

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

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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 vari-

ous 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.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



introduce something challenging, adventurous, and extreme-like AOI 1050



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

BJP MLAs urge CM to reconsider 3-fold salary hike

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Amidst public criticism over the threefold hike in salaries and allowances of legislators, ruling BJP MLAs Thursday urged Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to reconsider the proposal.

In a written petition to Majhi, the BJP legislators said the Bills passed unanimously in the Assembly December 9 to enhance the salaries and allowances of MLAs the CM, Deputy CMs, Speaker Deputy Speaker, ministers and others should be reconsidered.

"The BJP MLAs at a meeting with the CM here today urged him to reconsider the proposed hike in the salary and allow ance of the lawmakers. They have also written a letter requesting the CM to reconsider the move, respecting the pub lic opinion," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Ma haling said.

Mahaling said the meeting elaborately discussed the matter relating to the hike in the sala ry and allowances of MLAs and the public views in this regard The meeting also discussed the political impact of the decision to enhance the monthly package of MLAs from Rs 1.11 lakh to Rs 3.45 lakh.

Though the Bills were passed unanimously, they were yet to get assent of the Governor.

Parl okays VB-G RAM G Bill On Day I, state garners

Opposition tears papers in House

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



Several members of the Opposition staged a walkout in the Raiva 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 fivehour discussion on the Bill in the Rajva 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.

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 Mahat-

ma 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

₹38,700cr investment

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

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 gener ate 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 gov ernance and a future-ready eco system," 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 pres-

idential story. Joe Biden is still the only president in the display not to be recognised with a gild-

Biden, who defeated Trump

ed portrait. Instead, Trump chose an autopen, reflecting his mockerv of Biden's age and assertions that Biden was not up to the job.

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 sign nature 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 encoun ter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Thursday, police said.

The exchange of fire took place in the morning on a for ested hill of Gondiguda under Golapalli police station area when a team of District Reserve Guard was out on a search op eration 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 re covered from the encounter site along with firearms, he said.

OrissaPOST

As the calendar pages turn to mark the close of 2025, a shadow stillies heavy over Ahmedabad, a city for ever changed by the catastrophic loss of Air India Filght 1711 June 12. The London-bound Boeing 787 Dreamliner, carrying 242 passengers and crew, crashed fust 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 deadlest air disasters. The victims include young students and families of multiple nationalities, leaving behind voids left agross confinents

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 1 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 12 emotional strain to his unimag- 14 already inable ordeal.



16

17

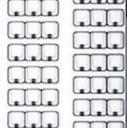
18

SC INTERVENTION

NOTICES ISSUED Court issued notices

> to the Centre, DGCA, and AAIR on





BHJ



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

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking an independent

alleging that the official probe violates citizens' fundamental

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),

ights to life, equality and access to truthful information.

TOP COURT'S ROLE

Actively overseeing the

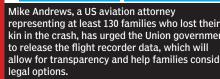
OCUS ON TRANSPARENCY Court concerned about media leaks affecting public perception

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.

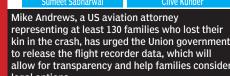




COURT'S PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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





Initial findings

Ait is shaping up to an one of the deadliest The AAIB report published July 12 said that the. fuel supply switches liest was the June 12 crash of for both en-Air India Flight 171, a that went gines were Ahmedabad, India, killing 260 people. The crash occurred in

s 2025 draws to a close,

it is shaping up to be

years for civil aviation in re-

cent 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 dead-

down shortly after takeoff from

a densely populated area, wors-

ening the toll. As required by international law, India's Air-

craft Accident Investigation

Bureau (AAIB) published a pre-

liminary report one month af-

ter the disaster, when the plane

exploded into flames shortly

after takeoff from Ahmed-

abad in western India. That

report provided some technical

information, but the investiga-

Air India flight 171 took off at

1:38 pm from Ahmedabad air-

port with 230 passengers and

12 crew members on board,

bound for London Gatwick

Airport. Less than a minute

later, it crashed into the build-

ings of a medical university

campus, located a few hun-

dred metres from the runway.

Video footage shows it taking

off but failing to gain altitude,

before crashing in a fireball.

The crash killed 241 of the 242

people on board and 19 on the

ground. Only one passenger

survived but was seriously in-

jured. According to Air India,

of the 230 passengers, 169 were

Indians, 53 British, seven Por-

tuguese and one Canadian.

tion is still ongoing

What happened?

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,

Controversy

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner is facing

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

BOEING 787 UNDER SCRUTINY

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

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

was reported that the flight experienced

departing from London Heathrow

Airport en route Chennai.

JUNE 16: A Delhi-bound

Dreamliner from

Air India Boeing 787-8

Hong Kong returned

to its airport within

a flap adjustment failure shortly after

security issues. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation in India has started

or by any kind of malfunction.

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.

THESKY

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.

scribed it as an unimaginable

never seen anything like

this." Pointing to a tree be-

hind his shop, the 60-year-old

said the aircraft first struck

there before crashing into

the hostel building. Another

local, Manubhai Raiput, 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 giv-

ing 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

"In all my years, I have

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 dam-

aging 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, saving 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 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

over 25 years of flying, Captain

Sabharwal had not had a single

incident or accident-causing



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 ΔΔΙΒ's final report, which is expected to provide conclusive findings about the crash.

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

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.

incidents occurred within six

months of maintenance.

■ 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

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 NDIA TO SET UP NATIONAL AVIATION SAFETY CENTRE Dreamliner in Ahmedabad, India. India will set up a national aviation safety centre modelled JUNE 15: British Airways 787-8 returns to London due to "flap adjustment failure". It

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 (FDTL) 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



calamity

ix 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 me-

from

point

tres

the

rushed to the site residents near even before pothe site, memories of the incident still linger, casting a lasting shadow on saying they are still afraid to

aircraft passes overhead

lice, fire services or the Army artheir lives, with some of them rived. look up at the sky when an

downtown

PROTEST OVER VB-G RAM G

Several members of Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) stage a protest at Rajmahal Square in Bhubaneswar against the withdrawal of the name of Mahatma Gandhi from MGNREGA through the contentious Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025, which was passed in the Lok Sabha, Thursday. They also demanded revision of daily wages to ₹700 and a guarantee of 200 workdays per annum



Scholarship scam: 149 students, 7 institutions in Khurda booked



PRAVAT PANIGRAHI, OP

Khurda, Dec 18: At least 149 students and seven private educational institutions have been booked for allegedly obtaining post-matric scholarships by submitting forged income and caste certificates, officials said.

Acting on the Khurda Collector's directions, the District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) lodged a written complaint at Khurda Model police station, leading to the registration of a case (487/25) against the students, police said.

In a separate case, (486/25), police booked seven institutions for allegedly facilitating scholarship payments to students who were either not enrolled or never attended classes. The cases were registered following instructions from

the Collector. The institutions named are: The Techno School; Subhash Academy of Management and Technology; Gurukul Engineering School; Gurukul Institute of Technology; Mahavir Engineering College; and Mahavir Institute of Engineering and Technical Education.

Officials said the district administration has also written to collectors of the districts where the 149 students reside, seeking initiation of recovery proceedings under the Odisha Public Demands Recovery Act to reclaim the disbursed scholarship amounts.

A review conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) into the implementation of the post-matric scholarship scheme in Khurda district for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21 has uncovered large-

POLITICKLE by MANJUL

A review conducted by the CAG into the implementation of the post-matric scholarship scheme in Khurda district for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21 has uncovered large-scale irregularities

scale irregularities.

According to the review, 149 student beneficiaries secured scholarships during the period by submitting forged income and caste certificates. The audit findings pointed to serious lapses in scrutiny at the institutional level.

Following receipt of the audit report and in compliance with directions from the state government, the district administration carried out a detailed probe into the forgery. Based on the findings, Khurda Collector Amrit Ruturaj directed the DSWO to initiate criminal proceedings against the students involved and seven educational institutions.

Acting on the DM's instructions, the DSSO has filed two separate written complaints at the police station, officials said.



JINGLE BELLS: With Christmas just a few days away, shops come up at Cuttack's Mission Road selling themed home décor and collectibles

ust a few days away, shops come up at Cuttac

Prime accused arrested from Ganjam

BHUBANESWAR GANGRAPE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The prime accused behind Dhauli gang rape case, absconding since the crime came to the fore, was arrested by the Commissionerate Police, Thursday.

