

HERE . NOW

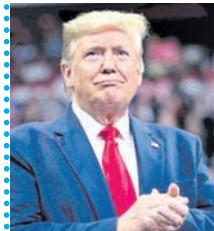
orissa POST



Sreeleela's appeal

Actor Sreeleela urges every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense

LEISURE | P2



Crude crackdown

Trump orders a "blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela, to increase pressure on Maduro

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Silver shines

Silver prices breach the record ₹2 lakh-per-kilogram mark in the national capital for the first time

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Doping woes

India records highest doping violations among nations conducting over 5,000 tests

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12 PAGES | ₹5.00



DEFIANCE ON DISPLAY

A person reacts as people clash with police officers on the day they evict migrants from a former school in Badalona, Spain

REUTERS

Protesters march towards Indian mission in Dhaka

India's tit-for-tat move in summoning the Bangladesh envoy, days after Dhaka called in India's representative, underscores worsening ties between the neighbours. Relations have frayed since Sheikh Hasina's ouster, marked by anti-India protests, security concerns around the Indian mission in Dhaka, sharp exchanges over elections and Dhaka's pushback against New Delhi's concerns.

India worries about security and democratic stability, while Bangladesh resents perceived interference. Mutual mistrust and diplomatic strain now define a relationship once seen as stable and cooperative

"On Wednesday afternoon, police intercepted the procession, which started from the Rampura Bridge, in front of Hossain Market in North Badda," where the diplomatic mission is located, a police spokesman said.

Vehicular traffic, however, on the main thoroughfare along the diplomatic enclave housing most foreign embassies remained suspended for hours, he said.

According to local media reports, as the protest marchers proceeded, police erected a barricade. They broke through the barrier but faced another stronger blockade where the protesters started chanting slogans against India and demanding the extradition of Hasina.

"We are not frightened and we will not attack the Indian High Commission... But if anyone tries to maintain hegemonic control over Bangladesh, they will not be spared," a protester was quoted as saying by the private UNB news agency.

The demonstrators claimed that conspiracies are being hatched by "Indian proxy political parties, media and government officials" against Bangladesh. Hasina fled to India after a violent student-led protest, dubbed 'July Uprising', ousted her Awami League regime August 5, 2024.

Dhaka, Dec 17: A large group of protesters, marching towards the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, was stopped by police Wednesday, even as India expressed strong concern about the security situation around its mission in the Bangladeshi capital.

The protesters, marching under the banner of July Oikya (July Unity), were chanting anti-India slogans and raising several demands, including the extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and others who fled the country during and after the July uprising last year.

5-YR-OLD TRIBAL GIRL RAPED; KIN ARRESTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 17: A five-year-old tribal girl was allegedly raped by one of her distant relatives in Mayurbhanj district, police said Wednesday. The accused, who resides in the neighbourhood of the minor's family, was arrested, a senior officer said.

The girl's mother lodged a complaint with Baripada Sadar Police Station, alleging that the girl was lured by the accused with a promise of giving biscuits and taken to a bamboo forest where she was allegedly raped Monday evening, he said. When the girl started screaming, her aunt and mother reached the spot and rescued her, the officer said.



A case has been registered under various sections of the BNS and the POCSO Act, and the statements of the complainant and the minor have been recorded, Baripada Sadar PS IIC Aditya Prasad Jena said.

The girl has been admitted to PRM Medical College and Hospital here for a medical examination and collection of biological samples, the officer said. The investigation into the alleged rape is underway, he added.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Concrete plaque caves in killing school student

POST NEWS NETWORK



ers of providing false information about the incident.

Following the death, the victim's family members and local residents blocked NH-63 in front of the health centre for about five hours from afternoon, demanding ₹50 lakh in compensation. As a result, hundreds of heavy and passenger vehicles were left stranded on both sides of the highway.

Tehsildar Twinkle Sethi, Kotpad IIC Premananda Sunani and BDO Nayak tried to persuade the agitators to withdraw the road blockade, but they did not relent.

Later, the project administrator of ITDA Tripti Barai, Jeypore Sub-Collector Akavaram Sasya Reddy and Sunabeda SDPO Sumitra Jena arrived at the spot, held discussions with the family members and gave away ₹50,000 in cash. The road blockade was finally lifted after officials assured that the remaining ₹1.5 lakh would be paid through the bank account.

Predeep Majhi, Zilla Parishad members Geeta Majhi and Tripathi Chalan, along with senior BJD workers, also reached the CHC and alleged that the incident occurred due to administrative negligence.

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leisure

**REASON AMANDA HAS NOT SUNG IN A BROADWAY SHOW**

Actress Amanda Seyfried shared that she used to dream of starring on Broadway, but she revealed that she'd be too anxious to sing in front of a live audience. Seyfried has actually found it liberating to accept that she'll never sing on Broadway, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

SPIELBERG CONFIRMS EPIC NEW SCI-FI FILM

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg is working on his new film *Disclosure Day*, which is set to release in the summer. The iconic filmmaker is returning with a new sci-fi epic, which marks his first movie since 2022's *Fabelmans* and will star the likes of Josh O'Connor, Emily Blunt, Colman Domingo and Wyatt Russell.

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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ARIES

The stars are sending out a warning today, and it will prevent you from getting cheated. Even though you manage to remain a step ahead of people, you are likely to make a few enemies along the way. Ganesha says today is not auspicious for buying a house or a vehicle.

**TAURUS**

There is a strong likelihood of some dispute or misunderstanding cropping up between you and your parents. This, Ganesha assures, could easily be resolved through a positive, meaningful dialogue. You will be clear, coherent and persuasive in your communications. Your ideas and intentions will be easily understood and accepted by others. The day will turn out to be a bright and a pleasant one.

**GEMINI**

You will be in an extremely emotional and romantic mood today. You may be worried about your personal relations, health, diet, career etc. You need to guard against giving into excessive stress and worry and look after your health says Ganesha.

**CANCER**

Ganesha says that it will be a day of challenge. You will be tempted to plunge into a new venture. But there is no need for haste or anxiety in this regard. Pending work will be completed. Business deals and transactions will end on happy note. Translocation due to business or domestic reasons is possible.

**LEO**

You will be extremely serious about your work today and will work diligently to finish your tasks. You will be focussed and disciplined about your projects. You will feel the need to improve your style of functioning. Traders can expect good financial gains today, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

Your ambitions and desire to undertake more work will be very prominent today. After working hard all day, try to get yourself some recreation and relaxation, perhaps at a private party, a social gathering or maybe even at a marriage reception, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says beware of overspending today. Those of you having close ties abroad may find them beneficial. Ganesha says you should always remain optimistic.

**SCORPIO**

Expressing your feelings becomes important at some point of time. Today, you are in a mood to express emotions for your near and dear ones. And why not? After all, they need to be appreciated. Though your heart is full of emotions today, do not express in a way that you become vulnerable in eyes of general public.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Brace yourselves: the day has a lot of uncertainties today. First being financial. You may have to shell out money for unexpected expenses. But, this may also teach you to be economically independent. Always look at the brighter side, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**

You are armed with good communication skills, it helps you convince the most adamant of those around you. But, you'll need to hone this talent once again, says Ganesha. You'll look into heart of the matter and find the answers you have been searching for. As the day progresses, your creativity will come to the fore, impressing the people around. You can ask for the support of your peers to move ahead, feels Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS**

Sometimes it feels like you are stuck in a quicksand, and there is none out there to pull you out. But, the independent Aquarius is capable of dealing with adversities alone. And, that tendency shall hold you in a good stead even today. Dilemmas dissolved and problems resolved, you shall spend a quiet, romantic evening with your sweetheart, foresees Ganesha.

**PISCES**

The mundane routine of daily life will finally catch up with you, and you will feel the urge to take a break and travel somewhere. And a break is well deserved considering the number of hours you have slaved over your current projects. A picnic or a short journey with your partner is very much on the cards, says Ganesha.



Sreeleela's appeal to netizens

Hyderabad: Actress Sreeleela, who is one of the top stars in the Telugu and Tamil film industries, on Wednesday urged every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense.

Taking to her Instagram page to post an emotional appeal, the actress wrote, "I put my hands together and request every social media user not to support AI-generated nonsense. There is a difference between using and abusing technology. Advancements in technology are meant to simplify life, not complicate it, in my opinion."

Pointing out that every girl out there was a daughter, granddaughter, sister, friend, or colleague, even if she chose art as one of her professions, the actress said, "We wish to be part of an industry that spreads joy, with the confidence that we are in a protected environment."

Stating that she had been unaware of many things happening online due to her schedules, the actress said, "I thank my well-wishers for bringing this to my notice. I have always taken things

with a pinch of salt and lived in my own world, but this is deeply disturbing and devastating. I also see my fellow colleagues going through the same and am reaching out on behalf of everyone. With grace and dignity, and with trust in my audience, I ask you to please stand by us. The authorities will be taking it over from here."

IANS



May I come to your set: Cameron to Rajamouli



Hyderabad: Hollywood director James Cameron has now expressed a desire to visit the sets of director S S Rajamouli's upcoming magnum opus *Varanasi*, featuring Telugu star Mahesh Babu in the lead, and see the ace director "create his magic."

Cameron made this request to Rajamouli during a conversation he had with Rajamouli after the latter watched Cameron's eagerly awaited entertainer *Avatar: Fire and Ash*, which is to hit screens worldwide on December 19 this year.

Right at the beginning

of the conversation, Cameron thanked Rajamouli for agreeing to watch and discuss his film and said, "Thank you so much for doing this. I think it's important for filmmakers to talk

Mumbai: Popular actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu is all set to step into 2026 with clarity and purpose.

Following her recent marriage to filmmaker Raj Nidimoru, the actress has shared her resolution for the year ahead. Samantha revealed that she wants to slow down and focus on building deeper, more meaningful connections in both her personal and professional life. On Friday, the Kush actress shared a candid image of her alongside a list of her New Year resolutions.

In the photo, the actress is seen smiling while lying on a bed.

The text on the image read, "2026 me-
gratitude, lift for longevity, deeper connec-
tions, give back, listening inward,
steady work, steady growth, align with
purpose."

On the personal front, Samantha Ruth recently tied the knot to filmmaker Raj Nidimoru. The couple exchanged vows in a traditional ceremony at the Isha Foundation in Coimbatore in the presence of their close family members. On December 1, Samantha announced her wedding to Raj via a post on social media. Sharing their photos, the *Yashoda* actress simply captioned, "(white heart emoji) 01.12.2025." The images showed the newlyweds exchanging wedding rings and praying before commencing their new journey.

IANS



Fatima living a dream she once thought impossible

Mumbai: Actress Fatima Sana Shaikh recently reflected on her remarkable journey as she opened up about how she is now living a dream she once thought was beyond her reach.

Expressing gratitude for her achievements, she shared an inspiring message about perseverance, self-belief, and embracing opportunities that once seemed unimaginable. Taking to Instagram, the *Dangal* actress celebrated a major milestone in her career. She received her first Filmfare Award for Best Actress for her performance in the short film *Ayesha*. Sharing her joy on social media, she described holding the iconic Black Lady trophy as "surreal and magical." She captioned the post, "Received my first @filmfare award Best Actress for Ayesha, a short film directed by @misterbistar And produced by @motwayne @ing the Black Lady in my

dream this big. And yet, myself permission to imagine. Really grateful of everything i have today. @jiteshpillai @filmfare thank you for making this real for me."

Filmmaker Nihit Bhave's short film *Ayesha*, starring Fatima Sana Shaikh, Vaishnavi Ratna Prashant, and Kshittee Jogi, premiered at Tokyo's Short Shorts Film Festival; Asia in June and competed for a nomination in the short film categories at the 2025 Oscar cars.



IANS

A pleasantly surprised Rajamouli replied, "Oh, that would be an absolute pleasure, sir. You're most welcome. And I mean, not just me, not just my unit, my entire film industry will be thrilled."

To this, Cameron said, "Well, I can't think of anything I'd rather do. So I think you're shooting for a while, right, on the new film in Varanasi?"

Rajamouli said yes and went on to give an update on the status of the film.

He said, "It's almost a year now and another sev-

en, eight months to go. Yes, we are in the middle of the shoot." Cameron replied, "Okay, plenty of time. Well, tell me when you're doing something fun. I don't know, something with tigers."

For the unaware, *Varanasi* is a film that is being directed by S S Rajamouli, featuring Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra and Prithviraj in the lead.

The title of the film was revealed at a grand event organised at the Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad in the presence of several thousand excited fans last month.

IANS

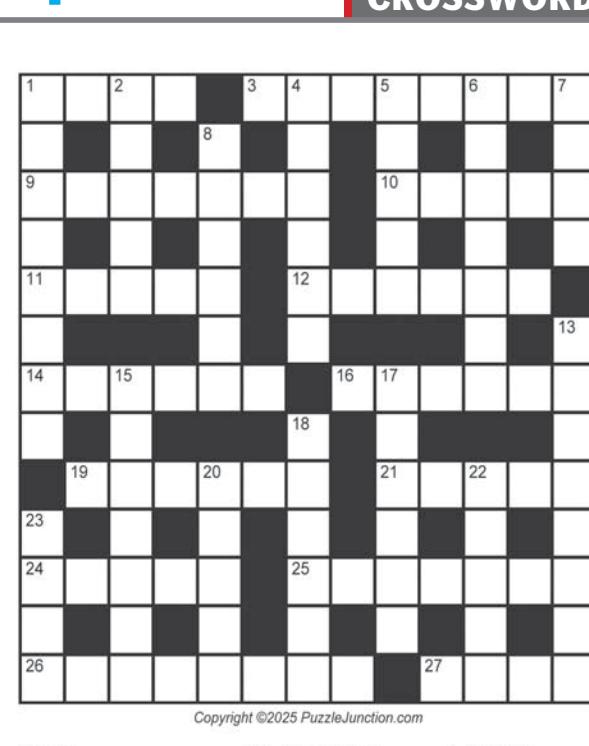
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY

**FUN POST****CROSSWORD**

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Across

- 1 Circular flower whorl
- 25 Military officer
- 3 Sunup
- 9 Hawaiian guitar
- 10 Mature
- 11 Raw fish wrapped in seaweed
- 12 Calamine, e.g.
- 14 Xylophone striker
- 16 Iran, once
- 19 Minded
- 21 Billiards shot

- 8 Central American country
- 13 Swift graceful antelopes
- 15 Shellfish
- 17 Fine fur
- 18 Pas de deux part
- 20 Marina sight
- 22 North Atlantic herring
- 23 Limerick, e.g.

