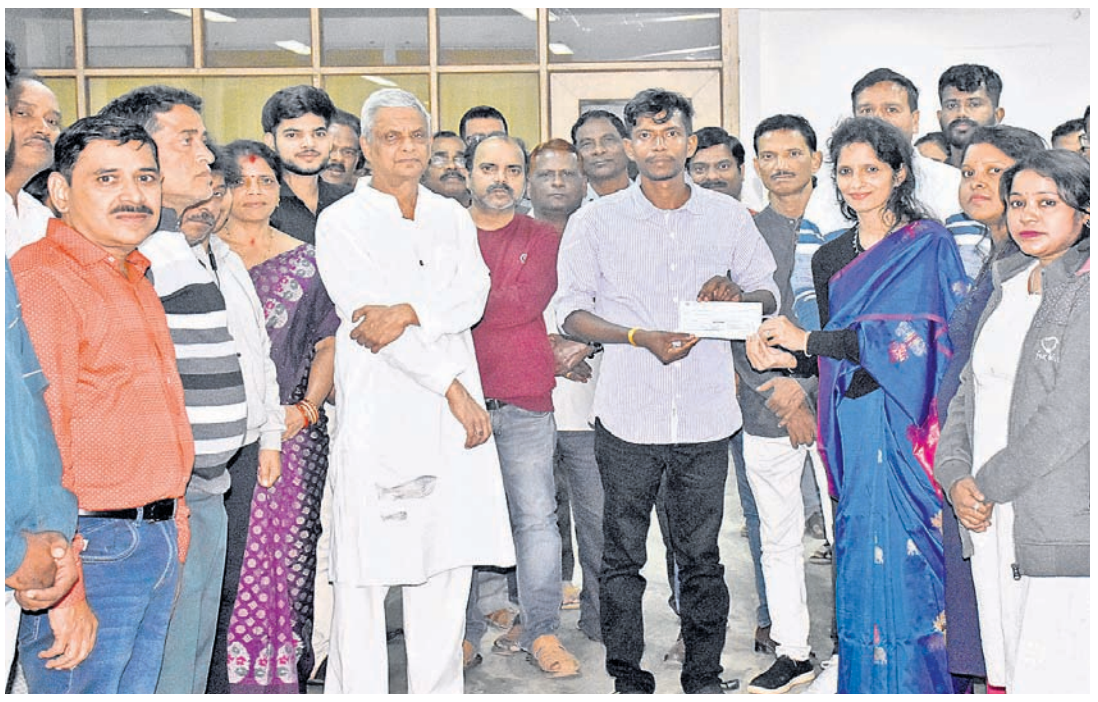
CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

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

CULTURAL EVENT

Artistes perform during Shree Padmalaya 2nd Dance Festival in Puri, Monday



Dharitri and **Orissa POST** Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy hands over a cheque of ₹1 lakh to 'Dharitri Climate Grant 2025' awardee Bapi Gochhayat and 'Special Climate Grant' cheque of ₹1 lakh to environmentalist Bichitrananda Biswal at the newspapers' office in Bhubaneswar, Monday. The dailies' Editor Tathagata Satpathy and employees are seen

PICS: MANORANJAN MISHRA

MLA SALARY HIKE

War of words ensues as all eyes on Guv's assent to Bill

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: With a threefold hike in the salary and allowances of Odisha MLAs triggering a political row and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Naveen Patnaik announcing that he would forgo the enhanced benefits, a war of words has ensued between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Congress over the bill.

With the Bill witnessing unanimous support in the House, all eyes are now on Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, whose assent is required for the Bills passed by the state Assembly.

On the last day of the Winter Session December 9, the Assembly passed four Bills unanimously, though the lone CPI(M) member remained absent from the House.

The Left party has opposed the increase in legislators' salaries and allowances.

Under the new provisions, the total monthly package of an MLA has been raised to ₹3.45 lakh from ₹1.11 lakh earlier.

The move has drawn sharp criticism on social media and from various organisations, which accused the BJP government of prioritising lawmakers over people, pointing out that the state's per capita annual income is estimated at ₹1.83 lakh in 2024-25.

While the Chief Minister will get a monthly salary of ₹3.74 lakh, his deputies are entitled ₹3.68 lakh.

Social media users highlighted the income gap between legislators and the people they represent, noting that an MLA's annual income now stands at about ₹41.4 lakh.

"An MLA in Odisha now earns about 22 times more than the average citizen. In other words, they make in just two weeks what an average Odia

earns in an entire year," one widely shared post said.

Amid the outrage, BJD president Naveen Patnaik recently wrote to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, stating that he would forgo the enhanced salary as the LoP.

However, the BJD had supported the Odisha Legislative Assembly Members' Salary, Allowances and Pension (Amendment) Bill, 2025 when it was passed in the House.

Senior BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo termed Patnaik's announcement as "politics" and a "stunt". "Why Patnaik did not attend the Assembly session or voice opposition during the Bill's discussion. He is playing politics," Singh Deo said.

Former minister and senior BJP MLA Jaynarayan Mishra also termed Patnaik's announcement as a "drama".

"As leader of opposition in the House, Patnaik must have given consent to his party MLAs to support the Bill. Now, he is forgoing the enhanced package. This is not acceptable," Mishra said.

Mishra highlighted Patnaik's affluent background and claimed that his father Biju Patnaik took Re 1 as salary when he was the Chief Minister between 1990 and 1995.

He said, "Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik had openly supported the Bill in the House. Other BJD MLAs also supported it. They were free to oppose, but did not."

However, BJP MLA Babu Singh announced that he would donate the enhanced salary amount to the poor in his Bhubaneswar-Ekamra assembly segment.

BJD MLA and former minister Ganeswar Behera, however, defended Patnaik, describing his decision as an "idealistic and personal choice".

At the same time, Behera justified the salary hike for MLAs, saying the demand had been pending since 2018 and critics should understand the pressures faced by legislators who interact with people daily.

Congress MLA Pabitra Saunta also criticised Patnaik's announcement, calling it "duplicitous" and a "political stunt".

"Patnaik comes from a well-to-do family and may not need the enhanced salary. But it is a necessity for many of the 147 MLAs, most of whom come from humble backgrounds," Saunta said.

Constitutional expert Manas Behera said the focus was now on the governor.

"All eyes are on the governor. The bills have been sent to him, and he may or may not give assent. There are instances of governors returning bills to the House. The decision rests with him," he said, adding that while most bills receive assent, "it remains to be seen what happens in this case".

"I am not sure if by now the Bill on MLA salary hike has received the assent of the Governor of Odisha. If not, and some citizens feel they would make an appeal to Governor to hold back assent and suggest a reconsideration, I am willing to extend my support to such a move," retired IAS officer Prasanna Mishra posted on X.

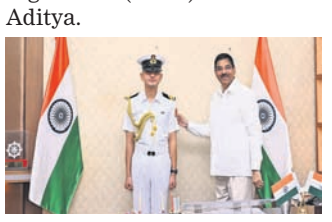
The House December 9 passed the Odisha Legislative Assembly Members' Salary, Allowances and Pension (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Lieutenant Harshit Deo appointed Guv's ADC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Lieutenant Harshit Deo, an officer of Indian Navy, was formally appointed as the Aide-De-Camp (ADC) to Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Monday.

The appointment ceremony was held at Lok Bhawan, where the Governor conferred the honorary title upon Lieutenant Deo, who joins his new assignment after serving as Watch Keeping Officer (WKO) aboard INS Aditya.



An alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), he holds a B.Tech degree in Applied Electronics and Communication. He completed his Sub-Lieutenant (Afloat) phase onboard INS Delhi in May 2022 and subsequently underwent the SLT (X) Tech Course, following which he was posted to INS Aditya in April 2023 for watch-keeping duties. He was appointed as the WKO onboard INS Aditya in December 2023.

During his tenure, Lieutenant Deo participated in multiple fleet deployments and international naval exercises, gaining valuable operational experience. A native of Lohaghat in Champawat district of Uttarakhand, Lieutenant Deo is the son retired government teacher Naresh Deo, a recipient of the President's Award for teaching.

Naveen condemns violence in Dharmasala, demands action

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Odisha Assembly Naveen Patnaik Monday condemned the alleged attack on supporters of former MLA and senior Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader Pranab Kumar Balabantaray in the Dharmasala area of Jajpur district Sunday, demanding stringent action against the culprits behind the violence.

The BJD supremo also targeted the state government and Odisha Police, accusing them of remaining mute spectators and taking no action yet against the accused persons despite the violence being committed in broad daylight. Taking to his X account, Patnaik Monday wrote, "I strongly condemn the incident of vandalism and the brutal assault on the supporters of Pranab Balabantaray, former MLA of Dharmasala and a senior leader of the Biju Janata Dal, following the forceful entry into his residence. Even though the incident occurred in broad daylight, the silence of the police administration and the government, and their failure to take action against anyone so far, has surprised everyone."

Supporters of Himanshu Sekhar Sahoo have claimed that two of his supporters were attacked first by the former MLA Balabantaray's supporters near his farmhouse Sunday

"By condoning anarchy and hooliganism in the state, what message is the BJP government trying to convey? The peace-loving people of Odisha will never accept this. Strict action should be taken immediately against the culprits," Patnaik further added.

Notably, several persons sustained serious injuries in a political clash at the farmhouse of Balabantaray at Panturi under Jenapur police limits in the Dharmasala area of Jajpur district Sunday afternoon.

Speaking to media persons, Balabantaray alleged that supporters of Dharmasala MLA Himanshu Sekhar Sahoo attacked around 30 to 40 of his supporters while they were having a feast at his farmhouse. He claimed that the miscreants vandalised 20 vehicles and injured around 25 of his supporters, including women members.

Meanwhile, several BJD leaders, including Balabantaray, along with his supporters, have been camping in a sit-in protest in front of the DGP Camp office in Bhubaneswar, demanding stringent and immediate action against the accused involved in the crime. On the other hand, supporters of Sahoo have claimed that two of his supporters were attacked first by the former MLA Balabantaray's supporters near his farmhouse Sunday. Two separate cases have been registered on the basis of two complaints lodged by opposite groups.

Krishi Vidya Nidhi application deadline extended till Dec 20

Bhubaneswar: The state government Monday extended the deadline for submission of applications for Krishi Vidya Nidhi, a scholarship aimed at making higher education accessible to the children of beneficiaries under the CM-Kisan scheme, to December 20, 2025. The online application period for the scholarship was initially set from October 15 to November 30 for the academic year 2025-26. However, in response to requests from students, the state government decided to extend the application deadline. "Now, the last date for submission of online applications has been extended to December 20, 2025," an official said. The verification of application forms at the institution level must be completed by December 25, 2025.

Workshop on women's digital financial literacy at BJB College

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: A two-day Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)-sponsored workshop on "Empowering Women through Digital Financial Literacy & Digital Payment Transformation" began at BJB Autonomous College Monday.

Principal Jhumki Rath inaugurated the event, highlighting the importance of women's participation in India's digital economy. Commerce head Nisha Jain and faculty from various departments attended and supported the initiative.

The workshop is part of an ICSSR Major Research Project (2023–24) titled "Understanding Digital Divide and Financial Inclusion Status to Boost Digital Payment Transformation: A Comparative Study between Urban and Rural Women of Odisha," led by Project Director Elina Kanungo, with Devika and Debabrata Sharma as Co-Project Directors. Focusing on digital financial confidence and empowerment, the initiative draws on field research across eight districts—Khurda, Bhadrak, Puri, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, and Kendrapara—covering urban and rural women. The study found that despite expanding digital infrastructure, many women remain hesitant to use digital payments due to low financial literacy, fear of cyber fraud, and limited digital skills.

The workshop attracted participation from students, faculty members, researchers, women entrepreneurs, SHG members and community representatives.

Ayurvedic, Homoeopathic PG students get hefty stipend hike

ENHANCED ALLOWANCE AIMS TO BOOST ACADEMICS AND PATIENT CARE, ENSURING BETTER HEALTHCARE SERVICES FOR ALL

FIRST-YEAR PG STUDENTS WILL NOW GET ₹48,000 PER MONTH, UP FROM ₹31,000, REFLECTING A 55% HIKE

SECOND-YEAR PG SCHOLARS SEE THEIR STIPEND JUMP BY ₹20,000 TO ₹52,000, AN INCREASE OF 62%

THIRD-YEAR PG TRAINEES WILL RECEIVE ₹55,000 MONTHLY INSTEAD OF ₹33,000, MARKING THE HIGHEST HIKE OF 67%

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: In a significant move to encourage higher education in traditional systems of medicine, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday announced a hefty increase in the stipend for the post-graduate (PG) students of government Ayurvedic and Homoeopathic medical colleges across the state.

According to a release issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), first-year PG students will now receive a monthly stipend of ₹48,000, up from the existing ₹31,000, marking a 55 per cent increase. Second-year students will see their stipend rise from ₹32,000 to ₹52,000, an increase of 62 per cent, while third-year students will receive ₹55,000 per month, up from ₹33,000, reflecting a 67 per cent hike.

In another major relief, the state government has also increased the stipend for House Surgeons in government Ayurvedic and Homoeopathic medical colleges. Their monthly stipend has been raised from ₹17,000 to ₹30,000, with the revised rate to be implemented retrospectively from August 1, 2025, the CMO said.

The revised stipend structure will come into effect from January 1, 2026, benefiting around 120 PG students enrolled in these institutions.

The CM said the decision was taken to motivate students pursuing Ayurveda and Homoeopathy and to strengthen healthcare services in the state.

He expressed hope that the enhanced financial support will help students focus more on academics and patient care, ultimately leading to the delivery of better and more qualitative healthcare services to the people.

ON WARPATH: Members of Odisha Rajya Asha Karmi Sangha stage a demonstration outside the CDMO office at Cantonment Road in Cuttack, Monday, to press for a pension hike

OP PHOTO

Govt, CanKids ink pact for paediatric cancer care

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: In a major move to enhance paediatric cancer care, the Health and Family Welfare department Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CanKids KidsCan, a leading cancer care organisation. The MoU was inked at the Health Directorate office in presence of Public Health director Nilakantha Mishra and CanKids founder-chairman Poonam Bagai.

The MoU outlines a comprehensive framework for paediatric cancer care, focusing on early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care. It also includes providing financial support and awareness programmes for children and families, with an emphasis on patient-centered research.

According to Bagai, the agreement will establish Odisha as a regional centre for paediatric cancer treatment in Eastern India. She expressed hope that the collaboration will greatly enhance care and support for children battling cancer in the region.

The signing ceremony was attended by Additional Director Sushanta Swain, along with senior government officials, medical professionals, paediatric oncologists and survivors of childhood cancer. The event was supported by the National Society for Change for Childhood Cancer in India and various other stakeholders.

Notably, CanKids began its operations in Odisha in 2018, partnering with AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and a local hospital to provide comprehensive cancer care. In 2023, it launched the State Cancer Care Coordination Center (SCCC) and a Home Away from Home (HAH) facility in Bhubaneswar.

Currently, CanKids is providing support to over 1,000 children annually through treatment assistance, making a positive impact on the lives of families affected by childhood cancer in Odisha and beyond.

4 HELD FOR ILLICIT LIQUOR TRADE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Excise department sleuths Monday arrested four persons for transporting illicit liquor in two vehicles, during patrolling on National Highway (NH) 16 near Pitapalli.

The accused were identified as Kanhu Charan Parida, 43, Bikash Gouda, 26, Jagadish Patra, 26, and Manoj Kumar Gouda, 35.

Bhubaneswar Excise SP Debasish Patel said they were tipped off about the smugglers transporting the contraband in vegetable vehicles. However, the mobile unit of the Excise department intercepted the two vehicles on NH 16 and seized them. The team also recovered 2,000 litres of illegal liquor.

Preliminary investigations suggested that the illicit liquor, procured from Khalikote area of Ganjam district, was being transported to Dumduma area for sale through vegetable and dry fish vehicles.

"We seized two vehicles from near Pitapalli on NH 16. They had adopted a unique method to evade arrests. However, we have foiled their plan. Further investigation is underway to find involvement of others, if any, in the case," said the Excise SP.

OUTR launches training on geosynthetics in road projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The department of Civil Engineering, Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR), in collaboration with CSIR–Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), New Delhi, and the National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, inaugurated a five-day training course on "Applications of Geosynthetics in Road Infrastructure Projects." The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, researchers, academicians, and professionals from the civil engineering domain.

The inaugural session was honoured by the presence of renowned scientists and eminent technical professionals, reflecting the academic and industrial significance of the programme. The event was jointly organised by CSIR–CRRI, New Delhi, and the National Technical Textiles Mission, Ministry of Textiles, in association with the department of Civil Engineering, OUTR, with the objective of promoting advanced, sustainable, and climate-resilient infrastructure practices.

Bhupendra Singh Poonia, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Skill Development and Technical Education department graced the occasion as the chief guest. In his address, Poonia highlighted the expanding future scope of civil engineering, particularly in the context of sustainable and innovative construction technologies. He encouraged students to continuously update themselves with multidisciplinary knowledge , acquire event management and professional skills, and pursue certifications to stay industry-ready, emphasising the importance of utilising academic time productively to meet future technical challenges.

The inaugural address was delivered by Manoranjan Parida, Director, CSIR–CRRI, New Delhi. He provided valuable insights into the transformative role of geosynthetics in modern road infrastructure, emphasising their contribution to climate resilience, sustainability, and resource conservation.

INDOCRYPT 2025

Experts deliberate on cryptography, information security

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The four-day international conference INDOCRYPT was inaugurated Monday at International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) here, marking the beginning of an important global dialogue on cryptography and information security research and innovation.

The conference brings together renowned experts, researchers, academicians, and industry professionals to discuss the latest trends, breakthroughs, and pressing challenges in cryptography—an area of growing importance in the contemporary digital age.

With digital technologies increasingly underpinning governance, finance, communication, and national security, the themes of INDOCRYPT underscore the critical role of secure data, privacy protection, and resilient digital infrastructure. The conference aims to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange to address emerging cybersecurity threats and shape the future of secure digital systems.

The first day of INDOCRYPT featured three highly impactful technical sessions by eminent scholars such as Pantelimon St nic , Naval Postgraduate School, USA, Sugata Gangopadhyay, IIT-Roorkee, and Luca De Feo, IBM Research Europe. The speakers shared cutting-edge research insights and explored recent advancements in cryptographic theory and practice, offering valuable perspectives on both current applications and future directions of the field.

The inauguration ceremony was presided over by state Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan. He emphasised the significance of cryptography and information security in strengthening digital governance, legal frameworks, and skill ecosystems, and highlighted how conferences like INDOCRYPT can contribute to meaningful reforms through improved policymaking and robust digital infrastructure.

Sambalpur: Farmers call bandh Dec 19

SAMBALPUR: Alleging severe irregularities in the paddy procurement process, Paschim Odisha Krushak Sangathan Samanwaya Samiti (POKSSS) Monday threatened a shutdown in Sambalpur district December 19. The outfit accused the administration of indifference towards 'mounting losses of farmers' during the kharif procurement process. It alleged that lapses in token generation have left vehicles loaded with paddy stranded for days near mandis, leading to quality deterioration and rising transport expenses. POKSSS convenor Ashok Pradhan said that about 40,000 farmers were issued only one token each, which is grossly inadequate to dispose of their harvested paddy, while the rest are yet to receive even one token. Meanwhile, Food Supplies Minister Krushna Chandra Patra held a meeting Sunday on the issues that the farmers were facing.
"We will issue tokens to all registered farmers to procure paddy. We procure paddy at 17 quintals per acre in non-irrigated land and 19 quintals per acre in irrigated areas," he said.

