



Harnaaz's philosophy

Actor Harnaaz Sandhu says setbacks in life aren't important—what matters is how one handles them

LEISURE | **P10**



China backs Venezuela

China opposes 'unilateral bullying' after US orders blockade of sanctioned tankers entering & leaving Venezuela

INTERNATIONAL | **P9**



Silver skyrockets

Extending the record run for the second straight day, silver surges ₹1,800 to a fresh lifetime high of ₹2,07,600 per kg

BUSINESS | **P11**



Series decider

India aim to end challenging home series on a high, leading South Africa 2-1 in T20s

SPORTS | **P12**

DELHI: CURBS ON PRE-BS VI VEHICLES COME INTO FORCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The ban on entry of non-Delhi private vehicles below BS VI standards and the enforcement of the 'No PUC, No Fuel' rule came into force in the national capital Thursday, as authorities stepped up measures to tackle worsening air pollution.

Fuel pumps are not dispensing fuel to vehicles without valid PUC certificates, and this is being enforced with the help of automatic number plate reader cameras, voice alerts at pumps, and police support. According to officials, 580 police personnel have been deployed at 126 checkpoints, including borders.

Additionally, enforcement teams of the Transport department have been deputed at fuel pumps and border points for effective implementation, they added. The entry ban on non-compliant vehicles, however, does not apply to vehicles running on CNG or electric power, public transport, vehicles carrying essential commodities or providing essential services. Vehicles carrying construction materials are also not permitted to enter the city under the GRAP IV restrictions.

27 FLIGHTS CANCELLED

As many as 27 flights of various airlines were cancelled and many more delayed at Delhi Airport Thursday due to dense fog and subsequent drop in visibility, a DIAL official said.

"As of now, 27 flights are cancelled -- 16 departures and 11 arrivals -- at Delhi Airport due to dense fog and low visibility," the Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) official said.

In a passenger advisory Thursday morning, DIAL said due to dense fog, 'flight operations are currently under CAT-III conditions, which may lead to delays or disruptions'.

For this type of operation, not only should the pilots be trained, but the aircraft must also be compliant.



FOR A CAUSE: Police stop Congress workers during a protest after a Delhi court Wednesday refused to take cognisance of ED's money laundering charge against party MPs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in National Herald case, in Chikkamagaluru, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Parl okays VB-G RAM G Bill

Opposition tears papers in House

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: Parliament late Thursday passed the VB-G RAM G Bill that seeks to replace the 20-year-old MGNREGA and guarantee 125 days of rural wage employment every year, amid vociferous protests by the Opposition, with Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asserting that it was needed to fix shortcomings in the old scheme.

The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it, amid strong protests by the Opposition over the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the existing rural employment guarantee scheme, MGNREGA, and accusing the government of putting the financial burden



on states.

Several members of the Opposition staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha during the passage of the Bill after demanding its withdrawal and raising slogans against the government. They also tore pages of the Bill, with Chairman CP Radhakrishnan warning them not to go towards the treasury benches.

The Opposition parties later sat on a dharna outside the Samvidhan Sadan in the Parliament complex against the Bill and claiming that they would launch a country-wide agitation. TMC MPs decided to remain on a 12-hour dharna in Parliament complex on the stairs of Samvidhan Sadan.

The Opposition has also de-

manded that the Bill be sent to a parliamentary panel for further scrutiny. Responding to the five-hour discussion on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan accused the Congress of 'killing' the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi several times and using his name to further their political gains.

"This Bill is very necessary as it will help provide employment opportunities, help development of rural India and take the country forward," the minister said.

Chouhan said that during the UPA's rule, MGNREGA was riddled with corruption and the expected amount of funds was not spent on the procurement of material for designated jobs.

Chouhan said 'Bapu' is the BJP's ideal and the party has adopted social and economic views of Mahatma Gandhi in its functioning.

"Schemes for rural development and employment have been formed since decades, but development of rural areas remained a distant cry. While the original scheme was launched in 2005, the name of Mahatma Gandhi was added in 2009 to derive electoral benefits by the Congress," he said.

"They use the name of Mahatma Gandhi for their politics. If anyone has murdered the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, it is the Congress which has done so. They have murdered Gandhi's ideals several times, including during the Emergency and while committing frauds and scams. They are doing so even now by creating uproar and disturbance in the House," the minister said.

Earlier in the day, the Lok Sabha passed the Bill amid tearing of papers by Opposition members, who accused the government of destroying rural economy and ignoring Gandhi's principles.

ODISHA INVESTORS' MEET IN HYDERABAD

On Day I, state garners ₹38,700cr investment

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Odisha Thursday received investment proposals and signed pacts worth a total of ₹38,700 crore on the first day of its two-day investors' meet in Hyderabad, an official statement said.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi attended the opening day of the meet and a roadshow organised by the state government in Hyderabad to strengthen industry partnerships, and showcase Odisha's industrial potential to national and global investors.

Majhi held one-on-one meetings with senior executives of companies operating in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, medical devices, green energy, textiles, food processing, engineering goods, automotive components and capital equipment manufacturing, the CMO said.

As part of the engagement, 15 government-to-business meetings were conducted with companies including Indorama Industries Ltd, Jindal Poly Films, ABI



Showatech Pvt Ltd and Maruti.

"During the interactions, investment proposals worth around ₹19,500 crore, with an employment potential of about 7,500 people, were received. In addition, seven MoUs were signed involving investments of ₹19,200 crore, expected to generate employment for nearly 12,700 people," the statement said.

"The response from industry reflects growing confidence in Odisha's industrial direction. Our focus is on building long-term partnerships through policy clarity, responsive governance and a future-ready ecosystem," Majhi said.

The Odisha Investors' Meet will continue Friday, with participation from industry leaders, business associations and institutional stakeholders.

Sleepy Joe, divisive Obama: Trump mocks predecessors

Washington, Dec 18: President Donald Trump has affixed partisan plaques to the portraits of all US commanders in chief, himself included, on his Presidential Walk of Fame at the White House, describing Joe Biden as 'sleepy' and Barack Obama as 'divisive'.

The additions, first seen publicly Wednesday, mark Trump's latest effort to remake the White House in his own image, while flouting the protocols of how presidents treat their predecessors and doubling down on his determination to reshape how US history is told.

"The plaques are eloquently written descriptions of each President and the legacy they left behind," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said describing the installation in

the colonnade that runs from the West Wing to the residence. "As a student of history, many were written directly by the President himself."

Indeed, the Trumpian flourishes include the president's typical bombastic language and haphazard capitalisation. They also highlight Trump's fraught relationships with his more recent predecessors.

An introductory plaque tells passersby that the exhibit was 'conceived, built, and dedicated by President Donald J Trump as a tribute to past Presidents, good, bad, and somewhere in the middle'.

Besides the Walk of Fame and its new plaques, Trump has adorned the Oval Office in gold and razed the East Wing in preparation for a massive ballroom. Separately, his administration has pushed for an ex-



amination of how Smithsonian exhibits present the nation's history, and he is playing a strong hand in how the federal government will recognise the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026.

Here's a look at how Trump's colonnade exhibit tells the presidential story. Joe Biden is still the only president in the display not to be recognised with a gilded portrait. Instead, Trump chose an autopen, reflecting his mockery of Biden's age and assertions that Biden was not up to the job.

Biden, who defeated Trump

in the 2020 election and dropped out of the 2024 election before their pending rematch, is introduced as 'Sleepy Joe' and 'by far, the worst President in American History' who 'brought our Nation to the brink of destruction'.

Two plaques blast Biden for inflation and his energy and immigration policy, among other things. The text also blames Biden for Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and asserts falsely that Biden was elected fraudulently.

Biden's post-White House office had no comment on his plaque. Barack Obama, the 44th president, is described as 'a community organiser, one term Senator from Illinois, and one of the most divisive political figures in American History'.

The plaque calls Obama's signature domestic achievement

'the highly ineffective Unaffordable Care Act'.

And it notes that Trump nixed other major Obama achievements: 'the terrible Iran Nuclear Deal ... and the one-side Paris Climate Accords'.

An aide to Obama also declined comment. George W Bush, Bill Clinton, Republican George HW Bush and Republican Richard were among others who were criticised.

Meanwhile, with two presidencies, Trump gets two displays. Each is full of praise and superlatives — 'the Greatest Economy in the History of the World'. He calls his 2016 Electoral College margin of 304-227 a 'landslide'. Trump's second-term plaque notes his popular vote victory — something he did not achieve in 2016 — and concludes with 'THE BEST IS YET TO COME'.

3 Naxals gunned down in Sukma

AGENCIES

Sukma, Dec 18: Three Naxalites, including a woman, collectively carrying a reward of ₹12 lakh, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Thursday, police said.

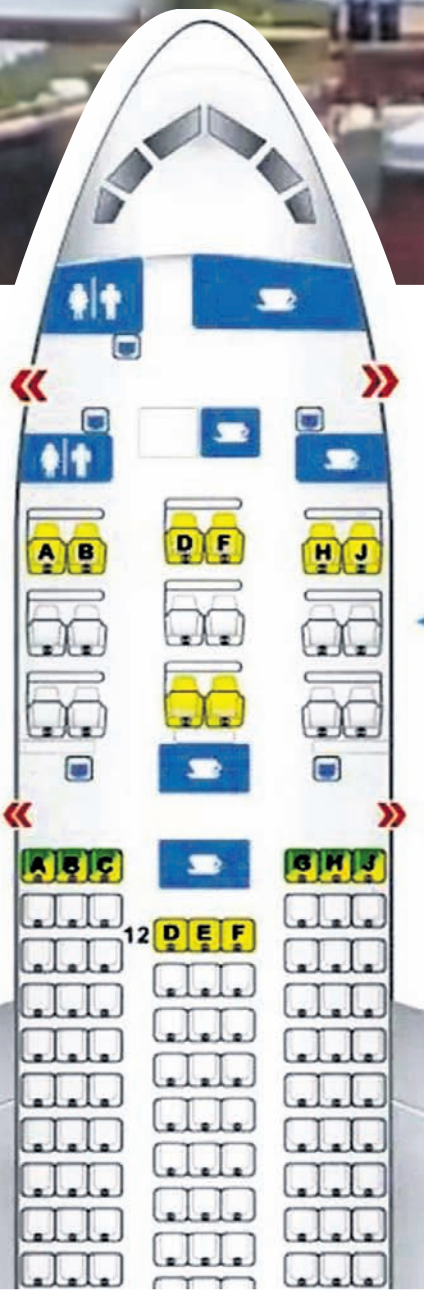
The exchange of fire took place in the morning on a forested hill of Gondiguda under Golapalli police station area when a team of District Reserve Guard was out on a search operation based on inputs about the presence of Maoist cadres in the area, Sukma SP Kiran Chavan said.

After the gun-battle ended, the bodies of three Naxalites, including a woman, were recovered from the encounter site along with firearms, he said.

As the calendar pages turn to mark the close of 2025, a shadow still lies heavy over Ahmedabad, a city forever changed by the catastrophic loss of Air India Flight 171 June 12. The London-bound Boeing 787 Dreamliner, carrying 242 passengers and crew, crashed just moments after takeoff, claiming the lives of nearly all on board and several on the ground in the Meghaninagar area, marking one of India's deadliest air disasters. The victims include young students and families of multiple nationalities, leaving behind voids felt across continents

LONE SURVIVOR

Vishwaskumar Ramesh, a British national of Indian origin, survived the devastating plane crash that claimed hundreds of lives, including his brother, Ajay. Ramesh was seated in 11A, while his brother was in 11J. The businessman from UK, battled severe survivor's guilt, unable to sleep and haunted by the loss of his sibling. Describing the accident in an interview as a blur of terror, Ramesh recalled, "Thirty seconds into take-off, there was a loud noise and the plane crashed." When he regained consciousness, he found himself surrounded by bodies. Remarkably, his seat detached during the crash and landed in a narrow gap between buildings, where loose soil cushioned his fall, sparing him from the fireball that followed. Despite suffering burns on his left hand, Ramesh crawled through the wreckage to escape. His trauma was further compounded by a baseless rumor, adding emotional strain to his already unimaginable ordeal.