Down

1 Macabre

2 Defeats badly

4 Ring of colour

5 Military wear

6 Utilises

7 Picture card

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CM to lead Odisha Investors Meet in Hyderabad Dec 19



The trip highlights the state government's push to attract quality investments and forge long-term partnerships with leading industry players

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 17: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will lead the Odisha Investors Meet Roadshow in Hyderabad December 19, showcasing the state's growing industrial strengths in Automotive Components, IT & ESDM, Chemicals, Green Energy, Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices, and other priority sectors.

Following the success of recent investor engagement initiatives, the visit forms part of Odisha's broader effort to attract new investments, strengthen partnerships with industry leaders, and position the state as a preferred destination for inclusive and sustainable economic and industrial development.

The high-level roadshow will be headed by CM Majhi, along with Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain and senior government officials, during a

Odisha delegation to hold one-on-one meetings and roundtable discussions with industry leaders during Hyderabad roadshow

State to showcase industrial parks, infrastructure, land availability, skilled workforce, investor-friendly policies, and single-window clearance mechanisms

two-day visit. The trip underscores the state government's focused approach to attracting quality investments and fostering long-term partnerships with leading industry players.

As part of the roadshow, the Odisha delegation will hold one-on-one meetings with industry captains and senior leaders of top companies, along with a roundtable discussion with industry representatives. The Hyderabad

roadshow is strategically designed to engage companies exploring expansion and new investment opportunities. During these interactions, the state will showcase its dedicated industrial parks, robust infrastructure, availability of land, skilled workforce, supportive government policies, and single-window clearance mechanisms.

Minister Swain said, "Odisha is emerging as a leading destination for industry and investment, driven by its forward-looking policies and investor-friendly ecosystem. Our Hyderabad visit marks a significant step towards deepening collaborative engagement with industry leaders and investors. This visit will help strengthen Odisha's industrial base and further our vision of transforming the state into a hub of innovation, opportunity, and sustainable development."

The state government continues to conduct investor outreach programmes across major industrial centres in the country. The Hyderabad roadshow represents another step in converting investor interest into tangible industrial development, job creation, and sustainable economic growth for Odisha.

KISS staff, three minors held for student murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 17: Infocity Police have arrested eight staff members of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) and apprehended three minor students in connection with the murder of 14-year-old hostel student Shiba Munda, a Class IX student.

Police Commissioner S. Dev Datta Singh said the case arose after Shiba's body was brought to KIMS Hospital on December 12, where he was declared dead. A Zero FIR lodged at Keonjhar's Town Police Station led Infocity Police to register Case No. 656 on December 13, 2025.

The arrested staff include KISS Additional CEO Pramod Kumar Patra (50), TGT teacher Binay Kumar Gochhi (37), Senior Academic Coordinator Prasanna Kumar Malla (54), teacher Pradeep Kumar Das (54), Headmaster Rashmiranjan Nayak (45), Hemanta Kumar Mohapatra (45), Subhakanta Behera (32), and Sujata Mishra (37). Three juvenile students of KISS, identified as Children in Conflict with Law (CCLs), have also been detained. According to the victim's father, he was informed that his son was hospitalised, but found him dead upon arrival and noticed neck injuries, prompting suspicion.

Post-mortem confirmed external injuries caused by compression with a rough ligature. Investigation revealed that the three juveniles assaulted and strangled Shiba on the night of December 11 following a minor dispute over a hostel toilet bucket.

Excise seizes contraband worth ₹21 lakh; 3 arrested



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 17: The Excise department Wednesday seized 50 kg of ganja worth about ₹5 lakh and 160 gm of brown sugar valued at ₹16 lakh, arresting three persons and detaining two minors in separate raids conducted in the district.

In the ganja seizure case, the Excise team arrested Rakesh Sahu (23) and Brahmananda Panda (23) and detained two minors. Two vehicles were also seized during the operation at Hirapur main road in the Balakati area under Baliajia police station limits.

According to reports, the ganja was being transported from the Kandhamal area to Balakati. Acting on a reliable tip-off, the Excise team inter-

cepted the ganja-laden vehicles and arrested the smugglers. However, one accused managed to flee from the spot. Further investigation is underway to nab the other persons involved in the smuggling.

In another case, inspectors of the Bhubaneswar Range-II Excise team arrested Zahar Ali Khan, a resident of CRPF Munda Sahi area while he was selling brown sugar pouches. The team seized 160 grams of brown sugar, estimated to be worth ₹16 lakh. A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway to identify his associates and the source of the contraband.

"During the ganja seizure operation, the five smugglers created a ruckus at the spot. Although we overpowered them, one managed to escape. In another case, we arrested a brown sugar smuggler and seized 160 grams of brown sugar. Today, we have seized narcotics worth ₹21 lakh," said Bhubaneswar Excise SP Debasish Patel.

OHRC seeks Chief Secy's report on outsourced workers' issues



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 17: The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has directed the Chief Secretary to submit a report on issues related to outsourced employees engaged across various state government departments and agencies.

Chaired by BMC Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahoo, the workshop brought together over 40 engineers from BMC and BDA.

Addressing participants, Sahoo emphasised the need for evidence-based planning, stating,

"Urban environments have under-utilised open spaces. A data-led approach catering to the needs of all will help improve the quality of public spaces while centering the health and well-being of adolescents."

A distinctive feature of the workshop was its co-leadership by young public space ambassadors aged 10-19 years. These young residents engaged engineers in participatory discussions and hands-on activities, sharing lived experiences and highlighting the everyday challenges adolescents face in public spaces.

The directive was issued while hearing a petition filed by noted human rights activist Biswajit Kanungo and others, which alleged exploitation of outsourced workers engaged through private agencies.

"The complainants allege that there are more than 2 lakh employees engaged in different departments of the state government through outsourcing to private agencies. But they have not been paid at par with the regular employees, though they perform the same work," reads the OHRC order.

The petitioners further alleged that outsourcing employees are denied leave benefits and are paid only minimum wages, despite performing duties similar to regular staff.

They claimed that such workers have been exploited by outsourcing agencies in various ways.

The petitioners also stated that the system promoted by

the state itself is not only a violation of the principle of equal pay for equal work, but may also be treated as other forms of forced labour, amounting to a violation of human rights.

"Accordingly, the complainants pray for intervention of this Commission to recommend the state government for framing of a just, fair and equitable service rule for the outsourcing employees serving under different Odisha government bodies and government undertakings and autonomous government institutions of the state with specific relation to salary, leave including maternity benefits, EPF, ESI and job security," stated the commission.

The report is to be submitted before the next hearing of the case, which is scheduled to be held January 19, 2026.

Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan recently described the outsourcing system as exploitative, stating that it was adopted by the previous state government. He further informed that the present government is in the process of phasing out the system.

VSSUT, Utkal varsity to host students global summit 2025

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 17: Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT), Burla, in collaboration with Utkal University (UU), will organise Amrit-Peedhi: Students Global Summit 2025 from December 18 to 20, focused on 'Governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its Ethics.'

The three-day global academic and youth leadership summit, supported by Higher Education department, aims to bring together students, innovators, policymakers, academics, industry leaders, researchers, and international experts to deliberate on ethical, societal, and governance challenges of AI.

Students have registered under three categories—Yuva Swadeshi Navachar Pradarshani, Voices of Future (Policy Debate), and Delegate Pass. The summit follows an open-access model with free registration and participation.

VSSUT VC Dipak Kumar Sahoo said, "Amrit-Peedhi is envisioned as a youth-driven, policy-informing global platform that aligns technological innovation with ethics, responsibility, and national priorities such as 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' and 'Viiksit Bharat @2047'."

SNEH organises awareness prog

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 17: Society for Nature, Education and Health (SNEH) organised an awareness programme on domestic violence at Red Cross Bhawan here Wednesday, highlighting the need for early intervention, community support and institutional response to curb the social menace.

The programme brought together counsellors, advocates, journalists and representatives of civil society organisations, who deliberated on various forms of domestic violence, including physical, emotional, psychological and financial abuse, and their impact on individuals and families.

Addressing the gathering, Odisha State Commission for Women member Kalpana Mallick stressed the importance of women's participation in decision-making at both family and community levels. "Peace of mind is unattainable for those experiencing domestic violence. Addressing violence is crucial for achieving true peace," she said.



for strengthening the grievance redressal mechanism with clearly defined accountability to ensure time-bound resolution of complaints.

Attending the review meeting, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Department Principal Secretary Arabinda Padhee underscored the importance of advance planning for the upcoming plantation season, emphasizing scientific site selection, appropriate species choice, and increased community participation.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force (PCCF & HoFF) Suresh Pant informed that future plantations would prioritise wild fruit-bearing species, Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) species, and

multi-economic species, aimed at livelihood support, fodder availability, and ecological enhancement. He reiterated the need for all DFOs to complete portal uploads within the current month.

The ACS also appreciated the Forest department and Odisha Remote Sensing Application Centre (ORSAC) for developing a robust, technology-driven monitoring system capturing plantation locations and numbers across the state.

He directed the constitution of a multi-departmental committee for scientific site selection based on agro-climatic zones, comprising representatives from the Forest department, Directorate of Horticulture, and Directorate of Soil Conservation.

Call to promote safe work, end forced migration

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 17: Odisha, along with states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan, is among the major sending regions for migrants in India, highlighting its significant role in the country's internal migration patterns. Observed annually December 18, International Migrants Day recognises the contributions of over 280 million migrants worldwide and reaffirms their rights, dignity, and freedoms.

Highlighting the scale of migration from Odisha, social activist Naba Kishore Pujari noted that over 1.1 crore informal workers from the state are registered on the e-Shram portal, the third-highest in India. Each year, around 17 lakh seasonal migrants leave for states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat. Their remittances support rural development, helping families build homes, fund education, and sustain local economies. However, 432 migrant deaths reported between 2019 and 2025 underscore

the human cost of unsafe and unprotected labour migration.

The government is boosting employment through MGNREGA, promoting skill-based industries like textiles and footwear, and expanding welfare schemes, including health insurance and social security, in migration-prone areas. Mobile Migrant Resource Centres and helpline services provide information and support to workers, while inter-state coordination

and worker welfare.

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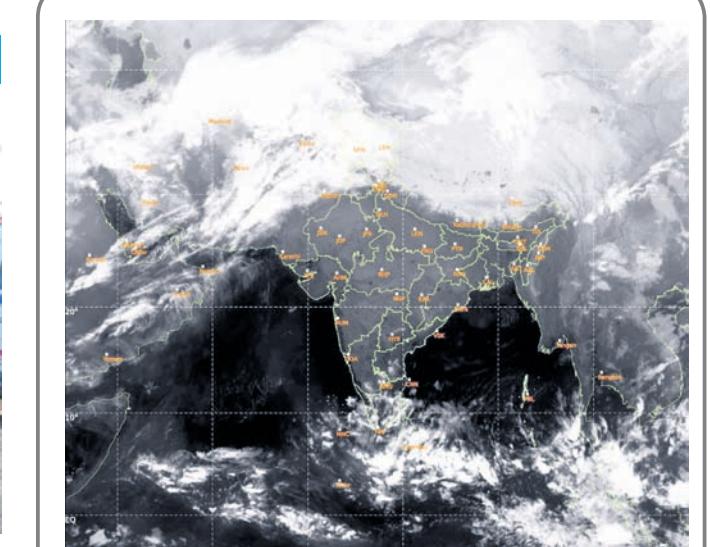
seeks to enhance protection, rescue, and rehabilitation of migrants.

Labour activist Sudarshan Chhotray said migration persists despite policies, noting MGNREGA's limited impact, and urged identifying migrant households, ensuring livelihoods, expanding irrigation, and implementing the Forest Rights Act for tribal land rights.



MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.50 ▲ 0.60	SENSEX	84559.65 ▲ 120.21	GOLD	₹134,550 ▲ 141
EURO	106.15 ▲ 0.91	NIFTY	25818.55 ▲ 41.55	SILVER	₹204,136 ▲ 6,381



WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.6°	26.6°	Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later
Min Temp	13.6°	13.2°	
Humidity	84%	86%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



Guest lecturer found 'murdered' in Keonjhar



Rudra Prasad Mishra, treasurer of the district truck owners' association, is believed to be the prime suspect in the case

POST NEWS NETWORK
Keonjhar, Dec 17: The body of woman lecturer at Keonjhar Women's College was recovered from a building on Mining Road here Wednesday morning, prompting police to register a murder case and arrest a local transport body office-bearer.

Police identified the deceased as Priyanka Das, 30, a guest faculty at Home Science department of the college and

a native of Talapada village under Gopalpur police station in Balasore district. Priyanka's body, which bore injury marks on the neck, was recovered and sent to the district headquarters hospital for postmortem. The body was handed over to her family members after the conduct of the autopsy.

The incident sent the chatters abuzz as the building from where the body was recovered is reportedly owned by Rudra

Prasad Mishra, treasurer of the district truck owners' association. Police suspect that Priyanka and Mishra, a native of Keonjhar Old Town, were in a live-in relationship.

According to Keonjhar Town police station inspector-in-charge Srikant Sahu, the victim's uncle Hemendra Prasad Das and aunt Padmaja Das lodged a complaint alleging that Mishra had raped and murdered Priyanka. Hemendra and Padmaja told the police that they received a phone call from a person, identifying himself as a lecturer, Wednesday morning. The caller said Priyanka collapsed while locking her room in the morning and was declared dead at the hospital. Based on the complaint, police registered a murder case (974/2025) under Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and launched an investigation.

Mishra has been arrested in connection with the case, police said, adding that he would be sent to the court Thursday.

Youth beats uncle to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Dec 17: A 58-year-old man was beaten with a lathi to death by his nephew following an argument at Hundisahi village under Govindpur police outpost of Dhenkanal Sadar police station Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Manas Nayak and the accused as Banambar Nayak, 29. Preliminary investigation indicated that Banambar was creating some disturbance near Manas' house. When Manas objected, Banambar allegedly lost his temper and struck his uncle on the head with a lathi, killing him on the spot.

On being informed, Gobindpur outpost police, along with a scientific team, reached the scene, conducted an investigation and sent the body for post-mortem examination.

Police Wednesday seized the lathi used in the crime and arrested the accused, Govindpur police outpost officer Ghanishtha Mohanta said. A case (1033/25) has been registered at Dhenkanal Sadar police station in this connection and further investigations were on, he added.