Man arrested for extortion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Bharatpur Police Monday arrested a 31-year-old man for demanding extortion money, abusing and assaulting a couple running a snacks outlet at Tarini Market near Studio Chhak.

The woman shop owner lodged a complaint with Bharatpur Police alleging that accused Pabitra Maharana used to visit her shop and consume food without paying money.

It was around 5pm Sunday, when Pabitra arrived at the shop and allegedly demanded ₹500 per day as extortion along with free jalebi and pakoda. When the complainant and her husband refused to serve him free food, Pabitra verbally abused them and shoved her husband.

When the couple protested, the accused snatched the UPI payment sound box and a light stand from the shop and threatened them with dire consequences, before fleeing the spot.

Police launched an investigation and arrested Pabitra from GA Colony area. During interrogation, he reportedly confessed to the offence.

Pabitra was booked under sections 296(b)/126(2)/351(2)/308(2)/324(4) BNS. Further investigation is underway.

PURI HERITAGE WALKS

Railway heritage explored on Chakratirtha Road

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 15: During their 16th heritage trail Sunday afternoon, members of Puri Heritage Walks (PHW) came across a restored engine from the Nuapada–Gunupur line of the erstwhile Parlakimedi Light Railway (PLR), displayed on the lawn of the Chanakya BNR Hotel along the historic Chakratirtha Road. Joined by over 20 heritage enthusiasts from different parts of the state, the walk began with a visit to the Chanakya BNR Hotel, one of Puri's prominent colonial-era heritage buildings.

The participants were briefed in detail on the hotel's history, architecture and various phases of transformation by the property's manager, Pabitra Kumar Sarkar, while the heritage enthusiasts were led by PHW advisor Debi Prasanna Nanda.

Originally known as Ashworth Villa in 1922, the building was later acquired by the Indian Railways in 1925 and converted into a railway guest house. Today, it is regarded as a symbol of Puri's modern heritage.

The historic steam railway engine PL 692, installed in front of the hotel, emerged as a major attraction for the heritage enthusiasts. Considered a priceless relic of the early phase of Indian Railways, the narrow-gauge engine—once part of the Nuapada–Gunupur line under the PLR—drew keen interest from PHW members.

The participants also toured the sprawling three-and-a-half-acre hotel campus, including the heritage restaurant, and viewed antique artefacts reflecting the lifestyle and tastes of a bygone era. Notably, the hotel has hosted several eminent personalities from India and abroad, including former prime ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, filmmaker Satyajit Ray, and was also a favourite destination of Biju Patnaik.

After spending time at the historic Railways property, the members proceeded along Chakratirtha Road to visit the Chakra Nrusimha Temple, Bedi Hanuman Temple, Sunar Gouranga, and the sacred Chakratirtha Temple. Deeply rooted in Puri's religious, mythological and cultural traditions, these shrines are integrally linked to the rituals of the Srimandir. Located near the Mahodadhi (Bay of Bengal), they together embody the unique spiritual glory of the "Shankha Kshetra", with Chakratirtha, Chakra Nrusimha and Bedi Hanuman temples holding special significance.

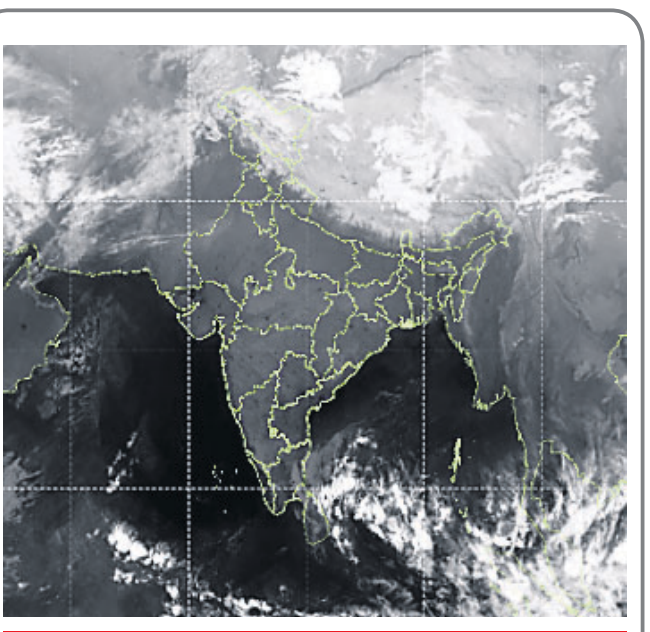
On Pana Sankranti (Mahavishuva Sankranti), the birth of Lord Hanuman is celebrated in Shreekhetra. On this occasion, the "Agyan mala" is brought from the Shree Jagannath Temple to Bedi Hanuman, where rituals such as "Agyan mala Lagi", "Sheetala Bhoga" and "Bandapana" are performed. The Mahavir idol, holding a mace and a mountain, is believed to date back to the Ganga dynasty.

At the Chakra Nrusimha Temple, three rare forms of Nrusimha—Lakshmi Nrusimha within the Sudarshan Chakra, Yogarudha Nrusimha and Adi Nrusimha—are worshiped. These nearly 1,000-year-old Ganga-period idols reflect diverse modes of Nrusimha worship.

The heritage walk concluded with a visit to the PHW Library on Station Road, where members shared their experiences and discussed the importance of preserving Puri's rich heritage.

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY INDEX	VARIATION	BOURSES INDEX	VARIATION	COMMODITIES INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR 90.84	▲ 0.26	SENSEX 85213.36	▼ 54.30	GOLD ₹134,716	▲ ₹1,094
EURO 106.75	▲ 0.51	NIFTY 26027.30	▼ 19.65	SILVER ₹198,394	▲ ₹5,543



WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	29.6°	27.2°
Min Temp	12.6°	12.6°
Humidity	69%	72%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha

Internet fully restored as Malkangiri sees normalcy

PNN & AGENCIES

Malkangiri, Dec 15: Normalcy returned to Malkangiri district Monday, nearly a week after around 200 houses were damaged in violent clashes and arson in a village, with the district administration fully restoring internet services, a senior official said.

Additional District Magistrate Bedabar Pradhan said internet services, suspended across the district December 8 to curb the spread of rumours and misinformation following the clashes, were restored after the situation improved.

The suspension had been extended in phases till 12 noon, Monday. District Collector Somesh Kumar Upadhyay and Superintendent of Police Vinodh Patil visited Rakhelguda, Maribada, Niliguda and MV-18 villages and held discussions with local residents. Addressing villagers, the Collector said unity and brotherhood were essential to ensure a secure future for the next generation. He urged people to rebuild mutual trust through dialogue and resolve misunderstandings peacefully.

The Collector and the SP asked villagers to immediately inform the administration or police about any law and order concerns. The SP cautioned against circulating fake news or rumours on social media, especially in the current sensitive situation, saying that such acts create fear and unrest. He said strict action would be taken against those found spreading misinformation.

The administration had earlier withdrawn prohibitory orders imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita within a 10-km radius of MV-26 village, where arson incidents were reported December 7 and December 8. Though the violence was confined to two villages, tension had gripped the entire district, as the incident took the form of a clash between local tribals and Bengali settlers following the recovery of a headless body of a woman December 4, officials said.

The violence broke out after residents of Rakhelguda village allegedly set ablaze several houses belonging to Bengali residents, forcing hundreds to flee. The headless body of Lake Podiami (51), a woman from the Koya tribe, was recovered from the banks of the Poteru river December 4, while her head was found six days later at a location about 15 km away.

Officials said the district administration held several rounds of discussions with representatives of the tribal and Bengali communities, following which both sides agreed to maintain peace.

Relief and rehabilitation work has since been launched at MV-26 village, with preliminary assessment pegging property damage at around ₹3.8 crore. A two-member ministerial team headed by Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo visited the affected village, interacted with officials and locals, and submitted a report to the Chief Minister.

So far, 18 people have been arrested in connection with the violence, the officials said, adding that despite the withdrawal of prohibitory orders and restoration of internet services, security forces, including BSF and CRPF personnel, continue to be deployed to prevent any untoward incident.

Nabarangpur MP Balabhadra Majhi Sunday visited MV-26 and neighbouring Rakhelguda villages, and held discussions with members of both communities as part of efforts to rebuild confidence and restore peace. More than two lakh Bengali-speaking Bangladeshis were rehabilitated by the Centre in Malkangiri and Nabarangpur districts in 1968, and they currently reside in 124 villages of Malkangiri.

TUSKER FOUND DEAD IN ANGUL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bantala/Angul, Dec 15: A tusker was found dead at Baliapashi in Manikjodi panchayat under the Pokunda forest section of Angul forest division Monday morning.

The matter came to the light when villagers spotted the animal dead while heading outside to attend to their daily chores Monday morning. They immediately alerted forest officials as they reached the spot and launched an investigation.

Locals alleged that the elephant may have died from gunshot injuries inflicted by poachers, allegedly due to negligence by forest authorities. However, forest officials said the exact cause of death, circumstances and motive will be determined after a postmortem examination of the carcass and a detailed investigation.

The incident has triggered strong reactions from environmentalists and wildlife lovers, who have demanded stricter protection measures and accountability to prevent further loss of wildlife.

Meanwhile, residents said that the presence of poachers has increased in the division. Locals alleged that the forest department has limited its action to seizing hooks, GI wires used for trapping, and related materials, without curbing poaching effectively. Earlier, a leopard was found dead after being caught in a snare at Dimiripal village under the Karatapata forest section of the Angul Forest Division December 9.

22 migrant workers rescued

POST NEWS NETWORK

Lathor, Dec 15: Police rescued 22 migrant workers from the Lathor bus stand in Bolangir district Monday and arrested a labour agent in connection with their illegal trafficking.

The accused, identified as Saroj Parabhue of Pipalbahal village under Lathor police limits, was produced in the Patnagarh court, police said.

According to police, the agent had brought together 22 workers - 10 women, nine men and three children- from Padhel village under Patnagarh police limits, Gerda village under Larambha police limits, and Khairpali village under Padampur police limits in neighbouring Bargarh district. The agent had assembled them at Jogimunda with plans to traffic them to Siddipet in Telangana.

The agent brought the workers in a Nuapada bound private passenger bus Tarini from Bolangir to Lathor from where he planned to sent them onward by train. Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a raid at the bus stand and took the workers to the police station for questioning. During interrogation, the workers named Saroj as the agent involved.

Police later raided Pipalbahal village and arrested the accused. The rescued workers have since been sent back to their respective homes, said Lathor police station officer-in-charge Ramakant Sahu. A case has been registered.

Elephant injured after explosives go off in mouth

Baripada: A female elephant sustained serious injuries to its mouth after allegedly consuming explosives placed as bait in Mayurbhanj district, a forest official said Monday. The 5-year-old elephant was spotted in a forest area of the district December 12 morning and later tranquilised and shifted to a nursery in the Similipal North Division, Divisional Forest Officer (Baripada) Gobinda Chandra Biswal said. The animal had entered the Baripada forest range from the Nilagiri area of neighbouring Balasore district, he said.With severe injuries to its tongue, the elephant was rescued December 13 and is currently undergoing treatment under the supervision of a dedicated team of veterinary doctors, the DFO added.The exact cause of the injury will be ascertained by the treating veterinary team, Biswal said.

बैंक ऑफ़ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda

ROURKELA MAIN BRANCH
Sector-19, Bank Colony,
Rourkela, Sundargarh-769005

ABRIDGED NOTICE TO BORROWER

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the **Borrower(s): Mr. Pawan Kumar Sahoo,** S/o: Shambhu Prasad Sahoo, At: Banki Tola, Lathikata, Dist.: Sundargarh, Odisha - 770037 that Bank has granted you credit facilities pursuant to acceptance of the sanction letter dated **14.11.2025.** However, despite our previous notice dated **31.10.2025 and 18.11.2025,** you have failed to repay the overdue amount, resulting in default. Further, your debt has been classified as a **Non-Performing Asset (NPA) on 27.09.2025** in terms of RBI guidelines.

You are required to pay the total dues amounting to **Rs.47,95,213.49 plus Unapplied Interest, charges and cost thereon from 14.12.2025,** within **30 days** from the publication of this notice. If payment is not made within the said period, bank will be entitled to repossess the hypothecated movable assets and take other necessary actions in respect of hypothecated assets, including selling the assets to recover the outstanding amount. Any remaining balance will lead to further legal proceedings.

For detailed demand cum repossession notice, please refer/visit to the website link **https://www.bankofbaroda.com**

Place: Rourkela **Sd/- Chief Manager & Branch Head**
Date: 15.12.2025 **Bank of Baroda**

4 arrested for political violence

Jajpur/Jenapur: Jenapur police Monday arrested four workers of BJP in connection with the political violence between workers of the saffron party and the BJD in Jajpur district's Dharmasala Assembly constituency. The confrontation between supporters of former MLA Pranab Balabantray (Jitu) of BJD and sitting MLA Himanshu Sekhar Sahu (Liku) of BJP began near the Jenapur police station and later spilled over to Bhubaneswar. Demanding the arrest of those allegedly involved in the attack, about 500 BJP workers staged a sit-in outside the Jenapur police station. The protest had not been withdrawn at the time of filing this report. Meanwhile, BJD leaders have been holding demonstrations outside the office of the Director General of Police in Bhubaneswar, demanding the arrest of the Dharmasala MLA and BJP workers allegedly linked to the violence. BJP workers have continued their protest since late Sunday night, raising slogans. Amid the tension, Jenapur police arrested four BJP workers, IIC Nirupama Jena said. Senior police officials, including the Jajpur Road SDPO Lakshmidhar Swain, the Jenapur police station officer Jena, Kuakhia police station inspector Jyotiranjan Mohapatra and Ranjan Kumar Jena along with additional police forces, were deployed at the protest site outside the police station.

चक्रधरपुर मंडल के तहत विभिन्न परिसंपत्तियों के लिए ई–नीलामी सूचना

भारत के राष्ट्रपति, भारतीय संघ के लिए और उनकी ओर से, वरिष्ठ मंडल वाणिज्य प्रबंधक, चक्रधरपुर मंडल, दक्षिण पूर्व रेलवे द्वारा चक्रधरपुर मंडल के तहत निम्नलिखित परिसंपत्तियों की श्रेणियों के लिए ई–नीलामी आमंत्रित की जाती है, जो **https://www.ireps.gov.in/वेबसाइट** में सूचित की गई है। **क्रम संख्या, कैटेगरी, कैटलॉग संख्या, नीलामी की तिथि, नीलामी शुरू होने का समय और नीलामी बंद होने का समय** निम्नानुसार हैं: **● पे एंड यूज़, पीएनयू–सीकेपीडीआईवी–डीईसी, 19.12.2025, 12:30 बजे और 13:00 बजे। ● विज्ञापन, एमएमएस–वीबी–25, 22.12.2025, 12:00 बजे और 12:40 बजे। ● पार्किंग, पार्किंग–सीकेपी–डीईसी, 26.12.2025, 12:00 बजे और 12:30 बजे। ● विज्ञापन, एडीवीटी–एलबी–पीयू–25, 26.12.2025, 12:00 बजे और 12:30 बजे। ● पे एंड यूज़, पीएनयू–लाउंज–सीकेपी, 26.12.2025, 12:30 बजे और 13:00 बजे। ● पार्सल, पार्सलएसएलआर–18101, 26.12.2025, 12:30 बजे और 13:00 बजे। ● मिसलेनियस, एमआईएससी–पीएस–टाटा, 27.12.2025, 11:30 बजे और 12:00 बजे।** इच्छुक पार्टी इसका ध्यान रखें एवं ई–नीलामी सूचना के साइट का विवरण और संबंधित जानकारी के लिए ऊपर उल्लिखित वेबसाइट देखें। पूछताछ/स्पष्टीकरण के लिए, यदि कोई हो, कृपया अधोहस्ताक्षरी के कार्यालय से संपर्क करें।

(PR-960) **वरिष्ठ मंडल वाणिज्य प्रबंधक, चक्रधरपुर**

दक्षिण पूर्व रेलवे
मुस्कान के साथ सेवा

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. ELOP-T-13-2025

NAME OF WORK : SUPPLY OF CLEAN SILICA SAND FREE FROM CLAY, LOAM, MICA AND OTHER FOREIGN MATERIAL AS PER SPECIFICATION NO. AAR M-916-51 IN 20KG WATER PROOF NON-MOISTURIZED TRANSPARENT POLYTHENE BAGS AND FILLING IN THE ELECTRICAL AND DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE SAND BOXES AT PALASA, KHURDA ROAD, BHADRAK, TALCHER, PARADEEP, ANGUL, PURI, BHUBANESWAR, RAJATHAGARH, KENDUJHARGARH & JAKHAPURA ALONG WITH REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF SAND GEAR OF DIESEL AND ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES AT KHURDA ROAD, TALCHER, PARADEEP, PALASA & JAKHAPURA ROUND THE CLOCK AS PER REQUIREMENT FOR A PERIOD OF 02 YEARS (730 DAYS).

Advertised Value : ₹5,90,11,067.48, **EMD:** ₹4,45,100/-, **Cost of Tender Document :** ₹11,800/-, **Period of Completion :** 730 Days.

Bidding Start Date : 17.12.2025

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1730 Hrs. of 31.12.2025.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-Tender documents and corrigendum is available in website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. Divl. Electrical Engineer (OP)/ Khurda Road
PR-902/Q/25-26

Drone show to regale audience at Parab '25

Koraput: A drone show will be the centerpiece of this year's national-level 'Parab' festival, scheduled to be held from December 18 to 22 on Kechela Road in Koraput, district Collector Manoj Satyawan Mahajan said at a press conference, Monday. Cultural programmes will begin daily at 4pm. Singer Umakanta Barik and his team will perform, along with folk dance troupes from across the district December 18. The Humsufi Band from Kolkata will perform December 19, alongside traditional performances like Lavani, Bonda, Mallakhamba and animal mask dance presentations. V Company, Asima Panda and her team will present musical performances, along with Ranapa dance, Paika Akhada and Kerala's Kalaripayattu December 20. The drone show, this year's main attraction will be held December 21, followed by a performance by popular pop singer Nakash Aziz and his team. On December 22, musical composer Sachet and Parampara will perform at the event. Artistes and cultural teams from within the district, across the state and beyond will take part in this event. A total of 543 stalls will be set up at the festival, including 80 food stalls and 35 handicrafts and indigenous products (Swadeshi Mela) stalls. The Collector said the Chief Minister and several ministers are expected to attend. Seating facility has been arranged for about 50,000 people, while nearly 1 lakh visitors are expected to enjoy the cultural programmes. Parking facilities have been created at eight locations to ensure smooth traffic management. Among those present at the press conference were Jeypore Sub-Collector A Sashya Reddy, Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Tapan Kumar Nayak, District Planning Officer and In-charge District Culture Officer Suryakanta Behera, Koraput Sub-Divisional Information Officer Radhamani Sarkar, and members of the various media houses.