The accused identified as Satya Prakash Hati alias 'Joker Happy' was previously involved in several crimes and has 18 cases registered against him in different police stations.

According to sources, Satya committed the crime 10 days after he was released from jail. After arrest, Satya was taken to the crime spot to recreate crime scene.

With the arrest of Satya, the total number of arrest have reached to three, while other two accused who were involved in this incident are currently absconding. Police have intensified their investigation to arrest the remaining accused in the case.

stitutions exist in Mayurbhanj

and other districts of Odisha,

there is a pressing need to en-

sure that academic books in Ol

Chiki reach more schools and

Asked about visitors feed-

back to the Santali language

book stall, Murmu said, "We

have received overwhelmingly

positive response. Members of

the Santali community visit-

ed the stall in large numbers,

while many non-Santali visi-

tors, encountering the Ol Chiki

institutions across the state.

Ol Chiki stall at Odisha State Book Fair a big draw



It is to be noted that the case was registered at Dhauli police station December 11, where a 17 year old girl and her male friend were intercepted by five men following which they gang raped the minor in front of her male friend at Daya River embankment. Besides, the accused also stole a gold chain and other belongings from the victim following the gangrape. After the case was lodged, the police swung into action and arrested two accused who were produced before the court Wednesday. Later, Satya was arrested by the Police.

Provide compensation of ₹5 lakh, job to kin: Cong

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Congress Thursday demanded ₹5 lakh compensation and government job for a family member of the alleged gangrape victim at Dhauli on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. A 17-year-old college student was allegedly raped by some men near Dhauli hills on the evening of December 10. Alleging that the law and order situation has deteriorated in the state, including the capital city Bhubaneswar, Odisha Mahila Congress president Minakshi Bahinipati claimed the atrocities against women are rising day by day in the state under the BJP rule. "Though such a heinous crime happened near Bhubaneswar, the state government, including Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, has remained silent till now," Bahinipati alleged. She demanded the immediate arrest of all the accused persons involved in the crime and ₹5 lakh and a government job for any eligible family member of the victim. If the government fails to fulfil the demands, the Mahila Congress workers will gherao the governor's house in the coming days, she warned. The police have so far arrested three persons, including the prime accused in the qang-rape case, while two other accused are still absconding.

Two Odisha men fall victim to Kerala organ trafficking racket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Dec 18: A racket involved in trafficking people to Iran for illegal organ donation had also sent two persons from Odisha to Tajikistan this year, the NIA has found while probing a case registered in Kerala.

The National Investigation

Agency (NIA) revealed fresh details in an affidavit filed in a court here while seeking further custody of the first accused, Madhu Jayakumar, a native of Palarivattom here. The case came to light May

18, 2024, when a person named Sabith was intercepted by immigration officials at Kochi airport on suspicion of being part of an organised organ trafficking network.

Subsequent investigation led to the arrest of Sajith and Bellamkonda Ram Prasad, a native of Vijayawada, who were found to have facilitated the travel of organ donors and recipients to hospitals in Iran for illegal organ transplantation.

Jayakumar, who had been absconding for over a year, was arrested upon his arrival at the New Delhi airport November 7 this year.

As per the affidavit filed by the national agency at the NIA court here, Jayakumar, during interrogation, disclosed the names of 27 recipients who underwent kidney transplantation in Iran with his assistance. He also revealed the names of 11 donors, the NIA said.

"Even after the registration of this case, in 2025, two persons from Odisha were brought to Tajikistan, where their kidneys were transplanted to rich recipients through the accused," the affidavit said. The NIA sought Jayakumar's further custody to trace the money obtained through the illegal organ trade.

"The huge amount obtained by him through the kidney trade through Stemma Club and various bank accounts was converted into Bitcoin and USDT. The details of these Bitcoin and USDT transactions made by the first accused are to be ascertained through custodial interroga-

tion," the agency told the court.

Though Jayakumar's counsel opposed the plea, pointing out that the NIA had already interrogated him for seven days in custody, the court observed that the gravity of the alleged crime was extremely serious.

Attempts are being made to trace two donors from Odisha

who were sent to Tajikistan.

NIA chargesheet stated that donors who are from a financially poor background were lured with high remuneration. However, after taking them to Iran, their passports were seized.

CM unveils Srimandir wall, desk calendars

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday unveiled the newly designed wall and desk calendars published by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), featuring captivating photographs of Lord Jagannath.

The first copies of the calendars were ceremonially offered to the Lord at the 12th century shrine on the auspicious occasion of Dhanu Sankranti. Following the ritual offering, the calendars were formally unveiled by the Chief Minister.

The calendars highlight

splendid visuals of the Lord's various attires and iconic scenes from the world famous Rath Yatra. These images are presented through traditional art forms such as sand art, Pattachitra, palm-leaf engraving, and traditional stone carving, reflecting the state's rich cultural heritage.

According to sources at

According to sources at SJTA, the calendars will be available for devotees at the Shrimandir Information Centres in Puri and Bhubaneswar within the next two-three days.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also unveiled a special diary published by the temple administration. The stall, titled Santali Saonhed Akhada, is managed by Malati Murmu, a publisher and cultural activist from Santali community, and

Santali community, and is distinct for its exclusive focus on books published entirely in Ol Chiki script

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: As a symbol of linguistic pride and cultural preservation, a lone outlet dedicated to Santali literature written in Ol Chiki script drew attention of the visitors at 7th Odisha State Book Fair dotted with nearly 500 stalls.

The stall, titled Santali Saonhed Akhada, is managed by Malati Murmu, a publisher and cultural activist from Santali community, and is distinct for its exclusive focus on books published entirely in Ol Chiki script.

The collection on display included novels, short stories, poetry, magazines and a wide range of academic texts.

Among the notable titles were 'Ol Chiki Chedoh Potob', an alphabet primer; 'Elkha-Potob', an introductory book on numbers and mathematics; and 'Santali Ranal', a comprehensive grammar text.

Academic works such as 'Atan' (Geography), 'Nagam' (History) and 'Hitel', a philosophical text based on the ideas of Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu, were also showcased at the stall.

Established in 2024, Santali Saonhed Akhada is run by 25 members of the Santali community. The organisation is still young and its own publishing output remains limited. The strength of the stall lies in its carefully and extensive collection of Santali literature, Murmu said. "Our purpose is to

Jurmu said. "Our purpose is to script for the first time, showed state of the first time, show

distribute books written in Ol Chiki script and promote Santali language, literature, heritage and culture," she said, adding that although Santali model keen interest and purchased introductory alphabet books. Our presence shines distinctly amidst the crowd."

amidst the crowd."

Murmu also highlighted

FAIR SEES ₹6.5CR TURNOVER



Bhubaneswar: The book fair organised by Odia Language, Literature, and Culture department clocked a business turnover of ₹6.5 crore. This was revealed during the concluding day ceremony Wednesday. The 12-day long event saw launch of more than 100 books of various publishing houses. Addressing the valedictory function as the chief guest, Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy said, "It would not be an exaggeration to say that Odisha State Book Fair is the confluence of writers, readers, and publishers. Books are invincible and immortal. I congratulate the Odia Language, Literature, and Culture department for this innovative effort to enrich our language and literature." The keynote speaker and Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award winner Yashodhara Mishra said, "Books are the priceless

Yashodhara Mishra said, "Books are the priceless wealth of human civilisation. Books are the mirror of society. It is impossible to imagine a developed society without books. Despite the era of globalisation and internet, books have carved a unique space for themselves, and the youth are showing interest in purchasing and reading books."

'Fagun', a monthly magazine published entirely in Ol Chiki script, of which she is the editor.

Founded in 2008, 'Fagun' carries news, events and voices from across the Santali world. The print edition is circulated in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal, while its digital PDF edition reaches Santali communities abroad in countries including the USA, Nepal, Bangladesh and several Arab nations.

"Language is where we feel most at home. When our people read Ol Chiki in distant lands, they are not just reading the news, they are returning, even if briefly, to their motherland," Murmu said, describing the magazine's cultural significance.