Cash, jewellery worth over ₹17 lakh robbed at gunpoint



POST NEWS NETWORK

The accused allegedly broke open the chests and trunks and looted about ₹2 lakh in cash, gold ornaments valued at around ₹15 lakh and silver items worth approximately ₹50,000. The stolen items reportedly included gold necklaces, chains, earrings, rings, bangles, lockets and silver anklets.

Before fleeing the scene, the robbers tied Sahu's hands and legs. He later managed to free himself with much difficulty and came out to seek help. He also found that the miscreants had entered the house by opening a rear door.

Following the complaint lodged at Bahadajhola outpost, Odagaon police station officer-in-charge Abhay Kumar Behera, along with outpost officer Mohammed Jafarulla, visited the spot. A dog squad and a scientific team were pressed into service to investigate the case, police said.

Meanwhile, such huge quantities of cash and ornaments being kept in the house despite a bank being located nearby have sent chatters abuzz in the area. Police said the investigation into the incident is in progress.

Tarbhia student death: Hostel supdt suspended

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, Dec 17: A day after the suspicious death of a Class XII Science student at PM Shri SSD Higher Secondary School at Tarbhia in Subarnapur district, the administration put under suspension the in-charge hostel superintendent over the issue.

It was alleged that Aryan Suna, 17, was involved in a physical altercation with fellow students Monday evening for unknown reasons. Two students allegedly assaulted him. The incident reportedly caused severe mental distress to Aryan. He did not take dinner that night and also skipped breakfast Tuesday morning.

Based on a preliminary inquiry report, Subarnapur Collector Nruparaj Sahu Wednesday suspended Arbind Mahakur, the in-charge hostel superintendent and laboratory assistant of the school, on charges of negligence of duty and failure to ensure the safety and security of hostel boarders. The suspension was ordered vide Collectorate Letter No-2088 dated December 17, 2025.

150 detained during 12-hr Deogarh bandh



POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, Dec 17: Deogarh witnessed heightened tension Wednesday as a 12-hour shutdown over healthcare demands coincided with the early-morning launch of bus services from a new bus stand.

The District Mahila Ekata Manch called the dawn-to-dusk bandh, demanding round-the-clock health services at the old district headquarters hospital

following its relocation to a place about 6 km away. Shops, markets, offices and public transport remained were shut, while protesters blocked National Highway 49 at Rajamunda Square.

Police detained more than 150 protesters, including Deogarh MLA Romanch Ranjan Biswal. Protesters later burned effigies of the Chief Minister, Union and state ministers, and district officials, warning of intensified agitation if demands are not met.

Meanwhile, amid the shutdown, the district administration and the private bus owners' association quietly launched bus operations from the newly built Bajiroi bus stand at around 5:15am. District Collector Kabindra Kumar Sahu, SP Anil Kumar Mishra, municipal officer-in-charge Prajat Kumar Bhoj and association president Rajkishore Das flagged off the services.

Bhadrak Collector pedals to office to promote fitness

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhadrak, Dec 17: Bhadrak Collector and District Magistrate Dilip Routrai Wednesday rode a bicycle from his residence to his office to promote healthier lifestyle and cleaner environment.

The unusual sight of a senior IAS officer opting for a bicycle, instead of a vehicle, sparked curiosity among residents, while many appreciated the move.

Speaking to reporters, Routrai said the decision was driven by his commitment to personal fitness and environmental responsibility.

As there was no official tour scheduled for the day and the distance between his residence and office is short, he chose to pedal to the workplace. "Cycling helps me stay fit and also reduces carbon footprint and fuel consumption," the Collector said.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Fit India movement, Routrai said cycling is one of the best ways to maintain good health. He said the small initiatives like this can collectively contribute to a healthier lifestyle and a cleaner environment.

Routrai said he plans to continue cycling during the winter season and will also use the bicycle in summer on days without official tours.



National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)

(A CPSE under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India)

Head Office : 1st & 2nd Floor, Tower A, World Trade Centre, Nauropi Nagar, New Delhi - 110020

Recruitment Notice No.04/2025

NHIDCL invites online applications from eligible, experienced and qualified Indian citizens or subjects of Nepal/Bhutan for the following Technical Executive positions :-

Sl. No.	Post Name	Grade / Scale of Pay (IDA)	Total Vacancies	Max. Age (as on closing date)
1	Senior Manager (Technical)	E4 / (₹ 70,000 - ₹ 2,00,000)	21	38 years
2	Deputy General Manager (Technical)	E5 / (₹ 80,000 - ₹ 2,20,000)	15	41 years
3	General Manager (Technical)	E6 / (₹ 90,000 - ₹ 2,40,000)	7	44 years
4	Senior General Manager (Technical)	E7 / (₹ 1,00,000 - ₹ 2,60,000)	5	48 years

How to Apply

- Visit the official NHIDCL website : www.nhidcl.com
- Navigate to Careers "Current Vacancies 2025 - Apply Online"

Important Dates

- Commencement of Online Application : 20th December, 2025 (10:00 AM IST)
- Closing Date for Online Application : 19th January, 2026 (05:00 PM. IST)
- The crucial date for age determination is the last date prescribed for the receipt of the ONLINE application.

Selection Process

The selection involves a two-stage process :

- Stage 1 :** Eligibility Test (MCQ-based screening)
- Stage 2 :** Selection Test (Specific Written Test & Personal Interview)

Note : Applicants with 5 years or more experience in NHIDCL are exempted from the Stage-1 Eligibility Test.

For detailed eligibility conditions, age relaxations, the syllabus, etc. please refer to the detailed advertisement being published in the Employment News dated 20.12.2025 and on the NHIDCL website.

General Manager (Recruitment)

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE, BUILDING THE NATION

cbc 37112/12/0007/2526

NALCO Bhuban, Plot No.-P/1, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751013, Odisha (CIN : L27203OR1981GOI000920) A NAVRATNA COMPANY

National Aluminium Company Limited (A Government of India Enterprise)

NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS

TRANSFER OF EQUITY SHARES TO INVESTOR EDUCATION & PROTECTION FUND

This Notice is published pursuant to Section 124(6) of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016 ("the Rules"), as amended. The Rules, inter-alia, provide for transfer of all shares in respect of which dividend has not been encashed or claimed by the shareholders for seven consecutive years, to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF), set up by the Central Government. The Company is in the process of sending individual communications to the shareholders at their latest available addresses whose shares are liable to be transferred to IEPF under the said Rules. The Company has uploaded the details of such shareholders and shares due for transfer to IEPF on its website at www.nalcoindia.com. Shareholders are requested to refer to the Investor Services page on the Company's website to verify the details of the shares liable to be transferred to IEPF. Notice is hereby given to all such shareholders to make application to the Company's Registrar (Ms. Bigshare Services Private Limited) by 25.03.2026 to claim their unpaid Interim dividend for the year 2018-19 onwards so that the shares are not transferred to the IEPF. It may please be noted that if no claim is made by 25.03.2026, the Company will with a view to comply with the requirements of the IEPF Rules, transfer the dividend amount and shares to IEPF Account by the due date i.e. 01.04.2026 as per the procedure stipulated in the Rules, without any further notice by following the due process in the rules as under:

i) **Shares held in demat mode:** The Company shall inform the Depositories to execute the corporate action and debit the shares lying in the demat account of the shareholder(s) and transfer such shares in favour of the IEPF Authority;

ii) **Shares held in physical mode:** The physical shares will be converted to demat form and will be transferred in favour of the IEPF Authority on completion of necessary formalities. The original share certificate(s) which stand registered in the name of the shareholder(s) will be deemed cancelled and non-negotiable.

It may also be noted that the shares transferred to IEPF, including all benefits accruing on such shares, if any, can be claimed back from the IEPF Authority after following the procedure prescribed under the Rules.

For any clarification on the matter, please contact the Company's Registrar and Transfer Agents: M/s. Bigshare Services Private Limited, Office No S6-2, 6th floor Pinnacle Business Park, Next to Ahura Centre, Mahakali Caves Road Andheri (East) Mumbai - 400093. Email: alister@bigshareonline.com / vikas@bigshareonline.com. Customer Number: 022-62638200, RTA Website: <https://www.bigshareonline.com>.

For National Aluminium Company Limited Sd/-

(B. K. Sahu) Company Secretary

cbc 26111/12/0001/2526

Bank of India

Zonal Office : Sambalpur, Near Sarlakani Chowk, Sambalpur - 768006 (Odisha)

[Rule 8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Mortgagor in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Mortgagor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 of the said rules. The Borrower/Mortgagor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Bank of India, **Vedvyas Branch** for an amount mentioned below with interest & other expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset.

VEDVYAS BRANCH/ Name & Address of Borrower/Mortgagor	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrower/Mortgagor: 1) M/s. Padmalaya Enterprise, Prop.: Mr. Duryodhan Behera, At: Shop No.: G-2, Ground Floor, Barabhuja Market Complex, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751030, 2) Mr. Duryodhan Behera, S/o: Mr. Narasingha Behera, At: Plot No.: 384, Raghunath Nagar, Dumuduma, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha-751019	₹9,65,600/- as on 11.08.2025 + interest & expenses thereon	11.08.2025 / 17.12.2025	All the part & parcel of the Land & Building situated at Khatu No.: 432/2239, Plot No.: 1154/1522, Area: A.C.0.013 Dec, Kissam: Gharabari, Mouza: Dumuduma, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Odisha-751019, standing in the name of Mr. Duryodhan Behera , Bounded by East: Ramesh Sahoo, West: Ramahari Sahoo, North: Road, South: Private Plot

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 17.12.2025

Authorised Officer, Bank of India

Regional Office (Sambalpur Region) 1st Floor, At: Christian Para, G.M. College Chowk, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN - 768001

POSSESSION NOTICE (Immovable Property)

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **BANK OF BARODA** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the Borrower/Partners/Guarantors to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Partners/Guarantors and the public



The principle of Yoga is the turning of one or all of our human existence into a means of reaching divine Being.

SRI AUROBINDO

Post-Neoliberal Consensus

The post-neoliberal consensus is here, but don't look for it in US President Donald Trump's policies.

After a decade of backlash, it is time to accept not only that neoliberalism is dead but also that a new consensus is taking its place. Remarkably, significant segments of the left and the right in the United States have come to agree on the broad outlines of economic policy. Discussions in universities and think tanks are driven today by a common understanding that departs significantly from the neoliberal orthodoxy of the last 50 years.

The first element of the new consensus is a recognition that the concentration of economic power has become excessive. The concern is expressed in different forms by different groups. Some complain directly about inequality in income and wealth and its corrosive effects on politics. Others worry about market power and the adverse implications for competition. For yet others, the key problem is financialization and the distortion of economic and social priorities that it produces.

The remedies on offer also vary, from wealth taxes to vigorous anti-trust enforcement to campaign-finance reform. But the desire to curb the economic and political power of corporate, financial, and tech elites is widespread, uniting progressive supporters of US Senator Bernie Sanders with populists like the podcast host and former Trump adviser Steve Bannon.

The second element of the new consensus is the importance of restoring dignity to people and regions that neoliberalism left behind. Good jobs are essential to this agenda. Jobs are not just a means of providing income. They are also a source of identity and social recognition. Good jobs are what underpin a robust middle class, which is the foundation of social cohesion and a sustainable democracy.

Dislocation is inevitable in a world of economic change. Until the 1990s, plenty of safeguards – job protections, trade restrictions, price controls, and regulations that kept finance in check – limited the impact on workers and communities. For neoliberals, these safeguards were inefficiencies that had to be removed. They overlooked the economic and social distress that job losses arising from technological change, globalization, or economic liberalization would produce.

The third component of the emerging consensus is that government has an active role to play in shaping the economic transformation that is needed. Markets on their own cannot be trusted to produce economic resilience, national security, innovation for advanced technologies, clean energy, or good jobs in distressed regions. Government must prod, twist arms, and subsidize. Industrial policy has moved from the disreputable fringe of economic discussion to its very centre.

Taken together, these three tenets provide a new understanding of the goals and instruments of economic policy that is both novel and, on the whole, laudable. But the devil is always in the details. Actual outcomes will be determined by specific policies that are chosen and implemented.

Consider the good-jobs objective. Here the left and the right seem to have reached a consensus on the desirability of reshoring and reinvigorating manufacturing. Historically, the industrial labour force played a pivotal role in producing equitable, middle-class societies. But automation and other technological forces have turned manufacturing into a labour-shedding sector. Even China has been losing manufacturing employment by the millions in recent years. So, even if manufacturing investment and output is revived in the US and Europe, the impact on employment is likely to be minuscule.

Whether we like it or not, the future of employment lies in services – care, retail, hospitality, logistics, the gig economy, and so on. Any approach to good jobs that does not focus on organizational and technological innovations in these services will necessarily disappoint.

There are of course other important reasons for supporting manufacturing. Advanced manufacturing, along with the digital economy, plays an outsize role in innovation and national security. It makes sense to deploy industrial policies that focus on these economic activities, in addition to policies that focus on labour-absorbing services. But here, too, the "how" matters as much as the "what."

Caveats apply to industrial policies as well. These can go badly wrong when they foster corruption or serve narrow corporate interests. Unfortunately, Trump's approach provides little comfort on this score. His trade policies and dealings with tech companies have been erratic, transactional, and devoid of a coherent long-term strategy that would serve the public interest. Even worse, they are part of an agenda of deepening authoritarianism and disregard for the rule of law.

The post-neoliberal tenets of economic policy provide us with a broad checklist for evaluating actual agendas – and Trump's fails miserably. It pays lip service to good jobs and industrial policy in the service of economic transformation, while fostering even greater concentration of wealth and power. A model of crony state capitalism that tries to resuscitate a long-dead industrial economy is hardly an antidote to neoliberalism.

The best that can be said of Trump's approach to the economy is that it is an experimental phase in the post-neoliberal transition. The good news is that future policymakers will not have to look far for new guiding principles. The new consensus is already here.

The writer is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School.

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WISDOM CORNER

Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.

OSCAR WILDE

If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

CARL JUNG

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1787: New Jersey became the third state admitted to the United States when it ratified the U.S. Constitution.

1865: The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution officially entered into force, abolishing slavery in the United States.

1892: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* was first presented at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia.