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक pnb punjab national bank (Together for the better)
Oriental United

MEGA E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

CIRCLE OFFICE : SAMBALPUR
Balaji Midtown, 1st Floor, Deheripali, P.O.: Budharaja, Sambalpur-768004
Email Id: cs8310@pnb.co.in, Authorised Officer Contact Number- 9955639375

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE/IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical/symbolic possession of which has been taken by the **Authorised Officer** of the Bank/Secured Creditor, will be sold on **"AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS"** basis on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of the dues + further interest & expenses thereon of the Bank / Secured Creditor from the respective borrower (s) and guarantor(s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties.

DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION : 30.12.2025, 11.00 A.M. to 4.00 P.M.
LAST DATE & TIME OF EMD SUBMISSION : 29.12.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.
PROPERTY INSPECTION DATE & TIME : 26.12.2025 FROM 11.00 AM TO 02.00 PM

Sl. No.	Name of the Branch / Name of the Account / Name & Addresses of the Borrowers / Guarantors in the Account	Description of Immovable / Movable Properties Mortgaged / Owner's Name (mortgagers of Property(ies)	A) Date of Demand Notice u/s 13(2) of SARFAESI ACT 2002 / B) Outstanding Amount as on Specified Date + further interest & expenses thereon / C) Possession Date u/s 13(4) of SARFAESI ACT 2002 / D) Nature of Possession Symbolic / Physical / Constructive	A) Reserve Price (₹) / B) EMD / C) Bid Increase Amount	Date & Time of E-Auction
1.	**SONEPUR BRANCH (498500) / Borrowers: 1) Shri Sourav Jagadala,** S/o: Ramdas Jagadala, **2) Smt. Gitanjali Jagadala,** W/o: Ramdas Jagadala, Both are At: Thapapali, PO: Gochhapada, Dist.: Boudh, PIN-762015	All the part & parcel of property situated over Khata No.: 12, Plot No.: 197/453, Area: Ac. 0.100 Dec., Mouza: Thapapali, Tahasil/Dist.: Boudh recorded in the name of **Smt. Gitanjali Jagadala,** W/o: Ramdas Jagadala / **Property ID: PUNBIUT47612946**	A) 01.08.2024 B) ₹11,28,179.04 as on 30.09.2025 + further interest & expenses thereon C) 02.12.2024 D) Symbolic	A) ₹5,58,000/- B) ₹55,800/- C) ₹25,000/-	30.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M. to 4.00 P.M.
2.	**LAIKERA BRANCH (206200) / Borrowers: 1. Sachidananda Saraf,** S/o: Prafulla Saraf, At/PO: Laikera, Dist: Jharsuguda-768215, **2. Srimanta Saraf,** S/o: Sachidananda Saraf, At/PO: Laikera, Dist: Jharsuguda - 768215. Saraf / **Property ID: PUNB24C55777076**	All that part & parcel of property situated over Khata No.: 207/514, Plot No.: 977/3591, Area: Ac. 0.010 dec. & Plot No.: 977/3592, Area: Ac. 0.020 dec., Mouza: Laikera, PS: Laikera, Tahasil: Laikera, Dist.: Jharsuguda recorded in the name of **Sachidananda Saraf,** S/o: Prafulla	A) 14.06.2024 B) ₹7,15,980.14 as on 30.09.2025 + further interest & expenses thereon C) 27.08.2024 D) Symbolic	A) ₹6,17,000/- B) ₹61,700/- C) ₹25,000/-	30.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M. to 4.00 P.M.

DETAILS OF ENCUMBRANCES KNOWN TO THE SECURED CREDITOR FOR ALL ABOVE PROPERTIES : Not Known

TERMS AND CONDITIONS : The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions: **1.** The properties are being sold on **"AS IS WHERE IS BASIS"** and **"AS IS WHAT IS BASIS"** and **"WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS"**. **2.** The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule here-in-above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. **3.** The Authorised Officer reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids, if not found acceptable or to postpone/cancel/adjourn/discontinue or vary the terms of the auction at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever and his decision in this regard shall be final. **4.** The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website **https://baanknet.com** on **30.12.2025** at the time mentioned in above proclamation table. **5. Applicable GST extra. 6.** For detailed term and conditions of the sale, please refer **https://baanknet.com** & **www.pnbindia.in**

15 DAYS STATUTORY SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 9(1) OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 15.12.2025 **Sd/- Authorised Officer, Punjab National Bank**

THE PURI URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD, PURI

HEAD OFFICE: KACHERI ROAD, PURI-752001

(Possession Notice) (For Immoveable Property)

The undersigned being the authorized office of the Puri Urban co-operative Bank, ltd. Puri had in exercise of powers conferred on him u/s 13 (12) of securitization and reconstruction of financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and under rule 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002, served demand notice on the loanees to pay arrear amount mentioned there in the notice within 60 (sixty) days from the date of receipt. The loanees / guarantors / mortgagers, if failed to pay off their loan dues, the loanees / guarantors / mortgagers in particular and the public in general are informed though this notice that the undersigned exercising the powers conferred on him u/s 13 (4) of the Act r/w Rules (8) of the Said Act has taken the Possession of the below mentioned properties on "as is where is whatever there is basis on this day date **09-12-2025.**

Therefore the loanees / Mortgagers in particulars and the public in general are hereby informed not to make any deal in respect of those properties shall be subject to the charge of the Puri Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd, Puri for the amount as stated here in below and interest thereon.

Sl no	Name of the Loanees / Guarantors	Date and Amount of Demand Notice	Description of Property
1.	Smt. Chhabirani Sahoo W/o-Sri Sankar Sahoo At-LokanathGhat, Hatisala, Dist- Puri	Rs. 3,69,055.00 Dt. – 18-08-2023 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon.	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.s No-04, Revenue village-LokanathGhata, Puri, Hal Khata No.-131/828, Sabak Khata No-126, Hal Plot No-325/1536, Sabak Plot No-325, Area-Ac.0.013 decimals., Dist-Puri. **Mortgager - (s):-** Smt. Chhabirani Sahoo
2.	a) Smt. Jati Behera, W/o- Sri Dasarathi Behera b) Sri Ajiba Behera, S/o-Sri Dasarathi Behera, c) Sri Gajendra Behera, S/o-Sri Dasarathi Behera, d) Sri Bhajaman Behera, S/o-Sri Dasarathi Behera e) Smt. Manorama Behera D/o-Dasarathi Behera At-Narasinghballav Patana, Dist-Puri, Odisha	Rs. 2,07,332.00 Dt. – 30-06-2019 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri, Tahasil No-674, P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.S No-32, Revenue village-Kumutipatna No-1, Puri, Hal Khata No-71, Plot No-151, Area-Ac.0.028 dec., Dist-Puri. **Mortgagor (s):-** 1) Smt. Jati Behera & Others .
3.	a) Sri Nityananda Mukharjee, b) Sri Pramod Ku. Mukharjee, c) Sri Tapan Ku. Mukharjee, S/o-Lt. Nagendranath Mukharjee, At-Chakrathirtha Road, Bankimuhan, Dist-Puri, Odisha. Guarantors name-1) Sri Pramod Ku. Mukharjee, S/o-Lt.Nagendranath Mukharjee, 2) Sri Tapan Ku. Mukharjee, S/o-Lt. Nagendranath Mukharjee, Copy Forwarded to 1) Sri Subhojit Mukharjee, 2) Smt. Nirmalya Mukharjee, 3) Smt. Champa Mukharjee, C/o-Nityananda Mukharjee.	Rs. 33,25,252.00 Dt. – 17-08-2023 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri, P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.S No-26, Revenue village-Bankimuhan, Puri, Khata No-87/13, Plot No-94/400, Area-Ac.0.064 dec., Boundary by-N-Plot No-92, S-Road, E-BibhutiBhusan Mukharjee, W-Plot No-358 & 94. **Mortgagor (s):-** a)Sri Nityananda Mukharjee
4.	a) Sri Panchanan Behera S/o-Lt. Bhagirathi Behera b) Smt. Fulla Behera W/o- Sri Panchanan Behera c) Sri Pradeep Ku. Behera Sri Panchanan Behera At/Po-Red cross Road, Ps-Kumbharpada, Dist-Puri, Odisha	Rs. 3,68,206.00 Dt. – 20-09-2025 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri,Tahasil No-647,P.S-KumbharpadaThana Puri, P.s No-28, Revenue village-Kundheibentasahi, Puri, Hal Mouza-Talabania, Sabak Khata No-79, Hal Khata No-137/kha, Sabak Plot No-384,386,387,389,390,391, Hal Plot No-1146, Area-Ac.0.018 dec., Dist-Puri. **Mortgagor (s):-** Sri Panchanan Behera
5.	a) Smt. Arnapurna Prusty, W/o-Nilakantha Prusty b) Sri Bhagirathi Prusty c) Sri Rajkishore Prusty d) Ku. Gitanjali Prusty e) Smt. Namita Sahoo C/o- Nilakantha Prusty All Legal heir of Lt. Nilakantha Prusty, At/Po-Markandeswar Sahi, Banualane, Ps-Town Thana, Dist-Puri, Odisha	Rs. 3,57,412.00 Dt. – 26-09-2025 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri, P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.S No-18, Revenue village-Chudangasahi, Puri, Khata No-122, Plot No-161, Area-Ac.0.015 dec., Dist-Puri **Mortgagor (s):-** Nilakantha Prusty
6.	a) Smt. Chandrama Maharana W/o-Sri Baikuntha Maharana b) Sri Baikuntha Maharana S/o-Lt. Krushna Ch. Maharana c) Sri Basanta Ku. Maharana S/o- Sri Baikuntha Maharana d)Sri Srikanta Maharana S/o- Sri Baikuntha Maharana e)Sri Rabindra Ku. Maharana S/o- Sri Baikuntha Maharana At/Po-Narasinghballava Patna, Near Mahadev Mandir, Dist-Puri-752002, Odisha	Rs. 1,97,682.00 Dt. – 20-02-2025 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri, P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.S No-32, Revenue village-Kumutipatna, Puri, Khata No-200/197, Plot No-168/362, Area-Ac.A0.013 dec., Dist-Puri. **Mortgagor (s):-** Smt. Chandrama Maharana
7.	Sri Manmohan Pradhan S/o-Sri Madhusudan Pradhan At-Bali sahi, Swetaganga Lane, Dist-Puri, Odisha	Rs. 4,37,453.00 Dt. – 29-12-2022 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri, P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.S No-10, Revenue village-Manikarnika Sahi, Puri, Hal Khata No-418, Plot No-1008, Area-Ac.0.013 dec., Dist-Puri. **Mortgagor (s):-** Sri Manmohan Pradhan
8.	a) Sri Rajesh Ku. Khatua b)Smt. Sasmita Khatua c) Smt. Sulochana Khatua C/o-Satya Narayan Khatua At-Khatua Lane, Dolamandap Sahi, Dist-Puri, Odisha	Rs. 3,42,430.00 Dt. – 04-01-2025 + Interest, costs and incidental expense thereon	Dist-Puri, S.R.O-Puri, Tahasil-Puri, P.S-Town Thana Puri, P.S No-15, Revenue village-Dolamandap Sahi, Puri, Hal Khata No-55, Plot No-307, Area-Ac.A0.005 dec., Dist-Puri. **Mortgagor (s):-** Sri Rajesh Ku. Khatua .

Sd/- Authorised Officer
The Puri Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd,
Puri Head Office Kacheri Road, Puri-1,
Pin code – 752001 (Odisha)

> Detachment is the beginning of mastery.
> **SRI AUROBINDO**

Jail Diary

It is not a bad idea, it appears, if top notch politicians get incarcerated, at least for some days, so as to understand what prisons, or those that are now euphemistically called correctional homes, actually mean for an inmate. In fact, it is exactly this word that former French President Nicolas Sarkozy used to describe his recent 20-day stint in the prison of La Santé in Paris, in a new book he penned. Ironically, 'La Sante' in French means 'health' or 'wellness', the implication being that the mental health of the prison's inmates would improve after staying there. Sarkozy called this prison a noisy, harsh "all-grey" world of "inhuman violence." The book is notable not only for its vivid, graphic account of the appalling conditions of the prison, but also the former President's surprising advocacy of a new political line for his conservative party to close ranks with France's Far-Right political outfit. The shift in his political strategy runs counter to the aims of "republican front" or parties that have traditionally kept the Far-Right out of power.

In his "Diary of a Prisoner," 70-year-old Sarkozy confesses his own tough stand on crime and punishment and has taken on a new perspective as he recounts his short experience in prison after being found guilty of criminal association in financing his winning 2007 campaign with dubious funds from Libya. Hundreds of his supporters queued up at a bookshop in a Paris upscale residential neighbourhood where Sarkozy staged his first book signing. The court sentenced him in September to five years in prison and he appealed against the ruling. He was granted release under judicial supervision after 20 days behind bars.

The book provides a rare look inside the La Santé prison, where Sarkozy was kept in solitary confinement, strictly away from other inmates for security reasons. His loneliness was broken only by regular visits from his wife, supermodel-turned-singer Carla Bruni-Sarkozy and his lawyers. Sarkozy wrote that his cell looked like a "cheap hotel, except for the armored door and the bars," with a hard mattress, a plastic-like pillow and a shower that produced only a thin stream of water. He described the "deafening noise" of the prison, much of it at night. Opening the window on his first day behind bars, he heard an inmate who "was relentlessly striking the bars of his cell with a metal object." "The atmosphere was threatening. Welcome to hell!," he wrote in his book.

Sarkozy said he declined the meals served in small plastic trays along with a "mushy, soggy baguette (a long, narrow French bread)" – their smell, he wrote, made him nauseous. Instead, he ate dairy products and cereal bars. He was allowed one hour a day in a small gym room, where he mostly used a basic treadmill. Sarkozy says he was informed of several violent incidents that took place during his time behind bars, which he called "a nightmare."

"The most inhumane violence was the daily reality of this place," he wrote, raising questions about the prison system's ability to reform and reintegrate people into the mainstream once their sentences are served. Sarkozy was known for his tough rhetoric on punishing criminals. He promised that "upon my release, my comments would be more elaborate and nuanced than what I had previously expressed on all these topics."

No less important is Sarkozy's strategic political advice offered in his book for his conservative Republicans party. He sprang a surprise by revealing that he spoke over phone from the prison to the Far-Right National Rally's leader Marine Le Pen, once his fierce rival. He no longer finds Le Pen's party "a danger for the Republic," he wrote. Despite his party's differences with the outfit on many issues, including economic, he argued in the book that the reconstruction of his weakened Republicans party can only be achieved through "the broadest possible spirit of unity."

Sarkozy is of course free to hold his political opinion and spell out new strategies. But his prescription this time around reads like a desperate attempt to safeguard personal interests.

This is nothing new since some tall leaders across the globe, including the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have for some time been courting Far-Right groups for their own personal and political survival engendering, in the process, the politics of hatred, religious divide and racism but all of that assure long term survival for such men in office.

WISDOM CORNER

> It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.
> **MARK TWAIN**

> Unless one is able to live fully in the present, the future is a hoax.
> **ALAN WATTS**

> The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience.
> **HARPER LEE**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1707:** Last eruption of Mount Fuji. The highest volcano in Japan erupted for the last time in what is known as the Hoei Eruption. The eruption lasted for 17 days.
- **1773:** The Boston Tea Party. On this day in 1773, a group of men dressed in Mohawk headdresses and cheered by a crowd of thousands threw tea belonging to the British East India Company into Boston Harbor. Britain's punitive response to the Boston Tea Party, which was a protest against taxes, helped push American colonists closer to war.
- **1944:** During World War II, German forces attempted to push through Allied lines in the Ardennes, beginning the Battle of the Bulge.
- **1971:** End of India-Pakistan War. The third major conflict between the two countries was fought because of India's support of Bangladesh's War of Liberation. The war ended only after 13 days and with the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh.
- **1985:** Paul Castellano, who was reportedly the "boss of bosses" of the Mafia's Five Families, was fatally shot in New York City. John Gotti was later convicted of arranging the murder.
- **1991:** Kazakhstan independence. The Central Asian country was the last Soviet republic to declare its independence.

FOCUS SOCIETY

WAR ON UNIVERSITIES

Jan-Werner Mueller

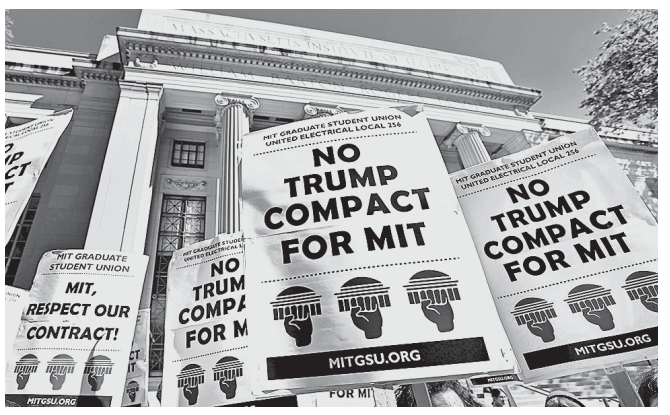
AUTOCRACIES NOT ONLY COPY EACH OTHER BUT ALSO REACH ACROSS BORDERS WITH INCREASING ACTS OF TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

We have become so accustomed to aspiring autocrats attacking universities that we hardly ever stop to ask why. But pushing back against authoritarians requires understanding their motivations and strategies. University leaders, in particular, ought to be better prepared to coordinate resistance across institutions of higher education, and to ensure internal cohesion among faculty. Otherwise, autocrats may succeed in playing different parts of academia off against one another.

One type of attack on universities has become depressingly familiar partly because it is so easy for far-right populists to copy: a culture war targeting specific academic subjects and programs like "diversity, equity, and inclusion." One can criticize DEI's implementation without endorsing the far right's claim that it amounts to discrimination against white men, and without accepting the demonstrably false notion that left-wing professors comprehensively indoctrinate their innocent charges.

Such claims are the building blocks for a bridge that the far right hopes to extend to citizens who see themselves as centrist. When in power, the far right has appropriated the language of "freedom" but actually makes academic life unfree. In the United States, for example, laws devised by Republicans restrict which subjects can be taught and how; similarly, the Hungarian government has prohibited gender studies altogether.

But it is a mistake to think other parts of the university are safe if concessions are made to the culture-war agenda, because aspiring autocrats – which is what far-right politicians will always become if they have enough power, time, and resources – cannot tolerate independent institutions. Universities potentially provide safe spaces for open political discussion and coordination of the opposition. They serve as what Harvard Law School's Vicki C. Jackson calls "knowledge institutions," producing expertise



It is no accident that aspiring autocrats target higher education, both to prevent such institutions from becoming sites of resistance and to ensure their own long-term influence over educational content and public culture

that could serve as a basis for criticising governments. And they generally advance what Robert C. Post of Yale Law School calls "democratic competence" among citizens.

Thus, it is no accident that aspiring autocrats target higher education, both to prevent such institutions from becoming sites of resistance and to ensure their own long-term influence over educational content and public culture. Their preferred strategy nowadays is "autocratic legalism": substituting laws that are passed in formally correct ways for violent assaults likely to generate pushback and loss of reputation among domestic and international observers.