Recalling a recent milestone, Murmu spoke about her visit to Rashtrapati Bhavan October 2, where she, along with her husband Mangat Murmu and members of the Santali community, met President Droupadi Murmu.

She described the interaction as deeply moving and a moment of collective pride for the Santali community, noting that the President showed keen interest in copies of 'Fagun' and discussed issues related to tribal welfare and language promotion.

Murmu also expressed reverence for Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu, the creator of the Ol Chiki script, describing him as a visionary who laid the foundation for Santali literary and cultural self-respect.

The community welcomed the announcement by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi of a ₹50-crore package on the occasion of Pandit Murmu's 120th birth anniversary, which includes plans to develop memorial sites, establish an Ol Chiki Library at Baripada, set up an open theatre museum and organising an international seminar to promote Santali literature.

235 new hostels approved for ST, OBC students: Min



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 threeday 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

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

hostels across the state.

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.

cials to ensure basic facilities

such as drinking water, toilets,

temporary sheds, and CCTV in-

stallation at each mandi. He em-

phasised that no eligible farmer

should be left out of the procure-

ment process, and urged that

issuance of tokens and timely

payments be given top priority.

measures, mandi nodal officers

and supervising officers have

been deployed. The district ad-

ministration is keeping a close

watch on border areas to pre-

vent paddy from neighbouring

states from entering Odisha.

Every vehicle transporting

paddy from mandi to mill is

also being closely monitored,

In addition to preparedness

ipating in the festival possess the potential to represent the state at higher levels and excel in various fields.

In his welcome address, department

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

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

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.

Govt disburses ₹90cr as loan

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 democra tising 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-

CLASSIFIED

By virtue of an affidavit

No.- 4081, Dtd.-16.10.2025

before the Executive

Magistrate, Jajpur

Road, I, Suryakanta

Behera, S/o.-Krushna

Behera, At-Nirala, P.O.-

Debabhumi, P.S.- Aska,

changed my name from

Suryakanta Behera to

Surjaya Kanta Behera.

Dist.- Ganjam hereby

declare that I have

Henceforth, I shall

be known as Surjaya

Kanta Behera for all

declare that my wife's

name has been changed

from Kishmita Behera

purposes. I further

to Kismita Behera.

shall be known as

purposes.

Henceforth, my wife

Kismita Behera for all

AFFIDAVIT

EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS interest waiver to 1.55L SHGs

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

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

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.

en-led enterprises and make da 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



Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Stewart School celebrated its 65th Annual Sports Day Thursday with great enthusiasm. DSF and Arjuna Awardee K Ravi Kumar graced the occasion as chief guest, sharing his expe riences 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 vi brant 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, Princi pal-in-Charge Madhuswani Pramanik and senior teachers

Orissa HC orders action in medicinal opium case

POST NEWS NETWORK

the minister said.

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

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

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 decid ed 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.





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	WEATHI	EK		
	BBSR	CTC	FORECA	
Max Temp	27.2°	25.6°	Fog or mis	
Min Temp	13.9°	13.4°	the morning mainly clear later	
Humidity	90%	86%		
Rainfall	Nil	Nil		



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 Hansda 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.

Bribery cuffs on woman IIC Traffic Curbs imposed for NH-49 works



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bangiriposi, Dec 18: The Mayurbhani 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,

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



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**

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 Uskapalli village is inhabited by members of the Koya tribe. In recent days, sev eral villagers had reportedly died of various causes, leading some residents to suspect that Muka was behind those deaths through his witchcraft and sor cery practice. Acting on that be lief, the two accused allegedly attacked and killed him around 9pm Wednesday, police added

tender, and any such manual offer

received shall be ignored. Sl. No.

Tender Notice No. & Name of wor

re as follows : 1. CKP-WEST-25-26

35. Balance work for Engagement of

Railway land existing in South Easter

Railway Boundaries under the

urisdiction of ADEN/Rourkela & ADEN/Jharsuguda of Chakradharpu

Tender Value : ₹ 1.21.78.714.67. EMD

₹ 2,10,900/-. 2. CKP-CENTRAL-25

26-53. Balance work for Engagement

f Consultant for carrying out Mutatio

of Railway land existing in South

Eastern Railway Boundaries under the urisdiction of ADEN/Settlement

ADEN/West/CKP & ADEN/BNDM of

Chakradharpur Division under South Eastern Railway.(2nd call). Tender Value: ₹ 1,89,88,803.20. EMD:

2,45,000/-. 3. CKP-CENTRAL-25-26

54. Civil Engg. work in connection with Provision of Quick Watering arrangement at Chakradharpur Station

2nd call) Tender Value :

.03,19,198.26. EMD : ₹ 2,01,600/-Cost of Tender form: ₹ 0 for each

Date of opening: 09.01.2026 for SI

No. 1 and 12.01.2026 for SI. No. 2 & 3

http://www.ireps.gov.in The tendere

pidders must have Class-III Digital

Signature Certificate & must be

registered under on IREPS Portal. Only

registered tenderer/ bidder car

participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of

articipating in e-tendering. Note: e

Tender Forms shall be issued free of

cost to all tenderers. (Authority-Rly. Bd.'s

etter No. 2020/CE-I /CT/3E/GCC/Policy

Division under South Eastern Railw

Consultant for carrying out Mutation of

2 youths of one family killed in road accident

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

Guaanla village within Banshada 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-

Dhamara Marine police station IIC Priyadarshini Khatua said the two vouths 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

gar under Dosinga panchayat.

Divisional Railway Manager/Engg. Chakradharpur acting For & On behal of The President of India invites E Tenders against Open Tender, Manua offers are not allowed against this

The accident took place near

Police said the circumstances

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

Maoist surrenders

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

Addressing a news conference at the Rourkela district police headquarters, Western Range DIG Brijesh Rai and Rourkela SP Nitesh Wadhwani 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

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 Khalari 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

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

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.

NOTICE

It is declared that the property/ies, Mutation Khata No.573/666 Plot No.2330, Extent of A0.229dec., Mutation Khata No.573/684 Plot No.2330/5071, Extent of A0.350dec. belongs to MOUZA VILLAGE: Unit No. 13, Chandini-Chouk, P.S.: Lalbag, P.S. No TAHASIL: Cuttack, TAHASIL No.202, DIST: Cuttack in respect of Project named and styled as "JAIN EXOTICA" belongs to the developer JAIN BUILDERS PVT. LTD., is a Company in-corporate under Companies Act 1956, CIN. -U452010R1990PTC002698, PAN: AAACJ7476N, having its office at Paras Plaza, Tinkonia Bagicha P.S. Dargha Bazar, Town/Dist. Cuttack represented by its Director Sr Vinit Sethia & Attorney Holder of Ashok Kumar and Anuj Kumar Modi vide read. G.P.A. vide No. 10392207734 dt. 19.10.2022 availing the project construction Loan and has been Equitably mortgaged with DCE Bank Ltd., Chandrasekharpur Branch, Bhubaneswar, Dist. Khurda. Any person/s having objection may contact Sri Parthendu Ray, Advocate Mob: 9776328828 within 15 days of the publication.

Sri Parthendu Rav

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया Bank of India

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

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, PIN-751015

[Rule-8 (1) & (2)] of Security

POSSESSION NOTICE

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)/Coforrower(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, Bhubaneswai 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

Sahoo / Co-Borrower: Late Jnanendra Sahoo, Legal Heirs of deceased Co-Borrower Late Janeadra Sahoo: 1) Miss Abbinsa 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. Borrower & Mortgagor: Mrs. Sunita Sahoo, W/o- Late Jnanendra Sahoo/ ₹11,60,963.86 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.