TRAGEDY IN THE SKY

As 2025 draws to a close, it is shaping up to be one of the deadliest years for civil aviation in recent memory. After a decade of improving safety, with 2023 marking a year with no fatal crashes, 2025 has seen a series of tragic incidents. The deadliest was the June 12 crash of Air India Flight 171, a that went down shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad, India, killing 260 people. The crash occurred in a densely populated area, worsening the toll. As required by international law, India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) published a preliminary report one month after the disaster, when the plane exploded into flames shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad in western India. That report provided some technical information, but the investigation is still ongoing.

Initial findings

The AAIB report published July 12 said that the fuel supply switches for both engines were

almost simultaneously placed in the "off" position just after takeoff. "In the cockpit voice recording, one of the pilots is heard asking the other why did he cut off (the fuel supply). The other pilot responded that he did not do so," the report states. The aircraft then began to lose altitude. The report also notes that an auxiliary power unit, intended to provide power to the aircraft in the event of engine failure, deployed automatically. Less than 10 seconds later, both switches were returned to the "on" position. Immediately afterwards, "one of the two pilots" managed to transmit *Mayday, Mayday, Mayday*, before the plane crashed. The 15-page document does not mention whether the turning off of the fuel switches could have been caused by pilot manoeuvre, or by any kind of malfunction.

Controversy

As soon as it was published, the report met strong criticism. Pilot associ-

PROBE STILL UNDERWAY: CENTRE

Earlier this month, the government told Parliament that the investigation by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is still underway. Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said the probe is being conducted under the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2025, and that the final report has not yet been released.

ations argue that the dialogue between the captain and his co-pilot, which the report merely paraphrases, suggests the possibility of human error without providing evidence. They also pointed out that the AAIB did not recommend at that stage any control measures on the aircraft or its engines - effectively ruling out the possibility of a technical failure, or a maintenance or servicing defect. A war of words erupted between the families of the victims, lawyers and pilots on one side, and the airline and the manufacturer on the other.

Hypotheses

British lawyer Sarah Stewart, who represents around 50 families of victims, also favours

a scenario not involving the pilots. "The factual information raises a troubling spectre that this accident may have been caused by uncommanded fuel cut off, suggesting a possible failure in the Boeing systems", she said in a statement. Air India CEO Campbell Wilson, in a speech September 10, said that the "preliminary report indicates nothing wrong with the aircraft, nothing wrong with the engines, nothing wrong with the airline's operation". Some experts, however, seem to doubt this.

"There were electrical faults reported before the crash on this plane," former commercial pilot Amit Singh, founder of Safety Matters Foundation, told AFP.

SC INTERVENTION

TOP COURT'S ROLE

- Actively overseeing the investigation into the crash.
- Ensuring the probe is impartial, transparent, and expeditious.

NOTICES ISSUED

- Court issued notices to the Centre, DGCA, and AAIB on pleas for a judicially monitored probe.

COURT'S PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Pilot not blamed; no evidence suggesting pilot error in initial reports.

FOCUS ON TRANSPARENCY

- Court concerned about media leaks affecting public perception and fairness.
- Call for an independent review of investigation data and findings.

FAMILIES OF VICTIMS

- 130 families supporting petitions and legal efforts for more accountability in the investigation.



Mike Andrews, a US aviation attorney representing at least 130 families who lost their kin in the crash, has urged the Union government to release the flight recorder data, which will allow for transparency and help families consider legal options.

PIL IN SC SEEKS INDEPENDENT PROBE

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking an independent court-monitored probe into the crash. The plea has been filed by "Constitution by Safety Matters Foundation", an aviation safety NGO led by Captain Amit Singh (FRAES), alleging that the official probe violates citizens' fundamental rights to life, equality and access to truthful information.

Pilot's father demands another investigation

Pushkaraj Sabharwal, the father of Captain Sumeet Sabharwal, one of the pilots killed in the crash, has demanded a formal government investigation into the tragedy. In a letter to the civil aviation secretary and AAIB Director General, Pushkaraj criticised the preliminary AAIB report, which suggested his son may have been under psychological stress, potentially leading to suicide.

He called these claims damaging to his son's reputation and a violation of his rights.

Pushkaraj requested an investigation under Rule 12 of the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017, saying the AAIB report lacked definitive conclusions and was selective in releasing information, including cockpit voice recorder contents. "It is most pertinent to note that in

over 25 years of flying, Captain Sabharwal had not had a single incident or accident-causing fatalities or otherwise," the letter said. He had almost 15,638.22 hours of flying experience out of which 8,596 hours were on the 787-8 aircraft.

FAMILIES IN LIMBO

While the investigation continues, the families of the victims are left to cope with their loss. Many have abandoned the hope of returning to their former lives. The families are still waiting for answers, but in the meantime, they continue to live with the grief and uncertainty of a tragedy that remains shrouded in mystery. For many, the emotional toll is far more immediate than the financial one. While many victims' families are seeking answers, others are focusing on the compensation. Meanwhile, as per the reports, compensation has been paid to 95% of the families. An ex-gratia payment of one crore rupees has been made to 70 families by the Tata Group's 'AI-171 Memorial and Welfare Trust'.



Father of Sumeet Sabharwal offers prayers as he stands next to the body of his son



INVESTIGATION & RESPONSE

- Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) enhances inspections of 787 Dreamliners.
- Immediately after the crash, nine agencies from India and abroad joined the investigation.
- Families continue to await AAIB's final report, which is expected to provide conclusive findings about the crash.

INDIA TO SET UP NATIONAL AVIATION SAFETY CENTRE

India will set up a national aviation safety centre modelled on global best practices to train aircraft accident investigators and aviation professionals. The Ministry of Civil Aviation plans to double the manpower of both the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

MATTER OF CONCERN

- Boeing 787 Dreamliners have experienced 31 uncommanded Ram Air Turbine (RAT) deployments globally in 14 years, largely due to faulty locks in older actuators. Most incidents occurred within six months of maintenance.
- The revelation comes after the RAT on an Air India Boeing 787-8 (VT-ANO) deployed seconds before landing at Birmingham airport, sparking safety concerns.
- Following the incident, the DGCA instructed the airline to re-check RAT stowage procedures in accordance with Boeing's Aircraft Maintenance Manual (AMM) across all Dreamliners.

BOEING 787 UNDER SCRUTINY

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner is facing renewed scrutiny after a series of incidents, including the first-ever crash in Ahmedabad. Following this, three flights were forced to return to base due to mechanical or security issues. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation in India has started enhanced inspections of the 787 fleet. Investigators from Boeing, the US NTSB, and other agencies are probing the crash, raising concerns. This comes after earlier issues with the 787's lithium-ion batteries and Boeing's ongoing challenges with its public image after the 737 Max crisis.

JUNE 12: First-ever crash of a Boeing 787 Dreamliner in Ahmedabad, India.

JUNE 15: British Airways 787-8 returns to London due to "flap adjustment failure". It was reported that the flight experienced a flap adjustment failure shortly after departing from London Heathrow Airport en route Chennai.

JUNE 16: A Delhi-bound Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner from Hong Kong returned to its airport within an hour of take-off after the pilot in command suspected a technical issue.

PREVIOUS ISSUES WITH 787

- 2013-2017: Overheating issues with lithium-ion batteries on Dreamliners.
- Whistleblower reports and investigations in 2024 revealed significant issues.

Boeing's challenges

- Boeing delivered 348 jetliners in 2024, down 33% from 528 in 2023. The company posted an \$11.8 billion loss for the year, bringing its total losses since 2019 to over \$35 billion.

AVIATION SAFETY

New flight duty time limitation (FDLT) norms introduced by India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) have increased the weekly rest period for pilots and restricted night landings. The government has set up a high-level expert committee to strengthen aviation safety following the crash.

Hostel in ruins, lifeless



Six months after the plane crash, the B J Medical College hostel complex in Ahmedabad stands as a haunting reminder, with its charred walls and burnt trees replacing the once lively chatter of students with an eerie stillness.

Scattered across the crash site are grim remnants of daily life - burnt cars and motorcycles, twisted beds and furniture, charred books, clothes and personal belongings.

The Atulyam-4 hostel building and the adjoining canteen complex stand abandoned, with entry strictly prohibited.

"The area now lies very silent, only a few birds chirp here," Sanjaybhai, a security guard deployed at the premises by authorities to prevent trespassing, told PTI.

Mahendrasingh Jadeja, a general store owner whose shop is just 50 metres from the point

where the aircraft struck, described it as an unimaginable calamity.

"In all my years, I have never seen anything like this." Pointing to a tree behind his shop, the 60-year-old said the aircraft first struck there before crashing into the hostel building. Another local, Manubhai Rajput, who lives barely 200 metres from the site, said he witnessed the horror. For over three decades, Rajput and his neighbours lived close to the airport without giving much thought to the aircraft overhead. "We never looked up at the sky. But that day is etched in my mind. The plane hit a tree first, and then there was a loud sound," he said. Rajput recalled how hundreds of locals rushed to the site even before police, fire services or the Army arrived.

For residents near the site, memories of the incident still linger, casting a lasting shadow on their lives, with some of them saying they are still afraid to look up at the sky when an aircraft passes overhead

AGENCIES

SARGIFUL FESTIVAL 2025

235 new hostels approved for ST, OBC students: Min



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The state government has approved the construction of 235 new hostels for tribal and other backward class students, SC and ST Development Minister Nityanand Gond said Thursday. Gond made the announcement while addressing the inaugural session of the three-day state-level ‘Sargiful’ festival, organised under the Academy of Tribal Language and Culture, part of the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Development, Minority and Backward Classes Welfare department.

Highlighting the department’s achievements, the minister said over 5.5 lakh students are

currently enrolled in 1,765 educational institutions and 5,963 hostels across the state.

Besides, 235 new hostels have been approved for ST and other backward class students, he said.

Under the Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme, incentive amounts are being provided to students enrolled in Classe IX and XI, while enhanced pre-matric and post-matric scholarships for SC and ST students are expected to boost their educational development, he added.

Minister Gond said Sargiful brings hope and joy among children and provides a powerful platform to showcase and nurture the hidden talents of ST and SC students.

He added that students participating in the festival possess the potential to represent the state at higher levels and excel in various fields.

In his welcome address, department Commissioner-cum-Secretary B Parameswaran said students and teachers from Ashram Schools, Sevashram Schools, High Schools, Residential Schools and Eklavya Model Residential Schools from all 30 districts of the state are participating in the festival.

On the inaugural day, 10 meritorious SC/ST students who performed well in the 2025 Class X board examination were felicitated.

As part of the event, a state-level science fair is being organised, featuring 40 stalls with the participation of 80 students and 40 guide teachers. A volleyball tournament involving 112 participants will be held at Tapoban High School.

Additionally, 22 competitions will be conducted across 16 pavilions, including painting, music, debate, quiz, dance and slogan writing. The festival will also host 27 workshops on child journalism, mathematics games, mural art, puppetry, storytelling, glass painting, Chhau dance, poster making and drawing.



TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING: Artistes perform puppet dance during National Puppet Festival organised by Odia Language Literature and Culture department, in collaboration with Odisha Sangeet Natak Academy at Bhanjakala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

IndiaAI Mission hosts conference in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The IndiaAI Mission, in collaboration with the state government, launched the Regional AI Impact Conference in the Capital Thursday, ahead of the Odisha AI Summit starting December 19. The event, aimed at democratising AI resources, brought together policymakers, industry experts, and academics to discuss strategies for making AI tools—including data, computing power, and infrastructure—accessible to all.

At the inaugural session, IT Minister Mukesh Mahaling highlighted Odisha’s role in hosting the Regional AI Impact Conference on democratising AI resources, describing it as one of the ‘seven chakras’ under India’s AI mission for people-centric governance.

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja noted that AI naturally democratises intelligence by empowering citizens with accessible public goods like computing power and data, aligning with India’s public digital infrastructure approach.

EIT department Principal Secretary Vishal Kumar Dev welcomed attendees, highlighting the state’s role in hosting regional AI summits. MeitY Joint Secretary Sudeep Shrivastava stressed the importance of equitable AI access, noting that it will shape India’s strategy for the upcoming India AI Impact Summit 2026.

International experts, including Ahmed Hefnawy from Egypt, co-chaired discussions, underscoring global support for inclusive AI development. The conference also emphasised

the need for accessible data, computing resources, and AI education, aiming to empower citizens and bridge digital divides.

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, scheduled from February 15 to 20 in New Delhi, will bring together representatives from over 50 countries to finalise a global framework for democratising AI.

The summit is a key step toward India’s vision of ‘Viksit Bharat 2047’, using AI as a tool for inclusive growth and societal empowerment.

Min Patra reviews paddy procurement



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: A review meeting via video conferencing was held here Thursday, chaired by Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, to assess the current status and progress of Kharif season paddy procurement underway in the state. Senior officials, along with district Civil Supply Officers (CSOs), attended the meeting.

At the outset, department Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh stated that the paddy procurement process is underway in Bargarh, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, and Sundargarh districts. He also directed CSOs to upload mandi details through the PC-SAP app and Mandi Monitoring System app.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Patra instructed offi-

cials to ensure basic facilities such as drinking water, toilets, temporary sheds, and CCTV installation at each mandi. He emphasised that no eligible farmer should be left out of the procurement process, and urged that issuance of tokens and timely payments be given top priority.

In addition to preparedness measures, mandi nodal officers and supervising officers have been deployed. The district administration is keeping a close watch on border areas to prevent paddy from neighbouring states from entering Odisha. Every vehicle transporting paddy from mandi to mill is also being closely monitored, the minister said.

EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: In a significant step to support women-led enterprises and strengthen their economic participation, the state government Thursday disbursed over ₹90 crore as loan interest waivers to more than 1.55 lakh self-help groups (SHGs) across the state.

At a programme held at Mission Shakti Bhavan here, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida directly credited the interest waiver amount to the bank accounts of 1,55,852 SHGs, marking a major boost to women entrepreneurship. The disbursal reflects the government’s continued commitment to improving the financial health of SHGs and ensuring their sustainable growth.

Speaking at the event, Parida said the government’s regular interest waiver scheme would significantly enhance the economic participation of SHG members. She added that the

Govt disburses ₹90cr as loan interest waiver to 1.55L SHGs



initiative would not only provide financial relief but also empower women entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and contribute more meaningfully to the state’s economy.

“We are committed to supporting self-help groups through regular financial assistance and by strengthening their economic participation. This initiative will boost wom-

en-led enterprises and make them more self-reliant,” Parida said while handing over cheques to the beneficiaries.

Department Commissioner and Secretary Girish S N lauded the initiative, saying it would foster women’s leadership in business and contribute to Odisha’s economic development. He noted that the interest waiver would help self-help

groups manage their finances more efficiently, encouraging more women to take up entrepreneurship.

The event was attended by senior officials, including Director Monica Priyadarshini and members of the Odisha Livelihoods Mission, who stressed the importance of financial inclusion for women in both rural and urban areas. Representatives of several banks, along with department employees and SHG members, also participated in the programme, with some joining virtually.

As of the current fiscal year (2025–26), over ₹318 crore has been disbursed as interest waivers, reflecting the government’s sustained efforts to ease the financial burden on SHGs and enable them to thrive.

The initiative, part of the state’s Mission Shakti programme, remains a cornerstone of the government’s strategy to uplift women and equip them with the tools needed to succeed in business and beyond.

Stewart School holds Annual Sports Day



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Stewart School celebrated its 65th Annual Sports Day Thursday with great enthusiasm. DSP and Arjuna Awardee K Ravi Kumar graced the occasion as chief guest, sharing his experiences to inspire students to work hard while staying humble. He also lit the ceremonial torch to inaugurate the event.

The programme began with an inaugural performance by junior students, followed by various sporting events. Winners were felicitated with medals and trophies, while a vibrant house march-past added to the excitement.

School Secretary FC North and Tanushree Bose were present on the occasion. Prizes were distributed by the chief guest along with FC North, Principal-in-Charge Madhuswani Pramanik and senior teachers.

Orissa HC orders action in medicinal opium case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, Dec 18: The Orissa High Court has directed state authorities to take appropriate legal action in a case concerning the supply of medicinal opium to a Khurda resident, under the Odisha Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Rules, 1989.

The case involves Ramachandra Senapati of Pitapalli, on the outskirts of Khurda, who petitioned the High Court to increase his monthly medicinal opium quota from 40 grams to 60 grams. Senapati has been using opium for medicinal purposes for several decades.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice MS Raman heard the matter and directed the competent authorities to resolve the petitioner’s grievance under Rule 20 of the 1989 Rules. The court ordered that necessary steps be completed within two weeks of receiving the order, and the final decision communicated to the petitioner within one week thereafter.

The court also emphasised that, under sub-rule (3) of



Rule 20, authorities should consider providing appropriate expert medical treatment to help the petitioner manage his addiction.

According to case records, Senapati was earlier issued a medical opium card by the district administration on the recommendation of the district medical board. Since 2002, the Excise Department had allowed him to consume medicinal opium tablets, initially 10 grams

per month, which was gradually increased to 15 grams, 22 grams, and later 40 grams based on medical necessity.

As Senapati aged, his requirement reportedly grew, prompting him to apply to the district collector on April 29, 2025, for a further increase in his quota. Acting on the application, the collector directed the Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) to take necessary steps. A district medical board was subsequently constituted on June 5, 2025, which recommended an increase in the dosage.

The district administration forwarded the recommendation to the Excise Commissioner, Cuttack. When the proposal was not accepted, Senapati filed a petition before the High Court.

His counsel argued that Senapati has been consuming opium for 46 years and that the medical board’s recommendation should be duly considered. After hearing the matter, the High Court issued directions, emphasizing the need for lawful and timely action by the authorities.

NCST seeks report on KISS student’s ‘murder’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) Thursday sought a report from the Odisha government, and decided to conduct an inquiry into the alleged murder of a 14-year-old tribal student at the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) here.

The NCST took suo motu cognisance of the incident based on media reports, a day after Odisha police arrested eight officials of KISS and three students in connection with the boy’s death.

“The commission has decided to investigate/inquire into the matter in pursuance of the powers conferred upon it under Article 338A of the Constitution of India,” the NCST said.

In notices issued to the Home, School and Mass Education, and ST & SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare departments, the DGP, Commissioner of Police, and the Khurda district collector, the NCST asked them to furnish a detailed report within three days. It warned that failure to respond within the stipulated time could lead it to exercise civil court powers, including summoning officials to appear before it.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.32 ▼ 0.18	SENSEX	84481.81 ▼ 77.84	GOLD	₹134,650 ▼ ₹244
EURO	105.91 ▼ 0.25	NIFTY	25815.55 ▼ 3.00	SILVER	₹204,710 ▼ ₹2,725

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	27.2°	25.6°	Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later
Min Temp	13.9°	13.4°	
Humidity	90%	86%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Bribery cuffs on woman IIC



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 18: The inspector-in-charge (IIC) of Dasmantpur police station in Koraput was arrested by Vigilance sleuths Thursday while allegedly accepting a bribe of ₹20,000 from a relative of an accused.

“Sukma Hansdah, IIC of Dasmantpur PS, has been apprehended while demanding and taking a bribe of ₹20,000 from a relative of the accused in order to submit the case diary in the court in a case registered earlier in the PS,” the Vigilance said.

The accused was lodged in judicial custody, and the court had called for the case diary.

To produce the case diary and enable bail, Hansdah, investigating officer of the case, demanded a bribe ₹20,000 from the relative of the accused, who reported the matter to Vigilance, an officer said.

The bribed money has been recovered from the possession of Hansdah and seized, he said.

Following the trap, simultaneous searches were launched at two locations linked to the IIC to unearth any undisclosed assets, he said.

In this connection, a case has been registered at Koraput Vigilance PS under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Traffic curbs imposed for NH-49 works



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bangiriposi, Dec 18: The Mayurbhanj district administration has imposed traffic restrictions on National Highway 49 passing through Dwarashuni Ghat for road-widening work.

As part of safety measures to conduct stone-blasting operations required for the expansion work, vehicular movement on the stretch will remain suspended from 1pm to 4pm every Thursday and Friday. The order will remain in force until February 27, 2026.

During the restriction hours, entry points to Dwarashuni Ghat from both Bangiriposi and Bisoi sides will remain closed. Movement of all vehicles including two-wheelers as well as pedestrians will be prohibited during this period. Authorities have also cautioned local residents not to allow cattle or

goats near the ghat area.

Ambulances, fire tenders and other emergency vehicles will be allowed to pass only after obtaining prior permission from the road construction agency and concerned departmental officials. Vehicles belonging to the general public and transport operators will have to wait at designated parking areas during the restriction period.

After the restrictions are lifted, priority will be given to the movement of vehicles belonging to the general public. Light vehicle users have been advised to use the Bisoi-Argalabinda-Shankhabhanga-Joka-Chandanpur-Katara Chhak route as an alternative for travel.

The district administration has instructed Bisoi and Bangiriposi police stations to deploy adequate personnel to handle any untoward situation.

Woman dies after green papayas fall on her head, chest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliguda, Dec 18: A woman lost her life Thursday after green papayas fell on her head and chest while she was plucking the fruits from a tree in her garden at Gochhapada village under Baliguda police limits in Kandhamal district, police said.

Sources said, the deceased woman identified as Chandrakala Digal had gone to her garden in the morning to pluck green papayas for preparing lunch. Tragedy hit when several unripe papayas suddenly fell from the tree, striking her on the head and chest. She collapsed at the spot and lost consciousness.

Family members rescued and rushed her to the Baliguda Sub-Divisional Hospital, where doctors declared her dead on arrival.



On being informed, Baliguda police station officer Sambit Swain reached the spot, seized the body and sent it for post-mortem examination. An investigation into the incident is underway, police said.

The incident has left locals stunned, sparking widespread discussions about the fragility and uncertainty of life.

TRIBAL HACKED TO DEATH OVER SORCERY SUSPICION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri/Kalimela, Dec 18: A 51-year-old tribal man was brutally hacked to death with an axe over suspected witchcraft and sorcery at Uskapali village under Kalimela police limits in Malkangiri district, Wednesday night.

The victim was identified as Muka Padiami, a resident of Uskapali village. According to police, Muka was sleeping in his house when two men from the same village allegedly attacked him with an axe, killing him on the spot. Family members lodged a complaint Thursday morning at the Poteru police outpost under Kalimela police jurisdiction.

Police registered a case (293/25) and launched an investigation. The body was seized



from the spot and two suspects, identified as Adama Padiami and Irma Padiami, have been detained for questioning. The axe used in the crime has been recovered.