Hungary is once again a prime example. By turning many universities into foundations, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán supposedly rendered them less dependent on the state. In reality, they have all ended up being controlled by his cronies. The same is true for lavishly funded new institutions created in parallel to the existing higher education system. These "castles of illiberal thought" are ultimately in the service of the regime.

Autocrats can also gain an advantage by sowing uncertainty within institutions, so that professors are never quite sure where normal teaching and research end and where areas the state might suddenly target begin. This notion of a "dual state" – initially suggested by the legal theorist Ernst Fraenkel to make sense of 1930s Nazi Germany – describes the Chinese government's strategy via-à-vis Hong Kong through its "National Security Law." When people can never be sure about what is permissible, self-censorship often becomes the default.

But repression need not be confined to one territory. Critics abroad can also be targeted with online and physical harassment by fellow students when they cross the line. Autocracies not only copy each other but also reach across borders with increasing acts of transnational repression.

So, what is the best way to fight back? For starters, universities should be more proactive. Even in countries that remain stable democracies, such as Germany, the far right is already targeting higher education with official requests for information about gender and postcolonial studies. Academia should not allow itself always to be on the defensive. Instead, academic leaders should anticipate different scenarios in advance of attacks.

University presidents must also have a plan ready to coordinate with peers. One of the most disheartening lessons of the MAGA assault on higher education has been universities' inability to form a united front in defense of academic freedom. Resistance is a coordination game, and many have failed to play it well. As a result, Trumpists can divide and rule through individual "deals" that leave those who accept them at the mercy of the federal government.

Internal cohesion is also crucial. This does not mean that faculty must agree on everything; but it does mean that universities should figure out how to prevent fatal fractures. The Trump administration has clearly sought to set natural scientists against the humanities and some social sciences, incentivising the former to put pressure on the latter to make concessions so that funding for critical lab work can be restored. Fortunately, internal solidarity has largely prevailed in these cases – so far.

University presidents also must speak to the public and make the case for what their institutions contribute to society. True, this is more difficult in countries where aspiring autocrats have already captured independent media, and it does run the risk of turning important but esoteric academic subjects into the playthings of public opinion. But the university is not only in the useful business of producing and disseminating knowledge. It is also in the seemingly useless business of preserving knowledge that otherwise might be lost forever. In doing so, it is providing a public good.

Finally, the law itself can offer a defense, rather than becoming a weapon of autocratic legalism. Where academic freedom is not constitutionalised explicitly – such as in France – protections should be codified and solidified. And where supranational institutions might gain leverage – think of the European Research Area Act currently being debated in the European Union – the law should not only aim at increasing investment and researcher mobility, but include robust safeguards for academic freedom.

The writer is Professor of Politics at Princeton University. ©Project Syndicate

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Delhi's alarming air pollution

Nikunja Bihari Sahu

AT THIS MARK OF AIR QUALITY, THE QUANTUM OF POLLUTION HAS REACHED A CRITICAL LEVEL AND THE AIR IS HIGHLY UNHEALTHY

The national capital on Sunday woke up to a thick layer of smog, with air quality lingering in the 'severe' category.' The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) recorded the Air Quality Index (AQI) at 462 in the morning. All 40 monitoring stations in Delhi showed 'red', meaning AQI in the 'severe' category. Several areas also reported low visibility conditions due to smog as people were found driving with headlights on. In the light of this worst air quality of the season, the Centre invoked the toughest emergency measures under GRAP-4 in Delhi-NCR on 13 December.

Delhi battles chronic winter smog every year due to the accumulation of deadly pollutants in the air mostly from coal-fired power plants outside the city, fumes from vehicles, construction activities, and open burning of rubbish. Low wind speed also plays a part as it traps the pollutants in the lower atmosphere making them difficult to disperse. One of the key contributors to the air pollution in winter is the smoke due to stubble burning by farmers in neighbouring states. Also, heavy fireworks during the festival of Diwali add to the woes and worsen the air quality.

At this mark of air quality, the quantum of pollution has reached a critical level and the air is highly unhealthy. Elderly individuals, in particular, can feel its immediate effects and are at risk in falling sick to various respiratory tract diseases like pneumonia, asthma and even lungs cancer. Even healthy people may show symptoms for short exposures. As per a study carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO), among 1600 cities of the world, Delhi is one of the worst in terms of air pollution.

Delhi's population continues to grow unabated as thousands of migrants arrive in the city each year in search of better opportunities. Dust-generating construction sites, industrial emissions as well as proliferation of coal-fired power plants contribute to the deterioration of air quality. Car sales have also been soaring as nearly 10 million vehicles jostle for space on the roads of Delhi everyday. Thousands of diesel guzzling trucks rumble across the capital every night bringing in essential commodities from neighboring states.

As a long term goal, Delhi must find ways to curb all the pollutant sources, point or non-point origins, so as to reverse the trend and allow its citizens to breathe clean air.

The writer is Education Officer, Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar.

Letters TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Sydney lessons

Sir, The Hanukkah terrorist attack at Sydney's Bondi Beach, where gunmen killed 16 people and injured dozens, reflects the lethal spillover of global conflicts into open, multicultural societies. Authorities have termed it a terrorist, anti-Semitic act, rooted in radicalisation fuelled by the Gaza war, online hate propaganda and a permissive climate for extremist narratives. Australia's experience shows how targeted communities become vulnerable when ideological violence travels across borders. For India, the lesson is stark. A diverse nation cannot afford complacency against imported hatred. Strong intelligence coordination, early monitoring of online radicalisation, and swift action against hate speech are critical. Places of worship and public religious events need proactive security, not reactive responses. Equally vital is political and social messaging that isolates extremists without stigmatising communities. Cross-faith engagement, strict enforcement of anti-terror laws and zero tolerance for glorifying violence are essential to prevent such tragedies on the Indian soil.

Rs Narula, PATIALA

Centralisation bid

Sir, The Union Cabinet's approval of the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill is being sold as reform, but it exposes a dangerous obsession with centralisation. Replacing the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) with one regulator ignores India's real crisis—chronic underfunding, faculty shortages, rural exclusion and shrinking academic freedom. Separating funding from regulation while keeping it under ministerial control invites political interference and weakens university autonomy. Uniform standards will hurt small and rural institutions, pushing them towards closure or privatisation. True reform demands trust in universities, not another top-down, one-size-fits-all experiment that rewards control over quality, diversity and equity. Students and teachers deserve investment, freedom and accountability, not cosmetic renaming of regulation.

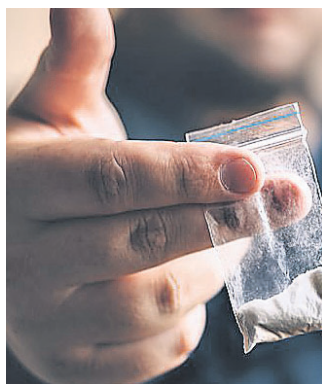
Vijaykumar Hk, RAICHUR (KARNATAKA)

CHITTA MENACE

Women take to night patrol in HP's Bilaspur

Himachal Pradesh is grappling with the spread of dangerous drugs such as chitta, which has claimed many young lives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Bilaspur (HP), Dec 15: In the dead of winter nights, groups of women step out of their cosy homes in Leghat village of Bilaspur district here, holding torches and wielding sticks, to patrol the silent streets. In their crosshairs are gangs trafficking adulterated heroin, known locally as chitta.

Laghat village, which falls under the Bilaspur Sadar Assembly segment, connects the Bairi Rajadian panchayat with the Barmana industrial area. The area sees heavy vehicular movement round-the-clock, making it an easy transit route for drug peddlers, the women said.

Braving the biting cold, the women patrol village streets in small groups, keeping a close watch on movement during night hours. Suspected persons are questioned, close vigil is kept on passersby, and any unusual activity is reported to the police.

The patrol groups comprise women aged between 25 and 50, all members of the Laghat Mahila Mandal. They are on the roads every night, determined to protect their children from the growing menace of drugs.

"Our aim is to apprehend drug traffickers and ensure the village remains safe," said Mahila Mandal head Pinky Sharma Monday. "Drug addiction destroys not just individuals but families and society as a whole. Community participation, along with the police and administration, is essential."

> The patrol groups comprise women aged between 25 and 50, all members of the Laghat Mahila Mandal
>
> They are on the roads every night, determined to protect their children from the growing menace of drugs

She said, "If we find anyone suspicious, we will stop them and inform the police". The women asserted that there is no place in the village for drug dealers or those who shelter them, and warned that stricter measures would be taken if required.

Mahila Mandal member Anju Sharma said a newly built link road has increased the movement of outsiders at night, which traffickers exploit to lure young people. She added that the campaign has received full support from villagers.

Another member, Kusum, said their efforts will determine the future of their children and that such initiatives would also strengthen the state government's campaign against Chitta.

Several residents have joined the women on these night patrols, while others keep watch over people entering and leaving the village and report suspicious activity to the Mahila Mandal or the police. Villagers said failure to act firmly now could lead to serious consequences in the future.

Bilaspur SP Sandeep Dhawal praised the initiative and assured full police support. "The women are doing excellent work. They will receive full cooperation from the police. Those involved in selling or consuming drugs will not be spared," he said.

Himachal Pradesh is grappling with the spread of dangerous drugs such as chitta, which has claimed many young lives. The government, police, panchayats and local communities are working together combat the menace.

Chitta, or diacetylmorphine, is a semi-synthetic opioid derived from heroin and is highly addictive and lethal. An overdose can be fatal, said Arun Sharma, former director of the State Forensic Science Laboratory.

Police earlier said the drug costs between ₹4,000 and ₹6,000 per gram. Its high profit margins have led many drug peddlers to switch to chitta, with network increasingly involved students.

Officials said the situation has become alarming as Chitta spread to rural areas.

The expensive and habit-forming drug, unaffordable for the students, is forcing addicts to "consume as well as sell it" to sustain their habit, drawing more youth into the network and forming chains to survive, they added.

Wildlife census commences in Jharkhand

The census is being conducted in 31 territorial forest areas (general forest divisions) and five protected forest areas (wildlife divisions) of the state, including the Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR) and Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Medininagar (Jharkhand), Dec 15: Wildlife census in Jharkhand began Monday, with officials using a mobile application for data collection, forest department officials said.

"This census is being conducted in 31 territorial forest areas (general forest divisions) and five protected forest areas (wildlife divisions) of the state, including the Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR) and Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary," state nodal officer for the exercise and PTR field director SR Natesh said.

This census is conducted every four years using a completely scientific method to obtain accurate information regarding the presence of wildlife, the official added. "The counting of wild animals has started simultaneously in more than half of the forests in the country. Soon, the counting will begin in the remaining reserves and territorial forest areas too," Natesh, who is also the chief conservator of forests, said.

The census is being held under the guidance of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

"It involves field data collection and the use of camera traps. Additionally, an ecological app is being used in this process," the forest official said.

Giving detailed information about the census, PTR deputy director Kumar Ashish said, "Currently, there are 58 reserves (sanctuaries) in India, including the Madhav Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, which was declared in March."

"According to the 2022 census, there are 3,167 tigers in the country, which is 70 per cent of the total world population. The numbers are likely to go up this time," Ashish said. Ashish said a special feature of this census is that, in addition to technology and satellite-based surveys, a manual counting system is also being used, which involves collecting animal droppings, and noting footprints and scratch marks. The app-based census will continue till December 22. Thereafter, wildlife counting in both protected and non-protected forest divisions will be conducted with human assistance and is expected to conclude by April 2026.

Around 1,600 forest personnel have been deployed for the exercise, and volunteers will also be engaged to support the operation, officials said.

Organisation seeks demolition of Shimla mosque's illegal floors

Shimla: Members of Dev Bhoomi Sangarsh Samiti Monday submitted a memorandum to the commissioner of the Shimla Municipal Corporation seeking demolition of the top three illegal floors of the disputed Sanjauli mosque here after the Himachal Pradesh High Court's order to the effect. After hearing the arguments of the parties involved in the case, a single judge bench of Justice Ajay Mohan Goel December 3 ordered status quo on the lower two floors of the mosque, while maintaining that the top three floors must be demolished according to the Shimla Municipal Commissioner Court's directions. In a memorandum submitted to Municipal Commissioner Bhupinder Attri here, the Samiti members demanded immediate demolition of the illegal floors and offered to raze them free of cost in case the municipal commission was facing any difficulty, Samiti convener Madan Thakur told PTI here. He said three storeys have been declared illegal, out of which the top floor has been demolished and the Dev Bhoomi Samiti is willing to demolish the third and fourth floors of the five-storey mosque free of cost.

J'khand launches paddy procurement exercise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Dec 15: Jharkhand minister Irfan Ansari Monday virtually launched the state's paddy procurement exercise during a programme in Jamtara district.

Addressing farmers at the inaugural function, Ansari said the government would procure paddy at ₹2,450 per quintal and has set a target of purchasing 7 lakh metric tonnes during the current season. "This is not merely a scheme but an initiative to restore the trust of farmers," the food, public distribution and consumer affairs minister said. Ansari said Jharkhand has become the first state in the country to ensure one-time direct payment to farmers immediately after procurement.

"Jharkhand is the first state in the country where farmers will receive one-time payment directly into their accounts after paddy procurement. Earlier, farmers faced difficulties in selling paddy, as payments were made in 2–3 installments, causing them significant hardship. Now, as soon as a farmer sells the paddy, the amount will reach directly into their account." He directed officials to regularly visit the procurement centres and interact with farmers, and ensure that they are not mistreated.

"If any kind of misbehaviour with farmers is reported, strict action will be taken against those responsible," he warned.

He also cautioned against black marketing of paddy, illegal sale to other states and the involvement of middlemen, saying stern action would be taken against violators.

Altogether 783 procurement centres have been set up across the state to carry out the exercise, he said. The state cabinet on December 8 decided that farmers will get a bonus of ₹81 per quintal of paddy in addition to the Centre's minimum support price (MSP) for the crop in the 2025-26 fiscal. In 2024-25, the government procured the highest 40.08 lakh quintals of paddy against a target of 60 lakh quintals.

Himachal to ban mobile phones in schools: CM Sukhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Dec 15: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Saturday announced that there would be a complete ban on students carrying mobile phones in school premises from pre-nursery to Class XII from the upcoming academic session.

"Teachers, however, will be permitted to keep their mobile phones in staff rooms or in their bags" he added. The CM inaugurated state-of-the-art facilities at the Directorate of Samagra Shiksha, including the Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK), Education Gallery, Programme Management Studio Conference Area, New Conference Hall and a modern central heating system. Speaking on the occasion, he said these advanced facilities would not only enhance administrative and academic efficiency but would also mark the beginning of a new era of digital education governance in Himachal Pradesh.

"This initiative reflects the visionary approach of the present state government and it will place education at the core of overall development" he remarked.

The CM claimed that during the last three years, the state government has accorded top priority to the education sector and implemented several decisive reforms, the positive outcomes of which are now clearly visible. He highlighted that Himachal Pradesh has made remarkable progress at the national level by improving its ranking in education quality assessment from the 21st to the 5th position.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER KEONJHAR (R&B) CIRCLE, KEONJHAR
No.6248 dt.15.12.2025
1st Corrigendum to EOI Identification No. CCEKC-02/2025-26
Expression of Interest
No.B-848 : The following changes are made to EOI Identification No. CCEKC - 02/2025-26 vide No. 6075 dt. 05.12.2025.
1. Letter of Invitation of the Authority along with all other relevant details of Expression of Interest (EOI) will be available in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in from 10:30 A.M of 23.12.2025 to 4:00 P.M of 18.01.2026. Further details with any addendum, corrigendum and cancellation can be seen from www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
2. Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be received only "On-line" latest by 4:00 P.M. on 18.01.2026.
3. Proposals received "On-line" shall be opened at 11:00 A.M. on 19.01.2026 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Keonjhar (R&B) Circle, Keonjhar-758001 in the presence of bidders who wish to attend. Bidders who participated in the bid can witness the opening of bids after logging on the site through their DSC.
4. If the office happens to be closed on the stipulated date of opening of Bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.
All other terms & conditions remained unchanged.
Sd./- Chief Construction Engineer, Keonjhar (R&B) Circle, Keonjhar
OIPR-34033/11/0103/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, GANJAM (R&B) DIVISION NO. I, BERHAMPUR
Phone / Fax : (0680) 2233683, e-mail : sernb1.ganjam@yahoo.com
No.B-836 **"e" Procurement Notice**
Bid Identification No. SE R&B Divn. No.I Bam. 42/2025-26
Lr. No. 14343 Dated : 08.12.2025
Name of work : Road & Building works
No. of works : 10 (Ten) Nos
Estimated Cost : Approximately Rs.53.94 Lakh to Rs.99.30 Lakh
Period of Completion : Two & Four Calendar months
Date and time of Availability of bid document in the portal : From 10.00 hours of 17.12.2025 to 16.00 hours of 23.12.2025
Last date / time for receipt of bids in the portal : Upto 16.00 hours of 23.12.2025
Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Ganjam (R&B) Division No.I, Berhampur
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal
https://tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- Superintending Engineer Ganjam (R&B) Division No.I Berhampur
OIPR-34109/11/0066/2526

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BARGARH
No.O-1779: Email: rd_bgh@yahoo.co.in, Gmail:rwd.bgh@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice No.ONLINE-BGH-21 of 2025-26

1	Name of the Work	:	Road Work during 2025-26 in the district of Bargarh.
2	EMD	:	@ 1% of the estimated cost put to tender
3	Other details	:	As per DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for bidding From	To	Last Date & Time of Seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bargarh	ONLINE-BGH-21 of 2025-26	16.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M.	22.12.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.	22.12.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.	23.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
OIPR-25062/11/0043/2526 Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W.Division, Bargarh

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, KEONJHAR WILDLIFE DIVISION, ANANDAPUR
Telephone No.06731220322, Fax No.06731220220, email ID: dfo.keonjharwl@odisha.gov.in.
NOTIFICATION
No.MM-377: This is for information of all concerned that the following Forest Roads of Keonjhar Wildlife Division, Anandapur in Keonjhar District will remain closed to Traffic on 30th December 2025 from "0" (Zero) hour to 24 hours in accordance with Rule-284 with Odisha Forest Department Code 1979. The movement of Traffic on the date as specified above will be violation of Section-26 of Odisha Forest Act and hence will be liable for prosecution.