FOCUS ECONOMY

GROWING FAST, GROWING SLOW

Conventional thinking from mainstream economists travelling down to the average citizen has it that GDP growth is desirable and good – the higher the better. India now reports high growth, with the last announcement giving a surprisingly robust GDP growth of 8.2%. But the nation was not always in that league, and indeed never was right up to the 1990s when Dr. Manmohan Singh introduced the era of economic reforms. Before that, largely, the economic cart of a newly independent nation remained stuck at a growth of about 3.5% on an average and 1.3% per capita, all the way from 1947 to 1980. This state came to be called the "Hindu rate of growth," a term that in its origins was entangled with the Hindu way of life but has subsequently been used almost as a harmless cliché for slow growth.

The phraseology is now under attack, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the charge. The continued popularity of the usage is indicative of "a mentality of slavery," the PM rime said last week. In his words: "... an attempt was made to prove that the reason for India's slow growth rate was our Hindu civilization and Hindu culture." As the Indian economy races ahead, the PM has now asked: "Have you read anywhere about the rapid growth that India is experiencing today? Have you heard about it anywhere? Does anyone call it the Hindu rate of growth?" The remarks came in a speech earlier this month, highlighting on the one hand what the government sees as high achievement on the GDP growth front and on the other hand an unstated condemnation of the post-independence socialist approaches and policies that, it is claimed, failed India, a failure that cannot be labelled for Hindu society as a whole.

In a 2007 paper, economists Kaushiki Basu and Annemie Maertens of Cornell University



Is growth in and by itself good, a free radical that signals energy and achievement that will take the nation and its people to a higher ground?

referred to the "Hindu rate of growth" as a "tongue-in-cheek expression" coined by the late economist Raj Krishna "to capture the frustration of India's planners" struggling with what appeared to limit the India growth story. "No matter what they did, growth seemed, invariably, to revert to 3.5% per annum, almost as if this magic figure was written in the land's scriptures," they wrote in a footnote to contextualise the term. But the roots of that coinage go back to 1973 and to the bureaucrat BPR Vithal, who was a member of the 10th Finance Commission, among serving other positions. Vithal's thesis was complex, in part problematic and has been criticised but this is criticism not of the kind the BJP has in mind when it sees the usage "Hindu rate" as derogatory. Vithal's case was centred around preserving what he called the Hindu way of life, which he argued, would breakdown if growth accelerates. In that sense, the roots of the term that are now being labelled as derogatory of a religion or a community are not that at all. Vithal did not decry India's historic low growth and on the contrary alerted economists and policy makers to the risks of higher growth merely as a target number, arguing to the effect that any faith in a higher rate of growth as a panacea will lead to a

breakdown in society as citizens became slaves of Western-style consumption. And building further on this, Vithal wrote in 1993: "If, therefore, our expectations of the new economic policy are fulfilled and we get on to a trajectory of a consistently faster rate of growth, we would be well-advised to devote some thought to devising a suitable ideological and cultural framework for it. If it merely succeeds in breaking present moulds, there will be a rootlessness which can be dangerous in a large country like ours." Here was an economist not limited to numbers and how they would be achieved but one who delved right into the sociology of growth and what it brings for a nation like India. Without commenting further on the roots of the term, or Vithal's "intellectual subtlety" as one reviewer put it, it should be clear that the socio-political dynamic of India coupled with its claims of high growth are already bringing some huge problems that are worthy of serious discussion rather than the idea of Hindu pride that is supposedly hurt when poor growth is associated with the land. The arguments embedded in the origins of the phraseology and the current questions raised about it bring into sharp relief issues around the structure and the

quality of India's growth story. Is growth in and by itself good, a free radical that signals energy and achievement that will take the nation and its people to a higher ground? What are the downsides? Can the growing inequality sustain or will the present arrangement breakdown with disastrous consequences for the nation?

It is ironic that the conversation has hit the headlines just around the time of ugly excesses of corporate power bordering on national blackmail seen in the case of the havoc wrought by the country's biggest airline, Indigo. By force-landing the airline with a massive cancellation of schedules that were then attributed to an unimplemented safety policy, Indigo gave the nation a taste of the risks of companies that are too powerful to control and thereby too big to fail. At a different scale but of a similar kind was the death of 25 people earlier this month at a nightclub in Goa, with the owners copying the playbook of Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallaya to flee the nation. The airline brought national disaster. The nightclub hotel was a more localised story. But both mock the nation and its growth story in their own ways, highlighting the hidden costs of a faster growth that has beaten the "Hindu rate of growth" but has brought us a disaster that unfolds at periodic intervals to shock the nation and ridicule its governance structures.

In that sense, faster growth is good but there is such a condition called "bad growth." To quote an age old HDR report by the UNDP: "Determined efforts are needed to avoid growth that is jobless, ruthless, voiceless, rootless and futureless." But if that is what we get with faster growth, then the "Hindu rate of growth" might even begin to look good.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR.

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Jagdish Rattanani
FASTER GROWTH IS GOOD BUT THERE IS SUCH A CONDITION CALLED 'BAD GROWTH'

Dani Rodrik
Markets on their own cannot be trusted to produce economic resilience, national security, innovation for advanced technologies, clean energy, or good jobs in distressed regions

SPECTRUM DATA

Perils of statistical illusion

Santosh Kumar Mohapatra
INDIAN ECONOMY SEEMS TO BE IN A CONTRADICTORY STATE: REAL GDP SURGES WHILE NOMINAL GDP SLOWS

The National Statistics Office's latest report for the July–September 2025 quarter has reignited a debate over what India's economic data truly reveals. At first glance, the picture seems radiant. India recorded 8.2% real GDP growth—the highest in six quarters and well above the IMF's 6.6% forecast. This comes after strong prints of 7.4% in January–March and 7.8% in April–June. Agriculture, manufacturing, services, and GST-driven consumption are all being showcased as engines of this impressive expansion. Even the drag from US retaliatory tariffs on Indian exports appears too small to scare the headline figure.

Yet underneath these glowing numbers lies a structural puzzle. Nominal GDP growth, which captures the economy's expansion before adjusting for inflation, has been steadily eroding—from 10.7% early in 2025, to 8.3%, and further to 8.7% in the latest quarter. The shrinking gap between nominal and real GDP implies an abnormally low GDP deflator of just 0.5%. Such an unusually weak deflator inflates real GDP and makes growth appear stronger than many believe is realistic. This paradoxical coexistence of robust real growth and low nominal growth has

been described as "Schrödinger's Economics"—a term borrowed from Nobel laureate physicist Erwin Schrödinger. The term was coined by Washington Post columnist Matt O'Brien in a December 2018 article. The article used the phrase to describe the postmodern economic claims made by the Trump administration at the time, specifically the ability to deny whether something was real. In the economic context, it describes a situation or an economy in an uncertain state where contradictory indicators coexist—one indicator shows improvement, another shows deterioration.

Indian economy seems to be in a similarly contradictory state: Real GDP surges while nominal GDP slows; activity accelerates even as employment trails behind; growth looks dynamic while corporate revenues and tax collections reveal softness. The fiscal consequences are immediate. Lower nominal GDP distorts every fiscal calculation—deficits, expenditure ratios, tax projections—because nominal GDP is the denominator for all these metrics.

When the denominator weakens, the fiscal framework becomes unstable. The government's own projections illustrate

this volatility: the 2024–25 Budget projected 10.5% growth but delivered 9.7%. The 2025–26 projection of 10.1% is also set to fall short. Growth rates mean vastly different things depending on the size of the economy. One percent rise in US GDP adds over \$305 billion; in China, \$192.3 billion; in India, just \$41.9 billion. India may soon be the world's third-largest economy, but in term of per capita income India ranks below 135 countries. Without bridging this gap, headline growth will remain a feel-good statistic rather than a measure of widespread welfare.

What is disconcerting is that the IMF has assigned India a C-grade for its national accounts' statistics, while awarding B-grade for prices, external statistics, government finances, and monetary and financial data. The C-grade indicates that although data exists, it suffers from deficiencies like an outdated 2011–12 base year used to calculate GDP and gross value added (GVA). Another major issue is India's reliance on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) as the GDP deflator, whereas the global standard is the Producer Price Index (PPI). More significantly, India continues to use single deflation, applying one

deflator to both inputs and outputs, whereas global best practices recommend double deflation for more accurate measurement of real value-added, especially during price volatility. India also delays in publishing consolidated central and state fiscal data.

The largest blind spot lies in the informal sector, which makes up nearly half the economy. Current methods extrapolate informal sector trends from the formal sector—an approach that breaks down during disruptions such as demonetisation, GST rollout, or the pandemic, when informal activity diverges sharply.

Equally troubling are long-standing institutional delays. The population census—due in 2021—remains postponed, affecting per capita income, poverty estimates, and labour market assessments. Household consumption expenditure data also remains outdated, forcing the CPI to rely on an obsolete 2011–12 consumption basket. These shortcomings somewhat hamper surveillance. A robust statistical foundation is essential not just for accurate measurement, but for credible policymaking, investor confidence, and inclusive growth.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

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

Letters

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

OrissaPOST

Instrument of change

Sir, It is said that the greatest nations are defined by how they treat their weakest inhabitants. People move to other countries, across borders, for work and study irrespective of the legal status of their migration. Although barring a few instances, migrants do not impinge on the development of the countries they have migrated to, a lot of them are treated like terrorists. Many consider them as pawns in a chess board to meet their political ambitions. Sagacious leaders consider migrants as instrument of change: they are said to shape the economy of the communities, but not all leaders are statesmen. About 280 million migrants across the globe are anxious and apprehensive about their future because more than 70,000 have gone missing across land and sea since 2014. "My Great Story: Cultures and Development" is the theme for the International Migrants Day that falls on 18 December...

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

'Slop' returns

Sir, 'Slop' which was used in 1700's meaning 'soft mud' has returned in 2025 to become the Merriam-Webster word of the year 2025. Heavily related to artificial intelligence, the word now means 'digital content of low quality that is produced usually in large quantity by means of artificial intelligence.' It's really amazing that the word 'slop' which was used to refer to soft mud, waste food, or other messy, valueless substances in the old past now taking it's 'rebirth' in a new digital cultural set up to describe something related to AI, the latest cyber technology, all set to transform and redefine the whole world. The word defines digital content that is of low quality, mass-produced, and often non-sensical. According to Merriam-Webster, one of the oldest and most popular dictionaries from America, slop is everything sub-mediocre seen on screen or in other words absurd videos, weird advertising images, cheesy propaganda, fake news, deepfake and junky AI-written digital content and books.

M Pradyu, KANNUR



POLLUTION NOT LIMITED TO PLAINS

Dehradun's AQI turns 'poor'

With AQI shooting through the roof in Delhi-NCR, popular tourist destinations across Uttarakhand, including Nainital, Bhimtal, and the Corbett Tiger Reserve, are witnessing a steady rise in visitors



According to experts, the main reasons for the increasing pollution in Dehradun include the growing volume of vehicular traffic and the burning of waste

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Dec 17: As Delhi virtually disappears behind its annual smog and toxic air chokes its residents, many heading for a sojourn in Dehradun seeking clean air may have to think twice.

In the past two days, the Air Quality Index in Dehradun, nestled in the mountain ranges of the Himalaya, slipped into the 'poor' category -- indicating that pollution is not limited to the plains.

According to experts, the main reasons for the increasing pollution in Dehradun include the growing volume of vehicular traffic and the burning of waste. In addition, forest fires are also considered a major contributor to air pollution.

Having a population of nearly 17 lakh, Dehradun serves as Uttarakhand's winter capital. The city spread across 3,088 sq km is a favoured tourist destination as it attracts tourists, pilgrims and enthusiasts from various walks of life to its serene environs.

Professor Vijay Shridhar, head of the pollution monitoring center at Doon University, the city's real-time AQI Wednesday was 267, while the average AQI reached 291.

He stated that this situation falls between 'polluted' and 'severely polluted'.

The AQI shows some improvement during the day due to air movement, but at night it crosses 300, Shridhar said, adding that while the situation in Dehradun is not yet like Delhi, it cannot be considered satisfactory either.

Normally, the Mussoorie hills are clearly visible from Dehradun, but these days a layer of smog is visible over the hills surrounding the city. Due to the effects of pollution, some young people are being seen wearing masks outdoors.

With AQI shooting through the roof in Delhi-NCR, popular tourist destinations across Uttarakhand, including Nainital, Bhimtal, and the Corbett Tiger Reserve, are witnessing a steady rise in visitors.

Tourists from Delhi say that inside the Jim Corbett National Park, the air feels almost pristine, with air quality levels so low they seem unimaginable.

But, in Dehradun the situation was different with the city's AQI, according to Central Pol-

lution Control Board's data at 4 pm, reached 294 in the 'poor' category.

Surekha, a Delhi resident visiting Corbett park, said, "Speaking of Delhi, the pollution there is so bad that people are experiencing breathing problems. Due to air pollution, many people are suffering from asthma and other respiratory tract conditions.

We decided to take a trip to get away from it all and enjoy a change of atmosphere. We thought it would be good to travel somewhere else for a while. Compared to Delhi, the temperature and atmosphere here are very different. The air here isn't nearly as polluted as it is in Delhi."

According to hoteliers, families are not just choosing short vacations but are also booking long stays of one to three months in small properties across Nainital and the Corbett region.

"It's a good sign for tourism that people are coming to stay for extended periods, especially

lution and traffic and the burning of waste

"People moving away from Delhi should not end up increasing the AQI level here. The traffic congestion in Ramanagar, the heavy footfall on weekends, is causing complete traffic jams; you can't even move around. So, we need to be careful that Ramanagar doesn't end up like Delhi," a hotelier said.

Local residents are also worried about the situation.

Yash, a resident of Dehradun, said that the city's air quality has been continuously deteriorating over the past few years.

"Deforestation is a major reason for this. A large number of trees have been cut down. When the AQI is above 200, elderly people have difficulty breathing when they go outside. They experience a burning sensation in their throats, and the problem worsens during the winter," he said.

Experts are warning that the increasing pollution in hill towns could become a serious health challenge in the future.

elderly parents, because their families or children want to keep them away from pollution," a hotelier said.

Saket Badola, Field Director of Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR), said, "Uttarakhand is known throughout the region for its natural beauty and the purity of its air. And we've observed that whenever the air quality deteriorates in nearby cities, especially in metropolitan areas, many people head to Uttarakhand to spend their holidays or simply to enjoy some quality time. The forests in the Corbett Tiger Reserve are excellent, and the air is very pure. Because of this, there is a significant movement of people towards that area."

While many are happy about the movement of tourists in the state, some have raised concerns about the rising pollution and traffic.