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 18.12.2025

भारत सर्कार

कारपोरेट कार्य मंत्रालय

त्वरित कॉपोरिट समापन प्रसंस्करण केंन्द्र (सी-पेस),

आई.आई.सी.ए. बिल्डिंग, 7वीं मंजिल,

प्लाट P-6,7,8, से.-5, आई.एम्.टी. मानेसर,

गुडगाँव, हरियाणा - 122050

Email: roc.cpace@mca.gov.in

BHUBANESWAR SME BRANCH /

Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Mortgagor(s)

Date of Demand Notice/ Liabilities due Description of **Date of Possession** as per Notice Immovable Property/ies (Symbolic) Notice Borrower & Mortgagor: Mrs. Sunita Sahoo, W/o- Late Jnanendra ₹24,63,387.86 All that piece and parcel of 29.09.2025 the Land and Building situated at Flat No.: E/6 in other charges 17.12.2025

thereon 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

All that piece and parcel of the 29.09.2025 + interest & Land and Building situated at other charges Flat No.: 3/A-208 in 2nd 17.12.2025 thereon 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. Authorized Officer, Bank of India

EAST COAST RAILWAY

ENGAGEMENT OF COMMISSION AGENT FOR

KAPALI ROAD & BARITHENGARH PASSENGER HALT No. G.51/P.H/KPLD & BRTG / Notification / 5144 APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FROM INTERESTED CANDIDATES FOR KAPALI ROAD (KPLD) PASSENGER HALT IN BETWEEN KENDUAPADA (KED) AND BAUDPUR (BUDR) STATION, (2) BARITHENGARH (BRTG) PASSENGER HALT IN BETWEEN BYREE (BYY) AND DHANMANDA (DNM) RAILWAY STATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION. COMMISSION PAYABLE TO THE HALT AGENT WILL BE

Amount of Sale of tickets per month & Commission payable:

*₹ 1/- to 15,000/-: 15%, *₹ 15,001/- to 50,000/-: 12%, *₹ 50,001/- to 1,00,000/-9%, *₹ 1,00,001/- to 2,00,000/-: 6%, *₹ 2,00,001/- and above : 3%. Security Deposit for above halt is ₹ 2,000/- (Rupees Two thousand only).

N.B.: All photostat copies enclosed with the application must be self-attested without which the application will be summarily rejected. How to Apply: Candidates may apply in prescribed format for the above Passenger Halt to the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, East Coast Railway, Khurda Road, At/ P.O.: Jatni, Dist: Khurda, Pin-752050 and

applications should be dropped in the Box kept for this purpose in the office of the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, East Coast Railway, Khurda Road, on any working day between 1000 hrs to 1700 hrs. Application sen through postal service or by any other means shall not be entertained Application duly filled in should reach this office by 1500 hrs. on or before 08.01.2026 (Thursday). If the last day i.e. 08.01.2026 happens to be or is declared to be a holiday, applications will be received by the same time on the next working day. All the received applications will be opened on 1530 hrs

The Railway reserves the right to reject any application without assigning any reason whatsoever. For complete details, application format and other terms & conditions please

isit our website www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / Khurda Road

Email: roc.cpace@mca.gov.in 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: 12/12/202!

Reference: In the matter of striking off or removal of names of (3) companies in the state of Odisha unde 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 unde section 248(2) of the Companies Act, 2013 for removal of its/their name(s) from the register of companies either on the ground 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.

CBC 07123/11/0520/2526

Irkan Tirkay **Deputy Registra Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit**

STATE BANK OF INDIA Regional Business Office, Bhubaneswar North, Rajpath, Unit-I, Bhubaneswar-751009

GOLD AUCTION

Rs.68,991/-

This is to inform the public that inspite of repeated reminders the following gold loan borrower have no 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 lega action against them if the Bank losses where necessary. Borrower can take his Jewellery by repaying

he ou	utstanding debt before the auction take place.			
SI. Io.	Name & Address of the Borrower / Gold Loan A/c No.		Gross Weight (in Gram)	Loan Balance (as on 18.12.2025)
	BASIII GARH BRANCH BH	LIBANESV	/AR	

Bijaylaxmi Panda, D/o.: Bhaskar Panda, At: Kuansh, 15.50 17.00 Bhadrak, PIN - 756100 / 43159099022

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

1) 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







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

Gurgaon, Haryana - 122050





Consider the Divine Life as the most important thing to obtain.

THE MOTHER



Marcello Estevão

technology

redrawing

the map of

comparative

policymakers

recognize the

reorientation

that will shape

economy in the

coming decade

underlying

structural

the world

advantage,

should

With

Hidden Rebalancing

ext year, global growth is expected to be near 3.1%, almost the same as this year. To many observers, such steadiness suggests a world economy drifting sideways, neither slowing nor accelerating. But the stability implied by the headline figure is the product not of inertia, but of a rebalancing that is quietly reshaping how global savings and investment interact.

The core message of the Institute of International Finance's latest Capital Flows Report is about shifting growth patterns. The United States is cooling after a strong post-pandemic period, whereas Europe and Japan, long seen as weak links, have found a firmer footing. While China's structural slowdown continues, India and a wider set of Asian economies are growing faster.

Emerging markets overall may still be growing at nearly 4.2% per year, but the strong performers within this group have changed significantly. The world economy's engines are rotating, but they are not all pulling in the same direction.

This redistribution of weight shows up most clearly in capital flows. Nonresident flows into emerging markets reached roughly \$1.18 trillion in 2025 – well above historical averages. But this surge is not the start of a boom. Much of the strength reflected bank-related flows, official financing, and balance-sheet rebuild-

ing in emerging Europe and parts of Asia. As these temporary drivers ease, flows are projected to moderate to about \$1.13 trillion in 2026 – representing a normalization rather than a retreat.

Capital-flow ratios put this into perspective. Nonresident flows have amounted to about 2.6% of emerging-market GDP in 2025. but will fall to 2.3% in 2026. That is below pre-pandemic norms, but the headline distorts the underlying story, because inward flows to China have collapsed. Remove China, and you will find that all other emerging markets are absorbing capital at roughly the same pace as in the mid-2010s. The softness in the aggregate reflects China's weight, not a broad weakening of emerging-market fun-

What matters, then, is the direction of flows. Capital is rotating away from China and toward emerging markets offering credible policy frameworks, resilient domestic demand, and opportunities for investment.

Several Asian economies are receiving larger shares of foreign direct investment and portfolio flows, and emerging Europe is recovering after a turbulent period. Latin America is stabilizing across a range of external indicators, and certain commodity importers have begun to absorb larger capital flows. These are not dramatic changes, but they do reflect a world in which capital circulates more selectively than in the liquidity-heavy decade that followed the 2008 global financial crisis.

China's evolving role lies at the center of this new configuration. The country remains

the world's largest source of external savings among emerging markets, with a current-account surplus of between \$500 and \$700 billion. But the way that surplus is recycled has changed. Instead of rising through People's Bank of China reserves, a growing share now moves outward through firms, banks, and households investing abroad.

China has thus become a structural exporter of capital, which helps to explain why global reserve accumulation remains modest even with a somewhat softer dollar. China's savings are increasingly supporting investment in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, rather than flowing back into traditional reserve channels.

A second shift is visible in external balances. Asia, excluding China, has become a major surplus center. Vietnam continues to attract foreign direct investment with unusual consistency; India finances its deficit without strain, owing to its strong services exports; and South Korea and Malaysia have benefited from the upswing in the global tech cycle and the depth of their information and communica-

tion technology (ICT) service sectors. By contrast, commodity exporters are channeling more resources toward domestic transformation. For example, Saudi Arabia's external surplus has narrowed as it invests heavily in logistics, manufacturing, and non-oil sectors. Latin America remains broadly balanced, while emerging Europe is more mixed (though it is not under systemic pressure). Finally, several African economies are gradually regaining market access as domestic reforms strengthen their macro frameworks.

These shifts amount to a subtle but meaningful redrawing of global imbalances. Surpluses are concentrating in parts of Asia, commodity exporters are looking inward, and many emerging economies are managing external accounts more effectively.

Then there is the technological dimension. The rapid buildout of AI computing capacity made a visible contribution to US GDP in early 2025, and these capital-heavy, energy-intensive, globally interconnected investments are beginning to influence where global savings flow and where production capacity expands.

The handful of emerging economies with a combination of domestic digital capabilities and strong exports of ICT services are likely to anchor the next phase of digital investment. The extent of their participation, however, will depend not only on their macro stability and regulatory clarity, but also on their reserves of reliable energy and skilled labor.