Kalimela OIC Mukunda Melka said the murder took place over suspected witchcraft and sorcery practice. A scientific team from Koraput is examining the crime scene and the post-mortem examination will

be conducted Friday.

Police said Uskapali village is inhabited by members of the Koya tribe. In recent days, several villagers had reportedly died of various causes, leading some residents to suspect that Muka was behind those deaths through his witchcraft and sorcery practice. Acting on that belief, the two accused allegedly attacked and killed him around 9pm Wednesday, police added.

2 youths of one family killed in road accident

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhadrak, Dec 18: Two youths of a family were killed after the motorcycle they were riding was hit by an unknown vehicle in Bhadrak district, police said Thursday.

The accident took place near Guanla village within Banskada police station limits in the district's Chandbali block Wednesday night. The deceased were identified as Rakesh Jena (35) and his nephew Manas (22), residents of Pradyutana-

gar under Dosinga panchayat. Dhamara Marine police station IIC Priyadarshini Khatua said the two youths were found lying injured after the accident. Police personnel from Dhamara and Dhamara Marine police stations, who were passing through the area at the time, rescued and shifted the injured to Chandbali Hospital where doctors declared both brought dead, Khatua said.

Police said the circumstances leading to the accident remain unclear, and further investigation is underway.

Maoist surrenders

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 18: A juvenile Maoist who had been active for years in the Saranda and Kolhan regions along Odisha border surrendered before Rourkela police Thursday and joined the mainstream, officials said. A 9mm carbine was seized from his possession.

Addressing a news conference at the Rourkela district police headquarters, Western Range DIG Brijesh Rai and Rourkela SP Nitesh Wadhvani said the minor was involved in several major incidents, including loot of explosives, a railway blast and an IED explosion in the Banko Reserve Forest area in 2025. The juvenile, a native of the Jamda police station area in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, joined the Maoist outfit in 2022 at the age of 12 after being radicalised by two cadres identified as Rappa and Gunga, police said.

After joining the outfit, he operated under Maoist commander Mochhu in the Saranda and Kolhan regions and was active in areas including Baliba, Tiriliposh, Lailor, Jamardihi and Jojodera. Police said he had recently participated in explosives loot from a stone quarry in the Banko area, explosion on rail route and IED blast in Banko reserve forest area. He had also camped in the Saranda forest with 70 to 80 Maoist members to plan for the explosive loot.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Ray said the minor, who comes from an impoverished background, will receive financial assistance for housing under the Antyodaya scheme. He will also be given ₹25,000 as marriage assistance in the future. The juvenile will be enrolled in a skill development programme and provided a monthly stipend of ₹10,000 for 36 months.

In addition, he will be issued government health, ration and other welfare cards. The minor has been placed in the 'B' category under the policy. A total assistance of ₹1.65 lakh will be provided, along with ₹1.15 lakh to be deposited as a fixed deposit. Subject to good conduct, he will receive ₹50,000 after one year and ₹65,000 after three years, Rai said.

Elderly woman bludgeoned to death by daughter-in-law

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Dec 18: An elderly woman was bludgeoned to death allegedly by her daughter-in-law and the latter's mother over a dispute at a rented house near Jamubandh Chhak in Khilari Gadapada Sahi under Sadar police limits in Angul late Wednesday night, police said Thursday.

The victim was identified as Kuni Nayak, the mother of Kanhu Nayak. Preliminary inquiries by police indicated that she was allegedly bludgeoned to death with a stone.

According to police, Kanhu of Colony Sahi under Rasol police limits in Dhenkanal district had been living in the rented house with his mother for the past few years. About eight months ago, he married Sarita Sahu, and the couple continued to live there with Kuni. Investigators said frequent quarrels and domestic disputes had been reported after the marriage.

Police said that Kanhu left for his shop and returned home around 10pm. When he asked to call his mother for dinner, his wife allegedly told him that she was unwell and had already taken food and gone to sleep, asking him not to disturb her.

Later, Kanhu went to the adjacent room to check on his mother. Receiving no response, he removed a blanket covering her and found severe head injuries and profuse bleeding. Realising she was dead, he immediately informed Angul Sadar police. Police reached the spot, seized the body and launched an investigation. Based on preliminary findings, the daughter-in-law and her mother, Jayanti Sahu who had visited the house earlier in the day were detained for questioning.

Wall collapse kills 4-year-old girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Umerkote, Dec 18: A 4-year-old girl was killed and two other children were seriously injured after a wall collapsed on them while they were playing on the verandah of a house under Umerkote police limits in Nabarangpur district Thursday, police said.

The incident occurred at Kamabandha village under Bakadabeda panchayat in Jharigaon block. The deceased was identified as Jamuna Bhatra, daughter of Baishakhu Bhatra. The injured

children, Dhananti Bhatra, 5, and Jyoti Bhatra, 5, are undergoing treatment at the Umerkote Sub-Divisional Hospital.

Sources said Jamuna and the two other children were playing on the verandah of Baishakhu's house when a wall suddenly collapsed, trapping them under the debris. Family members rushed to the spot after hearing the children's cries and pulled them out.

As the ambulance was delayed, the injured were taken to the hospital in private vehicles, where doctors declared Jamuna dead on arrival.

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया

Bank of India

BOI

भारत सरकार

कारपोरेट कार्य मंत्रालय

तृतीय कोषागार

समाधान प्रसंस्करण केंद्र (सी-पेस),

आई.आई.सी.ए. बिल्डिंग, 7वीं मंजिल,

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Government of India

Ministry of Corporate Affairs

Centre for Processing Accelerated

Corporate Exit (C-PACE),

IICA Building, 7th Floor,

Plot P - 6, 7, 8, Sector-5,

IMT Manesar,

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Bank of India

Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1-D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, PIN-751015

POSSESSION NOTICE

[Rule-8 (1) & (2)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Bank of India** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the 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(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Mortgagor(s) 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(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Symbolic Possession** of the property described here-in below in exercise of the powers conferred on him / her under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with Rule-8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002. Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property & any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Bank of India, Bhubaneswar SME Branch**, for the amount stated below with interest thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.**

BHUBANESWAR SME BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Mortgagor(s)	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession (Symbolic) Notice	Description of Immovable Property/ies
Borrower & Mortgagor: Mrs. Sunita Sahoo, W/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo / Co-Borrower: Late Jnanendra Sahoo, Legal Heirs of deceased Co-Borrower Late Jnanendra Sahoo: 1) Miss Abhipsa Sahoo, D/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo, 2) Miss Anwesha Sahoo, D/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo, All are at Address-1: At: Ashirbad Plaza, Kantilo, Sundarpada, Bhubaneswar, Khurda, PIN-751002, Address-2: At: Station Bazar, Ward No. 22, Dhenkanal, Odisha, PIN-759013.	₹24,63,387.86 + interest & other charges thereon	29.09.2025 / 17.12.2025	All that piece and parcel of the Land and Building situated at Flat No.: E/6 in 6th Floor, 3BHK having Super Built Up Area: 1106 sqft., Ashirvad Plaza, Mouza: Kantilo, PS: Airfield, Tahasil: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, recorded in the name of Mrs. Sunita Sahoo, W/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo.
Borrower & Mortgagor: Mrs. Sunita Sahoo, W/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo/ Co-Borrower: Late Jnanendra Sahoo, Legal Heirs of deceased Co-Borrower Late Jnanendra Sahoo: 1) Miss Abhipsa Sahoo, D/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo, 2) Miss Anwesha Sahoo, D/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo, All are at Address-1: Flat No.: 3/A-208, 2nd Floor, Type-A, Jyotsna Villa, Sahaspur, Bhubaneswar, Khurda, PIN-751002, Address-2: At: Station Bazar, Ward No. 22, Dhenkanal, Odisha, PIN-759013.	₹11,60,963.86 + interest & other charges thereon	29.09.2025 / 17.12.2025	All that piece and parcel of the Land and Building situated at Flat No.: 3/A-208 in 2nd Floor, Type-A, 2BHK having Super Built Up Area: 903 sqft., Jyotsna Villa, Mouza: Sahaspur, PS: Airfield, Tahasil: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, recorded in the name of Mrs. Sunita Sahoo, W/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo.

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 18.12.2025

Authorized Officer, Bank of India

भारत सरकार

कारपोरेट कार्य मंत्रालय

तृतीय कोषागार

समाधान प्रसंस्करण केंद्र (सी-पेस),

आई.आई.सी.ए. बिल्डिंग, 7वीं मंजिल,

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Form No. STK - 6

PUBLIC NOTICE

[Pursuant to sub-section (2) and sub-section (4) of section 248 of the Companies Act, 2013 and rule 7 of the Companies (Removal of Names of Companies from the Register of Companies) Rules, 2016]

Public Notice: ROC/C-PACE/STK-2/248(2)/2025-26/1560 **Date: 12/12/2025**

Reference: In the matter of striking off or removal of names of (3) companies in the state of Odisha under section 248 of the Companies Act, 2013 in respect of:

S. No.	Work Item	CIN	Company Name
1	AB8758879	U52609OR2022PTC039763	MOHAKUD ASSOCIATES TRADING ENTERPRISES PRIVATE LIMITED
2	AB8771884	U74994OR2018PTC028845	NPSM INFRA PRIVATE LIMITED
3	AB9057397	U51909OR2022PTC038919	TANDHAN BULLION N JEWELLERS PRIVATE LIMITED

(2) Notice is hereby given that the Registrar of Companies had received applications from the above-mentioned companies under section 248(2) of the Companies Act, 2013 for removal of its/their name(s) from the register of companies either on the ground that they have failed to commence business within one year of their incorporation or on the ground that the company(ies) is/are not carrying on any business or operation for a period of two immediately preceding financial years and has/have not made any application(s) within such period for obtaining the status of a dormant company under section 455 of the Companies Act, 2013 or the company(ies) have obtained the status of dormant company/subscribers to the memorandum have not paid the subscription which they had undertaken to pay at the time of incorporation of a company and a declaration to this effect has not been filed within one hundred and eighty days of its incorporation under subsection (1) of section 10A/have not been carrying on any business or operations, as revealed after the physical verification carried out under sub-section (9) of section 12, but it/they do not wish to continue its/their registration as companies and have, therefore, requested for removal/strike off of its/their names from the register of companies.

(3) Accordingly, the Registrar of Companies proposes to remove or strike off the names of the above-mentioned companies from the Register of Companies.

(4) Any Person objecting to the proposed removal or striking off name of the companies from the register of companies may send his or her objection to the office address mentioned here above within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice.

Irkan Tirkey

Deputy Registrar

Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit

CBC 071231/11/0520/2526

STATE BANK OF INDIA

Regional Business Office, Bhubaneswar

North, Rajpath, Unit-I, Bhubaneswar-751009

GOLD AUCTION

NOTICE

This is to inform the public that inspite of repeated reminders the following gold loan borrower have not repaid their loan. If they do not repay their outstanding debts before the auction, their gold ornaments will be auctioned at the premises of our **Rasulgarh Branch** on **29.12.2025 at 10.30 A.M.** The Bank will not be liable for any inconvenience or loss to the borrower and the Bank will take legal action against them if the Bank losses where necessary. Borrower can take his Jewellery by repaying the outstanding debt before the auction take place.