"People moving away from Delhi should not end up increasing the AQI level here. The traffic congestion in Ramanagar, the heavy footfall on weekends, is causing complete traffic jams; you can't even move around. So, we need to be careful that Ramanagar doesn't end up like Delhi," a hotelier said.

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"It has only shown straying behaviour," he said. Efforts were underway to drive the tiger back into the forest or capture it, and veterinary teams were on standby to tranquillise the animal if those attempts failed.

Hundreds of forest personnel, including rapid response teams, trained kumki elephants used to manage wild elephants, and thermal cameras were deployed in the search operation, the official added.

Tiger that strayed into Wayanad for 2 days returns to forest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad (Kerala), Dec 17: The Kerala Forest Department Wednesday said the tiger that strayed into populated areas of the hill district from the Pathiri reserve two days ago has returned to the forest.

Wayanad South Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Ajith K Raman told reporters that pug marks indicated the animal had returned to the jungle. He said camera traps would be installed in the area and patrolling would be intensified to ensure the tiger does not stray back.

Earlier in the day, State Forest Minister AK Saseendran said department officials and personnel were working efficiently to capture the tiger if necessary. The minister said orders had been issued authorising the tranquillisation of the animal, which would be carried out at an appropriate time and location if required.

The tiger's presence had created tension in Panamaram panchayat and nearby areas, leading to the closure of schools and advisories for residents to remain indoors, a senior forest official said.

The official said the five-year-old tiger had not displayed any aggressive behaviour and there had been no conflict with people.

"It has only shown straying behaviour," he said. Efforts were underway to drive the tiger back into the forest or capture it, and veterinary teams were on standby to tranquillise the animal if those attempts failed.

Hundreds of forest personnel, including rapid response teams, trained kumki elephants used to manage wild elephants, and thermal cameras were deployed in the search operation, the official added.

Families of Goa liberation fighters from Kerala to be honoured at Lok Bhavan



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 17: The families of freedom fighters from Kerala who participated in the Goa Liberation Movement will be honoured at a special function to be held at Lok Bhavan here Friday evening.

The programme, scheduled for 4 pm on the occasion of Goa Liberation Day, will be attended by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, a Lok Bhavan statement said Wednesday.

The event aims to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the state's freedom fighters to the national struggle, preserve and popularise the historical legacy of Goa's liberation among the public and younger generations, and reinforce the values of patriotism and national unity, it said.

According to the statement, the Goa Liberation Movement marked a decisive chapter in India's post-Independence history.

The movement culminated in 1961 with the end of Portuguese colonial rule in Goa, following years of coordinated political, cultural and armed resistance, it said.

Freedom fighters from across the country, including Kerala, played a significant role in strengthening the struggle.

A large number of Malayalis actively participated in the movement, with activists from political organisations such as the Jana Sangh, the Praja Socialist Party and the Communist Party taking the lead. Many volunteers were subjected to severe repression and violence by Portuguese authorities, the statement said.

The Central government has recognised participants in the Goa Liberation Movement as freedom fighters, it said, adding that the families of these fighters would be honoured at the ceremony.

Among those who took part in the movement, KV Narayanan from Kasaragod is the only surviving participant.

Several leaders who participated in the struggle later rose to prominence in public life.

Shivarama Bharathi from Chittur in Palakkad district and Sathyam Kokkery, son of K Kelappan Nair, served as MLAs, while K A Sankara Menon became a member of the BJP National Council.

DIRECTORATE OF GROUND WATER DEVELOPMENT, ODISHA

Office of The Deputy Director, GWD Division-II, Bhubaneswar A/2, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar, [e-mail: srgeologistsbsbs@gmail.com]

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) Date: 15.12.2025

e-Procurement Notice: 967 Bid Identification No. 08/GWRSD/CHHATA/2025-26

(Single Envelope Bidding Process)

No A-1128- Deputy Director, Geology, GWD Division-II, Plot-A2, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids from bidders Class "D" & "C" (As per latest OPWD codal provisions) registered with the State Governments and bidders of equivalent Grade/Class registered with Central Government/ MES / Railways for the construction of works following Work.

Bids must be submitted online on or before 03/01/2026 at 17.00 Hrs IST (system server time).

Proposals will be opened online on 05/01/2026 at 14.00 hours. In the event of the date specified for proposal opening being declared as a closed holiday for the purchaser's office, the due date for opening of bid will be the following working day at the appointed time. Details of the Tender will be available in the procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sl. No. Description Details

1. Name of the Work Construction of 3 Nos. of RRHS under CHHATA Scheme at Lai Building & Smart Class room of Narayani Govt. High School, Itamati & Smart Classroom of Banama Abakas Govt. High School, Itamati, Nagaynagar Block under Nayagarh District during FY-2025-26

2. Start Date of availability of Bid document online (bid download) 2/1/2025 from 11.00 Hrs.

3. Last Date of availability of bid document online (bid download) 03/01/2026 up to 17.00 Hrs.

4. Last date/time for receipt of bid document (Bid Submission Date & Time) 03/01/2026 up to 17.00 Hrs.

5. Date & Time of opening of bid document (Bid Opening date) 05/01/2026 at 14.00 Hrs.

OIPR-32462/11/0020/2526 Sd/- Deputy Director, Geology GWD Division-II, Bhubaneswar

Government of Odisha "e" Tender Notice

Bid Identification No. FE&CC-DFO(K.L.) KJR-02/2025-26

Office Order No.195, Dt.16.12.2025

e-mail: keonjarkhdivision@gmail.com

1. No. of the work

- A Construction of New Forester Quarter at Dhenikote under Keonjhar K.L. Range

2. Estimated Cost

- Item 'A' Rs.21.72 Lakh

3. (Three) Calendar Months

4. Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal

- From 10.00 Hour of 20.12.2025 to 17.00 Hour of 02.01.2026

5. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal

- 17.00 Hour of 02.01.2026

6. Date of Opening of Bid From Portal

- 11.30 Hour of 03.01.2026

7. Name and address of the officer inviting Bid

- Divisional Forest Officer Keonjhar Kenduleaf Division, At-Judia Keonjhar, PIN: 758002

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./-Divisional Forest Officer Keonjhar Kenduleaf Division

OIPR-08154/11/0005/2526

Government of Odisha "e" Tender Notice

Bid Identification No. E-Mail ID: dfo.athagarh@odisha.gov.in

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "E" Procurement Notice No. MM-403: for Building Works

Bid Identification No. DFO-ATH-02 of 2025-26

1. Name of the Work

- 2 Nos. Building Works

2. Estimated Cost

- Rs.21,33,360/- Lakh (Appx.)

3. Class of Contractor

- "C" & "B" Class (Only)

4. Tender Paper Cost

- Rs.6,000/- (Online) for each work

5. Period of Completion

- 03 (Three) Calendar Months

6. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal

- From 18.12.2025 to 5 PM of

7. Last Date/Time of receipt of bids in the portal

- 5 PM of 26.12.2025

8. Date & Time of Opening of Bids

- 11 AM of 29.12.2025

9. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid

- Divisional Forest Officer Athgarh Forest Division

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer Athgarh Forest Division

national

of the day quote

Had the chance to experience BMW's world in Munich, Germany with a guided tour of BMW Welt and the BMW Plant - an incredible look at world-class manufacturing up close



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Small is beautiful. MSMEs keep the economy moving



MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

Tamil Nadu is the birthplace of social justice. In Tamil Nadu today, the DMK government is digging a pit and burying social justice



DR. ANBUMANI RAMADoss | PMK LEADER

SHORT TAKES

4 workers killed as brick kiln chimney collapses

Agartala: Four workers were killed and four others injured in Tripura's Dhalai district after the chimney of a brick kiln collapsed Wednesday, police said. While three labourers died on the spot, one succumbed to injuries in a hospital. "The injured people are currently under treatment in the hospital," Officer-in-charge of Kamalpur police station, Suman Acharya said. The massive structure came crashing down on the workers of the kiln in Kamalpur area, resulting in fatalities. According to preliminary reports, there was no indication that the chimney was at risk of collapse.

Kabaddi player killing: Key accused shot dead

Mohali: One of the key accused in the killing of a 30-year-old kabaddi player-cum-promoter in Mohali was shot dead here Wednesday by police in an encounter in which two head constables were also injured. Haripinder alias Middu, a resident of Naushera Pannuan in Punjab's Tarn Taran district, was injured in an exchange of fire in Laili and later succumbed to injuries in hospital, police said. Mohali Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Harmandeep Hans told reporters that Haripinder, the key accused in the Kabaddi player's murder case, was neutralised in a retaliatory fire by police teams.

4 killed, one injured as truck hits pilgrims

Morbi (Gujarat): Four pilgrims were killed and one was injured after a truck crashed into them in Gujarat's Morbi district Wednesday, police officials said. The injured pilgrim has been admitted to a hospital in Morbi. Deputy Superintendent of Police Pratipalsinh Zala said the victims were walking to Dwarka on a pilgrimage when the accident took place around 6 am between Malya village and Jamanagar.

More trouble for Shilpa and Raj Kundra

Mumbai: Businessman Raj Kundra and his actor-wife Shilpa Shetty, facing Mumbai police probe in a Rs 60-crore criminal breach of trust case, have now been charged with cheating, officials said Wednesday. Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW), probing the case, has invoked cheating charge against the high-profile couple in addition to criminal breach of trust. The EOW has already recorded statements of Kundra and Shetty in connection with the case.



As a leader of the Opposition, I have a moral responsibility to protect public properties. The vandalism caused by outraged spectators due to mismanagement by the organisers and West Bengal government is inexplicable

SUVENU ADHIKARI | LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY

PREZ VISITS SRIPURAM GOLDEN TEMPLE IN TN

President Droupadi Murmu visited the Sripuram Golden Temple here Wednesday and offered prayers during her brief visit to Tamil Nadu. She was received with full temple honours upon her arrival and was conducted around the Sri Lakshmi Narayani Golden Temple



GOA NIGHTCLUB FIRE

Luthra brothers sent to five-day police custody



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the two were again taken to the District Hospital.

Later, they were produced before Judge Sardesai, who ordered the five-day police custody of the accused.

After the fire tragedy at Arpora village, the Anjuna police had registered a case against the Luthra brothers on various charges, including culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The brothers were arrested in Delhi Tuesday after being deported from Thailand. A court there allowed the Goa Police their two-day transit remand.

THE BROTHERS WERE ARRESTED IN DELHI TUESDAY AFTER BEING DEPORTED FROM THAILAND. A COURT THERE ALLOWED THE GOA POLICE THEIR TWO-DAY TRANSIT REMAND

THE DUO HAD FLED TO PHUKET IN THAILAND EARLY DECEMBER 7, HOURS AFTER THE FIRE AT THEIR NIGHTCLUB, PROMPTING THE AUTHORITIES TO ISSUE AN INTERPOL BLUE CORNER NOTICE AND CANCEL THEIR PASSPORTS

The brothers were arrested in Delhi Tuesday after being deported from Thailand. A court there allowed the Goa Police their two-day transit remand.

The duo had fled to Phuket in Thailand early December 7, hours after the fire at their nightclub, prompting the authorities to issue an Interpol Blue Corner Notice and cancel their passports.

They were detained by Thai authorities at Phuket December 11 following a request from the Indian government, which later coordinated with officials in Thailand to deport them under legal treaties between the two nations.

The duo was initially taken to a Primary Health Centre at Sioim for medical examination. They were later taken to the District Hospital at Mapusa.

After their health assessment, the two were produced in the court.

The court directed that the accused be sent for fresh medical examination. Accordingly,

The brothers were arrested in Delhi Tuesday after being deported from Thailand. A court there allowed the Goa Police their two-day transit remand.

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Five managers and staff members have already been arrested by the Goa Police in connection with the fire.

Telangana has approximately 2,081 zero enrolment schools, while West Bengal has 1,571 such institutions

5,149 schools have zero students

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: Of 10.13 lakh government schools across India, 5,149 have no students at all. And more than 70 per cent of these schools reporting zero enrolment in the 2024-25 academic year are in Telangana and West Bengal, according to government data.

The broader category of schools "with less than 10 or zero enrolment" has also seen a sharp surge, reveals data shared by the education ministry in Parliament recently.

The number of such government schools grew by 24 per cent over the last two years - from 52,309 in 2022-23 to 65,054 in 2024-25. These schools now account for 6.42 per cent of the country's total government schools, the government said in a written reply to questions by MPs Karti P Chidambaram and Amrinder Singh Raja Warring in the Lok Sabha.

While Telangana has approximately 2,081 zero enrolment schools, West Bengal has 1,571 such institutions.

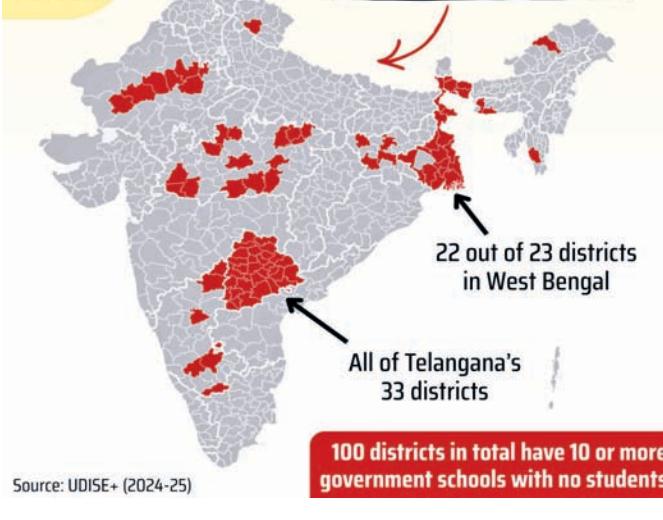
Telangana's Nalgonda district recorded the highest number of empty schools in the state as well as the country at

Over 5,000 govt schools sit empty with zero students

PTI GRAPHICS

Total govt schools: 10.13 lakh

Districts with 10 or more government schools with zero enrolment



315. Mahabubabad with 167 and Warangal with 135 are the next two districts with the highest number of such schools in the state, shows the data sourced

from the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+).

In West Bengal, state capital Kolkata has 211 government

schools with zero enrolment - the second highest in the country. Purba Medinipur with 177 and Dakshin Dinajpur with 147 follow as the next two highest in the state.

Despite the lack of students, a large workforce remains deployed at these institutions.

Across India, 1.44 lakh teachers are currently posted in government schools with fewer than 10 students or no enrolment, up from 1.26 lakh in 2022-23.