These shifts are unfolding against a backdrop of familiar risks. The US fiscal trajectory remains uncertain, and China's domestic demand remains weak as its property-market correction continues. Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and threats to key shipping routes have raised costs and disrupted trade, and AI introduces new measurement

challenges as intangible investment grows. Yet the global system has absorbed these pressures through exchange-rate adjustments and portfolio shifts, rather than through sudden stops or external crises. Such resilience is not accidental: it reflects the underlying rotation in capital flows.

The dollar illustrates the point. Although it weakened against most emerging-market currencies in 2025 as US growth cooled, it did so in an orderly way, and several emerging-market currencies remain undervalued even after appreciation. The IIF's baseline scenario for 2026 is that the dollar will remain broadly stable – though perhaps slightly softer. Hedging costs have fallen, and local-currency markets have deepened. Adjustments are taking place through foreign-exchange channels rather than reserves, implying a healthier global equilibrium than the one that emerged immediately after the pandemic.

The world economy is not drifting; it is rebalancing. Growth remains steady, but its global composition has changed. Capital flows remain strong because their channels have shifted. With technology redrawing the map of comparative advantage, policymakers should recognize the underlying structural reorientation that will shape the world economy in the coming decade.

> The writer is a Professor at Georgetown University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

FOCUS POLITICS

THE HIGH COMMAND

been as over-used (rather mis-used) in the political lexicon quite like 'High Command'. Conceptually the idea of a 'High Command' is repugnant to a parliamentary multi-party democracy, reflecting the ascent of the 'elected autocrat'. Traditionally, this word is associated with the Congress and the Nehru-Gandhi family, with Indira Gandhi being widely seen as the original party 'High Command'. But in a twist in the tale, the contemporary High Command has shifted location from 10 Janpath to 7 Lok Kalyan Marg and 6 A Krishna Menon Marg, the residences of Gujarat and now India's political Jodi number one, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Consider this. Only this week, the BJP chose a national 'working' president in 45 year old Nitin Nabin. No one outside Bihar had paid much attention to the four-time MLA and state minister who is now being described as BJP's 'rising star'. No political commentary while speculating endlessly on 'Kaun Banega BJP adhyaksha' had even remotely mentioned Nabin's name. Suddenly, Nabin's name is announced as 'working' president (Is there anything like a 'non-working' president?). Faithful BJP karyakartas and leaders gathered to garland him outside the party headquarters in New Delhi to greet Nabin even as some workers confessed that they would have been hard put to recognise him.

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 but 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



Contrast the BJP High Command's unilateralism with the Congress leadership dithering over whether Siddaramiah should continue as CM in Bangalore or should be replaced by a DK Shivakumar

parivar family background. Contrast the BJP High Command's unilateralism with the Congress leadership dithering over whether Siddaramiah should continue as CM in Bangalore or should be replaced by a DK Shivakumar. Recall how in 2022, the Congress 'high command' couldn't get an Ashok Gehlot to agree to take over the party president's post. When Gehlot refused to quit as Rajasthan CM, the party leadership had little choice but to back off. Today, when a high-profile party MP like Shashi Tharoor departs from the Congress line on key issues, the party 'high command' avoids any public confrontation. Disciplined? No. Democratic? Well, sort of. Certainly, there is far greater space today to question the Gandhis in the Congress than there is to express any discontent in the BJP.

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

the last word within the party. Out of power for more than a decade, the Congress 'High Command' has weakened to the point where it no longer evokes the fear factor. In sharp contrast, the BJP has grown exponentially in a milieu where its Jodi number one are feared and admired in equal measure. As long as elections are won in the name of Modi with Shah as a media-styled Chanakya, who is really concerned about whether there is any genuine inner-party dialogue? When was the last time the BJP parliamentary board-once considered the apex body of the party's decision-making-actually held a meaningful discussion on a national issue?

From choosing CMs to formu-

lating party strategy, all roads

now lead to the gates of the Jodi

number one.

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 Raie would have won. Instead. the choice of a first-time MLA as CM was made in Delhi and merely communicated as a diktat 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-

party meeting in Jaipur only to astonishingly find his name being proposed for the top job. A similar pattern was seen in Guiarat too when another first time MLA Bhupendra Patel was plucked out from the back benches to the front row. In a sense, the Modi-Shah 'high command' have only taken a leaf out of Indira Gandhi's political playbook. It was, after all, Mrs Gandhi who perfected the art of anointing CMs in Delhi and expected regional satraps to fall in line.

And yet, the BJP 'high command' model has one sharp difference from the Congress one: with a ruthless edge, the Modi-Shah duo have used it to effect a generational change within the BJP. Almost all the BJP CMs are in their fifties, enabling the party to justifiably claim that it has a more youthful look. Party elders have been cast aside into Raj Bhavan sinecures or de facto Marg Darshak Mandals. By contrast, the Congress is still trapped between septuagenarian leaders who refuse to retire and 'young' leaders anxiously waiting for their big break.

At the heart of this latest BJP 'High Command' power-play lies another intriguing question: "After Modi, Who?" For Amit Shah in particular, still only 61 although he seems to have been around much longer, ensuring that important positions within the party, both at state and national level, are held by those proximate to him is a crucial element in cementing his own political future ahead of any potential succession battle. Which is why whether it is the appointment of a new UP BJP president or now the party's national working president, the Shah imprimatur is unmistakeable. Which is also why predicting what the BJP's 'High Command' does next is fraught with risk: no one, not even the RSS, is quite certain of future. Except Gujarat's domineering Jodi number one.

> The writer is a senior journalist and author.

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Rajdeep Sardesai

LEADERSHIP

ACQUIESCED

NOMINATION OF

A LEADER WITH

SANGH PARIVAR

BACKGROUND

A STAUNCH

FAMILY

THE RSS

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IN THE

Keeping Nigeria's schoolchildren safe and state ministries of edu-

cation and the National Safe

Schools Response Coordination

Center have made significant

efforts, with support from local

and international partners, to

build the capacities of commu-

nities and schools to resist not

just terrorists but also gangs of

bandits, who now see the ran-

som demanded for the return of

abducted children as a money-

maker. Security measures have

included training school-based

management committees and

teachers in safety procedures,

installing alarms and fencing.

and creating telecommunication

links through community-based



Gordon Brown

NIGERIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM STRUGGLES WITH LOW ENROLLMENT, **BUT THE PROBLEM IS PARTICULARLY ACUTE IN THE** STATES WHERE **ABDUCTIONS ARE** MOST COMMON

undreds of Nigerian children remain in captivity or unaccounted for after being abducted from their schools in November. Even the recent rescue of 100 students has done little to restore confidence. In many areas of northern and central Nigeria. school attendance has plummeted - either because schools are closed or because parents are keeping their children at home.

This situation must be remedied before the next school term begins in mid-January. To that end, a series of school-safety proposals has been presented to the Nigerian government and international funders. These were prepared by UNICEF's on-theground team, business leaders who helped finance the last Safe Schools Initiative, and local and national administrators.

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 Tsangava and Islamivva schools. Over the years, the federal

steering committees to identify, mitigate, and develop response plans for potential threats. But if parents are to send their children back to the classroom in the new year, there is an urgent need to upgrade vulnerable schools' security infrastructure by erecting more perimeter fencing and boundary walls, installing cameras and other surveillance equipment, and identifying secure entry points and emergency exits.

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

communication protocols between schools, local authorities, and security agencies. It will also be necessary to revive the program that trains teachers in evacuation procedures and provides guidance on how best to respond if faced with an attack.

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 Nigeria Learning Passport, an online e-learning platform with mobile and offline capability. The third task would be to equip the education ministries with rapid assessment tools to determine a school's safety level.

But the most immediate need is for funders to ensure that there are sufficient safeguards so that Nigerian children can safely return to school in January. With relatively limited financing, we can provide federal and state governments with the technical and logistical support needed to implement an early-warning system, create action plans for the most vulnerable schools in northern Nigeria, and distribute safeschool kits that include internet routers for high-speed communications in times of crisis.

The latest abductions remind us that far too many Nigerian students have had their schooling interrupted by terrorism. It is time to show children and parents that armed gangs will never again have the upper hand. Only then can every child have the chance to gain a decent, uninterrupted education.