Sl. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower / Gold Loan A/c No.	Net Weight (in Gram)	Gross Weight (in Gram)	Loan Balance (as on 18.12.2025)
RASULGARH BRANCH, BHUBANESWAR				
1.	Bijaylaxmi Panda, D/o.: Bhaskar Panda, At: Kuansh, Bhadrak, PIN - 756100 / 43159099022	15.50	17.00	Rs.68,991/-

Person willing to participate in the auction should obey the following rules:

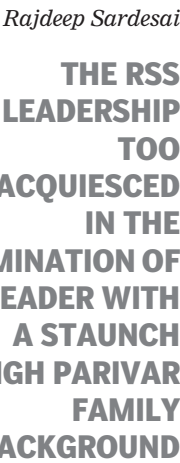
- Person willing to participate in the auction must deposit **10% of Loan Balance** in the form of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) alongwith valid KYC before two hours of the scheduled auction time.
- After depositing the EMD, person who willing to participate in the auction can inspect the ornaments.
- The person who make the highest offer shall have to deposit full amount of the said offer immediately in the Bank. After making the highest offer, if the person unable to deposit full amount of the said offer, then his EMD will be forfeited and that person will not be allowed to participate in the auction process further.
- Auction for another account will begin only after the auction and amount deposit of one account have been completed.
- The Bank is not bound to accept any auction calls. The Bank may cancel the auction without assigning any reason therefor.
- The person whose highest bid will be accepted by the Branch Office of the State Bank of India will be compelled to deposit full auction amount immediately after receiving the notice of confirmation of the auction. Otherwise EMD deposit will be forfeited.
- If State Bank of India, Branch Office cancel/postpone any higher Bid, then EMD amount will refunded to the depositor without any interest.
- State Bank of India will not held responsible in any manner for the quality, weight and purity of the ornaments pledged for auction.
- Bank will forfeit the EMD Deposit Amount if any person does not obey the above rules.

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 19.12.2025

Regional Manager, State Bank of India



*The writer is a Professor at
Georgetown University.*
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A STAUNCH GH PARIVAR FAMILY BACKGROUND

And yet, the 'election' of Nabin did not lead to a single dissenting voice. 'We are a disciplined party,' claimed a party leader. Disciplined? Maybe. Democratic? Not quite. The 'selection' of Nabin as BJP working president wasn't done through any rigorous internal party consultation and was decided almost entirely by the Modi-Shah duo, the BJP's unchallenged 'High Command'. The RSS leadership too acquiesced in the nomination of a leader with a staunch sangh-



It isn't as if the Congress has transformed itself overnight into a 'democratic' organisation or the BJP has unexpectedly embraced Congress-style decision-making from a previous era. Truth is, the 'High Command' is the result of a personality-centric political party culture that venerates absolute power above inner party democracy. A mix of fear and sycophancy drives this feudal culture where a political leader is seen as a larger than life 'Supremo' who has

A classic example was the decision to make Bhajan Lal Sharma the Rajasthan CM in 2023 ahead of two-time CM Vasundhara Raje. Had there been a fair 'election' based on views of the MLAs, there is every chance that Raje would have won. Instead, the choice of a first-time MLA as CM was made in Delhi and merely communicated as a dictate to the party legislature party. Not only was Raje taken aback but so was reportedly Sharma himself. The story, possibly apocryphal, is that Sharma was in charge of making the food and tent ar-

The writer is a senior journalist and author.

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Keeping Nigeria's schoolchildren safe

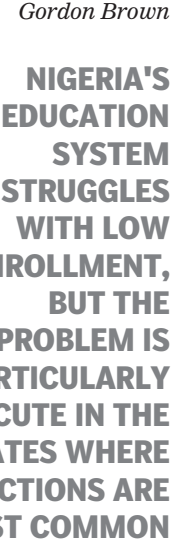
Nigeria's education system struggles with low enrollment, but the problem is particularly acute in the states where abductions are most common. Many of the hundreds of thousands of primary-school-age children who are out of school instead receive an informal Islamic education at Tsangaya and Islamiyya schools.

Over the years, the federal

These changes should be complemented by the development and implementation of clearer

If abductions continue, there may be a case for redirecting students enrolled in secluded or high-risk schools to safer ones. And where teaching cannot be resumed, it may be necessary to introduce online or radio lessons. Nor can we afford to underestimate the profound impact of lost classroom time on children who may need help coping with trauma. But the top priority is to provide strengthened security at and near schools. UNICEF, in partnership with the federal and state education ministries, has proposed a \$2.6 million support program that is currently unpublished but has been shared with relevant stakeholders. The first action item would be to meet the psychosocial needs of the students and teachers affected by the abductions, as well as their families. The second would be to provide continuity of learning for the children suffering from school closures through-

*The writer is a former
prime minister of the UK.*
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**NIGERIA'S
EDUCATION
SYSTEM
STRUGGLES
WITH LOW
ENROLLMENT,
BUT THE
PROBLEM IS
PARTICULARLY
ACUTE IN THE
STATES WHERE
SCHOOL FEES ARE
NOT COMMON**

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**



Unchecked greed

Sir, The Luthra brothers, Gaurav and Saurabh, have at last been brought to face the majesty of the law, in what stands out as a rare instance of swift and decisive action by Indian law enforcement agencies. Their prompt deportation was made possible largely because the brothers did not move beyond Thailand to a third country, where extradition could have become legally cumbersome or diplomatically delayed. That strategic miscalculation curtailed what might otherwise have been a prolonged escape, limiting their flight from justice to a mere 10-day sojourn. They now stand charged with culpable homicide in connection with the tragic nightclub fire in north Goa. The episode has also laid bare an unsettling arrogance. At no point did the wealthy businessmen display public remorse or moral responsibility. Had there been even a semblance of contrition, they might have announced substantial compensation for the families of those who lost their lives. Instead, there was a deafening silence from men who chose to flee the country at the first sign of accountability. When safety is sacrificed at the altar of profit under the guise of entertainment, the law must respond firmly. Exemplary punishment is imperative, not only to deliver justice in this case, but to deter similar exploitation driven by unchecked commercial greed.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Rupee's free fall

Sir, The rupee sliding to 91 against the US dollar—coincidentally India's STD code—has become a joke, but one with sharp economic undertones. Markets are uneasy and financiers worried, despite official efforts to downplay concerns by highlighting India's 8.2% growth rate. A further slide to 92 would link it with Pakistan's STD code—something best avoided, as unthinkable as Pakistan winning a cricket match against India. Growth figures cannot mask currency weakness forever, nor can media reassurance substitute for corrective action. Instead of pacifying people with technical jargon or diversionary narratives, the government and RBI should acknowledge the problem and act on expert advice. Honest communication and timely measures inspire confidence. A bitter truth reassures more than a sweet illusion.

RS Narula, PATIALA

of the day

quote

Unfortunately, it has become increasingly common to drag the language of faith into political battles, to bless nationalism, and to justify violence and armed struggle in the name of religion

POPE LEO | HEAD OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

Eleven months ago, I inherited a mess, and I'm fixing it, I've restored American strength, settled eight wars in 10 months, destroyed the Iran nuclear threat and ended the war in Gaza, bringing for the first time in 3,000 years peace to the Middle East, and secured the release of the hostages, both living and dead

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, USA

Like a man, I told your colleagues who came here: guys, you have to know how to admit defeat. If a big country like the US, if you organised an attack on us in 2020 and lost, that is a starting point

ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO | PRESIDENT, BELARUS

SHORT TAKES

China rejects arms-conflict link

Beijing: China said its arms trade with Thailand and Cambodia is unrelated to the current conflict between the Southeast Asian neighbours, with which Beijing has close ties, Thursday. Beijing hopes the two countries can reach a ceasefire as soon as possible, the ministry said, adding that China will continue to advocate for peace and talks. Border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia resumed this month and have killed more than 40 people and displaced over half a million in both countries. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in separate calls with his Thai and Cambodian counterparts Thursday, also called for an immediate ceasefire and criticised "false information" that he said was aimed at smearing China's ties with the two countries.

Nepal HC orders release of ex-HM

Kathmandu: A high court in Nepal Thursday ordered the release of Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) chairman Rabi Lamichhane on bail in connection with a fraud and organised crime case. The Butwal High Court, Tansen, ordered the release of former Home Minister Lamichhane on bail of Rs 26.8 million. A division bench comprising Chief Judge Basudev Acharya and Judge Tej Narayan Paudel issued the order, directing Lamichhane's release, according to a notice issued from the high court. Following the high court's order to seek bail, Lamichhane will be freed after furnishing the required amount.

Pope names Hicks as new archbishop of NY

Vatican City: Pope Leo XIV Thursday made his most important US appointment to date, naming a fellow Chicagoan as the next archbishop of New York to lead one of the biggest US archdioceses as it navigates relations with the Trump administration and its immigration crackdown. Bishop Ronald Hicks, the current bishop of Joliet, Illinois, replaces the retiring Cardinal Timothy Dolan, a prominent conservative figure in the US Catholic hierarchy. Hicks takes over after Dolan last week finalised a plan to establish a USD 300 million fund to compensate victims of sexual abuse who had sued the archdiocese.

China backs Venezuela

China voiced political support for Venezuela Thursday after the United States ordered a blockade of sanctioned oil tankers, denouncing what it called 'unilateral bullying' but offering no details on any concrete assistance to its long-time oil supplier

REUTERS

Beijing, Dec 18 : China opposed what it said was "unilateral bullying" after Washington ordered a blockade of sanctioned tankers entering and leaving oil-rich Venezuela, but did not say exactly how it would come to the South American country's aid or offer any refuge for its embattled leader. Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump ordered a complete blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers attempting to leave Venezuelan waters, and those arriving, as Washington massed troops and warships in the region.

China is the biggest buyer of Venezuelan crude, which accounts for roughly 4% of its imports, with shipments in December on track to average more than 600,000 barrels per day, analysts have said.

Beijing opposes all forms of "unilateral bullying" and supports countries in safeguarding their sovereignty and national dignity, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Venezu-



Beijing opposes all forms of unilateral bullying and supports countries in safeguarding their sovereignty and national dignity

WANG YI | FOREIGN MINISTER, CHINA

elan counterpart Yvan Gil on a phone call Wednesday.

Wang did not name the United States or Trump in the official readout of the call. Wang also did not elaborate on the form or extent of the support that China might or could offer to Venezuela, with which Beijing previously said it had forged an ironclad friendship.

The US is squeezing Venezuela's principal source of revenue in its attempt to target terrorism, drug smuggling and human trafficking, according to Trump. Last week, the US Coast Guard seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela.

President Nicolas Maduro has said the US wants the OPEC nation's crude oil resources, and the military build-up was to overthrow him. In an interview with Politico, Trump said Maduro's days were "num-

- US has ordered blockade of sanctioned oil tankers moving in and out of Venezuela
- China says opposed to 'unilateral bullying'
- China's foreign minister spoke to Venezuelan counterpart on the phone
- UN and other nations urge de-escalation and dialogue

bered". For years, China has extended credit lines to Venezuela under loans-for-oil deals. In a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Moscow this year, Maduro told Xi that Venezuela was looking forward to expanding cooperation in trade and energy.

At the same time, Beijing has been making an intense effort to co-exist with the US, its most important trading partner. After months of acrimonious dispute over trade and tariffs, Trump and Xi in October managed to hammer out a consensus on how to handle thorny trade issues. China says it opposes any acts that violate the UN Charter or encroach on the sovereignty and security of other countries.

India resumes visa services in Dhaka



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 18: India Thursday resumed operations at its visa application centre in Dhaka, a day after closing it over escalated security concerns, but closed two other identical facilities in other parts of Bangladesh as anti-India protestors tried to march towards the Indian missions there.

The Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) at southwestern Khulna and northwestern Rajshahi were closed on the grounds of security concerns amid strong protest marches towards the facilities that were stopped by security officials.

In Rajshahi, "Bharityo Adhipotto Birodhi July 36 Mancha" tried to march towards the Assistant High Commission of India but police in riot gear blocked them near the mission

when a brief clash occurred as the protestors tried to break through the security barricades. The protestors raised anti-India slogans, according to the videos on social media.