Sl.No.	Name of the Range	Name of the Forest Road	Length (in Km)
1	Anandapur	Gayalamunda- Hatichapal	8
2	Anandapur/Deogaon	Sagadapata-Kanto	17
3	Hadagarh	Chhenapadi-Sajanapal	25
4	Hadagarh	Kathakata-Pitanau	9
5	Hadagarh	Dalki-Hadagarh	3
6	Hadagarh	Raighati-Phuljhar	4
7	Brahmanipal	Brahmanipal-Palaspal	30
		Total-:	96

Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Wildlife Division, Anandapur
OIPR-08042/11/0044/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER JHARSUGUDA KENDU LEAF DIVISION
AT/PO-BADMAL, JHARSUGUDA, PIN-768202
Mob:8280342658, Email:dfokljsd@gmail.com
BID IDENTIFICATION No.DFOKL/JSG-02 of 2025-26
Order No.133/ Dated 11.12.2025
E-Procurement Notice
No.02, Dated 11.12.2025
No.MM-378: The Divisional Forest Officer, Jharsuguda K.L. Division, on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in **Single Cover /Double Cover** System in ONLINE MODE.
1. Nature of Work : **Construction of Forester Quarters**
2. Tender Cost : **Rs.6000/-**
3. Class of Contractor : **"C" & "D" Class Contractors**
4. Availability of bid document in the website : **10.00 Hours of 13.12.2025 to 17.30 Hours of 27.12.2025**
5. Date of Opening of Tenders : **11.30 Hours on dt.29.12.2025**
6. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only. Any Corrigendum/ Addendum/ Cancellation of tender will be displayed in the website said only.
Sd./- (Salvinder Singh, OFS-1 (SB)) Divisional Forest Officer, Jharsuguda K.L. Division
OIPR-08054/11/0028/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.A-1126
e-Procurement Notice
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER PHULBANI MINOR IRRIGATION CIRCLE : PHULBANI
e-mail ID : micirclephulbani@gmail.com
Letter No. 1033/WE Dt.12.12.2025
e-Procurement Notice
BID ID. NO.ACEPMIC-01/2025-26

1	Name of the work	:	As per Annexure to this bid notice
2	No. of works	:	12 (Twelve) Nos.
3	Estimated cost	:	Approximate cost varies from Rs.101.75 Lakh to Rs.203.37 Lakh
4	Class of Contractor	:	'B' & 'A' class
5	Period of Completion	:	03 (three) and 06 (six) Calendar Months respectively.
6	Date and Time of Availability of Bid Documents and Receipt of Bid Cost on online Payment mode in Portal	:	From 17.12.2025 (10.00 Hrs) to 28.12.2025 (17.30 hrs) in Website (www.tendersodisha.gov.in)
7	Last Date/Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	:	28.12.2025 (Upto 17.30 Hrs.) through online only
8	Date of Opneing of Technical Bid	:	11.00 Hrs Onwards on 29.12.2025 in the O/o-Additional Chief Engineer, Phulbani M.I. Circle, Phulbani
9	Name and Address of OIT	:	Additional Chief Engineer, Phulbani M.I. Circle, Phulbani Madikunda Square, Near Panchayat Bhawan, PIN : 762001, Dist : Kandhamal

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement market place http://tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- Additional Chief Engineer Phulbani M.I. Circle, Phulbani
OIPR-32521/11/0011/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, EARTH DAM DIVISION, CHITRAKONDA, DISTRICT: MALKANGIRI
E-mail ID: executiveengineereddckd@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice No.SE-EDD-CKD-02/2025-26
No.A-1125: The Superintending Engineer, Earth Dam Division, Chitrakonda on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Odisha invites Online percentage rate tender in single cover system through e-procurement for execution of the following work. The bid should be submitted by eligible class of contractors On-line in the Govt. website www.tenderorissa.gov.in. The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment with own digital signature certificate. The registered bidders outside of ODISHA can also participate in this online tender process after necessary portal enrolment but shall have to subsequently undergo registration with the appropriate authority of the State Govt. before signing of the agreement. The bidders may submit online bids for any or all the following works. Details as below:- 1. Name of Work: As per detailed Tender Call Notice. 2. Total No. of Works: 11 (Eleven) Nos. 3. Estimated Cost of Works(s) : Varies from Rs.30.56 Lakhs to Rs.8.41 Lakhs. 4. Period of Completion: 04 Calendar Months to 02 Calendar Months.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability and Submission of Bids-Online From	To	Opening of Tender
1	2	3	4	5
Superintending Engineer, Earth Dam Division, Chitrakonda	SE-EDD-CKD-02/2025- 26	20.12.2025 10.00 A.M.	30.12.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.	31.12.2025 , at 10.30 A.M. onwards at O/o S.E., Earth Dam Division, Chitrakonda

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Corrigendum/addendum/Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the aforesaid website.
Sd./- (Er. S.Sahu) Superintending Engineer, Earth Dam Division, Chitrakonda, Malkangiri (O)
OIPR-32019/11/0010/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
O/o THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, CUTTACK No.O-1751
Email ID - cuttackrw2nd@yahoo.co.in, Telephone / Fax No. (0671)-2445119
e-procurement Notice for Building Work
Bid Identification No. SECTC-II-19 of 2025-26 dt.09.12.2025
1. Number of the work : **01 (One) number of Building for the year 2025-26**
2. Estimated Cost (Approx) : **Rs.96.84 Lakh**
3. Period of completion : **11 (Eleven) calendar months**
4. Date & time of sale & receipt of bid document online : **From 17.12.2025 at 11:00 A.M. to 29.12.2025 at 5.00 P.M.**
5. Date & time of opening of Technical bid : **30.12.2025 at 11:30 A.M.**
6. Date & time of opening of Financial bid : To be intimated later on
7. Name and address of Inviting Officer : **Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Cuttack, Nayabazar, Cuttack-753004**
Further details can be seen from the State Govt. portal
https://tendersorissa.gov.in
Sd./- Superintending Engineer R.W. Division-II, Cuttack
OIPR-25095/11/0035/2526

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, BARGARH
Email : eerwss_bgh@.nic.in, Ph (O) : 06646 233220, FAX : 06646 234626
No.4566 / Dt.05.12.2025
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Bid Identification No. 08 Dt of 2025-26
No.O-1792 : The Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites tenders from the valid licensed holder contractors of class **'C'** or **'B'** registered with any Department of State Government or equivalent class of Central Govt. etc. to be eventually drawn up in P1 Contract Form for the below work as per terms and condition noted below.
1. Name of the work : Construction of Govt. Quarter for Assistant Engineer, RWS&S Section-I at Bijepur, under RWS&S Division, Bargarh
2. Approx. Estimated cost : **Rs.30.01 lakh**
3. Date and time of availability of document in the portal : **Dt.15.12.2025** to **Dt.02.01.2026** up to 5.00 P.M.
4. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : **Dt.02.01.2026** up to 5.00 P.M.
5. Date & time of Opening of Tender : **Dt.03.01.2026** at 11.00 A.M.
6. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh, District : Bargarh
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http//tendersorissa.gov.in". The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer RWS&S Division, Bargarh
OIPR-25018/11/0008/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, PHULBANI (R&B) CIRCLE, PHULBANI
Email:sernbphulbani@gmail.com
Letter No.2037 Dated- 10.12.2025
EOI Identification No.CCEPLBC-01/2025-26
Expression of Interest
No.B-834: The Chief Construction Engineer, Phulbani (R&B) Circle, Phulbani (the "Authority") on behalf of the Works Department, Government of Odisha invite Expression of Interest (EOI) from registered firms for the following works.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	EOI Invitation for	Cost of EOI document	Period of Engagement
1	Arrangement of Venue set-up Logistics and other allied activities associated with state level function at different locations under Phulbani (R&B) Circle.	Non-Consultanc Services	INR 10,000/-	36 Months

1. In accordance with the provisions under the Guidelines for Engagement of Non-Consultancy Services issued in the Office Memorandum No. 7460/F Dt. 04.03.2025, No. 16832 dtd. 04.06.2025 & No. 21619 dtd. 23.07.2025 of the Finance Department, Government of Odisha & Odisha General Finance Rule-2023, the Authority now invites eligible registered service provider to apply for above assignments. 2. Letter of Invitation of the Authority along with all other relevant details of Expression of Interest [EOI) will be available in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in from 10:30 A.M of 22.12.2025 to 4:00 P.M of 19.01.2026. Further details with any addendum, corrigendum and cancellation can be seen from www.tendersodisha.gov.in. 3. Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be received only "On-line" latest by 4:00 P.M. on 19.01.2026. 4. Proposal received "On-line" shall be opened at 11:00 A.M. on 20.01.2026 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Phulbani (R&B) Circle, Phulbani- 762001 in the presence of bidders who wish to attend. Bidders who participated in the bid can witness the opening of bids after logging on the site through their DSC. If the office happens to be closed on the stipulated date of opening of Bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. 5. Other details can be seen in the EOI documents. 6. The Authority reserves all rights to cancel any or all proposals without assigning any reason. 7.The Addendum/Corrigendum if any will be hoisted in the website only.
OIPR-34129/11/0032/2526 Sd./- Chief Construction Engineer, Phulbani (R&B) Circle, Phulbani

national

Our objective is to integrate the state's prominent natural sites with modern wellness facilities to create an environment where tourists can experience better health, peace, and natural and spiritual surroundings in one place

JAIVEER SINGH | MINISTER OF TOURISM OF UP

SC TO HEAR DELHI AIR POLLUTION PLEA

The Supreme Court Monday said it will list for hearing December 17 a plea related to worsening air pollution levels in Delhi-NCR. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pamcholi took note of the submissions of senior advocate Aprajita Singh, who is assisting it as an amicus curiae, that though the preventive measures are there in place but the key issue was of their poor implementation by the authorities

Quote of the day

We are also laying the foundation for affordable housing in Dahisar as some 1,000 acres of land spread over 6 km will be released for housing projects for the people of Dahisar

K RAMMOHAN NAIDU | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

We are finding solutions to Delhi's pollution problem while living and working in Delhi. We are not like those who leave Delhi to its fate and run away every six months to do Vipassana

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP CHIEF

History teaches us that fascism does not begin with guns on the streets, it begins with the quiet theft of institutions, the slow manipulation of systems, and finally, the theft of elections

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

Rush of people to offer prayers at the Sabarimala temple during the Malayalam month of 'Vrichikam', in Pathanamthitta district, Kerala PTI PHOTO

Two Punjab men shot dead in Canada over mistaken identity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bathinda, Dec 15: Two Punjab men were allegedly shot dead while they were sitting inside a car in Canada's Edmonton.

The incident took place early Friday, local time, a family member said Monday. The victims were identified as 27-year-old Gurdeep Singh from Barre village and 19-year-old Ranvir Singh from Uddat Saidewala village. Gurdeep had gone to Canada over two years ago and was awaiting a work permit approval. Ranvir had left India one and a half years ago to pursue studies. They were shot moments after they got into a car after leaving a birthday party. Ranvir Singh was sitting in the driver's seat, with Gurdeep Singh beside him. A few others sat in the back.

A bullet struck Ranvir while Gurdeep appeared to have been hit by shrapnel. Mandeep Singh, who lives in his village in Mansa, said the family suspects that the two were victims of mistaken identity, as the car belonged to someone else. Ranvir, the son of a farmer, was the only child of his parents, and has many of his family members settled in Canada.

"He was intelligent and good at studies. We told him that he could prepare for competitive exams in India and secure a good job here. Even many of our relatives in Canada told him to pursue studies here. But he was keen to go abroad," Mandeep Singh said.

Nitin Nabin takes charge as BJP's national chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The newly-appointed national working president of the BJP, Nitin Nabin, took charge of his new responsibility Monday, with top leaders saying his organisational skills will provide a new direction to the party's journey of public service and nation-building.

Nabin was also felicitated at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters here in the presence of party president and Union Health Minister J P Nadda, Home Minister Amit Shah, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, among others.

Extending his hearty congratulations to Nabin on his assuming the charge of the key party post, Nadda said he is fully confident that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, the working president will provide a new direction to the BJP's journey of public service and nation-building.

"At the same time, you will take the BJP government's public welfare policies and the organisation's ideas to the people with even greater resolve. I extend my best wishes for your new responsibilities and successful tenure," Nadda said in a post on X.

In his congratulatory message to Nabin, Shah said he is confident that under his leadership, the BJP will expand even further and he will take the policies of the Modi government and the party's ideology to every individual in the country. "I pray to God for your successful tenure," Shah said in a post on X.

After Nabin officially took charge of his new responsibility, Shah, Nadda and Pradhan held a discussion with him.

Nabin arrived at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport here from Patna in the afternoon, a day after his appointment as the BJP working president.

He was received at the airport by Gupta and several other leaders of the saffron party.

Cong slams govt over MGNREGA Bill

The Opposition party alleged that the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, "attacks the soul" of rights-based guarantee by replacing it with a scheme "stacked against" the states and workers and defies the ideals of Mahatama Gandhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Congress Monday strongly objected to the Bill on replacing MGNREGA, saying erasing Mahatma Gandhi's name shows how "hollow and hypocritical" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's gestures of paying homage to the Father of the Nation are.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor questioned the renaming of the scheme, saying the concept of Gram Swaraj and the ideal of Ram Rajya were never competing forces but they were the twin pillars of Gandhi's consciousness, and replacing the Mahatma's name in a scheme for the rural poor ignores this profound symbiosis.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said this is not just about changing the name of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), but is a "conspiracy by the BJP-RSS to dismantle MGNREGA".

"Erasing Gandhi's name on the centenary of the RSS shows how hollow and hypocritical Modi's gestures of paying homage to Bapu on foreign soil truly are," Kharge said in a post in Hindi on X. "Only a government that resents the rights of the poor would attack MGNREGA. The Congress party will strongly oppose any decision by this arrogant government that is anti-poor and anti-labour, both in Parliament and on the streets," he said. Tharoor, whose stand has been at variance with that of his party on some occasions recently, said the controversy over renaming MGNREGA in the government's proposed new G-RAM-G Bill is unfortunate.

"His (Gandhi's) final breath was a testament to 'Ram'; let us not dishonour his legacy by creating a division where none existed," the Thiruvananthapuram MP said on X. When a user asked whether he was objecting to the renaming or the controversy over it, Tharoor replied, "It's pretty clear that I am objecting to replacing the Mahatma's name..." Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also slammed the government over its move to change the name of MGNREGA, asking what the government's intention was behind removing the name of Mahatma Gandhi, who is the tallest leader not just in India but in the world.

Asked about the government's move, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Whenever the name of a scheme is changed, there are so many changes that have to be made in offices, stationery... for which money is spent. So, what is the benefit? Why is it being done?" "Why is Mahatma Gandhi's name being removed. Mahatma Gandhi is considered the tallest leader not just in the country but in the world, so removing his name, I really don't understand what the objective is. What is their intention?" she told reporters in the Parliament House complex.

"Even when we are debating, it is on other issues, not the real issues of the people. Time is being wasted, money is being wasted, they are disrupting themselves," Priyanka Gandhi added. Congress General Secretary in-charge (Communications) Jairam Ramesh said the entire opposition is demanding that the three far-reaching bills -- Higher Education Commission Bill, Atomic Energy Bill and G-RAM-G Bill -- be referred to the Standing Committees concerned. "We are hopeful that in keeping with the best of Parliamentary traditions and practices, this demand will be agreed to by the Government. The Bills require deep study and wide consultations," Ramesh said.

The Bill is set to be introduced in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Winter session of Parliament. According to a copy of the Bill, it will provide a statutory guarantee of 125 days of wage employment in every financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work.

SHORT TAKES

Three killed in fog triggered accidents

Chandigarh: Three persons, including a woman police officer and a CISF Inspector, were killed and several others injured in two separate road accidents involving multiple vehicles, in Haryana's Sonipat and Nuh districts, police said. The visibility levels dropped due to dense fog early morning at many places in Haryana, including Nuh, Sonipat and Hisar, police said. In the Nuh pileup, involving multiple vehicles, two persons, including a CISF Inspector, were killed on the Delhi-Mumbai expressway, police said, adding that some injuries were also reported in the incident.

Nagaland's forest fire contained: Officials

Kohima: The forest fire in the Western Dzukou area in Nagaland's Kohima district has been contained, officials said Monday. There were concerns that the blaze, which broke out Friday in the western range of the valley, would spread further due to windy conditions and the difficult terrain, which was affecting the firefighting operations, they said. The fire was first spotted by a tourist guide, who alerted the Khonoma village and the district administration, they added.

Encounter breaks out in Udhampur

Jammu: An encounter broke out between security forces and terrorists in a village in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir Monday evening, officials said. The gunfight started at village Soan in Majalta area of the hilly district when security forces launched a search operation following information about presence of terrorists believed to be affiliated with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit, the officials said.

Tiger found dead in forest

Surajpur: A tiger died due to suspected electrocution in a forest in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district, officials said Monday. The carcass of the male tiger, aged 6-7 years, was found in Bhainsamunda under Ghui forest range this morning, a senior forest official said. A team has been constituted for conducting autopsy as per guidelines, the official said. In November last year, a tiger was found dead in a forest in neighbouring Korea district.

NIA charges 6, two terror groups in Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 15: The NIA Monday filed a comprehensive chargesheet against six people and two terrorist organisations, Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and its shadow outfit TRF, in connection with the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed the lives of 25 tourists and a local pony operator.

The 1,597-page chargesheet, filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) before a special court, details the deep conspiracy traced back to Pakistan, which the probe agency said has been "unabatedly sponsoring terrorism against India". The NIA has named

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) headed by Hafeez Saeed, who has been designated as a global terrorist by the US as well as India, along with The Resistance Front (TRF) headed by Habibullah Malik alias Sajid Jatt, in the chargesheet for their role in planning, facilitating, and executing the Pahalgam attack that took place in the Baisaran meadows on April 22 this year.

"Pakistani handler terrorist Sajid Jatt is also named as an accused in the chargesheet, filed before the NIA special court, Jammu," a statement issued by the anti-terror agency said. The chargesheet also names the three Pakistani terrorists, who carried out the killings on religious lines on April 22 at Baisaran meadows in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir. All the three were killed by the Army during the Operation Mahadev at Dachigam located in the outskirts of Srinagar on July 29, almost 100 days after the deadly terror attack.

The three were identified as Faisal Jatt alias Suleman Shah, Habeeb Tahir alias Jibran, and Hamza Afghani, the NIA statement said. In its chargesheet, the NIA has also invoked the penal section against the accused for waging war against India. The agency's eight-month long "meticulous scientific probe" led to the chargesheet.

Two accused persons, Parvaiz Ahmad and Bashir Ahmad Jothar, who were arrested June 22 for harbouring the terrorists, have also been named in the chargesheet by the NIA. During interrogation, the two men had disclosed the identities of the three armed terrorists involved in the attack, and had also confirmed that they were Pakistani nationals affiliated to proscribed LeT terror outfit.

Bomb hoax hits 11 schools in Jalandhar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jalandhar, Dec 15: A bomb threat sent into panic several schools here Monday, with authorities evacuating the students and launching anti-sabotage actions.

It turned out to be a hoax, an officer said. Police teams were sent scurrying across the city after 11 schools received a bomb threat via email.

"We were told that there had been some fault in the electricity and we were asked to pick up our children from the school," a parent told reporters. ACP (North) Sanjay Kumar, who was at KMV School, said, "A threat was received on the school principal's email that the building would be blown up." He said the police searched the school premises immediately after the information was received.

"Anti-sabotage team also carried out a check in the premises, but nothing suspicious was found," Kumar said. A student said that he was giving an exam when a teacher said there was a power cut and ordered all students to assemble in the ground.

Another parent, who came to pick up his child, said the school did not reveal the real reason behind the evacuation and just asked them to take their wards from the school.