In West Bengal, 27,348 teachers are assigned to 6,703 government schools in this low enrolment category, resulting in a ratio of approximately four teachers per school, according to government figures.

Similarly, Bihar has deployed 3,600 teachers for 730 such schools, averaging nearly five teachers per institution - more than double the national average of 2.2 for this category. The ministry said the recruitment and rational deployment of teachers fall under the purview of respective state governments. The data also showed a decline in the number of government schools since 2019-20 - from 10.32 lakh to 10.13 lakh in 2024-25.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

India, Oman to sign free trade pact today

New Delhi, Dec 17: India and Oman will sign a free trade agreement Thursday in Muscat, opening greater opportunities for sectors such as textiles, food processing, automobiles, auto components, and gems and jewellery.

It will be signed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a four-day, three-nation visit. He arrived in Ethiopia Tuesday from Jordan and will depart from Addis Ababa for Oman.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has reached Muscat for the FTA signing. Talks for the free trade agreement, officially termed as CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), formally began in November 2023 and the negotiations concluded this year. In free trade agreements, the two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and attract investments.

Oman is the third-largest export destination for India among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Speaking at the Oman-India Business Forum in Muscat, Goyal said it would be the first trade agreement Oman is entering into in nearly two decades.

In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State

for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of electronic cigarettes are prohibited under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (PECA) Act, 2019.

The enforcement of the Act lies with the states and Union Territories through their law enforcement agencies.

Replying to reports that

vape devices seized in differ-

ent states contained narcotic substances such as methamphetamine and ketamine, the minister said the NCB has not investigated any such case.

On steps to strengthen screening at airports, ports and courier hubs, the government said agencies including the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and the Customs maintain constant vigil through intelligence-based operations, passenger profiling using the advance passenger information system (APIS), risk-based interdiction and non-intrusive inspection methods such as baggage and container scanning.

The ship entering the port call, Sarthak, an offshore patrol vessel, will engage in a range of activities to strengthen institutional linkages and enhance mutual understanding in maritime safety and security, they said.

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national

of the day quote

Services will be better through PPP mode. Some people say that medical colleges are being privatised. Though they are being built through PPP mode they will operate as government colleges
N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | ANDHRA PRADESH CM

So, the facade of NC 'fighting' for Article 370 is over. From promising special status in elections to now requesting 'business rules'
WAHEED PARA | PPP LEADER

There is no question of apologising. The Constitution has given me the right to ask questions
PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN | SENIOR CONG LEADER

POST
OF THE DAY

Nitish Kumar pulled the veil of a Muslim woman publicly without her consent. She got so traumatised by the event that she is now unwilling to join the Service. Life of a Muslim woman in India.
@Nher_who

SHORT TAKES

10 schools get bomb threat

Ahmedabad: As many as 10 private schools in Ahmedabad received an email Wednesday threatening bomb blasts, which later turned out to be a hoax as nothing suspicious was found during searches, police said. As a precautionary measure, these schools declared a holiday for the afternoon shift as the morning shift was already over when they received the emails, having a common text, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone 1, Harshad Patel said. After being alerted, police, along with the bomb detection and disposal squad, dog squad and anti-sabotage teams, reached the schools and conducted a thorough search, Patel told reporters.

24 prisoners booked

Ludhiana: Peace was restored in Central Jail on Tajpur Road here Wednesday, a day after a violent clash between inmates left several, including the prison superintendent, injured. Twenty-four prisoners have been booked in connection with the Tuesday evening's incident, police said. Jail Superintendent Kulwant Singh Sidhu, who was hit on the head with a brick, is stable and responding to treatment in a hospital, Ludhiana Police Commissioner Swapan Sharma said Wednesday.

Ch'garh liquor scam: Chaurasia arrested

Raipur: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Soumya Chaurasia, a suspended state administrative service officer who was deputy secretary in the CMO during the previous Congress government, in connection with an alleged liquor scam in Chhattisgarh. Chaurasia was arrested on late Tuesday evening and on Wednesday produced before a special court in Raipur which sent her to the ED's custody for two days, the central probe agency's counsel, Saurabh Kumar Pande, told PTI.



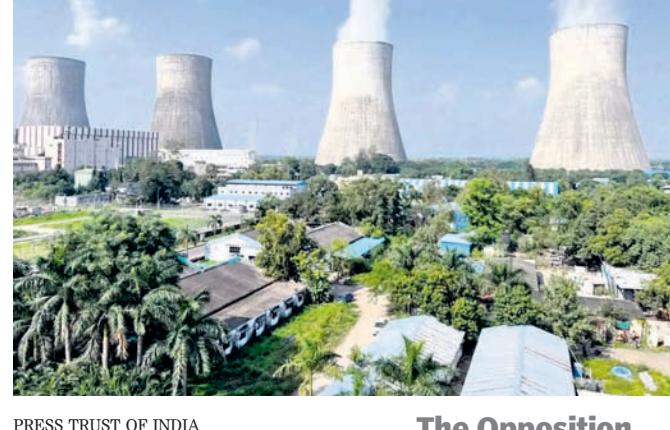
I can't sell Gulmarg as a skiing destination if I don't have snow. I can't sell glaciers for ice climbing if those glaciers are receding before our eyes
OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

NAVY STRENGTHENS ANTI-SUBMARINE ARM

The Indian Navy Wednesday commissioned its second squadron of MH-60R (Romeo) anti-submarine helicopters - INAS 335 'Ospreys' - at INS Hansa naval base in the presence of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Tripathi. The squadron was commissioned with the ceremonial water cannon salute



LS okays opening up nuclear sector to private players



INDIA SUMMONS B'DESH ENVOY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: India Wednesday summoned Bangladesh envoy Riaz Hamidullah and lodged its protest over plans by certain extremist elements to create a security situation around the Indian mission in Dhaka.

New Delhi also expressed its serious concerns over the deteriorating security situation in Bangladesh and reiterated its call for holding free, fair and credible parliamentary elections. The polls are scheduled for February 12.

Hamidullah was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and was served a demarche or a formal diplomatic note, people familiar with the matter said.

India's action followed after certain extremist elements announced plans to hold protests around the Indian high commission in Dhaka, they said.

In a statement, the MEA said that India "completely rejects the false narrative" sought to be created by extremist elements regarding certain recent events in Bangladesh.



It is unfortunate that the interim government has neither conducted a thorough investigation nor shared meaningful evidence with India regarding the incidents," it said shortly after summoning Hamidullah.

The MEA said Hamidullah was summoned and apprised of India's strong concerns at the deteriorating security environment in Bangladesh.

"His attention was drawn, in particular, to the activities of some extremist elements who have announced plans to create a security situation around the Indian Mission in Dhaka," it said. The MEA said India ex-

pects the interim government in Bangladesh to ensure the safety of its missions and posts in that country in keeping with its diplomatic obligations.

It also noted that New Delhi is in favour of peace and stability in Bangladesh.

"India has close and friendly relations with the people of Bangladesh rooted in the liberation struggle, and strengthened through various developmental and people-to-people initiatives," it said.

"We are in favour of peace and stability in Bangladesh and have consistently called for free, fair, inclusive and credible elections, conducted in a peace-

ful atmosphere," it added.

Three days back, Bangladesh foreign ministry summoned Indian envoy to Dhaka, Pranay Verma and conveyed its concern over former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's "incendiary" statements from Indian soil.

In its reaction, New Delhi asserted that it has never allowed its territory to be used for activities inimical to the interests of Bangladesh.

Last month, Hasina, 78, was sentenced to death by a special tribunal in Dhaka for "crimes against humanity" over her government's brutal crackdown on the student-led protests last year.

The Awami League leader has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the protests.

The relations between India and Bangladesh came under strain after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power.

India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country.

HC: No fourfold compensation for IndiGo flyers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: The Delhi High Court Wednesday refused to entertain a PIL seeking direction to the Centre and IndiGo airline to pay a compensation of four times the full ticket price to all passengers whose tickets were cancelled in November and December after the roll out of the new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL).

A bench of Chief Justice Dvedendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said it has already taken cognisance of the issue while hearing another Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and granted liberty to the petitioner to seek intervention in the pending petition.

"We don't see any reason as to why the concerns raised here cannot be taken up with the earlier petition. The jurisprudence developed by the Supreme Court and high courts around PILs permits the court to expand the scope of a petition in public interest." According to the petition filed by the Centre for Accountability and Systemic Change (CASC) through its president Prof Vikram Singh, the IndiGo fiasco has triggered widespread concern across the aviation sector, and due to sudden disruption and last-minute cancellation of thousands of flights, stranded passengers faced severe inconvenience.

Advocate Virag Gupta, representing the petitioner, said airports were overflowing with misdirected pieces of baggage, excessive holdups, inadequate communication from the airline and confusion regarding refunds or re-booking options. Meanwhile, Moving the Bill for consideration and passage, Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeeyika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill will ensure all-round development of villages and make them poverty-free, fuelling their growth journey.

Participating in the debate, Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Mahua Moitra Wednesday launched a blistering attack on the government over the VB-G RAM G Bill, saying it is destroying Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Ram Rajya both in letter and spirit by repealing MGNREGA and renaming the scheme.

Oppn to protest against G-RAM-G Bill in Parl today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 17: Maharashtra Sports Minister and NCP leader Manikrao Kokate moved the Bombay High Court Wednesday, challenging a sessions court order that upheld his conviction and two-year jail term in a 1995 cheating and forgery case.

The move comes as Kokate faces the imminent threat of losing his cabinet post and his assembly seat. In mounting trouble for the minister, a court in Nashik district Wednesday issued an arrest warrant against him in the case.

Kokate's lawyer Aniket Nikam mentioned the plea before a single HC bench of Justice R N Laddha, for an urgent hearing, reasoning that the minister was set to lose his job.

While Nikam did not press for an urgent stay on the conviction Wednesday, he submitted to the HC that Kokate was set to lose his ministry and that the Nashik sessions court, which upheld the conviction order of a magistrate's court, had stayed the conviction.

They also alleged that renaming the scheme is an insult to Mahatma Gandhi and by doing so, the ruling BJP is displaying its "hatred" towards him. It provides for 125 days of wage employment in every financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work and talks about establishing a rural development framework aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Woman booked for harassing cop with love proposal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 17: A woman was booked on charges of obstructing a police inspector from discharging his official duties and threatening to commit suicide if he did not accept her love proposal, police said Wednesday.

The 45-year-old inspector attached to the Ramamurthy Nagar Police Station here alleged that the woman repeatedly harassed him, they said.

According to his complaint, the harassment began October 30, when he started receiving

calls from an unknown woman from multiple phone numbers.

During these calls, she allegedly spoke incoherently and claimed to have close links with several highly placed individuals, including the Chief Minister, Deputy CM, Home Minister and other political leaders. Police said the woman sent photographs via WhatsApp purportedly showing herself with these dignitaries and claimed she could use their influence to compel the inspector to accept her proposal. She also allegedly threatened to use her contacts against him if he refused.



The inspector said that he advised her to visit the police

station and submit a written complaint if she had any grievance. However, she did not do so and instead continued to repeatedly call and send messages, which disturbed his official duties, the FIR said.

According to the FIR, November 7, the woman allegedly visited his office and handed over an envelope containing some tablets along with handwritten letters. The letters contained emotionally charged and inappropriate content, and the woman claimed they were written using her blood, indicating obsessive behaviour.

Despite being clearly informed that the number she was contacting was an official departmental number meant for public service, she allegedly continued making unnecessary calls and messages, causing mental harassment and obstruction to his day-to-day duties, he alleged.

During the inquiry, police learnt that the woman had allegedly exhibited similar behaviour with other police and government officials in the past, it stated.

On December 12, she allegedly went to his police station and shouted and threatened to commit suicide and ruin the inspector's career if he did not respond to her proposal, prompting him to lodge a complaint.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered against the woman under Sections 132 (assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from discharge of duty), 351(2) (criminal intimidation) and 221 (obstructing a public function of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita at the Ramamurthy Nagar Police Station. The matter is under investigation," police said.

international



Russia is making unreasonable demands in a US-brokered push for peace with Ukraine

GIORGIA MELONI | PRIME MINISTER, ITALY

SINGAPORE STUDENTS TACKLE REAL PROJECTS

A Singapore-headquartered group with a network of leading international schools has announced plans to send its students, including from campuses in India, to work with Silicon Valley based companies on real projects aimed at creating innovations for deployment globally



of the day quote

Our message in Finland and to all our friends abroad is that the government takes racism seriously and is committed to combatting the issue



PETTERI ORPO | PRIME MINISTER, FINLAND

Only Australians of Jewish faith are forced to worship their gods behind closed doors, CCTV, guards



AMIRAM MAIMON | AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRALIA, ISRAEL

The fact that the Americans have made such a commitment - to protect Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire as if it were NATO territory - I think that's a remarkable new position for the United States of America.



FRIEDRICH MERZ | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

SHORT TAKES

Louvre workers extend strike

Paris: Employees at the Louvre Museum voted Wednesday to extend a strike that has disrupted operations at the world's most visited museum. Union workers were protesting chronic understaffing, building deterioration and recent management decisions – pressures intensified by a brazen crown jewels heist in October. The decision came during a morning general assembly, after workers had adopted the walkout unanimously earlier this week. The museum was already closed Tuesday for its regular weekly shutdown. It remained unclear whether the strike would force a full closure on Wednesday. Visitors holding tickets queued outside the museum in the morning as management assessed staffing levels and whether enough employees were available to safely open galleries.

Pak extends airspace ban on India

Islamabad: Pakistan extended its airspace ban for Indian aircraft by another month till January 23, Wednesday. Pakistan closed its airspace to India's airlines in April after the Pahalgam attack. India too has imposed a similar ban on Pakistan. The previous extension was set to expire on December 24 but the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) extended the restrictions Wednesday till January 23. "Pakistan airspace will remain closed to Indian-registered aircraft, including all aircraft owned, operated, or leased by Indian airlines, as well as Indian military flights," the PAA said. According to the NOTAM (Notice to Airmen), the restriction, which has already been in force, "will continue until January 23, 2026, as per the specified timings."

Myanmar junta charges hundreds

Bangkok: Myanmar's military government has charged more than 200 people with violating the Southeast Asian country's voting law ahead of a general election at the end of this month, keeping up pressure on opponents of the polls. Critics of the election set to start on Dec 28 claim it will be neither free nor fair and is designed to add the facade of legitimacy to military rule that began after the army in February 2021 ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The takeover triggered widespread popular opposition that has grown into a civil war, which has complicated holding the polls in many contested areas. This is one of the reasons voting will be held in three phases, with the second on Jan. 11 and the third on Jan 25.