In Khulna, the protestors under a banner called 'Unity Against Indian Hegemony' tried to march towards the Assistant High Commission of India but army soldiers and navy sailors joined hands with police to thwart the marchers. "We had enforced a stringent vigil preventing them (protestors) from proceeding towards the mission. They left the scene after staging a 'peaceful' rally," Khulna's deputy commissioner of police Tajul Islam said.

The reports said in both the rallies the protestors accused India of sheltering deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and demanded her immediate return to be exposed to gallows.

CEPA SIGNED

India and Oman formalised a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), that aims to boost trade, investment, and cooperation across key sectors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Muscat, Dec 18: India and Oman Thursday signed a free trade agreement, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and explored ways to further add greater depth to the bilateral Strategic Partnership.

Modi, who arrived in Oman Wednesday on the last leg of his three-nation tour, was welcomed by Sultan Haitham at Al Baraka Palace in Muscat before their one-on-one talks and the

delegation-level meeting.

"Today, we are taking a historic step forward in India-Oman relations, whose positive impact will be felt for decades to come. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will energise our ties in the 21st century," Modi said.

He said the agreement will give new momentum to trade, investment and open new op-

portunities across different sectors, and greatly benefit the youth of both nations.

Modi thanked the Sultan for his efforts in finalising the historic CEPA, as he described it as "a new and golden chapter" of bilateral cooperation.

They also exchanged views on regional and global developments and reaffirmed their commitment to regional peace and stability. They reaffirmed

RARE SMOG

SPIKE HITS BEIJING

It is up to us to choose how we fund Ukraine's fight. We know the urgency. It is acute. We all feel it. We all see it

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Beijing was shrouded in heavy smog Thursday with AQI climbing to "very unhealthy" levels of 215, a rare spike in pollution in the Chinese capital after years of expensive cleaning up



FRESH TENSIONS WITH CHINA

US rolls out \$10bn Taiwan arms deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 18: The Trump administration has announced a massive package of arms sales to Taiwan valued at more than \$ 10 billion that includes medium-range missiles, howitzers and drones, drawing an angry response from China.

The State Department announced the sales late Wednesday during a nationally televised address by President Donald Trump, who made scant mention of foreign policy issues and did not speak about China or Taiwan at all. US-Chinese tensions have ebbed and flowed during Trump's second term, largely over trade and tariffs but also over China's increasing aggressiveness toward Taiwan, which Beijing has said must reunify with the mainland. The eight arms sales agreements announced Wednesday cover 82 high-mobility artillery rocket systems, or HIMARS, and 420 Army Tactical Missile Systems, or ATACMS — similar to what the US had been providing Ukraine during the Biden administration to defend itself from Russia — worth more than \$4 billion.

They also include 60 self-propelled howitzer systems and related equipment worth more than \$4 billion and drones valued at more than \$1 billion.

Other sales in the package include military software valued at



more than \$1 billion, Javelin and TOW missiles worth more than \$700 million, helicopter spare parts worth \$96 million and refurbishment kits for Harpoon missiles worth \$91 million. China's Foreign Ministry attacked the move, saying it would violate diplomatic agreements between China and the US; gravely harm China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity; and undermine regional stability.

"The Taiwan independence' forces on the island seek independence through force and resist reunification through force, squandering the hard-earned money of the people to purchase weapons at the cost of turning Taiwan into a powder keg," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun.

"This cannot save the doomed fate of Taiwan independence' but will only accelerate the push of the Taiwan Strait toward a dangerous situation of military confrontation and war. The US support for Taiwan Independence' through arms will only end up backfiring. Using Taiwan to contain China will not succeed," he added.

Deposed PM Oli re-elected party chair

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Dec 18: Ousted Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was Thursday elected as the CPN-UML's chairman for the third consecutive term with a two-thirds majority.

Oli was elected the Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman in a contest held three months after his government was forced to resign following a student-led protest.

During the 11th general convention of the party that concluded Thursday, Oli secured 1,663 votes against his opponent Ishwor Pokharel, who received 584 votes, according to party sources.

Pokharel, 71, had received the backing of former President Bidya Devi Bhandari, his rival in the presidential election.

The convention started with a public meeting in the Bhaktapur district and concluded with the election of Oli and other office bearers and central committee members of the party.

Shankar Pokhare, from Oli's panel, was elected to the post of General Secretary of the party for the second term. He defeated Surendra Pandey, former finance minister, who contested the election from Pokharel's panel.

Among 19 office bearers of the party, 17 were elected from Oli's panel, while two were from Pokharel's panel.

Prithvi Subba Gurung, Bishnu Paudel, Raghuji Panta, Ram Bahadur Thapa and Gokarna Bishta have been elected to the post of Vice President. Among them, only Gokarna Bishta is from Oli's rival team.

Similarly, among three deputy general secretaries, Lekh Raj Bhatta, Yogesh Bhattarai and Raghubir Mahaseh, Bhattarai is from Pokharel's team. All nine secretaries were elected from Oli's team.

Hundreds of cadres belonging to Oli took out a victory procession in Kathmandu's Bhrikutimandap, where the general convention was held, soon after the election results were out.



While Trump did not name the conflicts, he has throughout the year repeated his claim innumerable times that he ended wars between India and Pakistan, Thailand and Cambodia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Kosovo and Serbia, Israel and Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as Rwanda and the Congo.

He also touted his administration's success in dealing with migrants coming into the country from around the world, taking up American jobs and driving up housing costs.

Trump said that a major factor in driving up housing costs was the "colossal border invasion".

"We have never been invaded. This is the worst thing that frankly, in my opinion, the worst thing that the Biden administration did to our country is the invasion at the border," he said.

Trump said the Biden administration and its allies in Congress brought in "millions and millions" of migrants and gave them taxpayer-funded housing, while the rent and housing costs for Americans skyrocketed. He claimed that over 60 per cent of growth in the rental market came from foreign migrants.

"At the same time, illegal aliens stole American jobs and flooded emergency rooms, getting free health care and education paid for by you, the American taxpayer," Trump said. He claimed that for the first time in 50 years, the US is now seeing "reverse migration, as migrants go back home, leaving more housing and more jobs for Americans."

In the year before his election, all net creation of jobs was going to foreign migrants. "Since I took office, 100 per cent of all net job creation has gone to American-born citizens. Hundred per cent," he said.

India, Oman sign historic trade deal



Today, we are taking a historic step forward in India-Oman relations, whose positive impact will be felt for decades to come. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will energise our ties in the 21st century-

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER, INDIA

their commitment to further enhancing the defence and security collaboration, including in the maritime domain.

The CEPA - signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef - is expected to enhance market access, promote investments, and strengthen cooperation across key sectors.

The pact will increase trade between the two countries by reducing trade barriers and

of the day

quote

India's opportunity in AI lies not only in scale, but in inclusion. By supporting AI adoption across MSMEs, startups, and regional ecosystems, the country can drive productivity gains, generate quality employment, and support long-term socio-economic resilience

JYOTI VIJ | DIRECTOR GENERAL, FICCI

Whom are you (the industry) providing the private credit? You are providing it to people who have for some reason not been able to get the bank credit, who for some reason have been found not to be fit, to be worthy of the bank credit

UK SINHA | FORMER CHAIRMAN, SEBI

The pact with Oman would further help Indian industry across sectors to expand its presence in the region. The reduction in tariffs would help India diversify its exports to new markets. Besides, this deal is also important from the perspective of India's energy security

DEEP KAPURIA | CHAIRMAN, HI-TECH GEARS

SHORT TAKES

Parth Jindal elected as CMA president

New Delhi: The Cement Manufacturers' Association, the lobby group of the industry, Thursday said that Parth Jindal, Managing Director of JSW Cement, has been elected as its new president at the annual general meeting. Raghavpat Singhania, Managing Director of JK Cement, was elected as the vice president, a statement issued by Cement Manufacturers' Association (CMA) said. Jindal takes over charge as head of CMA from Shree Cement Managing Director Neeraj Akhouri.

RBI clears PPSL as payment aggregator

New Delhi: Fintech firm One97 Communications Thursday said its subsidiary Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), has received authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as a Payment Aggregator for physical (offline) payments and cross-border transactions. The approval is in addition to the authorisation for Online Payment Aggregation already granted by the central bank to PPSL last month. With the new license, PPSL now holds Payment Aggregator authorisations across online, offline, and cross-border segments use cases, enabling end-to-end payment aggregation services for merchants.

JSW MG Motor to hike prices from Jan

New Delhi: JSW MG Motor India Thursday said it will hike vehicle prices by up to 2 per cent with effect from January to offset the impact of rising input costs. The price increase shall be effective from January 1, 2026 and will vary as per the model and variant, the automaker said in a statement. The reasons behind the price increase are rising input costs and other macroeconomic factors, it added. Luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz India and BMW have also announced plans to hike vehicle prices from next month.

Accenture revenue up

New Delhi: Accenture, an IT services and consulting company with a significant workforce in India, Thursday reported a 6 per cent year-on-year rise in revenue to \$18.7 billion in the September-November quarter of FY26, landing at the top of the company's guided range. Accenture follows a September-August financial year.

I am not concerned about the rupee at all... Let me say that the rupee and its current weakness should not be necessarily conflated with some economic worry, because historically, if you go over time, you will see that economies that are in their high growth phase very often go through a phase of exchange rate weakness

SANJEEV SANYAL | MEMBER, ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE PRIME MINISTER

TECH FUNDING HOLDS STRONG

India's tech startups raised \$10.5 billion in 2025, 17 per cent lower than last year, but stood resolute on the third spot in the global pecking order, ahead of China and Germany, and trailing only the US and the UK, according to year-snapshot by market intelligence platform Tracxn. As per the report, India's tech startups raised \$10.5 billion in 2025, the funding levels 17 per cent lower than \$12.7 billion in 2024 and a 4 per cent drop compared to \$11 billion in 2023



BULLISH SILVER RALLY CONTINUES

Silver surges ₹1,800 to hit fresh record of ₹2.07 lakh/kg

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

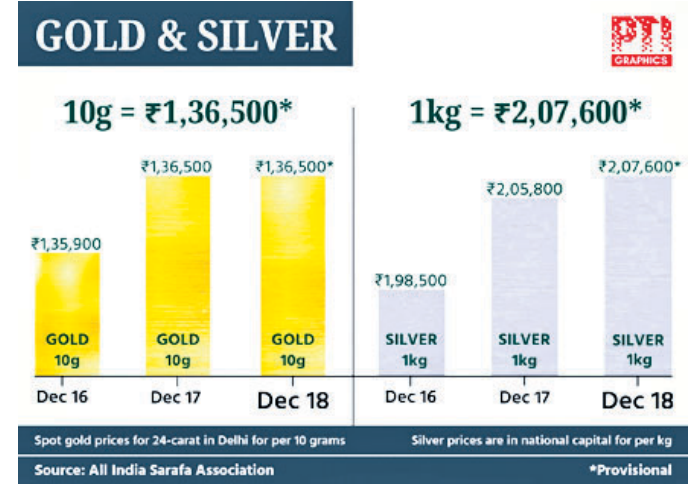
New Delhi, Dec 18: Extending the record run for the second straight day, silver surged ₹1,800 to a fresh lifetime high of ₹2,07,600 per kilogram in the national capital Thursday amid sustained buying by traders, according to All India Sarafa Association.

The white metal jumped ₹7,300 Wednesday to breach the ₹2 lakh per kilogram-mark for the first time, settling at ₹2,05,800 per kg.

With the latest gain, silver prices have skyrocketed by ₹1,17,100, or 129.4 per cent, this year, from ₹90,500 per kilogram, recorded on January 1, 2025. In the local bullion market, gold of 99.9 per cent purity remained flat at ₹1,36,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), as per the association.