Anti-dowry laws suffer from ineffectiveness, misuse: SC

Stressing that "concentrated effort" of all was needed to deal with the issue, a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N Kotiswar Singh passed several directions, including asking the high courts to ascertain the number of pending cases dealing with sections 304-B and 498-A of IPC -- from the earliest to the latest -- for expeditious disposal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The eradication of dowry is an urgent constitutional and social necessity, the Supreme Court said Monday, while flagging that existing laws suffer from both "ineffectiveness" and "misuse", and that the evil practice remains rampant.

Stressing that "concentrated effort" of all was needed to deal with the issue, a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N Kotiswar Singh passed several directions, including asking the high courts to ascertain the number of pending cases dealing with sections 304-B and 498-A of IPC -- from the earliest to the latest -- for expeditious disposal.

While Section 304-B of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code deals with dowry death, Section 498-A pertains to the offence of husband or his relatives subjecting a married woman to cruelty.

The bench, which was delivering its verdict in a 24-year-old

case of dowry death, directed the Centre and states to consider changes as are necessary to educational curricula across levels, reinforcing the constitutional position that parties to a marriage are equal to one another and one is not subservient to the other.

It said this case represents that dowry is not a feature only amongst Hindus, but it can also be found in other communities professing different faiths and religions.

"While on the one hand, the law suffers from ineffectiveness and so, the malpractice of dowry remains rampant, on the other hand, the provisions of this Act (Dowry Prohibition Act) have also been used to ventilate ulterior motives along with Section 498-A, IPC," it said.

It further said, "This oscillation between ineffectiveness and misuse creates a judicial tension which needs urgent resolution".

The apex court's order came on appeals filed by the Uttar Pradesh government challenging the Allahabad High Court's verdict, which acquitted two persons, including a woman, in a 2001 dowry death case. The top court allowed the appeals and restored their conviction in the case.

However, it refrained from incarcerating the woman convict, considering that she was 94 years old. The bench directed the man to surrender within four weeks to serve the life sentence awarded to him by the trial court.

It said that while in this case, the accused have finally been brought to book, there are many instances where it does not happen.

"Many, who openly seek and give dowry, go scot-free. It has been noted time and again, in various judicial pronouncements, that DPA (Dowry Prohibition Act), 1961 suffers from various difficulties in its implementation," it said.

Passing a slew of directions, the bench said it has to be ensured that the future generations are informed and made aware of the evil practice of dowry and the necessity to eschew it.

The bench said the law provides for the appointment of dowry prohibition officers in states. It is to be ensured that these officers are duly deputed and given the necessary wherewithal to carry out the duties entrusted to them, the bench said.

national

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi should tender an apology for the Congress workers' threat to the life of the Prime Minister. They should tender the apology on the floor of both Houses of Parliament. It is most unfortunate and tragic that Congress workers openly declared to dig the grave of Prime Minister Modi

KIREN RIJIJU | UNION MINISTER

SC DEFERS PLEA CHALLENGING WANGCHUK'S DETENTION TO JAN 7

The Supreme Court Monday adjourned to January 7, 2026, the hearing on a plea filed by Gitanjali J Angmo, wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, against his detention under the National Security Act September 26

Quote of the day

Our double-engine government is fully committed to the welfare of students and youth and to securing a bright future for all

KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA | UP DEPUTY CM

The 'Mukti Joddhas' fought not for conquest, but for dignity. Your struggle reminds us that freedom is never gifted. It is earned through sacrifice, discipline, and faith in righteous purpose

CV ANANDA BOSE | WB GOVERNOR

Just spoke to Australian Foreign Minister @SenatorWong.Conveyed our deepest condolences about the Bondi Beach terrorist attack and offered our fullest support

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

X POST OF THE DAY

Media is only addressing MGNREGA's name change to hide the crucial details. Centre won't fund 90% now, only 60%. Funds won't be released to states now based on demand but rather on some formula that centre will decide. So many other caveats. Don't let the name change fool you. Entire bill is being destroyed.

@Nher_who

SHORT TAKES

Kabaddi player shot dead

Chandigarh: A 30-year-old kabaddi player-cum-promoter died after unidentified gunmen opened fire on him after he arrived with his team to take part in a tournament in Mohali Monday, police said. Kanwar Digvijay Singh alias Rana Balachauria was critically injured in the attack and was rushed to the Fortis Hospital in Mohali where he was declared dead, police said. The incident took place at Sohana in Mohali where a private kabaddi tournament had been going on for the past few days, SSP Harmandeep Singh Hans said.

BLO dies due to 'work pressure'

Bareilly: A 58-year-old booth-level officer (BLO) died here allegedly after a heart attack he suffered due to SIR-related work pressure, according to his family. The administration, however, termed the death of Vinod Kumar Sharma, the headmaster of the Upper Primary Girls Composite School in the Bisharatganj area, as natural. Sharma had been co-opted to work on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls, a behemoth exercise underway in the state to weed out fake voters and identify genuine ones. According to a family member, Sharma fell ill late Sunday night after dinner and died shortly after due to a heart attack. He was cremated Monday.

Taxi rider arrested for molesting passenger

Thane: A Rapido bike taxi rider was arrested in Kalyan in Thane district for allegedly molesting a 26-year-old woman passenger and stealing ₹1000 from her, a police official said Monday. Rider Siddhesh Pardeshi (19), a class VII drop out, was arrested Sunday for the incident which took place Saturday, Mahatma Phule police station senior inspector Baliramsingh Pardeshi said.

GOA NIGHTCLUB FIRE

HC converts civil suit into PIL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji/Bangkok, Dec 15: The Bombay High Court Monday converted a civil suit against Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub into a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), saying "someone has to be held accountable" for the tragedy in which 25 people were killed.

In a related development, Thai authorities are set to take up the case involving Gaurav Luthra and Saurabh Luthra, the co-owners of the nightclub, with a Bangkok court likely to decide the next course of action, according to sources.

The Luthras left for Phuket, Thailand, shortly after the fire incident. An Interpol Blue Corner Notice has been issued against them.

They were detained by Thai authorities in Phuket December 11 following an intervention by the Indian mission, which is in close touch with the Thai government in the case.

The Goa police have arrested six persons, including managers and staff members of the club, so far in connection with the December 6 fire tragedy.

In a stern observation, the Goa bench of Justices Sarang Kotwal and Ashish Chavan said the local panchayat had "failed to take suo motu cognisance" of the club and had taken "no action despite complaints."

The bench pointed out that commercial operations were continuing in the structure despite it having been served a demolition order and directed the Goa government to file a detailed reply on the permissions granted to the facility.

The High Court had fixed January 8 as the next date of hearing. The original petition was filed after the December 6 tragedy by Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar and Sunil Divkar, the owners of the land on which the nightclub was operating.

The Luthras left for Phuket, Thailand, shortly after the fire incident

An Interpol Blue Corner Notice has been issued against them

Advocate Rohit Bras de Sa, the lawyer representing the petitioner, was made amicus curiae in the matter and has been asked to file a detailed affidavit in the matter. In their petition, Amonkar and Divkar highlighted "the alarming pattern of statutory violations that have remained inadequately addressed despite multiple complaints, inspections, show-cause notices, and even a demolition order".

They contended that these violations posed "immediate threats to public safety, ecological integrity, and the rule of law in the state of Goa."

Investigations by multiple agencies into the nightclub fire have revealed various irregularities, including the lack of permission to operate the nightclub. According to the sources in the Indian Embassy in Bangkok, all relevant documents related to the two brothers have been transferred through official legal channels.

Legal developments suggest the case is likely to be argued before a Bangkok court, they said. "The matter is expected to move forward once a local court in Bangkok begins hearing the case. However, there is no clarity yet on the timeline, as proceedings will depend on when the judge takes up the matter," sources in the embassy told PTI. Senior advocate Javed Mir is leading a team of lawyers representing the Luthra brothers, while advocate Vaibhav Suri has also reached Bangkok.

Various legal options under Thai law are being explored to contest the case, sources said. The Indian government, after cancelling the passports of the two brothers, has submitted a dossier to Thai authorities alleging their involvement in the deaths of 25 people. The allegations, sources said, take the case beyond the scope of culpable homicide. India has also formally requested Thai authorities to deport the brothers. Thai authorities, meanwhile, are examining the legal complexities involved. The brothers are stated to have entered Thailand on valid travel documents, which were later revoked by Indian authorities, leaving them without valid papers. This has prompted Thai officials to examine the issue from multiple legal perspectives, including aspects related to basic human rights, sources said.

Indian government sources on Friday have reportedly said that authorities in Thailand are initiating the process to deport the Luthra brothers.

However, with legal and diplomatic considerations at play, the embassy sources indicated that the duo is unlikely to return to India in the immediate future.

SC issues slew of directions to streamline criminal trials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: In a bid to streamline criminal trials, the Supreme Court issued a slew of directions to trial courts Monday to enhance the legibility of verdicts in criminal matters.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said all trial courts dealing with criminal matters shall, at the conclusion of the judgment, incorporate tabulated charts summarising the details of the witnesses examined, documents exhibited and material objects produced and exhibited. The court said these charts shall form an appendix or the concluding segment of the judgment and shall be prepared in a clear, structured and easily-comprehensible format.

"We are of the considered view that a more structured and uniform practice must be adopted to enhance the legibility of criminal judgments. Accordingly, to ensure a systematic presentation of evidence that enables efficient appreciation of the record, we issue the following directions to all trial courts across the country.

"These directions aim to institutionalise a standardised format for cataloguing witnesses, documentary evidence and material objects. This will serve to facilitate better comprehension and immediate reference for all stakeholders, including the appellate courts," the bench said.

The apex court said each criminal judgment shall contain a witness chart with serial numbers, names of the witnesses, a brief description of the informant, eyewitnesses, the doctor etc.

"The description should be succinct but sufficient to indicate the evidentiary character of the witness. This structured presentation will allow quick reference to the nature of testimony, assist in locating the witness in the record and minimise ambiguity," the court said.

It added that a separate chart shall be prepared for all documents exhibited during the trial and it shall include the exhibit numbers, a description of the documents and the witnesses who proved or attested the documents.

"In complex cases, such as conspiracies, economic offences or trials involving voluminous oral or documentary evidence, the list of witnesses and exhibits may be substantially long.

"Where the number of witnesses or documents is unusually large, the trial court may prepare charts only for the material, relevant and relied-upon witnesses and documents, clearly indicating that the chart is confined to such items. This ensures that the charts remain functional reference tools rather than unwieldy compilations," the bench said.

The directions came while setting aside the conviction of a man for sexually assaulting a four-year-old girl.

The court said the FIR, despite the informant's professed complete knowledge of the incident, is bereft of even the most rudimentary details, such as the names of the accused and the purported witnesses.

Ex-bureaucrat Raj Kumar Goyal sworn in as CIC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: After a gap of nine years, transparency watchdog Central Information Commission attained its full strength with the appointment of former IAS officer Raj Kumar Goyal and eight other information commissioners, who took the oath of office Monday.

A three-member panel headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week recommended their names for the appointment. President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office to Goyal as the chief information commissioner (CIC) at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, her office said in a communique.

The event was attended by Vice President C P Radhakrishnan and Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh, among others. Goyal is a 1990-batch (retired) IAS officer of the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre. He superannuated as secretary, Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law and Justice, August 31. He has also served as secretary (border management) in the Home Ministry and held key posts both at the Centre and in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The post of CIC fell vacant after Heeralal Samariya completed his term September 13. The Commission is headed by a CIC and can have a maximum of 10 information commissioners.

In the presence of two incumbent Information Commissioners, Anandi Ramalingam and Vinod Kumar Tiwari, Goyal administered the oath of office to eight new appointees at the swearing-in ceremony.

They included former Railway Board chief Jaya Verma Sinha, former IPS officer Swagat Das – who held key posts in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Ministry and Cabinet Secretariat, among others – Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officer Sanjeev Kumar Jindal, former IAS officer Surendra Singh Meena and ex-Indian Forest Service officer Khushwant Singh Sethi.

Bill for single education regulator introduced in LS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: A Bill to set up a 13-member body to regulate institutions of higher education was introduced in the Lok Sabha Monday with the government expressing willingness to refer it to a joint committee.

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill seeks to establish an overarching higher education commission along with three councils for regulation, accreditation and ensuring academic standards for universities and higher education institutions in India.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan introduced the Bill amid din over the issue of alleged threatening slogans raised at a Congress rally on Sunday against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As soon as Pradhan introduced the Bill, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju rose to say that since it is a comprehensive Bill, the government would like to send it to the joint committee of both Houses for a threadbare examination. According to the Bill, the present challenges faced by higher educational institutions due to multiplicity of regulators having non-harmonised regulatory approval protocols will be done away with. The higher education commission, which will be headed by a chairperson appointed by the President of India, will cover all central universities and colleges under it, institutes of national importance functioning under the administrative purview of the Ministry of Education including IITs, NITs, IISc, IISERs, IIMs, and IIITs.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said his visit to Jordan will boost bilateral linkages between the two nations, as he arrived in Amman on the first leg of his three-nation trip aimed at further strengthening ties with them. In a special gesture emblematic of the close ties between the two countries, Modi was warmly received by Jordanian Prime Minister Jafar Hassan at the airport and accorded a ceremonial welcome PTI PHOTO

Nitish Kumar pulls down woman's hijab at event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Dec 15: A newly recruited AYUSH doctor in Bihar was taken aback Monday when Chief Minister Nitish Kumar pulled the hijab (veil) off her face, while she was receiving her letter of appointment.

The incident, a video clip of which has gone viral on social media, took place at 'Samvad', the CM's secretariat, where appointment letters were given away to more than 1,000 AYUSH doctors. PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the video.

According to the CMO, the appointees included 685 Aurveda doctors, while 393 were Homeopaths and 205 practised the Unani system of medicine.

Out of them, 10 appointees were handed over job letters by Kumar, while the rest got those online. When it was the turn of Nusrat Parveen, who had turned up wearing a hijab across her face, the 75-year-old CM frowned and exclaimed "what is this?".

The chief minister, who stood atop a raised platform, then bent down and pulled the hijab down. The flustered appointee was, thereafter, hastily pulled aside by an official present on the occasion, while Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary, who stood beside Kumar, was seen tugging at the latter's sleeve, in an apparent bid to restrain him.

Meanwhile, opposition parties like the RJD and Congress shared the video clip on their social media accounts, and claimed that the incident was the latest proof of the JD(U) supremo's "unstable mental health".

Delhi govt directs schools to shift from hybrid to online

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Delhi government Monday directed schools to shift from hybrid to online mode for students up to Class-5 in view of the severe air pollution levels in the national capital.

According to a circular issued by the Directorate of Education, physical classes for students of nursery to Class-5 in all government, government-aided and unaided recognised private schools in Delhi have been discontinued until further orders.

The decision has been taken due to the prevailing high Air Quality Index (AQI) in the city, it said.

Schools have been directed to conduct classes for these students only in online mode. However, classes for the remaining grades will be conducted in hybrid mode, according to the directions issued by the education department on December 13.

Delhi's AQI stood in the 'severe' category on Monday with a reading of 427, after touching the second highest AQI on record for December on Sunday at 461. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the air quality was 'severe' at 27 monitoring stations across the city on Monday, with 12 stations in the 'very poor' range. Wazirpur recorded the worst air quality at 475.

According to the CBCP, an AQI between 0 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'.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), 27 monitoring stations across the city recorded "severe" air quality, while 12 stations reported "very poor" levels. Wazirpur recorded the worst air quality among the 40 stations, with an AQI of 475. Notably, CPCB does not register an AQI value beyond 500.

POLLUTION WOES

Dense fog disrupts ops at Delhi airport

New Delhi: Dense fog disrupted flight operations at Delhi Airport Monday, with various airlines cancelling 228 flights and diverting five to nearby airports due to low visibility, an official said. However, except for Air India, which had in an X post in the morning announced the cancellation of some 40 flights, no other airlines, including crisis-hit IndiGo, shared the numbers of their cancelled or delayed flights. "As many as 228 flights -- 131 departures and 97 arrivals-- have been cancelled due to low visibility, so far," the airport official said. In addition to this, five flights have been diverted so far, he said.

international

As premier, if I am brought down by a parliament and political parties that trample on the constitution and throw governance into chaos, that will be the democratic medal of honour of my life

LAI CHING | PRESIDENT, TAIWAN

GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE: 3 INDIAN EDUCATORS SHORTLISTED

Three educators from India making an impact with their visionary and innovative teaching initiatives were named in the top 50 shortlist for the $1 million Global Teacher Prize 2026 Monday

Quote of the day

We call on mediators, and especially the main guarantor, the US administration and President Donald Trump, to work on obliging Israel to respect the ceasefire and commit to it

KHALIL AL-HAYYA | CHIEF NEGOTIATOR, HAMAS

The coalition between the United States and Syria is the most important partnership in the global fight against ISIS because only Syria has the expertise and experience to deal with this

MOUAZ MOUSTAFA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SYRIAN EMERGENCY TASK FORCE

Our country would undoubtedly not be more secure if we were not part of NATO, just as it would be less economically prosperous and stable if we were not members of the European Union

PETR PAVEL | PRESIDENT, CZECH REPUBLIC

SHORT TAKES

Flash floods kill 37 in Morocco

Rabat: At least 37 people have been killed in flash floods triggered by torrential rains in Morocco's Atlantic coastal province of Safi, Moroccan authorities said Monday. Fourteen people were still receiving medical care, including two who were in intensive care, they said in a statement. Schools were suspended in the city Monday as residents assessed damage and cleaned flooded homes. Videos shared by local media showed flooded streets and swamped cars in the old town, as well as authorities using boats in rescue operations. Authorities said at least 70 homes and shops had been flooded. Morocco is experiencing heavy rain and snowfall on the Atlas mountains after seven years of drought that emptied some of its main reservoirs.

Kast wins Chile polls, shifts right

Santiago: Jose Antonio Kast won Chile's presidential election Sunday, leveraging voter fears over rising crime and migration to steer the country in its sharpest rightward shift since the end of the military dictatorship in 1990. Kast secured a commanding 58% of the vote in a runoff with the government-backed leftist candidate Jeannette Jara, who won 42% and swiftly conceded. Throughout his decades-long political career, Kast has been a consistent right-wing hardliner. He has proposed building border walls, deploying the military to high-crime areas, and deporting all migrants who are in the country illegally. In a victory speech to a raucous crowd who waved Chilean flags at the headquarters of his Republican Party in the upscale neighborhood of Las Condes in Santiago Sunday evening, Kast pledged "real change."

Romanians rally against judicial reforms

Bucharest: A sixth day of protests calling for a clean-up of the Romanian judiciary was expected Monday, after thousands took to the streets of the capital Bucharest and other cities Sunday to support judges and prosecutors denouncing systemic abuses. Roughly 700 Romanian judges and prosecutors have signed an open letter on social media complaining of "profound and systemic dysfunction" in the justice system. President Nicusor Dan responded by announcing he would hold consultations with members of the judiciary December 22, saying that when so many magistrates complained of "an integrity problem in the justice system, things are very serious".

Pandas caught in crossfire of China, Japan tensions over Taiwan

The twins Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei, who are a huge draw at Ueno Zoological Gardens in Tokyo, may have to leave Japan by next month if China declines to renew the bilateral agreement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 15: Japan may have to be without its much-loved pandas for the first time since 1972 as the two fluffy bears could be sent back to China due to the aggravation of political relations between the two countries amid statements by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi about Taiwan.