CRUDE CRACKDOWN

US blocks Venezuelan tankers

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 17: US President Donald Trump ordered Tuesday a "blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela, in Washington's latest move to increase pressure on Nicolas Maduro's government, targeting its main source of income.

It is unclear how Trump will impose the move against the sanctioned vessels, and whether he will turn to the Coast Guard to interdict vessels like he did last week. The administration has moved thousands of troops and nearly a dozen warships – including an aircraft carrier – to the region.

"For the theft of our Assets, and many other reasons, including Terrorism, Drug Smuggling, and Human Trafficking, the Venezuelan Regime has been designated a FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "Therefore, today, I am ordering A TOTAL AND COMPLETE BLOCKADE OF ALL SANCTIONED OIL TANKERS going into, and out of, Venezuela."

In a statement, Venezuela's government said it rejected Trump's "grotesque threat."

Oil prices rose more than 1% in Asian trade Wednesday. Brent crude futures LCOc1 were up 70 cents, or 1.2%, at \$59.62 a barrel at 0245 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 rose 73 cents, or 1.3%, to \$56.00 a barrel.

U.S. crude futures climbed over 1% to \$55.96 a barrel in Asian trading after Trump's announcement. Oil prices settled at \$55.27 a barrel Tuesday, the lowest close since February 2021.

LEGAL QUESTIONS

American presidents have broad discretion to deploy US forces abroad, but Trump's as-



- Oil prices rise over 1% following blockade announcement
- Trump labels Venezuelan 'regime' a foreign terrorist organization
- Venezuela rejects Trump's 'grotesque threat'
- Maduro claims US aims to control Venezuela's vast oil reserves

serted blockade marks a new test of presidential authority, said international law scholar Elena Chachko of UC Berkeley Law School.

Blockades have traditionally been treated as permissible "instruments of war," but only under strict conditions, Chachko said. "There are serious questions on both the domestic law front and international law front," she added.

US Representative Joaquin Castro, a Texas Democrat, called the blockade "unquestionably an act of war."

"A war that the Congress never authorized and the American people do not want," Castro added on X. There has been an effective embargo in place after the US seized a sanctioned oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela last week, with loaded vessels

carrying millions of barrels of oil staying in Venezuelan waters rather than risk seizure.

INCREASED TENSIONS

Trump's pressure campaign on Maduro has included a ramped-up military presence in the region and more than two dozen military strikes on vessels in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea near Venezuela, which have killed at least 90 people.

Trump has also said that US land strikes on the South American country will soon start.

Maduro has alleged that the US military build-up is aimed at overthrowing him and gaining control of the OPEC nation's oil resources, which are the world's largest crude reserves.

In wide-ranging interviews with Vanity Fair, Susie Wiles, Trump's chief of staff, said Trump "wants to keep on blowing boats up until Maduro cries uncle."

The Pentagon and Coast Guard referred questions to the White House.

The Trump administration has formally designated Venezuela's Cartel de los Soles as a foreign terrorist organization, saying the group includes Maduro and other high-ranking officials.

Duke of Marlborough charged with int'l strangulation offences

REUTERS

London, Dec 17: Britain's Duke of Marlborough, a distant relative of Winston Churchill, has been charged with three counts of intentional strangulation, British police said Wednesday.

Charles James Spencer-Churchill, 70, was arrested in May last year over the alleged offences which took place in November 2022, and in January and May 2024 in Woodstock, near Oxford in central England, Thames Valley police said in a statement.

He has now been issued with a summons to appear at Oxford Magistrates' Court Thursday.

"Following a Thames Valley Police investigation, The Duke of Marlborough, has been charged with intentional strangulation offences in Woodstock," the police statement



said. Spencer-Churchill, who is known as Jamie Blandford, is the 12th Duke of Marlborough, one of Britain's most senior aristocratic families and whose ancestral home is Blenheim Palace in Woodstock, which played host to US President Donald Trump in 2018.

Two men were jailed earlier this year for stealing a \$6 million 18-carat golden toilet from the palace, which was Winston Churchill's birthplace.

The federal government is selling 100 per cent shares because all four bidders wanted the government to have no role in PIA after the deal, privatisation commission officials said.

Major business groups like Lucky Cement Consortium, Arif Habib Consortium, Fauji Foundation-owned Fauji Fertiliser and Air Blue are bidding for PIA.

Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had indicated plans to sell only a 60 per cent stake, but the move failed to attract serious buyers in 2024.

To improve attractiveness, the government's larger objective is to revive PIA and take it back to its past glory, Ali said, adding, "This requires heavy investment for fleet revamping, acquisition of planes."

The government will receive

Pakistan govt to sell entire stake in PIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 17: Pakistan has decided to sell its entire 100 per cent stake in Pakistan International Airlines after bidders sought complete managerial control with no government role post-privatisation, local media reported Wednesday.

Bidding is scheduled for December 23 and will initially be for 75 per cent shares of the loss-making national flag-carrier, with the winning bidder given an option to acquire the remaining 25 per cent within a month after bidding at a 12 per cent premium.

The extra 12 per cent price is charged as the buyer is allowed to delay payment for one year instead of instant payment.

The government will receive

only 7.5 per cent of the bid amount in cash, while 92.5 per cent will be reinvested directly into PIA to support revival, officials told The Express Tribune newspaper.

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The federal government is selling 100 per cent shares because all four bidders wanted the government to have no role in PIA after the deal, privatisation commission officials said.

Major business groups like Lucky Cement Consortium, Arif Habib Consortium, Fauji Foundation-owned Fauji Fertiliser and Air Blue are bidding for PIA.

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of the
day quoteThe impact of
the US trade
deal could be
as much as about
a percentage
pointSANJAY MALHOTRA |
GOVERNOR, RBIIndian
economy is
expected to
grow by 7 per cent
in the current fiscal,
slightly higher
than 6.6 per cent
projected by the IMF in October

GITA GOPINATH | FORMER CHIEF ECONOMIST, IMF

India is at a
demographic and
economic
inflection point.
Over the next
two decades,
millions of young
Indians will enter the working age
populationV ANANTHA NAGESWARAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC
ADVISOR**SHORT TAKES****Warner Bros shelves
Paramount offer**

Los Angeles: Warner Bros Discovery's board rejected Paramount Skydance's (PSKY.O), opens new tab \$108.4 billion hostile bid Wednesday, saying it failed to provide adequate financing assurances. In a letter to shareholders, disclosed in a regulatory filing, the board wrote that Paramount had "consistently misled" Warner Bros shareholders that its \$30-per-share cash offer was fully guaranteed, or "backstopped," by the Ellison family, led by billionaire and Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison. The board said it found Paramount's offer "inferior" to the merger agreement with Netflix's. Netflix's \$27.75 per share offer for Warner Bros' film and television studios, its library and the HBO Max streaming service is a binding agreement that requires no equity financing and has robust debt commitments, the board wrote.

**Natilus marks India
foray with new arm**

Mumbai: US aviation startup Natilus Wednesday said that India's SpiceJet has ordered 100 of its blended-wing-body jets, as the company marks its entry into the fast-growing Indian market with the launch of a local subsidiary. India's aviation market is the fifth biggest in the world, according to industry group IATA, and is a lucrative hotspot for global carriers and planemakers driven by stronger post-pandemic demand for travel to and from the country. Natilus is also considering India as one of the possible locations for a manufacturing facility, and aims to build roughly 300 HORIZON jets at the site once complete.

**NCLT approves
Flipkart restructuring**

New Delhi: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved the merger of eight Flipkart entities, taking the e-commerce major a step closer to obtaining an Indian domicile ahead of its potential public listing. The tribunal has sanctioned the Scheme of Amalgamation involving eight Singapore-incorporated transferor companies merging into Flipkart Internet Private Limited, the Bangalore-based arm. This major corporate restructuring, detailed in a 66-page order, marks a significant milestone for the Walmart-owned group and moves it closer to launching a long-anticipated initial public offering (IPO) in India.



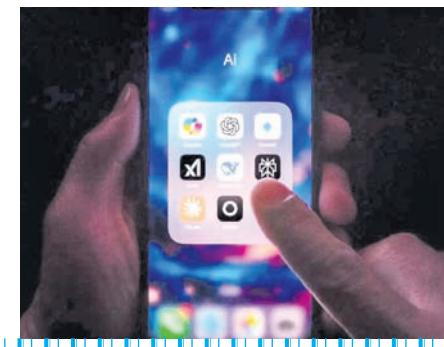
“

India can be lectured
saying you (India) are very
inward-looking, you are a
tariff king and so on. But
tariff has been weaponized

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

INDIA LARGEST LLM MKT GLOBALLY

The growing use of platforms such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity has made India the world's largest market for large language model (LLM) adoption, a foreign brokerage said Wednesday. This makes India the "ideal test bed" for agent AI apps built on top of LLMs that can reason, plan and execute tasks independently, the report by Bofa Securities said



**Sebi overhauls mutual
fund rules to curb costs,
boost transparency**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 17: Markets regulator Sebi Wednesday approved a comprehensive overhaul of mutual fund regulations, including changes to the expense ratio framework and limits on brokerage charges, to boost transparency.

Investors are also turning to China's experience in US President Donald Trump's first term in office, for a guide on how far the rupee could fall.

The proposals are aimed at bringing regulatory clarity, reducing redundancies, and promoting ease of compliance.

In its board meeting, Sebi has cleared a proposal to exclude all statutory levy -- STT (Securities Transaction Tax), GST (Goods and Services Tax), CTT (Commodity Transaction Tax) and Stamp duty-- from the expense ratio limits along with the present permissible expenses for brokerage, exchange and regulatory fee, its chief Tuhin Kanta Pandey said.

Moreover, this expense ratio limits would be called base expense ratio. Presently, GST on management fees is permitted over and above the TER limit. However, all other statutory charges are part of the overall TER limit specified for mutual fund schemes.

The expense ratio limits are proposed to be exclusive of statutory levy, so that any change in statutory levy in future is passed on to the investors. Also, the board decided to eliminate the additional 5 basis points (bps) that asset management companies (AMCs) were previously allowed to charge across mutual fund schemes.

The expense ratio limits are necessary to improve the competitiveness of the Indian exports," said Kunjal Gala, head of global emerging markets at Federated Hermes, who has been underweight on India since the start of 2024. "However, a depreciating rupee creates a dilemma for global investors who are indexed to the dollar."

Trade impasse keeps ₹ in the cold

**Rupee recovers 55 paise from all-time low
level to close at 90.38 against US dollar**

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 17: No currency has been hit harder by US tariffs than India's rupee - and there may yet be more downside as investors pull out of the country until they see a trade deal struck with Washington.

The rupee is among the worst-performing currencies globally this year, sliding 6% against the dollar as a widening trade deficit, punitive 50% US tariffs and investment outflows have dragged it to a record low of 91.07 per dollar.

Measured against a basket of trading-partner currencies, the real effective exchange rate of 96 is the lowest in more than a decade, according to Citi. That is well below a decade average of 103, and a usually reliable signal that it is overdue for a rebound. But this time is different, according to money managers who have driven pressure on the currency by pulling a record \$18 billion from Indian equities this year and say the mood is unlikely to reverse quickly, even though the rupee

looks cheap.

"I think the market's patience in general is running thin," said Vivek Rajpal, Asia macro strategist at investment advisory firm JB Drax Honore, as months of trade talks with the US have so far yielded no deal or tariff relief.

It is a good entry point for Indian assets, he said, but first the market needs confidence that the tariffs are only temporary.

India and the US have been engaged in negotiations through much of 2025, although India's Chief Economic Advisor said in a Bloomberg interview, opens new tab last week that he expects an agreement to be reached by March 2026.

Still, much of Asia already has agreements or at least moratoriums in place with the US, leaving India especially exposed and the rupee as the shock absorber.

RUPEE WEAKNESS HERE TO STAY

A falling currency can soften the blow of tariffs by reducing dollar prices for exports. But at 50% the US levies are so high that economists expect more

WORST-PERFORMING CURRENCY**Yearly fall in Rupee (against US Dollar) since 2015**PTI
GRAPHICS

Source: RBI

The recent pace of depreciation has been driven partly by geopolitical risk and its influence on current account expectations

JEAN-CHARLES SAMBON | HEAD OF
EMERGING MARKETS DEBT, TT
INTERNATIONAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

are worth revisiting thanks to improving valuations and economics. They also see Indian markets as a hedge against the AI rally.

Other brokerages including Citi, Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan have also upgraded Indian equities in recent weeks, expecting a turn in the Indian market's fortunes in 2026 with a boost from rate cuts and, to be sure, some eye a rebound in the rupee.

DILEMMA FOR GLOBAL INVESTORS

Indian equity markets, dominated by banks and IT outsourcing firms, have also lagged peers in 2025, with the benchmark Nifty 50 up about 10% so far compared to a 26% gain in the MSCI Emerging Market Index, hurt by a lack of clear AI bets.

In dollar terms, compar-

sions are even more unfavourable with MSCI's India equities index rising less than 2% this year against a near 30% rise in MSCI's China index, a rival for foreign investors' allocations.

Investors are also turning to China's experience in US President Donald Trump's first term in office, for a guide on how far the rupee could fall.

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Benchmarks inch lower for third day

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 17: India's equity benchmarks inched lower for a third consecutive session Wednesday as sentiment remained subdued amid concerns over foreign outflows and rupee depreciation, with no clarity regarding an India-US trade deal.

The Nifty 50 fell 0.16% to 25,818.55, and the BSE Sensex lost 0.14% to 84,559.65. They are down about 0.9% in three sessions. Eleven of the 16 major sectors fell on the day. The broader mid-caps and small-caps lost 0.5% and 0.7%, respectively.

Foreign investors have sold Indian equities worth Rs 130.5 billion in eight sessions till Tuesday. They have offloaded \$1.92 billion so far in December.

The Reserve Bank of India intervened aggressively in the currency markets Wednesday by selling dollars to prop up the rupee in a bid to stem its one-way decline after it slipped below 91 in the previous session.

Analysts said that hopes for a deal with Washington before the year's end appear to be dimming.

Heavyweight financials fell 0.5% on the day, with major constituents HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank dropping 1% each.

Among individual stocks, Akzo Nobel India slumped 13.6% after multiple block deals. Meesho soared 20%, nearly doubling in a week since its market debut, after UBS initiated coverage with a "buy" rating.