In the international markets, spot gold fell \$13.16, or 0.31 per cent, to \$4,325.02 per ounce.

"Gold dipped to around USD 4,330 per ounce on Thursday but stayed near the record highs reached in October, as expectations of further US rate cuts and



With the latest gain, silver prices have skyrocketed by ₹1,17,100, or 129.4%, this year, from ₹90,500 per kilogram, recorded January 1, 2025

ongoing geopolitical risks supported the metal's appeal," Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, said.

Meanwhile, market sentiment was influenced by comments from Federal Reserve

Governor Christopher Waller, who Wednesday supported additional interest rate cuts while noting that policymakers could proceed cautiously.

His remarks followed US labour data indicating further cooling, with the unemploy-

TP Odisha Discoms clarify legal basis of ASD on power bills

BHUBANESWAR: TP Odisha Distribution Companies Wednesday clarified that the levy of Additional Security Deposit (ASD) on electricity bills is a statutory and regulatory requirement mandated under the Electricity Act, 2003 and in accordance with Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) regulations. Security Deposit (SD) is taken before release of a new connection and reviewed annually based on a consumer's electricity consumption and applicable tariff. Consumers whose consumption has reduced during the previous financial year are eligible for adjustment of excess SD in their bills, while those with higher consumption are required to deposit additional security to maintain adequate coverage as per regulations. TP Odisha Discoms emphasised that ASD is a long-standing practice followed across states and has been in force even during the era of erstwhile utilities such as CESU, NESCO, SOUTHCO and WESCO. All security deposits are ring-fenced, maintained as fixed deposits with scheduled banks, earn interest and are fully refundable when a consumer surrenders the connection. During 2024-25, interest amounting to ₹217.29 crore at an annual rate of 6.50 per cent was credited to consumer bills across Odisha. Consumers also have the option of opting for prepaid electricity connections, which do not require any security deposit. The Discoms noted that consumers notified for ASD must pay within the stipulated timeframe, failing which a surcharge of 15 per cent per annum is applicable on the unpaid amount. Commenting on the matter, Gajanan Kale, Chief – Odisha Distribution Business, Tata Power, said, "The annual Security Deposit review is a statutory exercise mandated by the regulator, designed to protect consumer interests while ensuring business continuity. The Security Deposit earns 6.50 per cent annual interest, which is adjusted in electricity bills, and any excess arising from lower consumption is also adjusted. These deposits are maintained as fixed deposits and are not used for operational purposes."



Shares inch lower after struggling for direction

STOCK MARKETS DECLINE FOR 4TH DAY ON WEAK GLOBAL TRENDS, TRADE DEAL UNCERTAINTY

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 18: Indian equity benchmarks struggled for direction Thursday before closing lower for a fourth straight session, as lack of fresh triggers kept investors cautious, while gains in information technology stocks capped broader market losses.

The Nifty 50 eased 0.01% to 25,815.55 points and the BSE Sensex lost 0.09% to 84,481.81. The benchmark indexes are down 0.9% in four sessions. Eleven of the 16 major sectors fell, while the broader mid-caps and small-caps added 0.3% and 0.1%, respectively. A rebound in rupee kept

The benchmark indices are down 0.9% in four sessions

markets in the green for most of the session Thursday before the benchmarks gave up gains in the last hour.

Investors are waiting for US inflation data later today, which could be key to assessing the Federal Reserve's future interest rate action.

VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Investments said the market drifted down in the previous session Wednesday despite foreign investor buying, which could be due



to an increase in short positions. "This means, in the

near-term, foreign investors will resort to a sell-on-rally

Currency dip, festive costs drive shift toward shorter int'l trips

IF DUBAI IS INDIA'S SPONTANEOUS LUXURY ESCAPE, THE TRAVEL HOUSE SAID, VIETNAM HAS EMERGED AS THE FASTEST-GROWING DESTINATION FOR LAST-MINUTE WINTER BOOKINGS AMONG MILLENNIALS, GEN Z TRAVELLERS, AND YOUNG COUPLES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 18: Currency movements and festive-season costs are impacting people's travel decisions, with travellers opting for shorter international getaways and choosing destinations offering easy visa access, among others, as per data by Cox and Kings.

The data also shows that last-minute international bookings made within 15-20 days of travel have risen by nearly 30 per cent compared to last winter, with over 65 per cent of these bookings being for trips lasting under five days.

This winter season is witnessing a distinct shift in how Indians plan international holidays, it said and added that travellers are opting for shorter international getaways planned closer to departure, choosing

destinations that offer easy visa access, predictable on-ground expenses, and lower exposure to long-haul, dollar-linked travel costs.

It also said that rather than dampening travel demand, the current environment is encouraging a more calibrated approach, with Indian travellers prioritising value, convenience, and experience density during the Christmas and New Year period.

Within this shift, Cox & Kings said, Dubai and Vietnam have emerged as the most preferred destinations for festive-season travel, outperforming several traditional winter favourites despite being in peak season.

Strong flight connectivity from India, streamlined visa processes, and the ability to deliver multiple experiences



within compact itineraries have made both destinations particularly attractive for last-minute planners, it said.

"What's changed most this winter is who is travelling at short notice. Nearly 45 per cent of our last-minute winter bookings are coming from families travelling with children and

senior members, especially for destinations like Dubai where safety, medical infrastructure and indoor experiences matter. At the same time, Vietnam is seeing a sharp rise in young adults and first-time international travellers", said Karan Agarwal, Director Cox & Kings. It also observed that trav-

ellers aged 55 and above now account for a growing share of short-haul winter bookings, with most senior travellers preferring destinations with predictable infrastructure and minimal travel complexity.

Dubai continues to command the largest share of last-minute winter bookings, particularly among families with children and senior travelers with a visible rise in multi-generational travel this season, supported by the destination's safety, medical infrastructure, and wide range of indoor and weather-independent experiences, it said.

While winter is Vietnam's peak travel period and inventory remains tight in certain regions, clarity around e-visa processes and improving air connectivity have supported sustained late bookings, it said. This season has also seen a

shift in traveller profiles. Beyond backpackers, young professionals, friends' groups, and first-time international travellers are choosing Vietnam for its ability to offer diverse experiences within a single itinerary, it added.

Beyond destination-specific trends, Cox & Kings notes a broader behavioural change among Indian travellers this winter. Consumers are making quicker decisions, choosing shorter holidays, and prioritising experiences over long stays.

There is also a clear preference for destinations with visa-on-arrival or streamlined e-visa processes. This season, countries like Oman, Sri Lanka, and Bali are also seeing a steady rise in last-minute interest, though Dubai and Vietnam lead by a significant margin, it stated.

CANCELLATION CHAOS

IndiGo faces India antitrust scrutiny

Flight cancellations biggest crisis in IndiGo's 20 year history



REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 18: India's competition regulator said Thursday it was reviewing allegations of antitrust violations by budget airline IndiGo following recent flight disruptions that hit air travel nationwide.

The airline, which controls more than 60% of India's domestic market, cancelled about 4,500 flights earlier this month due to poor pilot roster planning, stranding tens of thousands of passengers and triggering one of the country's biggest aviation crises. Fares surged during the cancellations, prompting the government to impose temporary caps.

The Competition Commission of India said it had "taken cognizance of information filed against IndiGo in the context of the recent flight disruptions witnessed in the aviation sector, across various routes" and decided to proceed with an initial assessment. It did not disclose details of the allegations.

One complaint, seen by Reuters, accuses IndiGo of cancelling flights and then offering seats at much higher prices, amounting to abuse of its dominant market position. The filing by lawyer Kartikeya Rawal alleges his ticket was cancelled and the replacement fare quoted was significantly higher.

The disruptions underscored the risks of a near-duopoly in the world's fastest-growing aviation market, where IndiGo and Air India together hold a more than 90% share.

The CCI did not respond to a request for comment beyond its statement. In such cases, the regulator can order a detailed probe that may lead to penalties if wrongdoing is established.

IndiGo, known for its on-time performance, has apologised for the cancellations, calling them a "blemish" on its record.

Worst is over: CEO

MUMBAI: IndiGo's chief executive Pieter Elbers told employees that the airline has stabilised operations after a period of disruption, saying the worst was over and that the country's largest airline was now focused on resilience, a root-cause review and rebuilding. In a video message to staff, Elbers said IndiGo has restored most of its flight network following the disruptions. In early December, the airline cancelled hundreds of flights - at times more than 1,600 in a single day - due to planning issues linked to new pilot duty rules, crew shortages, winter weather and operational bottlenecks. The cancellations impacted tens of thousands of travellers and triggered regulatory scrutiny, schedule cuts and a temporary suspension of certain pilot duty norms to stabilise operations. Since then, IndiGo has gradually restored services, operating 2,200 flights Thursday and working to normalise its network while reviewing causes and compensating affected customers. "Through the storm, we are finding our wings again. The worst is behind us," Elbers said. He said the past two weeks had been "very challenging" but credited pilots, cabin crew, airport teams, operations control and customer service staff for restoring the network to around 2,200 flights a day. The airline, he said, is now focused on three things - resilience, root cause analysis, and rebuilding.

Kabaddi controversy: Pak player represents India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Dec 18: A popular Pakistani international kab-badi player, Ubaidullah Rajput, faces the prospect of a severe disciplinary action after he appeared for an Indian team in a private tournament in Bahrain December 16.

Ubaidullah found himself in big trouble after videos and pictures of him wearing Indian shirt and waving the Indian flag in the GCC Cup went viral.

The secretary of the Pakistan

Kabbadi Federation, Rana Sar-war, said an emergency meet-ing of the PKR had been called December 27 in which the matter would be discussed and decision taken on disciplinary action against Rajput and some other players.

"I can confirm it was a pri-vate event with private teams formed under the names of India, Pakistan, Canada, Iran etc. in the competition by the organisers. But all the teams had players of their own origin. Indian players represented the



Indian private side and Ubaid-ullah played for them which is

unacceptable in these circum-stances," Sarwar said.

He also claimed 16 Pakistani players had gone to Bahrain in their personal capacity without taking any permission from the federation or the Pakistan Sports Board.

"So action will also be taken against these players for false-ly playing under the names of Pakistan team."

Rajput has issued an apolo-gy and clarified that he was invited to play in the event in Bahrain and was included in a

private team.

"But I didn't know until later they had named the side Indian team and I told the organizers to don't use names of India and Pakistan. In private com-petitions in the past Indian and Pakistan players have played together for a private team but never under the names of India or Pakistan. I was not under the impression until I found out later that I was misrepresented as playing for the Indian team which I can't think of doing af-ter the conflict," he said.

Eng's Ashes hopes hanging by a thread



REUTERS

Adelaide, Dec 18: Nearly four years of Ashes planning was left in smouldering ruins Thursday as England buckled under the heat and the pres-sure at Adelaide Oval to lurch towards a series-deciding de-feat in the third test against Australia.

On a day when temperatures reached 40 degrees Celsius (104F)and fresh controversy erupted over the "Snicko" re-view technology, England were 213 for eight at stumps on day two, still 158 runs short of Aus-tralia's first innings 371.

England captain Ben Stokes (45 not out) was battling cramp and Jofra Archer (30 not out) showed courage to keep the ninth wicket intact for 45 runs, but the duo's late resistance could do little to make up for failures higher up the order.

Leading 2-0 in the series, Aus-tralia need only draw the match to retain the urn they have held since 2017/18.

But there was little sign the hosts would be content with anything less than another crushing win after their com-fortable victories in Perth and Brisbane.