The twins Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei, who are a huge draw at Ueno Zoological Gardens in Tokyo, may have to leave Japan by next month if China declines to renew the bilateral agreement.

The last day of their public viewing at Ueno Zoological Gardens, where they have lived since birth in 2021, will be January 25.

While the deadline of the lease agreement for the pair's return to China in February is fast approaching, China Monday parried questions about extending the agreement in the current climate of volatile bilateral ties.

"It is recommended that you refer the matter to the competent Chinese authorities for inquiry," was the curt answer by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Guo Jiakun, to a question from the Japanese media.

China was livid over Takaichi's remarks in parliament on November 7 that a Taiwan contingency could be a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan that may lead to action from the country's defence forces in support of the United States.

Her remarks angered China, as it regards Taiwan as part of its territory and insists that the Taiwan issue is purely an "internal affair" and demanded that Takaichi retract her statement.

Besides lodging diplomatic complaints, followed up with a number of countermeasures, including suspension of imports of fish and asking its millions of tourists not to travel to Japan, China also complained to the UN, saying it is the first-time Japan has "expressed ambitions" to intervene militarily in the Taiwan question, issuing a "threat of force" against Beijing.

In view of this, prospects for another panda loan, seen as a diplomatic symbol of friendship between Japan and China, remain uncertain amid the deteriorating relationship, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported Monday.

China has long used the giant panda as a tool of diplomatic outreach and goodwill toward various nations.

The Japanese public, who developed a sense of attachment to Pandas, appears to have reconciled to parting with them.

Delhi backs lasting ties with Dhaka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 15: Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma Sunday said New Delhi's relations with Dhaka are "not transient" but "everlasting", hours after Bangladesh's foreign office summoned him to express its "serious concern" over "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 bonds we share with Bangladesh are not transient; they are everlasting. A relationship forged in blood and sacrifice cannot be weakened," the envoy said, joining an event hosted by academic and cultural group Itihash O Oitijjo Parishad.

Verma said India stood with the people of Bangladesh during its 1971 Liberation War and would continue to support them in realising the vision for a "democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive nation".

The discussion was staged to mark the 54th anniversary of Victory Day on December 16, which marks the country's liberation from Pakistan in 1971.

The high commissioner said Bangladesh and India have come a long way since 1971, and both nations are now fast-growing economies. "Our societies and economies are closely linked, so closely that we are interdependent on each other," he said. Verma said that during the Liberation War, India stood with its "brothers and sisters in Bangladesh, with immense pride, supporting them at every step in their cause for truth, justice, dignity and freedom of Bangladesh".

BONDI BEACH SHOOTING

Oz strengthens gun laws

A mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney killed at least 15 people and wounded 40

REUTERS

Sydney, Dec 15: Australia vowed stricter gun laws Monday as it began mourning victims of its worst mass shooting in almost 30 years, in which police accused a father and son of killing 15 people at a Jewish celebration at Sydney's famed Bondi Beach.

The older gunman, aged 50, was killed at the scene, taking the tally of dead to 16, while his 24-year-old son was in a critical condition in hospital, police told a press conference.

Police have not released the suspects' names but national broadcaster ABC and other media have identified them as Sajid Akram and his son Naveed Akram. Two flags of militant group Islamic State were found in the gunmen's vehicle, ABC News reported, without citing a source.

The incident has raised questions about whether Australia's gun laws, among the toughest in the world, need an overhaul, with police saying the older suspect had held a firearms licence since 2015, along with six registered weapons.

For between 10 and 20 minutes Sunday evening, the gunmen had fired on attendees at the Hanukkah event, gunning down men, women and children as terrified beachgoers fled.

The victims were aged between 10 and 87. Among them were a rabbi who was a father of five, a Holocaust survivor, a Slovak woman, and a 10-year-old girl, according to interviews, officials and local media reports. The 40 people taken to hospital after the attack included two police officers who were in a serious but stable condition, police said.

PM Albanese condemns attack of 'pure evil'

Tally of 16 dead includes 10-year-old girl, rabbi and one gunman

What we saw yesterday was an act of pure evil, an act of antisemitism, an act of terrorism

ANTHONY ALBANESE | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

Cabinet plans even tougher gun laws after attack

Israel's Netanyahu criticises Albanese for recognising Palestinian state

CABINET AGREES TOUGHER GUN LAWS

"What we saw yesterday was an act of pure evil, an act of antisemitism, an act of terrorism," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters after laying flowers at Bondi Beach.

"The Jewish community are hurting today," he added. "Today, all Australians wrap our arms around them and say, we stand with you. We will do whatever is necessary to stamp out antisemitism. It is a scourge, and we will eradicate it together."

Mourners paid respects and laid flowers at a makeshift memorial at the Bondi pavilion draped in Israeli and Australian flags as police and private Jewish security guards patrolled.

Albanese said his cabinet had agreed to strengthen gun laws and work on a national firearms register to tackle aspects such as the number of weapons permitted by gun licences, and how long the latter are valid.

"People's circumstances can change," he told reporters before the cabinet met. "People can be radicalised over a period of time. Licences should not be in perpetuity."

Security officials said one of the gunmen was known to authorities but had not been deemed an immediate threat.

"We are very much working through the background of both persons. At this stage, we know very little about them," New South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon told reporters.

Home Minister Tony Burke said the father arrived in Australia in 1998 on a student visa, while his son is an Australian-born citizen.

Police gave no details of their firearms, but videos from the scene showed the men firing weapons that appeared to be a bolt-action rifle and a shotgun.

Albanese said measures being considered ranged from curbs on open-ended licences to limits on weapons held by a single individual and the types that are legal, including modifications, with permits restricted to Australian citizens.

HK court finds tycoon Jimmy Lai guilty in landmark security trial

REUTERS

Hong Kong, Dec 15: Hong Kong's High Court found tycoon and pro-democracy campaigner Jimmy Lai guilty Monday of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces in the city's highest-profile trial under a China-imposed national security law that could see him jailed for life.

The landmark case has drawn international scrutiny of Hong Kong's judicial independence amid a years-long crackdown on rights and freedoms in the global financial hub after 2019 pro-democracy protests that Beijing saw as a challenge to its rule.

While 78-year-old Lai's supporters see him as a freedom fighter, Beijing regards him as a mastermind of the protests and a conspirator advocating for U.S. sanctions against Hong Kong and the mainland. Chinese authorities have rejected accusations of eroding the city's rule of law.

SENTENCING EXPECTED NEXT YEAR

"There is no doubt" that Lai" had harboured his resentment and hatred of "China for many of his adult years, Judge Esther Toh told a packed courtroom as the tycoon, wearing a pale green jumper and a grey jacket, sat with his arms folded.

The two other judges in his case were Alex Lee and Susana D'Almada Remedios.Lai, the founder of the now-shuttered Apple Daily newspaper and one of the most prominent critics of China's Communist Party leadership, has already spent five years in jail, facing a slew of litigation under the sweeping security legislation that Beijing enacted in response to the 2019 protests.

KABUL STAYS AWAY

Iran hosts regional talks on Afghan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tehran, Dec 15: Afghanistan's neighbours met in Iran and agreed to deepen regional coordination to address political, economic and security challenges, as well as calling for sanctions on Afghanistan to be lifted. The only absent party Afghanistan itself.

China, Pakistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan all joined the talks organized by Iran, as did Russia, according to a statement released after the meeting Sunday.

Afghanistan was invited but decided not to attend. Its Taliban-led government was tight-lipped on the reasons, with the foreign ministry saying only that it would not participate because Afghanistan "currently maintains active engagement with regional countries through existing regional organizations and formats, and has made good progress in this regard."

The statement from the talks in Iran stressed the importance of maintaining economic and trade ties with Afghanistan to improve living conditions and called for the country's integration into regional political and economic processes.

The Taliban were isolated after they retook power in Afghanistan in August 2021, but in the past year, they have developed diplomatic ties. They now raise several billion dollars every year in tax revenues to keep the lights on.

However, Afghanistan is still struggling economically. Millions rely on aid for survival, and the struggling economy has been further impacted by the international community not recognizing the Taliban government's seizure of power in the wake of the chaotic withdrawal of US-led troops in 2021. Natural disasters and the flow of Afghans fleeing Pakistan under pressure to return home have underlined Afghanistan's reliance on foreign aid to meet essential needs.

The countries at the talks also voiced security concerns and pledged cooperation in combating terrorism, drug trafficking and human smuggling, while opposing any foreign military presence in Afghanistan.

Indians boost Singaporean luxury goods sales

Indian tourists spent SGD 812.17 million in Singapore in the first half of 2025, a rise of 4.40 per cent over the same period last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Dec 15: Tourists from India are among the biggest spenders on luxury goods in Singapore, helping the city-state's high-end product retailers defy a global downtrend in spending on premium products, a top business association here said Monday.

Indian tourists spent SGD 812.17 million in Singapore in the first half of 2025, a rise of 4.40 per cent over the same period last year, according to Singapore Tourism Board (STB) statistics.

"Indian travellers continue to be one of the island's most commercially significant markets, and they are among the tourists helping to lift luxury spending in Singapore," Orchard Road Business Association (ORBA) Chairman Mark Shaw said.

ORBA is Singapore's key body managing and promoting Orchard Road, a premier shopping belt.

Experts say, besides India, tourists from China and Indonesia are also helping the city-state defy a global downtrend in luxury spending.

"Indian travellers have high spending and longer-than-average lengths of stay at 6.3 days. These longer trips translate to higher discretionary spending across retail, dining, entertainment, attractions and accommodation," Shaw said.

He was commenting on increased footfalls at Orchard Road's Christmas Market and Village during the annual year-end festive season.

The Mastercard Economics Institute's 2024 Travel Trends report noted that India's expanding affluent base is increasingly seeking luxury experiences, jewellery and high-end fashion, reflecting rising disposable incomes and aspirational lifestyles.

Indian visitor arrivals in Singapore reached 1.03 million in the first 10 months of the year, up 2.6 per cent year-on-year, STB data showed. Overall, Singapore attracted 14.25 million visitors during Jan-Oct 2025, up 2.5 per cent.

Experts say, besides India, tourists from China and Indonesia are also helping the city-state defy a global downtrend in luxury spending

According to Euromonitor International, Singapore is among the few major tourism hubs expected to see an uptick in luxury sales this year.

The London-based market research firm projects luxury spending in Singapore to grow 7-9 per cent to about SGD 13.9 billion in 2025, outperforming other regional shopping hubs such as China and Japan.

The growth is being driven by affluent consumers seeking premium products, experiences and so-called "quiet luxury". Singapore is also home to a rising number of high-net-worth individuals, including 55 billionaires, according to a UBS wealth report released on December 4.

Global luxury brands such as Prada and Van Cleef & Arpels have increased their visibility along Orchard Road's hotel-shopping belt through outdoor installations, capitalising on heightened visitor activity during the festive season.

A key attraction is ORBA's annual Orchard Road Christmas Light-Up, ranked among the world's top five, featuring decorative displays, snowfall shows, markets, live entertainment and street festivities.

Orchard Road is one of Singapore's two major shopping districts that continues to draw leading global luxury brands.

business

Right now we are importing the batteries but yes we have a plan for localisation. It is very much on the cards in a phased manner over the next few years

PARTHO BANERJEE | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER (MARKETING & SALES), MARUTI SUZUKI

ICICI PRU AMC IPO FULLY SUBSCRIBED

The initial public offering (IPO) of ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company Ltd, an arm of the ICICI Bank, got fully subscribed on the second day of share sale Monday. The IPO received bids for 4,97,60,868 shares against 3,50,15,691 shares on offer, translating into 1.42 times subscription, according to NSE data till 13:27 hours

Quote of the day

Cybersecurity is entering a new era where hyper-connected enterprises and AI-driven threats outpace traditional defenses

RAVI KUMAR S | CEO, COGNIZANT

Europe does not have a national grid. Even the US does not have a national grid. But India has a national grid. So we are a preferred destination for data centres and as they are planning a growth in the years to come

PIYUSH GOYAL | UNION MINISTER

GST 2.0 was a much-needed step to stimulate economic growth, and its positive impact is evident in the improvement of consumer sentiment and the upward trend in credit demand

BHAVESH JAIN | MD AND CEO, TRANSUNION CIBIL

SHORT TAKES

Sugar output rises

New Delhi: India's sugar production has surged 28.33 per cent so far this season to 77.90 lakh tonnes, but the cooperative mills federation is urging the government to raise the minimum selling price, warning that falling market rates and rising costs are threatening farmers' payments. The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF), which represents farmer-owned mills, said ex-mill sugar prices have dropped by nearly Rs 2,300 per tonne since the season began, now hovering around Rs 37,700 per tonne, despite the strong output. As of December 15, the country's 479 operating sugar mills have produced 77.90 lakh tonnes compared with 60.70 lakh tonnes by 473 mills a year earlier, according to NFCSF data.

Vegoil imports drop

New Delhi: India's vegetable oil imports fell 28 per cent year-on-year to 11.83 lakh tonne in November, the first month of the 2025-26 oil year, driven by a sharp decline in refined, bleached and deodorised (RBD) palmolein shipments, industry body SEA said Monday. The world's biggest vegetable oil importer had brought in 16.50 lakh tonne of vegetable oils, including edible and non-edible oils, in November 2024. Overall palm oil imports declined 25 per cent to 6.32 lakh tonne in November from 8.42 lakh tonne a year earlier, the Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said in a statement.

TRADE GAP SHRINKS

Outbound shipments in Nov offset Oct losses as lower gold, oil, coal imports drive deficit fall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: India's exports rebounded by 19.37 per cent to a six-month high of $38.13 billion in November after contracting in October, driven by higher shipments of engineering and electronics goods that helped bring down the trade deficit to a five-month low of $24.53 billion.

According to government data released Monday, the country's imports dipped by 1.88 per cent to $62.66 billion due to a fall in the inbound shipments of gold, crude oil, coal, and coke during the month under review. The value of merchandise exports in November is the highest since May ($38.73 billion), while outbound shipments have logged the sharpest monthly growth in the past three-and-a-half years, since June 2022.

Gold imports dipped by 59.15 per cent to $4 billion. Crude oil imports also declined by 11.27 per cent to $14.11 billion during the month.

The dip in imports also helped narrow the country's trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) in November. The previous low was $18.78 billion in June this year. The trade deficit stood at a record $41.68 billion in October.

Cumulatively, exports during April-November were up 2.62 per cent to $292.07 billion, while imports during the eight months rose by 5.59 per cent to $515.21 billion. The deficit stood at $223.14 billion.

Briefing reporters on the data, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that outbound shipments in November offset the losses in October this year. "November has been a good month for exports," he said.

Exports recorded growth despite the USA's hefty 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods. He added that sectors like electronics, engineering, chemicals, gems and jewellery helped in pushing the country's merchandise shipments.

Exports of petroleum products too rose by 11.65 per cent to $3.93 billion in November. The other commodities which recorded positive growth included tea, coffee, iron ore, cashew, oil meals, dairy, handicrafts, marine products and leather goods.

However, shipments of rice, oil seeds, carpet and plastics recorded negative growth.

He also said that the ministry is finalising the detailed guidelines of the Rs 25,060-crore export promotion mission, and a few components of it will be rolled out this week itself.

He further said that this help may not be enough to deal with the steep 50 per cent tariff imposed by the US, but it will definitely bring relief for exporters in areas like liquidity.

"It will lessen the pain, not remove the pain; it will not solve their problems completely. But at the same time, we remain engaged with the US positively," to close the deal as early as possible.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President SC Ralhan said during April-November 2025, the US remained India's top export destination, despite the imposition of a 50 per cent tariff, clearly demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of the exporting community.

Other major export destinations during this period included the UAE, the Netherlands, China, the UK, Germany, Singapore, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Hong Kong.

India's exports contracted 11.8 per cent to $34.38 billion in October on account of the impact of high tariffs by the US, while the trade deficit widened to a record high of $41.68 billion, mainly due to a jump in gold imports in that month.

According to the provisional figures, the estimated value of services exports for November was $35.86 billion compared to $32.11 billion in the same month last year.

During the first eight months of this fiscal year, exports stood at $270 billion as compared to $248.56 billion in April-November 2024.

The secretary also said that the country's goods and services exports rose by 5.83 per cent to $562.13 billion during April-November this fiscal year as against $533.16 billion.

The ministry is aiming that these shipments will cross last year's figures of $825 billion.

With sustained policy support, enhanced logistics efficiency, and access to competitive export financing, India's exports are well-positioned to maintain this positive trajectory in the coming months

SC RALHAN | PRESIDENT, FEDERATION OF INDIAN EXPORT ORGANISATIONS

TRADE DEFICIT DECLINES TO A FIVE-MONTH LOW OF $24.53BN

EXPORTS REBOUND 19.37% TO SIX-MONTH HIGH OF $38.13BN

IMPORTS DIP BY 1.88% TO $62.66BN DUE TO FALL IN SHIPMENTS

Gold zooms ₹4K to fresh lifetime high

The yellow metal reflected the global strength with a sharp gain as it continues to rise in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Gold prices surged by Rs 4,000 to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,37,600 per 10 grams in the national capital Monday, tracking firm global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,33,600 per 10 grams Friday.

"Gold prices scaled even higher as international spot gold surged towards the $4,350 zone, triggering a strong rally in the domestic market," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Gold prices had earlier appreciated by Rs 3,200 to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,34,800 per 10 grams October 17.

"The move was driven by renewed safe-haven demand and expectations around upcoming US economic data, including non-farm payrolls and the Core PCE Price Index scheduled this week, focus has firmly shifted to US macro cues, which are expected to keep volatility elevated," Trivedi added.

On the other hand, silver prices remained flat at Rs 1,99,500 (inclusive of all taxes), as per the association.

So far in this year, silver prices have skyrocketed by Rs 1,09,800, or 122.41 per cent, compared with Rs 89,700 per kilogram on December 31, 2024.

In the international markets, spot gold rallied for the fifth consecutive session, rising $49.83, or 1.16 per cent, to $4,350.06 per ounce.

Over the past five sessions, the yellow metal has added $159.32, or 3.80 per cent, from $4,190.74 per ounce recorded December 8.

Meanwhile, spot silver advanced by $2, or 3.24 per cent, to $63.96 per ounce in the overseas markets. On Friday, the white metal had touched a lifetime high of $64.65 per ounce.

PRECIOUS METALS SHINE

DURING THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR, GOLD PRICES HAVE SURGED ₹58,650, OR 74.3%, FROM ₹78,950 PER 10 GRAMS DECEMBER 31, 2024

MEANWHILE SILVER PRICES HAVE SKYROCKETED BY ₹1,09,800, OR 122.41%, COMPARED WITH ₹89,700 PER KILOGRAM DECEMBER 31, 2024

HIGH TARIFF BLOW

India proposes PTA with Mexico

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: India has proposed a preferential trade agreement (PTA) with Mexico to help domestic exporters deal with the steep tariffs announced by the South American country, a top government official said Monday.

Mexico has decided to impose steep import tariffs - ranging from about 5 per cent to as high as 50 per cent on a wide range of goods (about 1,463 tariff lines) from countries that do not have free trade agreements with Mexico, including India, China, South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that India has engaged with the country on the issue.