The writer is a former prime minister of the UK. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

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



are most welcome to contribute letters 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:

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



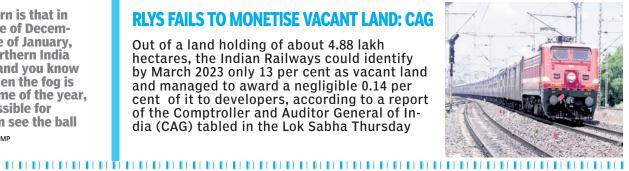
national



My concern is that in the middle of December till the middle of January, every place in northern India is subject to fog and you know perfectly well when the fog is like this at this time of the year, it becomes impossible for cricketers to even see the ball

RLYS FAILS TO MONETISE VACANT LAND: CAG

Out of a land holding of about 4.88 lakh hectares, the Indian Railways could identify by March 2023 only 13 per cent as vacant land and managed to award a negligible 0.14 per cent of it to developers, according to a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) tabled in the Lok Sabha Thursday





anything different from the BJP. If a Mus-



or Rajasthan, what a hue and cry there would have been. It would have been a disaster OMAR ABDULLAH I J&K CM

The magnificent statue of the Iron Man, Sardar Val-



Politics in (Himachal Pradesh) has aldevelopment

MOHAN YADAV | MP CM



settling personal scores but the chief minister is adamant on harassing the former Congress leaders and independent MLAs who left his side

SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKHU

SHORT **TAKES**

3 Naxals killed in encounter

Sukma: Three Naxalites. including a woman, collectively carrying a reward of Rs 12 lakh, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district the morning on a forested hill of Gondiguda under Golapalli of District Reserve Guard was out on a search operation based on inputs about the presence of Maoist cadres in the area Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan told PTI. After the gun-battle ended, the bodies of three Naxalites, including a woman, were recovered from the encounter site along with firearms, he said.

Gold crown, jewellery stolen from temple

Gopalganj/Saran (Bihar): Jewthe revered Thawe temple in Go palganj district, Thursday, police said. CCTV footage showed two masked persons decamping with the gold crown of the idol, weigh ing around 500 grams, along with a necklace and another ornament from the Thawe temple, dedicated to Goddess Durga, locally known as 'Thawe wali Mata', "A case has been registered and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted to probe the Thawe temple theft. We will soon nab the accused," Gopalganj

Ajay Gupta's police

Panaji: A Goa court Thursday extended by four days the police remand of Ajay Gupta, co-owner of Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub. where a devastating fire December 6 killed 25 persons. Gupta was arrested from New Delhi December 10, A court in Mapusa had remanded him in police cus tody for seven days at the time. Gupta was presented before the lower court, which sent him to four-day police custody as his initial remand was expiring, his advocate Rohan Desai told report ers. "Gupta had complained about back pain. The court ordered his medical examination, after which he was allowed use of a mattress in custody. He was examined by a specialised doctor at Goa Medical College and Hospital near here,"

'Dunki' route case: ED conducts fresh raids

Chandigarh: The Enforcement Directorate Thursday con-Harvana and Delhi as part of an ongoing money laundering investigation in a case linked to illegally transporting Indians to the US through the 'dunki' route officials said. The federal probe agency had in July conducted the attached assets worth Rs 5 crore of some travel agents after identifying some alleged accused operatives who were behind this illegal racket.

'26 Indians working in Russian forces died'

New Delhi. Dec 18: Twenty-six Indians working in the Russian armed forces have reportedly died, while seven have been marked as missing by the Russian side, the government told Parliament Thursday.

In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh also said efforts are on for an early discharge of 50 individuals.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has "provided assistance in repatriation of mortal remains of 10 deceased Indian nationals to India, and local cremation of two deceased Indian nationals", the "DNA samples of family

members of 18 Indians, who were reported dead or missing, have been shared with the Russian authorities in an effort to help establish the identity of some of the deceased Indian nationals." he added.

The MEA was asked about the number of Indian nationals identified as illegally working or forced to work in the Russian Army, along with the count of fatalities or people gone missing since 2022.

The government was also asked about the Indian nationals currently estimated to be stuck working in the Russian Army and the dates of all communications exchanged between the ministry and



Russia seeking their repatriation, and whether the mortal remains of any Indians killed in the Russia-Ukraine war are yet to be repatriated and if so, the reasons for the delay.

"As per information available, 202 Indian nationals are believed to have been recruited into the Russian armed forces. Concerted efforts by the government have resulted in early discharge of 119 of them: 26 are reported to have lost their lives and seven are reported missing by the Russian side. Efforts are ongoing for early discharge of 50 individuals," Singh said.

The ministry and the Indian Mission and posts in Russia have assisted the Indians discharged from the Russian Army for their return to India, including by facilitating travel documents and providing air tickets, wherever required, the government said.

The Indian Mission in Russia has also assisted with the evacuation of mortal remains. "Once the mortal remains are shifted to a safe zone, the identification process involves matching of DNA samples with the next of kin. When the identity is conclusively established. the Indian embassy assists in completion of requisite documentation for local cremation or transportation of mortal remains to India, in close coordination with the family,' Singh said.

The government remains 'continuously engaged" with the Russian side to ensure the safety, well-being and early discharge of all Indian nationals in the Russian armed forces. "This matter is discussed at various levels, including during interactions between leaders, ministers and officials of the two sides," the

ICG cracks down on illegal fishing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Indian Coast Guard authorities have apprehended two Bangladeshi fishing boats with 35 crew members for "illegally fishing" inside India's Exclusive Economic Zone in the northern Bay of Bengal, officials said Thursday.

The presence of active fishing gear and approximately 500 kilograms of fish catch "clearly indicated ongoing fishing operations inside Indian waters," the ICG said. Over the last three months, the ICG has apprehended eight Bangladeshi fishing boats with 170 crew members for similar violations, they said.

ICG Ship 'Anmol', while undertaking routine surveillance operations in the northern Bay of Bengal "December 16, "apprehended two Bangladeshi fishing boats (BFBs) along with 35 crew members for engaging in illegal fishing activities inside India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)," it said.

The arrests were made for "violation" of the Maritime Zones of India (MZI) (Regulation of Fishing by Foreign Vessels) Act, 1981, it said in a statement. "The presence of active fishing gear and approximately 500 kilograms of fish catch clearly indicated ongoing fishing operations inside Indian waters," the ICG said. The apprehended boats and crew were taken into custody by the ICG and subsequently handed over to the Marine Police, Frazerganj, December 17 for further legal proceedings in accordance with applicable laws, the officials said

SC junks PIL on packaged drinking water standards

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Supreme Court Thursday refused to entertain a PIL seeking enforcement of international standards for packaged drinking water, saying this is a case of "luxury litigation" in a country where a large population still lacks access to basic drinking water.

"Where is the drinking water in this country, Madam? People do not have drinking water; the quality of bottled water will come later on," Chief Justice Surya Kant, who was sitting with Justice Joymalya Bagchi, said, adding that these are "luxury litigations" The PIL, filed by one Sa-

rang Vaman Yadwadkar, sought directions to improve and align Indian standards for packaged drinking water with global benchmarks, including those prescribed by the World Health Organization. At the outset, the CJI questioned the very premise of the petition, observing that the court could not lose sight of the broader realities faced by the country. Senior advocate Anita Shenoy, appearing for the petitioner, said the issue directly concerned public health and consumer safety. She submitted that citizens



ter and relied on Section 18 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which mandates adherence to prescribed safety

She contended that statutory obligations could not be diluted merely because access to drinking water remained uneven across the country.

The bench remained unconvinced and described the plea as reflective of an "urban-centric approach".

"This is an urban-centric approach; the people in rural areas drink groundwater, and nothing happens to them," the CJI said. "Do you think we will be able to introduce the USA. Japan, EU guidelines? Let us face the ground realities of the

Woman killed by tenants while collecting rent

Ghaziabad(UP): Police have found the body of a 48-year-old woman, stuffed in a red bag, who was allegedly killed by her tenants when she went to their flat to collect rent, officials said Thursday. The deceased, identified as Deepshikha Sharma, was killed around 11 pm at Aura Chimera Society, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Nandgram Upasna Pandey said. Preliminary investigation revealed that Deepshikha and her husband Umesh Sharma, owned two flats in the society, one of which had been rented out to a couple. She went to the rented flat to collect rent but did not return till late night, raising suspicion. Her domestic help, along with neighbours, went to the flat to look for her, following which Deepshikha's body was recovered, stuffed inside a red bag from the flat, the ACP said. Sources informed that the accused couple had planned to dispose of the body but were intercepted by the house help and other neighbours who stopped them from leaving the house. A video of the incident is also making rounds on social media, where people can be heard questioning the couple.