The programme was formally launched by Uday A Kaole, Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD), MCL, at the company's headquarter.

Emphasising MCL's commitment to inclusive growth,

Kaole highlighted the crucial role of women in organisational excellence and nation-building.

Conceptualised by Women in Public Sector-MCL, the initiative focuses on skill development, leadership ori-

MCL launches 'SWAYAMSIDDHA' women empowerment initiative



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 17: Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) Monday launched 'SWAYAMSIDDHA', a flagship women empowerment initiative aimed at strengthening leadership, professional skills and confidence among its women employees.

The launch event featured a keynote session by Nishita Baliaisingh, Co-Founder & CEO, Nexus Power, and Nika Baliaisingh, Co-Founder & CIO, Nexus Power, who shared insights on leadership, innovation, digital empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Senior officials present on the occasion included Keshav Rao, Director (HR); Pranab Kumar Patel, Chief Vigilance Officer; Ajit Kumar Behura, Director (Finance); and Sanjay Kumar Jha, Director (Technical-Operations/P&P).

Rashmi Behura and Sashikala Jha, Vice-Chairpersons of Jagruti Mahila Mandal, were also present.

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The airline has expanded aggressively internationally and introduced sustainable aviation initiatives, including testing biofuels and deploying fuel-efficient air-

entation, digital literacy and entrepreneurial thinking, enabling women to excel in both professional and personal spheres.

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In the local bullion market, gold prices climbed by Rs 600 to Rs 13,650 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), compared to the previous close of Rs 13,500 per 10 grams, as per the association.

Renisha Chainani, Head - Research at Augmont, said the US dollar index has reached a two-month low, making greenback-priced bullion more af-

The record rise comes as investors increasingly turn to silver as both a safe-haven asset and a high-growth industrial metal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 17: Silver prices Wednesday breached the record Rs 2 lakh per-kilogram mark in the national capital for the first time, driven by strong demand in domestic and global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The white metal jumped by Rs 7,300 to hit an all-time high of Rs 2,05,800 per kg Wednesday, against the previous closing level of Rs 1,98,500 per kilogram.

"Silver continued its ascent with prices touching record high levels in the domestic markets as the white metal surged to hit a new peak in the international markets," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

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GOLD & SILVER

10g = ₹1,36,500*

₹1,37,600

GOLD
10g

₹1,35,900

GOLD
10g

₹1,36,500*

GOLD
10g

₹1,99,500

SILVER
1kg

₹1,98,500

SILVER
1kg

₹2,05,800*

SILVER
1kg

₹2,05,800*

Doping woes haunt India

The country shows highest positivity rate among major nations in WADA's 2024 Testing Report



India's poor doping record would be among the major concerns when the IOC evaluates its bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games in near future

plex. In 2025, NADA said it has so far conducted 7068 tests with a positivity rate of 1.5 per cent after a relatively lower adverse results count of 110.

In comparative analysis, the numbers released for 2024 indicate a marginal improvement in the positivity rate but overall, it remains too high and keeps India at the pinnacle of a list no country would want to be seen in.

"These initiatives have contributed to improved understanding of prohibited substances, safe medication practices, and the responsibilities expected under the anti-doping framework."

NADA said it is also strengthening compliance through Know Your Medicine' App to prevent "inadvertent doping".

"... (It) enables athletes and support personnel to verify whether any substance or medication contains prohibited ingredients. As of 2024, the app has approximately recorded a cumulative 2,40,000 searches, reflecting its growing adoption as a preventive tool against inadvertent doping," it stated.

"The available data reflects that the overall anti-doping ecosystem is becoming more robust, with improvements visible across testing, awareness, and preventive mechanisms," it added.

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has also repeatedly stated his commitment to tackle the menace that has traditionally afflicted athletics and power

sports such as weightlifting. NADA said it is witnessing "greater awareness and enhanced compliance among athletes and support personnel" on anti-doping measures.

"In 2024, around 280 anti-doping workshops were conducted during sports events and training camps, reaching approximately 37,000 participants. Additionally, by December 16, 2025, 329 awareness programs were held, including webinars, seminars, TV sessions, ADEL courses, mega events, engaging competitions and digital campaigns to engage a wider audience," it stated.

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To address the issue of contaminated supplements, NADA said it is working closely with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the National Forensic Science University (NFSU) to strengthen nutrition supplement testing.

Russia, which has been ostracized globally for its failure to tackle doping, conducted 10,514 tests in 2024, showed a positivity rate of just 0.2 per cent. The US anti-doping agency did a lesser number of tests than India, 6592 in total, and had a positivity rate of 1.1 per cent.

China, which conducted a whopping 24,214 tests in 2024, showed a positivity rate of just 0.2 per cent. The US anti-doping agency did a lesser number of tests than India, 6592 in total, and had a positivity rate of 1.1 per cent.

A few countries like Pakistan and Mongolia have higher positivity rates than India but they tested very less number of sam-

Dense smog hits India-SA T20I

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 17: The fourth T20I between India and South Africa was called off Wednesday owing to poor visibility after a dense layer of smog engulfed the Ekana Stadium raising serious questions about BCCI's scheduling of matches in northern part of India during peak winter month.

The venues allotted for the full series against the Proteas included New Chandigarh, Dharamsala, Lucknow, Ranchi, Raipur, Visakhapatnam, Cuttack, Ahmedabad, Guwahati and Kolkata during November and December.

It is also a period when pollution levels in the host cities like Lucknow, New Chandigarh and Dharamsala are usually at its worst.

The fourth T20I was official-



ly abandoned without a ball being bowled due to "excessive fog", the reality was that a thick blanket of smog enveloped the Ekana Stadium, severely hampering visibility.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the hazardous range, above 400 in Lucknow

Wednesday, raising serious questions about the BCCI's commitment to players' welfare.

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya was seen wearing a surgical mask to counter the pollution while the Indian team warmed up ahead of the game.

The match, scheduled to start

at 7 pm, was eventually called off at 9:30 pm after the sixth inspection although it was more of a formality with everyone present well aware that visibility was only going to get worse as the night progressed.

The players had abandoned their warm-up session by 7:30 pm and returned to the confines of their dressing rooms. By 9 pm, the sizeable crowd that had braved the cold conditions had also begun to thin out.

BCCI vice-president and life-long Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association's spiritual boss Rajeev Shukla walked out to the middle during one of the inspections but his body language after speaking to match officials indicated disappointment.

With no reserve day in place, both teams will now fly to Ahmedabad for the final T20I Friday, with India leading the series 2-1.

Mohun Bagan hit with AFC ban

India's top football club fined to the tune of \$100,729 for withdrawing from the 2025-26 AFC Champions League Two

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Dec 17: Star Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty showed nerves of steel to eke out a thrilling three-game victory over Olympic silver medallists Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang of China in their opening men's doubles Group B match at the BWF World Tour Finals here Wednesday.

World No 3 Satwik and Chirag, the only Indian representatives at the season-ending showpiece, recovered from an opening-game setback and saved a match point to eventually outwit the world No 5 Chinese pair 12-21, 22-20, 21-14 in a gripping contest.

The Asian Games champions, who reached the finals at the Hong Kong Open and China Masters earlier this year, will face another stern test when they take on Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri Thursday.

Former world No 1 pair Satwik and Chirag came into the match trailing Liang and Wang 3-7 in head-to-head encounters, and Wednesday's clash lived up to its billing as a high-quality duel between two attacking pairs.

As expected, the contest began on a tight note with both pairs focused on winning the early exchanges.



penalty for damages and losses" claimed by the AFC and Sepahan SC, and "disqualified from participating in the next AFC club competition for which they would otherwise qualify, with the ban remaining effective up to and including the 2027-28 season".

The committee also ruled that Mohun Bagan would forfeit all subsidies linked to their participation in the 2025-26 ACL Two season, including participation fees, performance bonuses and travel subsidies.

Any amount already paid by the AFC must be repaid within 30 days of the decision being communicated. "The compensation shall be paid to the AFC within thirty (30) days of the date that this Decision is communicated," the order stated.

As part of the sanctions, the Mariners were "fined \$50,000", ordered to pay "\$50,729 as com-

already pending at the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the supreme or final arbitral body for resolving international sports-related legal disputes and they were "hoping for a resolution".

"It's a biased decision against our club; our matter is pending at CAS and we're hopeful of a resolution. However, the club may pay up the fines," he said.

The ruling follows Mohun Bagan's decision not to travel to Iran citing player safety concerns after six foreign players declined to make the trip following advisories from their respective governments.

The club had sought a change of venue and later approached the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), but the AFC deemed the action as a withdrawal, triggering strict disciplinary action.

SHORT TAKES

Anantjeet, Darshna clinch mixed title

New Delhi: Asian Champion shooters Anantjeet Singh Naruka and Darshna Rathore produced a consistent performance to win the Senior Skeet Mixed Team gold medal, at the 68th National Shooting Championship Competitions (Shotgun) here Wednesday. The Rajasthan duo defeated Uttar Pradesh pair of Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Areeba Khan 45-43 in a closely contested gold medal match to seal the title, as the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here. Anantjeet hit 21 targets and Darshna contributed 24 to hold off Mairaj (21) and Areeba (22) in the gold medal match.

Anand returns for master-pupil clash

Kolkata: It will be a compelling showdown between a mentor and his protege when five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand returns to competitive action after six years to face reigning world champion D Gukesh among his other former wards at the seventh Tata Steel Chess here from January 7 to 11. Anand, who last played the tournament in 2019, will be making his comeback against a new generation of Indian stars, headlined by Gukesh, whom he has closely mentored in recent years at his WestBridge Anand Chess Academy. It will be the first time the two world champions meet in an individual tournament on Indian soil.

F1's new rules for 2026

London: Formula One fans will be hearing a lot about Boost, Overtake, Active Aero and Recharge in 2026 after saying farewell to DRS, the drag reduction system that provided an extra burst of speed for overtaking. The Liberty Media-owned sport announced revised terminology Wednesday to accompany the start of a new engine era and what it is calling the biggest ever overhaul of the technical regulations. The cars will be thinner and lighter with narrower tyres and a 50/50 split on internal combustion, using sustainable fuel, and electric power.

REUTERS

Carey's hometown century and Khawaja's 82 help Australia reach 326-8 on Day 1 of 3rd Ashes test

REUTERS

Adelaide (Australia), Dec 17: Alex Carey posted a hometown century and Usman Khawaja scored 82 after a dramatic, last-minute recall to help Australia reach 326 for eight at stumps on a hot opening day of the third Ashes test.

Paceman Joffra Archer (3-29) took three big wickets, including two in three balls immediately after lunch, and

spinner Will Jacks (2-105) dismissed Australia's two lead-

ing scorers to give England a slight edge Wednesday in conditions that were ideal for batting.

Carey shared partnerships of 91 with Khawaja, who replaced Steve Smith at late notice, 59 with Josh Inglis, 26 with Pat Cummins and 50 with Mitchell Starc to keep Australia's innings moving at around four runs an over. He was out just before stumps for 106, mistiming a slower ball from Jacks.

Mitchell Starc, voted player of the match in the first and second tests, continued his impressive form against England and was unbeaten on 33 at stumps.

As expected, the contest began on a tight note with both pairs focused on winning the early exchanges.

CAREY GOES FROM ASHES VILLAIN TO HERO WITH TON



Carey played a key role in one of the most contentious moments in recent Ashes history when he stumped England's Jonny Bairstow in the acrimonious 2023 series.

After scoring his first Ashes century, which he dedicated to his late father and his family, Carey said in a TV interview he'd probably rather discuss the 2023 episode than dwell on the emotions of his big innings.

"I love playing cricket and I understand what comes with playing professional sport," Carey said. "You're not always going to be liked. There's heroes and villains — that's all part of the game."

The biggest slice of FIFA's funding package for the North American showpiece - \$655 million - will be performance-based payments to 48 participating nations with the champions taking \$50 million and the runners-up \$33 million.

2026 WORLD CUP

FIFA hikes prize money

REUTERS

London, Dec 17: Prize money for next year's World Cup will be 50% higher than the previous edition with world governing body FIFA agreeing a record \$727 million financial contribution to the tournament Wednesday.

The 16 nations that fail to survive beyond the initial group phase will earn \$9 million while in addition, each qualified nation is entitled to \$1.5 million to cover preparation costs.

FIFA's Council also confirmed festival-style youth tournaments for under-15s open to all member associations to commence in 2026 with a boys events followed by a girls competition in 2027.

REUTERS

Dembele, Bonmati take top honours

THE STARS HAVE ALSO BAGGED THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BALLON D'OR THIS YEAR

Doha, Dec 17: Paris St Germain and France forward Ousmane Dembele was named FIFA men's player of the year in Doha Tuesday with Spain and Barcelona midfielder Aitana Bonmati winning the women's award for the third year in a row.

Dembele was instrumental in PSG's first Champions League triumph when they beat Inter Milan 5-0 in the final and scored 35 goals last season across all competitions, including 21 in Ligue 1 to finish as top scorer.

The 28-year-old, who won this year's Ballon d'Or in September, was part of the PSG team which also swept all before

them on the domestic front last season and reached the final of the Club World Cup.

Dembele was able to attend the ceremony, as he was already in Qatar for Wednesday's Intercontinental Cup final where PSG take on Flamengo.

Bonmati, the Champions League player of the season, also won the women's Ballon d'Or for the third time in a row this year, and helped Barcelona win the domestic treble along with reaching the Champions League final.

The 27-year-old also reached

the Euro 2025 final with Spain, losing the decider to England on penalties, and

Bonmati was named Player of the Tournament. Sarina Wiegman won the best women's

coach award for the fifth time after leading England to retain their European Championship title, and Luis Enrique won the men's coach award after taking PSG to their first Champions League win.

I want to thank all my teammates, it just shows that hard work pays off. It's been a fantastic year for me, both individually and collectively. I hope to come back here again next year

OUSMANE DEMBELE | FORWARD, PSG

oneses' Euro 2025 win with her penalty shootout saves and also won the domestic treble with her club.

Italy's Gianluigi Donnarumma, who now plays for Manchester City, won the men's keeper award for his role in PSG's treble win.

Mexico's Lizbeth Ovalle won the FIFA Marta Award for the best goal in women's football, for her scorpion kick for Tigres against Guadalajara in March.

Santiago Montiel won the Puskas Award for the best men's goal for his overhead strike for Independiente against Independiente Rivadavia during an Argentine Primera match in May.