"Technical level talks are on... The only fast way forward is to try to get a preferential trade agreement (PTA) because an FTA (free trade agreement) will take a lot of time. So we are trying to see what can be a good way forward," he said.

Central Bank holds plantation drive on 115th Foundation Day

BHUBANESWAR: Central Bank of India organised a massive plantation drive Monday across the country as a part of its 115th Foundation Day celebrations of the bank with the theme "Grow a Plant, Save the Planet". Simultaneously, its Bhubaneswar Region also organised a plantation programme at Rail Vihar, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, with an objective to create awareness about the importance of tree planting, environmental sustainability and to support biodiversity. The programme was held in august presence of KC Gauda, Sr DEN (Estate), East Coast Railway, Pankaj Kumar, Regional Head & Suresh Chandra, Deputy Regional Head, along with other senior bank officials. The programme was coordinated by Bandana Sarangi, Branch Head, Chandrasekharpur Branch.

WPI stays in negative despite food price rise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Wholesale price inflation stayed in the negative for the second consecutive month in November at (-) 0.32 per cent, even though there was an uptick in prices of food articles like pulses and vegetables on a month-on-month basis, government data showed Monday.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was at (-) 1.21 per cent in October and 2.16 per cent in November last year.

However, on an annual basis, the negative rate of inflation during November was primarily due to decrease in prices of food articles, mineral oils, crude petroleum & natural gas, manufacture of basic metals and electricity, the industry ministry said in a statement.

Food articles continued to witness deflation for the past eight months, beginning in April. It narrowed sharply in November at 4.16 per cent, from 8.31 per cent in October.

In vegetables, deflation was 20.23 per cent in November, as against 34.97 per cent in October. In pulses, deflation was at 15.21 per cent in November, while in potato and onion it was 36.14 per cent and 64.70 per cent, respectively.

In the case of manufactured products, inflation eased to 1.33 per cent in November, as against 1.54 per cent in October.

Fuel and power witnessed a negative inflation or deflation of 2.27 per cent, as against 2.55 per cent in October.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the WPI deflation narrowed faster than expected to 0.3 per cent in November 2025, from 1.2 per cent in October 2025, reflecting the base effect, weakening INR and rising prices of some commodities.

Data released last week showed CPI inched up to 0.71 per cent in November, from a record low of 0.25 per cent, driven by rising food prices.

Low inflation in the current fiscal year has given the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) room to cut policy interest rates by 1.25 percentage points.

The Reserve Bank, earlier this month, significantly lowered the inflation projection for the current fiscal to 2 per cent from 2.6 per cent estimated earlier, as the economy continues to witness rapid disinflation.

The RBI mainly tracks retail inflation for deciding on benchmark interest rates.

Robotaxi testing sends Tesla stocks on fast lane

Tesla shares near record high as Musk confirms robotaxi testing with safety monitors

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 15: Tesla shares hit their highest in nearly a year Monday after CEO Elon Musk said the electric-vehicle maker was testing its robotaxis without safety monitors in the front passenger seat.

While much of Tesla's $1.53 trillion valuation — the highest of any automaker globally — is tied to investor optimism around its self-driving technology and humanoid robot ambitions, the bulk of its revenue and profit still comes from selling electric vehicles.

Shares of the company rose as much as 4.9%, hitting $481.37, their highest in nearly a year.

The stock had hit a record high of $488.54 December 18 last year on hopes that the Trump administration would ease regulatory hurdles for self-driving cars. Tesla launched a limited robotaxi service in Austin, Texas, in June using modified Model Y vehicles equipped with Full Self-Driving. Early operations were geo-fenced and included a human "safety monitor" in the passenger seat.

"Testing is underway with no occupants in the car," Musk said in an X post Sunday.

Investors and analysts are betting that Tesla will intensify testing and rapidly deploy driverless taxis as it prepares to launch its Cybercab model next year.

"The news Tesla is testing robotaxis without the safety monitors is in line with our expectations that the company is making progress in its testing, in line with management's statements during the third quarter earnings call," said Seth Goldstein, senior equity analyst at Morningstar.

"The market is cheering the progress, sending shares higher today."

Tesla has long touted its robotaxi and self-driving taxi plans, though regulatory obstacles and technical setbacks have repeatedly slowed their progress.

Alphabet unit Waymo leads with more than 2,500 commercial robotaxis across major US cities, as of November.

D-St ends flat on weak ₹, outflows

NIFTY 50 FELL 0.08% TO 26,027.30 POINTS WHILE SENSEX LOST 0.06% TO 85,213.36

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 15: India's equity benchmarks ended little changed Monday, in line with the muted moves over the last two weeks, as foreign outflows and ongoing uncertainty surrounding a potential trade deal with the US dampened sentiment.

The Nifty 50 fell 0.08% to 26,027.30 points and the BSE Sensex lost 0.06% to 85,213.36. The rupee hit another record low at 90.785 per dollar.

Foreign outflows from Indian equities have totalled $2 billion so far in December, marking the worst sell-off in three months.

Nine of the 16 major sectors rose. Small-caps gained 0.2%, while mid-caps lost 0.1%.

India's blue-chip indexes have eased about 0.5% over last two weeks as investors booked profits near record-high levels amid uncertainty over the India-US trade deal.

"US tariffs are finally starting to compound into stress across asset classes... The best way to ride this out is to stick with large caps, with private lenders, pharma, and IT," Emkay Global Financial Services said.

The US imposed steep tariffs on Indian goods earlier this year, partly in response to India's Russian oil purchases.

India's trade secretary said Monday that the two countries were close to a "framework deal", without giving any timeline. Last week, India's chief economic advisor said that a trade deal is likely only by March.

AUTOS FALL, INDIGO RISES

Automobile stocks fell 0.9% and were the biggest losers among major sectors. JM Financial said auto and auto components, and aluminium goods could be among the worst affected from tariff hike by Mexico.

India's largest airline IndiGo rose 2.2%, marking the third session of gains, as its operations stabilised after poor pilot roster planning led to thousands of flight cancellations earlier this month.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,114.22 crore Friday, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 3,868.94 crore, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended lower. European markets were trading higher. US markets ended lower Friday.

Messi winds up GOAT India Tour

The football icon's three-day, four-city tour expectedly triggered fan frenzy everywhere he went

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Lionel Messi GOAT India Tour that began in shambolic fashion ended in a blaze of glory as devotional fans joyously gathered to catch a glimpse of a man that does things on the field that are often beyond human comprehension.

Most importantly, the much-publicised and anticipated event had the ending it wanted, after a chaotic beginning in Kolkata on the tour's first stop Saturday.

The thousands of heads totting the stands at Kotla, as well as the few Indian celebrities and dignitaries inside the ground, basked in the euphoria of hosting one of the world's most recognisable and bankable athletes at an extravagant event.

They were perhaps swept away by the otherworldly talent, the humility, and the impact that this man has had on the game he has played with all his might over the last two decades.

Speaking briefly in Spanish, a language not spoken by most in the city, Messi said, "Gracias Delhi! Hasta pronto", creating a sense of yearning among the crowds rarely seen before.

Well, I just want to thank everyone for the love and affection during these days in India. We carry all this love with us, and we will definitely return, hopefully one day to play a match or on another occasion, but we will definitely return to visit India. Thank you very much
LIONEL MESSI

Upon arrival, Messi took a lap of the ground smiling, and watched the 7x7 celebrity match coming to an end, even as the spectators, many of whom were dressed in the famous blue and white Argentine jersey bearing No 10, chanted his name continuously.

He was then standing there waving to the stands smiling, something he tried to do in Kolkata too but could not as, unlike the Arun Jaitley Stadium, he was crowded by too many people, including politicians and their aides, at the Salt Lake Stadium Saturday.

He was seen kicking the ball at the stands along with his Inter Miami teammates Luis Suarez and Rodrigo De Paul while taking a round of the venue that registered an attendance of around 25000.

Messi also felicitated the Minerva Academy football team. The script was specifically written for Messi, and, as is his wont, he played the role to perfection.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, ICC Chairman Jay Shah, DDCA President Rohan Jaitley and former Indian football team captain Bhaichung Bhutia had the privilege to be with Messi towards the end of the 30-minute event.

Earlier in the day, Messi arrived here for the final leg of his GOAT India Tour after his flight from Mumbai was delayed considerably due to inclement weather.

Messi, who was in Mumbai for the second day of his three-day whirlwind trip to India, was to land in the national capital around 10:45am but his charter flight was held up due to foggy conditions here.

'Uneasy' Bindra questions Messi's tour

Olympic gold-winning former Indian shooter Abhinav Bindra Monday criticised the manner in which Argentine football great Lionel Messi's tour of India has unfolded, saying he feels a "quiet sadness" seeing millions being spent for "moments of proximity photographs and fleeting access" to the legend. "...as his recent visit to India unfolded parts of it felt chaotic and left me quietly uneasy. It compelled me to pause and reflect not in judgment but in genuine concern about what we were really trying to achieve," he wondered aloud in an elaborate post on X. "Millions were spent for moments of proximity photographs and fleeting access to a legend. And yes it is people's money earned honestly and theirs to spend as they choose. Still I can't help but feel a quiet sadness wondering what might have been possible if even a fraction of that energy and investment had been directed toward the foundations of sport in our country," he observed. Bindra, however, made it clear that he has immense respect for the World Cup-winning Argentina captain, who is one of the most recognisable and admired sportspersons on the planet right now. "Lionel Messi is one of those rare athletes whose story transcends sport. His journey from a child fighting physical odds to a footballer who redefined excellence has moved millions across the world...I hold profound respect and admiration for what he represents - perseverance, humility and an uncompromising pursuit of greatness," said the 2008 Beijing Olympics gold-winner. Messi's GOAT tour has had no real football connection with his itinerary restricted to meet-and-greet sessions and little or no direct engagement with fans.

As a society are we building a culture of sport or are we simply celebrating individuals from afar?
ABHINAV BINDRA | OLYMPIC GOLD-WINNING FORMER INDIAN SHOOTER

Not just Ro-Ko, compulsory for all India players to play 2 Hazare games

This is in line with the recommendations of a review that was undertaken after the Test debacle in Australia earlier this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The BCCI has made it mandatory for all current national team players to turn up in at least two one-day matches of the upcoming Vijay Hazare Trophy starting December 24.

It is understood that with a gap of three weeks between the last T20I against South Africa in Ahmedabad (December 19) and the first ODI against New Zealand (January 11, 2026), the Board wants all its senior players to play domestic cricket.

The diktat has been communicated to the players by the Ajit Agarkar-led national selection committee.

While veterans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have already intimated their availability for the tournament, other senior stars like Shubman Gill, Jasprit Bumrah, KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav have also been asked to play at least two games for their respective teams.

Save Shreyas Iyer, who will take a lot more time to get fit, others are expected to represent their state teams.

"There are six rounds of Vijay Hazare Trophy scheduled between December 24 and start of the New Zealand ODIs. It is up to the players and their state associations to decide which two rounds they would like to play. But after the second T20I in Mullanpur, the players have been categorically told that playing Hazare isn't optional," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Exceptions would be made only if a player is declared unfit by the Centre of Excellence, but officials believe there is enough time to recuperate after the South Africa series.

The diktat would also help counter the narrative that the selection committee and head coach Gautam Gambhir only want to make an example out of Kohli and Rohit, who have nothing to prove.

The decision to make Vijay Hazare Trophy mandatory for all is indicative that rules will be same for everyone.

T20 WC, NZ series squad on same day

With the ICC setting a deadline for the T20 World Cup squad announcement, India's line-up for the global event and the preceding series against New Zealand will be announced on the same day, which could be some time in the first week of January.

"The squad that will be selected for the New Zealand T20Is will be the same that will be named for the T20 World Cup," the source added.

SHORT TAKES

Shahbaz replaces Axar

New Delhi: India all-rounder Axar Patel was Monday ruled out of the remaining two T20 Internationals against South Africa due to illness with the BCCI's selection committee naming Shahbaz Ahmed as his replacement. Axar had also missed the third T20I in Dharamsala Sunday with wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav being included in the playing XI. India went on to defeat South Africa by seven wickets in a low-scoring match to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series. The last two games of the five-match series will be played in Lucknow and Ahmedabad Wednesday and Friday respectively.

Shaheen's horror debut

Geelong: Shaheen Shah Afridi endured a difficult start to his Big Bash League career after being taken out of the attack for dangerous bowling during Brisbane Heat's clash with Melbourne Renegades here at the Simonds Stadium Monday. In the 18th over of the first innings, the Pakistani fast bowler's night fell apart when he bowled two waist-high full tosses. The umpires deemed the deliveries dangerous, forcing Afridi to stop bowling and leaving Heat captain Nathan McSweeney to complete the final two balls of the over. Afridi could only smile wryly as he walked off, and his debut spell ended prematurely with figures of 0 for 43 from 2.4 overs.

Stars power Real Madrid

Madrid: Kylian Mbappe and Rodrygo scored to give Real Madrid a 2-1 win away to Alaves, trimming the gap to La Liga leader FC Barcelona to four points. Mbappe opened the scoring in the 24th minute after an excellent run before firing into the top corner. Rodrygo restored Real Madrid's lead in the 76th minute after good work from Vinicius Jr, but then left the pitch with a calf injury. FC Barcelona won 2-0 at home to Osasuna, with Raphinha scoring both goals in the last 20 minutes.

PREMIER LEAGUE

City, Villa close lead gap with Gunners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Manchester, Dec 15: Manchester City and Aston Villa kept the pressure on Premier League leader Arsenal with wins.

Nottingham Forest pulled further away from the relegation zone with a 3-0 victory against Tottenham and Sunderland beat Newcastle 1-0 in the Tyne-Wear derby after an own-goal from Nick Woltemade.

Arsenal had extended its lead at the top of the standings to five points with a 2-1 win against Wolves Saturday. But a day later its closest rivals both responded with victories - second-place City winning 3-0 at Crystal Palace and Villa, in third, twice coming back to beat West Ham 3-2 at the London Stadium. City is two points behind Arsenal and Villa is a point further back.

Beaten by Palace in the FA Cup final last season, City exacted some revenge to take all three points at Selhurst Park.

Erling Haaland scored his 101st Premier League goal to put City in front late in the first half and he got his second of the match with an 89th-minute penalty. The Norwegian has 36 goals in 27 appearances for club and country in another remarkable scoring season. He is the league's leading scorer with 17 goals. Phil Foden got City's other goal in between Haaland's double.

Dubai witnesses India's para power

India win 56 medals at Dubai 2025 Asian Youth Para Games

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dubai, Dec 15: As the Dubai 2025-Asian Youth Para Games concluded, Team India clinched 56 medals, including 19 gold, and several nations celebrated historic milestones. Bangladesh and the Maldives won their first-ever medals at the event, with Bangladesh making a remarkable debut by securing three gold medals.

Held under the patronage of Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of the National Olympic Committee and Chairman of the Dubai Sports Council, the Games brought together 1,500 athletes from 35 nations in a celebration of youth, excellence, and inclusion.

In a momentous achievement, Baby Sahana Ravi secured a gold medal in the Class SF-9 (Under 23) category of Para Table Tennis, defeating the Philippines' Lhey Marie Manginsay in straight sets. Her victory not only underscores her personal dedication but also reflects India's growing prominence in para table tennis on the international stage.

Joining the celebration, Vishwa Vijay Tambe added a silver medal to India's tally in the Class SM-10 category after a hard-fought encounter against Korea DPR's Kwang Nam So. Despite narrowly missing the top spot, Tambe's effort showcased exceptional grit, strategy, and competitive spirit — earning admiration from supporters and coaches alike.

The Youth Asian Para Games 2025 was the fifth edition of this prestigious continental event.

NATIONAL SHOOTING

Manu, Simranpreet win 25m pistol gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Double Olympic bronze medallist Manu Bhaker and World Cup Final gold medallist Simranpreet Kaur Brar dished out commanding performances to clinch the senior and junior women's 25m pistol titles respectively at the National Shooting Championship Competitions, here Monday.

Manu shot 36 in the final to secure the gold medal, finishing four points clear of Divya TS of Karnataka, who took the silver with a score of 32.

Anjali Choudhary bagged the bronze with a score of 28, while Olympian Rhythm Sangwan finished fourth.

In a tough qualification round, Manu finished fourth with 581, while Divya topped with a score of 587. Anjali shot 582, while Sangwan scored 579.

Fresh from her gold-winning achievement at the elite season-ending World Cup Final in Doha, 21-year-old Simranpreet continued her impressive run shooting 39 to claim the gold in the junior women's 25m pistol event.

IPL MINI-AUCTION

Green, Venkatesh, Livingstone in focus

KKR, CSK ready to loosen purse strings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Abu Dhabi, Dec 15: Cameron Green could well be the biggest beneficiary of IPL's skewed demand-supply market dynamic surrounding seam-bowling all-rounders during the mini-auction here Tuesday with Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings seemingly ready to break the bank for the Australian.

The 10 teams need to fill up 77 slots with a cumulative purse of Rs 237.55 crore and among them, Mumbai Indians (Rs 2.75 crore) will hardly have any role to play save picking a few uncapped players at their base price.

Green, along with out-of-favour India all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer and English dasher Liam Livingstone, is likely to enjoy a handsome payday.

Kolkata Knight Riders, with a purse of 64.30 crore and an eye on rebuilding the outfit with 13 slots to fill, can only be challenged by Chennai Super Kings, who enter the mini-auction with a purse of Rs 43.40 crore.

The mini-auction is always more intriguing than the mega auction as franchises come with specific choices and are always ready to go the distance to procure the services of players with distinct skill-sets.

Pace bowling all-rounders always come at a premium and therefore, the troika of Green, Venkatesh Iyer and West Indies' Jason Holder, all coming at the highest base price of Rs 2 crore ($220,000), are set to headline the bidding war.

If one looks at their IPL stats, Green, especially, has middling numbers -- 704 runs and 16 wickets in the 29 matches -- but the mini-auction is more demand-driven activity and an Australian all-format regular is certain to get traction.

When it comes to Venkatesh, everyone save KKR CEO Venky Mysore, believed that an auction bid of Rs 23.75 crore was way too high and the player had his worst season trying to justify the price.

Having also released Andre Russell, who is the team's new "Power Coach", KKR are in need of at least two good top order batters and one all-rounder.

The third of three pace-bowling all-rounders, Holder, may be a low key name but he is equally adept at using the long handle and bowl those heavy balls, making him useful in a smaller auction with lesser options.

There is buzz that Green might surpass countryman Mitchell Starc (Rs 24.75 crore) to become the overseas player with the highest price tag at an IPL auction but there would still remain a catch.

Even if Green's bid goes northwards of Rs 25 crore, his salary for the season would still be Rs 18 crore ($1.9 million).

The bid amount and players' salary would be mutually exclusive with the former being deducted from team's annual player purse.

The reason being IPL's "maximum-fee" rule which states that a foreign player's maximum fee at a mini auction will be the lower value between the highest retention slab (Rs 18 crore) and the highest price at the previous mega auction (Rs 27 crore for Rishabh Pant in 2025).

In case of Venkatesh, it will be interesting if his bid value goes over and above Rs 10 crore ($1.1 million), which is a fair deal given his skill-set and capabilities.

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