ZILLA SWASTHYA SAMITI, MAYURBHANJ Office of the CDM&PHO-cum-District Mission Director, NHM,

TENDER CALL NOTICE FOR PRINTING & SUPPLY OF DIFFERENT

IEC MATERIALS UNDER ZSS, MAYURBHANJ No.E-597: Sealed proposals as per prescribed document are invited from interested eligible bidders for "TENDER CALL NOTICE FOR PRINTING & SUPPLY OF DIFFERENT IEC MATERIALS UNDER ZSS, MAYURBHANJ"

formats for submission of proposals are set forth in the tender documents which can be downloaded from the website https://mayurbhanj.odisha.gov.in nterested bidders fulfilling the eligibility criteria may submit their prop (with document as per tender call notice) to the O/o : CDM & PHO, DHF Baripada, Mayurbhanj. The Proposal (s) complete in all respect should react the undersigned on or before 11.00AM of dt:06.01.2026 through Regd. Post Speed post/ Courier and the same will be opened on dt:07.01.2026 at 11.00 AM in the office chamber of the undersigned. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tender(s) without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-10020/11/0055/2526

Sd./- Chief District Medical & Public Health

(NIA) has arrested a close associate of Red Fort area blast perpetrator Umar-un-Nabi, taking the total number of arrests in the "white-collar" terror module to nine, officials said Thursday.

The accused, Yasir Ahmad Dar, a resident of Shopian in Jammu and Kashmir, was nabbed from Delhi and placed under arrest under relevant provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the agency said in a statement. "The 9th person to be arrest-

ed in the case, Yasir Ahmad Dar is a resident of Shopian, Srinagar. He was nabbed by NIA from New Delhi and placed under arrest," an NIA spokesperson said.

According to the agency, investigations have revealed Dar's active role in the conspiracy behind the car bomb blast near Delhi's historic Red Fort on November 10.

An active participant in the plot which claimed 15 lives and left several others injured, Dar had allegedly taken an oath to carry out "self-sacrificial oper-

ations", the NIA said.

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Supreme Court has objected to the "growing trend" of judges passing "so many orders" just before they retire, equating it to a batter "hitting sixes" in the final overs of a match.



Chief Justice Surya Kant was hearing a plea of a Madhya Pradesh principal and district judge challenging a full court decision of the high court to suspend him just 10 days before his scheduled retirement allegedly over some questionable judicial orders.

"Petitioner just before retirement started hitting sixes. It is an unfortunate trend. I do not want chi and Vipul M Pancholi, observed

to elaborate on it," the bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bag-Wednesday. "There is a growing trend of judg-

es passing so many orders just be-

The Madhya Pradesh judicial officer, who was due to retire November 30, was suspended on November 19, allegedly because of two judicial orders passed by him.

Senior advocate Vipin Sanghi, appearing on his behalf, submitted that he had an impeccable service record with consistently high ratings in his annual confidential reports.

Sanghi questioned the legality of the suspension, arguing that judicial officers cannot be subjected to disciplinary action merely for passing judicial orders.

'How can an officer be suspended for judicial orders which can be appealed against and rectified by the higher judiciary?" he asked.

The bench agreed in principle, observing that disciplinary proceedings cannot ordinarily be initiated against a judicial officer for erroneous orders. "He cannot be suspended for this. But what if the orders are palpably dishonest?" the CJI asked, drawing a distinction between judicial error and misconduct. The CJI also noted that Novem-

ber 20, the top court had directed the Madhya Pradesh government to enhance the retirement age of judicial officers in the state from 60 to 61

Officer, Mayurbhanj ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION

(A STATUTORY BODY OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA) Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110 070 Ph. No. : 011-2958-1000/1050, 011-29581515 Website: www.aicte.gov.in

PUBLIC NOTICE

Applications for the Academic Year 2026-27 are invited for:

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- Extension of Approval for Existing Technical Institutions, Institutions Deemed to be Universities or Universities (Central/State/Private).
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Applications for the Academic Year 2026-27 must be submitted online on the AICTE Web Portal which is live from November 28, 2025. The applicants are advised to thoroughly read the AICTE Approval Process Handbook (APH) 2024-25 to 2026-27 along with the amendments issued from time to time available at www.aicte.gov.in.

The detailed schedule & timelines for submission of applications is available at www.aicte.gov.in.

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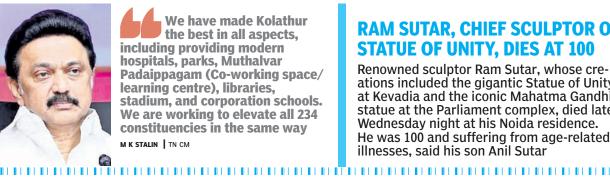
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We have made Kolathur the best in all aspects, including providing modern hospitals, parks, Muthalvar Padaippagam (Co-working space/ learning centre), libraries, stadium, and corporation schools. We are working to elevate all 234 constituencies in the same way

RAM SUTAR, CHIEF SCULPTOR OF **STATUE OF UNITY, DIES AT 100**

Renowned sculptor Ram Sutar, whose creations included the gigantic Statue of Unity at Kevadia and the iconic Mahatma Gandhi statue at the Parliament complex, died late Wednesday night at his Noida residence. He was 100 and suffering from age-related illnesses, said his son Anil Sutar



Convicted Maha

minister Kokate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

quits from Cabinet

Mumbai, Dec 18: National-

ist Congress Party minister

Manikrao Kokate has resigned

from the Maharashtra Cabi

net following a court verdic

upholding his conviction and

two-year jail term in a 1995

cheating and forgery case, be-

coming the second NCP min

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit

Pawar, who heads the NCP

Thursday said Kokate sent

his resignation letter to him

which has been accepted and

ister to quit this year.

and Jayalalithaa madam and dismantled the DMK in one stroke. I repeat what they said: the DMK is an evil force

VIJAY | ACTOR-POLITICIAN

Women are not only managing their households but are also playing an important role in strengthening the economy



When culture is taken away, a nation becomes lifeless and loses its identity. Just as a human body cannot survive without the soul, a nation cannot survive without its culture

YOGI ADITYANATH UTTAR PRADESH CM



When BJP was in opposition. they were blaming AAP for pollution in blaming AAP for pollution in Delhi.

When BJP is in power, they are

@punsterx

SHORT **TAKES**

Undertrial found hanging in Jail

New Delhi: An undertrial lodged in the Mandoli Jail allegedly hanged himself with a cloth inside the prison in northeast Delhi days before his court hearing, prison sources said Thursday. The deceased has been identified as Santosh Kamal (24), a resident of Usmanpur in northeast Delhi, they said. According to the sources, Santosh was lodged in Jail No. 13 for the past nearly four years in connection with a criminal case. On Tuesday night, he was found hanging in the bathroom of the jail barrack, following which prison staff alerted senior officials.

Cong MLC Pradnya **Satav joins BJP**

Mumbai: Congress Member of Legislative Council (MLC) Pradnya Satav joined the BJP here Thursday, hours after submitting her resignation from the Upper House of the Maharashtra legislature. "My late husband Rajeev had certain plans for the development of Hingoli district. I want to fulfil those plans by working with the BJP," she told reporters. The Congress accused the BJP of not respecting democracy, and breaking parties with money and posts.

3 killed after being

Seraikela: Three people were killed after being run over by a trailer in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharsawan district, police said Thursday. The speeding trailer first rammed a scooter from behind on the Tata-Kandra Road in the Adityapur police station

Man attempts to

Balrampur (UP): A rape attempt was made on a three-year-old girl in the Dehat area here after which police swung into action and arrested the accused after an encounter, an official said Thursday. The incident occurred on Wednesday when a woman had taken her three-year-old daughter to the fields.