There was certainly no eas-ing back into the action for Aus-tralia's returning captain Pat Cummins and recalled spinner Nathan Lyon, who combined to blitz England's top order before lunch.

"Pretty proud about how the boys went about it," Lyon told TNT Sports. "Pat's been phe-nomenal as captain as always, but the effort from our fast bowlers to get them 213-8 off 68 overs it's a pretty big effort so rest up, recover and we'll have another crack in the morning."

England lost 3-5 in a collapse that may have snuffed out the last flicker of optimism from having earlier denied Australia a 400-plus total on a flat wicket. Cummins threw his reha-

Australia lead series 2-0, need only a draw to retain urn

Lyon moves to second on Australia's all-time bowling list

bilitated back into his work, removing Zak Crawley (9) caught behind in a partner-ship-breaking dismissal before Lyon struck with two wickets in four balls.

Lyon's second dismissal was a peach, bowling Ben Duckett for 29 with a ball that gripped, turned and beat the outside edge.

It put the wily off spinner sec-ond on Australia's all-time test wickets list on 564, one ahead of pace great Glenn McGrath and behind only Shane Warne.

It's the biggest village that we are organizing in the Milano Organizing Committee.

Lyon's first wicket was a gift, though, as under-fire number three Ollie Pope surrendered it for three with a flick off his pads caught at midwicket.

SNICKO IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A Snicko controversy had en-gulfed day one and a new one flared late on day two.

England wicketkeeper Jam-mie Smith was at the centre of the confusion, first surviving a caught-behind appeal when on 16 then being given out caught be-hind for 22 when he appeared to completely miss a Cummins ball.

With third umpire Chris Gaf-faney having to rule on both de-cisions, Snicko only appeared to muddy the waters rather than clear up matters.

Australia paceman Mitchell Starc said Snicko needed to be "sacked" after Smith's earlier reprieve, while Smith left the field furious when he was even-tually dismissed.

When focus shifted back to the cricket, England ended up losing 3-9 to fall to 168 for eight courtesy of a two-wicket burst from pacer Scott Boland before Archer joined Stokes to push England past 200.

HISTORIC YEAR

PSG clinch first-ever Intercontinental Cup



It has been an incredible 2025 for Luis Enrique's men, who secured a treble in the 2024/25 season, including their first UEFA Champions League title

We've made history again! We shown the same mentality throughout this incredible, unforgettable year of 2025

LUIS ENRIQUE | PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN BOSS

level at 1-1, leading to penalties, where PSG's Russian goalkeep-er Matvei Safonov was the he-ro, saving four spot-kicks in the shootout to secure victory for the European champions.

"We've made history again! We shown the same mentality throughout this incredible, un-forgettable year of 2025. We're obviously happy for ourselves, for the club and for our support-ers. It's wonderful, we have to keep going. We feel connected to our supporters. It's a con-nection we feel during every match at the Parc and every away match. We're very hap-py," Enrique said.

Parisian midfielder Vitorinha was named the best player in the 2025 FIFA Intercontinen-tal Cup final and received his award from FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

India look to seal series against SA

Concerns mount around Indian captain SKY and vice captain Gill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Dec 18: India would hope that the challeng-ing home assignment against South Africa, which has ex-posed a few chinks in the ar-mour and thrown up difficult questions on selection, ends on a positive note when the two sides clash in the fifth and final T20 International here Friday.

After being blanked 0-2 in the Tests, India bounced back to win the ODI series and now have an unassailable lead 2-1 in the T20Is after the fourth game was abandoned due to poor weather conditions in Lucknow Wednesday.

That India cannot lose the series should be comforting to embattled head coach Gautam Gambhir given that the other two leaders in the camp - skip-er Suryakumar Yadav and his deputy Shubman Gill - are battling challenges of their own with less than two months to go for the T20 World Cup.

For someone who was ranked world No 1 not so long ago, Suryakumar's form has sharp-ly nosedived in the only format he is assured a place in the XI for India.

Having gone through 18 in-nings in 20 matches this year without a single half-century while averaging a poor 14.20 for his 213 runs, every failure for Suryakumar is adding to the concerns of the Indian camp.

Adding to it is the Gill conun-drum. Gill's return as vice-cap-tain in the T20I format might



Following the abandonment of the fourth T20I between India and South Africa due to excessive fog and poor visibility, Prem Manohar Gupta, the Secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA), said that the full ticket refund process will commence from Friday

and growing list of responsibil-ities in Indian cricket across formats.

Aside from this, India have a settled unit with both the all-rounders, Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube, featuring in all three games so far

In the pace attack, Arshdeep Singh is coming into his ele-ments and is also beginning to forge a partnership with Harshit Rana with the ball.

Meanwhile, Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the third T20I due to personal reasons, joined the team's camp before the fourth match.

A batting-friendly wicket here will pose a challenge to India's best bowler in the se-ries Varun Chakravarthy (6 wickets).

For South Africa, who have blown hot and cold particu-larly with the bat in the T20I series, Friday's contest will be an opportunity to end with the satisfaction of drawing a series against India.

have been perceived as one which put Suryakumar on no-tice a few months ago, but the former's ordinary run with the bat since his comeback and the latest injury setback only ham-pers the team's cause.

A toe injury suffered before the fourth T20I is set to keep Gill out of the final T20I here as India would want to take a cau-tious route, more so when there is a ready replacement for the top order slot in Sanju Samson.

Earlier, Gill had missed most of the two-Test affair following a injury to his neck which he suffered in the series-opener in Kolkata, something that also highlighted his busy schedule

Inter-CIL Volleyball Tournament 2025-26 hosted

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ranchi, Dec 18: The three-day Inter-CIL Volleyball Tourna-ment 2025-26 was inaugurated Tuesday at the CMPDI Sports Ground, Ranchi, and will con-tinue till December 19.

The tournament was formal-ly opened by Director (Techni-cal/CRD) Shankar Nagachari, Director (Technical/ES) Rajiv Kumar Sinha, Director (Tech-nical/RD&T) Nripendra Nath, and Chief Vigilance Officer Pankaj Kumar, who interacted with the players and inaugurat-ed the event by serving the ball.

Several senior officials, sports enthusiasts, and mem-



bers of the CMPDI fraternity were present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries underlined the im-portance of sports in fostering teamwork, discipline, physical

fitness, and camaraderie among employees. All participating players took an oath to uphold sportsmanship and fair play.

The tournament aims to strengthen inter-organisation-

al relations and promote unity, health, and team spirit within the Coal India family.

In the opening match, MCL-Sambalpur defeated CCL-Ranchi by 25-18, 25-18, 25-19. In the second encounter, NCL-Singrauli registered a win over WCL-Nagpur by 25-20, 27-25, 25-12. The third match saw SECL-Bilaspur defeating CMP-DI-Ranchi by 25-18, 26-24, 25-20.

Teams from all Coal India Limited subsidiaries are partic-ipating in the tournament, including host CMPDI (Head-quarters)-Ranchi and SCCL-Ko-thagudem, highlighting a spirit of healthy competition and unity across the organisation.

Sat-Chi get closer to knockouts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Dec 18: India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty dished out a solid performance to outwit the In-donesian pair of Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri in their second Group B match to inch closer to the knockout stage of the BWF World Tour Finals here Thursday.

The former world No 1 Indi-an pair shored up their defence and dominated the proceedings to register a 21-11, 16-21, 21-11 win over world No 8 Alfian and Fikri in the men's doubles match that lasted an hour.

With two wins from two matches, Satwik and Chirag



now lead the group and have built a considerable advantage in points difference.

Third seeds Satwik and Chi-rag will face second seeds Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in their last group match Friday.

Facing a pair known for their exceptional front-court skills, the onus was on Chirag, but he was ably supported by Satwik, who was simply flaw-less in the evening.

WFI tightens selection norms for wrestlers

The wrestling body makes presence at national camp must; bars wrestlers from training independently

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Wres-tling Federation of India (WFI) has unveiled a new selection policy that makes attendance at national camps mandatory to be eligible for national se-lection, bars wrestlers from training independently and mandates Olympic Games quota-winning athletes to appear in a final one-bout selection trial.

The policy was discussed and cleared at WFI's recent General Council meeting during the Na-tionals in Ahmedabad.

It was also presented to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) for feedback and a review.

No Nat'l camp, no India jersey

"Participation in the Nation-al Coaching Camp is mandato-ry for all wrestlers, including elite and iconic athletes. To be eligible for the camp, a wres-tler must have won a medal in the National Championship of the concerned year," the policy under the sub-head National Coaching Camps, stated.

"Once selected, wrestlers are required to train exclusively at the designated national camp. No athlete is permitted to train independently at any other ven-ue," it added.

It means that Vinesh Phogat, who recently announced her comeback from retirement, will have to prove herself at the domestic level before be-ing reckoning for a spot in the



national team.

The policy made it clear that a failure to attend the camp will make the wrestler "ineligible to participate in the selection trials".

The policy has also made a provision to keep a list of reserve wrestler, who will be asked to do the national duty in case of injury to selected athlete.

The WFI policy makes it clear that "past performances

will not be considered for selec-tion trials." "We are not going to give trials exemption to any-one. No athlete can sit on past achievements. In the past, few athletes had asked for exemp-tion which is not fair to up and coming wrestlers, WFI will give equal opportunity to all," a WFI official told PTI.

The policy mentions, that "to be eligible, a wrestler must

have won a medal in at least one of the following competi-tions of the concerned year: National Championship, Fed-eration Cup and any other WFI-recognised competition."

Selection trials must for international competitions

The policy also states that tri-als are mandatory for teams rep-resenting India in major inter-national competitions such as Olympic Games, Asian Games, Continental Championships and World Championships.

The objective of the trials is to provide fair opportunity, assessment of form and fitness, transparency, accountability and merit-based representation.

The WFI asserted that Olym-pic quotas are awarded to the nation and not to individual athletes and it reserves the right to conduct trials for Olym-pic participation.

WFI made it clear that quota winner will not compete in the initial trials and will fight it out with the winner of the trials and if he/she loses, will be given a se-cond chance to reclaim the quota.

The selection committee will be headed by the WFI President. It will also include the Secretary General or Vice President and will have either a Dronacharya/Arjuna/Dhyanchand awardee apart from chief coach of that discipline and the foreign coach.

Apart from this, the chief coach can recommend bar-ring a wrestler from trials on count of indiscipline or poor attendance. The selection com-mittee may uphold the recom-mendation and WFI reserves the right to take disciplinary action against wrestlers found overweight during internation-al competition.

NAT'L SHOOTING C'SHIP

Ketan wins women's 10m air pistol gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Haryana's Ketan Malik overcame a strong field comprising Paris Olympic double medallist Manu Bhaker and was crowned the women's 10m air pistol national champi-on here Thursday.

Ketan struck the gold with 240.0, ahead of Meenu Pathak of Delhi, who took silver with 238.4, and Surbhi Rao, who claimed bronze with 219.5.

In the junior women's category, Vanshika Chaudhary from Uttar Pradesh emerged on top, edging out Anjali Shekhawat by 0.2 for gold, while Asian Games champion Palak Gulia secured bronze, and Army Marksman-ship Unit's Lakshita Bishnoi claimed the youth title after a narrow 0.6 victory over Rash-mika Sahgal, with Sanskriti Bana completing the podium.

The final followed an exten-sive qualification phase that saw over 900 shooters compete across 39 relays.

Gulia topped the qualifi-cation with 582.24x. She was joined at the top by Bhaker, who also shot 582, finishing sec-ond on inner-10 count with 19x.

In the final, Bhaker finished seventh with 137.2, followed by Anjali Choudhary on 110.1, while Mohini Singh ended fourth with 197.9 and Anjali Shekhawat placed sixth with 157.5.