Giriraj Singh says woman can 'go to hell'

New Delhi/Patna, Dec 18: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was in the crosshairs of controversy for the fourth day Thursday -- a Union minister defending his act of pulling down a Muslim woman's veil, his colleague looking to put a lid on the row while the chorus of outrage from across sections grew louder.

The incident, a video clip of which has been circulated widely and sparked a major political row, took place Monday at the chief minister's secretariat in Patna when Ayush doctors had gathered to receive their letters of appointment. When the woman came up for her letter, Kumar saw her

New Delhi, Dec 18: Parlia-

ment Thursday passed the nu-

clear energy Bill, with the Ra-

jya Sabha giving its nod to the

legislation seeking to open the

tightly-controlled civil nuclear

sector for private participation.

Sustainable Harnessing and

Advancement of Nuclear En-

ergy for Transforming India

(SHANTI) Bill by a voice vote,

while rejecting several amend-

ments moved by Opposition

members to send the proposed

legislation to a parliamentary

committee. It was passed in the

the Bill. Minister of State, De-

partment of Atomic Energy,

Jitendra Singh, said it aims

at making India self-reliant in

nuclear energy and reducing

dependence on other sources

of energy. He asserted that nu-

clear energy is a reliable 24x7

power supply source, which is

not so in the case of other re-

Stating that the country

has already reached 8.9 GW of

nuclear energy in 2025, Singh

said by 2047, "if we are able to

follow the roadmap we have

envisaged, we will be 100 GW,

and we would be contributing

nearly 10 per cent of the energy

He also noted that India's en-

ergy requirement will be highly

dependent on nuclear sources,

be the most reliable, steady

24x7 source of energy, unlike

some other renewable sources,

Defending the opening up of

the tightly-controlled civil nu-

clear sector for private partic-

ipation, Singh said the "fruits

and the outcomes" of opening

various sectors to private play-

ers have been very rewarding.

He said that when the govern-

ment opened up the space sec-

tor, its economy was dismal,

in the next eight to ten years,

we hope to go five times to \$45 billion. The concept of space

"And, the pace is so fast that

but today it is \$8 billion.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

"This (nuclear energy) will

with AI coming in a big way.

requirement..."

he pointed out.

newable energy options.

Replying to a discussion on

Lok Sabha Wednesday.

The Upper House passed the

'naqab', said "what is this" and then removed the veil.

As Opposition parties asked Kumar for an unconditional apology and others articulated their distress, Union minister Giriraj Singh waded right into the row and said it is up to the woman to refuse the appointment or "go to hell".

Kumar, Singh insisted, had done nothing wrong. "If someone is going to collect an appointment letter, should they not show their face? Is this some Islamic country? Nitish Kumar acted as a guardian," he argued

"If you are going to get a passport, do you not show your face? When you go to the airport, do you not show your face? People talk about Pakistan and Englishtan, but this is India. In

Parl passes nuclear energy Bill

startups was un-

the

sector,

turned

heard of. Today,

we have over 300

space startups.

some of them

multi-million-

Singh said.

any way

aires. And some

of them have glob-

al potential. This was

possible because private sector participation was al-

lowed. The FDI was allowed,'

He also asserted that the safe-

The safety provisions and

their standard operating pro-

cedures (SOPs) are the same

as in the Atomic Energy Act of

1962, which was enacted when

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was

the Prime Minister, Singh not-

ed. "The SOP in place clearly

mentions 'safety first, second

radiation, saying so far there

has been no report of any ra-

diation-related hazards to the

last 10-11 years, India has

assumed a global role for

itself. India is no longer fol-

lowing others as it happened

earlier...we are the first line

nation. We are no longer fol-

lowers. India is offering cues

towards clean energy, and it

is also important for India to

achieve the goal in toto, so that

it becomes less and less depen-

dent on petroleum resources

or fossil fuel sources, Singh

The entire world is moving

for others to follow"

The minister said, "In the

Singh also allayed fears of

production'," he added.

ty provisions in the nuclear bill

have not been compromised in

space

have

India, the rule of law prevails," Singh said and added that Kumar did the right thing. Responding to

reports that the woman had refused to take up the job following the incident, he said, "Whether she refuses the job or goes to hell, that's her choice (Woh refuse kare jahannum mein jaye).' In Patna, Bihar

Health Minister Mangal Pandey said he was unaware of the

reports and sought to clamp down on the controversy by

remarked.

He informed the

House that a lot

has been done

to upscale nu-

clear energy.

the budget of

the atomic en-

ergy department

was just ₹13,879

crore, which has now

increased to ₹37.483 crore

In 2015, the NDA government

took another bold decision and

opened the nuclear sector for

joint ventures, but those were

limited to PSUs only and not to

the private (players), he added,

a bulk approval was given to set

up 10 reactors. In September

2025, the Prime Minister laid

the foundation of four nuclear

When this (NDA) govern-

ment came to power in 2014,

the nuclear power capacity was

just 4.7 GW; now it is 8.9GW, he

Participating in the discus-

sion, IUML's Haris Beeran

said the bill dismantles the li-

ability framework established

after the Bhopal gas tragedy.

CPI's PP Suneer questioned the

"dangerous haste" with which

the government is opening one

of the most sensitive sectors of

the economy to complete pri-

Terming the Bill as the

landmark legislation, TDP's

Masthan Rao Yadav Beedha

said it marks a significant

transition by consolidating

the Atomic Energy Act 1962

and Civil Liability for Nuclear

Damage Act 2010 into a modern

unified legal framework.

pointed out.

vate control.

reactors, the minister said.

In 2017, in a cabinet decision,

in the current year.

2014.

Before

Upper House

passed the Sustainable

Harnessing and Advancement

of Nuclear Energy for Transforming

rejecting several amendments moved

by Opposition members to send

the proposed legislation to

a parliamentary committee

It was passed in

saying that the ruling NDA in the state has always worked for empowerment of women. "Women have always

been respected

by our CM, who

has made huge

efforts for the

empowerment of

Matri Shakti," the

senior BJP leader

On Wednesday,

have happened

if he touched her

somewhere else?'

Facing a backlash

Pradesh

Sanjay

asked.

would

The incident, a video clip of which has been circulated widely and sparked a major political row, took place Monday at the Chief Minister's secretariat in Patna when Ayush doctors had gathered to receive their letters of appointment

When the woman came up for her letter, Kumar saw her 'naqab', said "what is this" and then removed the veil

over the comment, termed crass

said.

Uttar

miister

Nishad

'What

spirit of his remark was lost in The incident has drawn criti-

cism from far and wide, including many West Asian countries. and the JD (U) president is facing accusations of disrespecting Muslim traditions, allegedly in line with 'RSS agenda'. Congress MP from Bihar's

Katihar Tariq Anwar slammed Singh and Kumar, NCP (SP) MP Fauzia Khan also hit out Kumar and Singh. Veteran writer-lyricist Javed Akhtar also expressed his strong objections. Over the days as the condem-

nation has gathered strength, Amnesty International also issued a statement terming the move an "assault on this woman's dignity, autonomy, and

forwarded to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Pawar noted the resigna tion of his party and cabinet colleague, who held Sports and Youth Welfare, Minority Development and Aukaf port folios in the BJP-led Mahayuti government, follows a court verdict and affirmed his party

> individuals. The development comes two days after the Nashik district and sessions court upheld the order of a firstclass judicial magistrate confirming a sentence of two year imprisonment and a fine of ₹50,000 against Kokate in the cheating and forgery case linked to a government housing scheme. The court also issued an arrest warrant against him Wednesday.

> places supremacy of law above

The Deputy CM said Ko kate's resignation letter has been accepted in principle keeping with the party's long standing stance that laws and rules are paramount.

"As per constitutional procedure, the resignation has been forwarded to the chief minister for further action. Pawar said.

be rooted in constitutional morality, institutional integrity and respect for judiciary.

and misogynistic, he said the AI Express flight makes precautionary landing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Dec 18: A Kozhikode-bound Air India Express flight with 160 passengers made a "precautionary" landing at the airport here Thursday due to issues involving the aircraft's tyres, an airline official An Air India Express

spokesperson said that the Jeddah-Kozhikode flight was diverted to Cochin International Airport and "made a precautionary landing due to suspected damage to the aircraft's tyre likely caused by a foreign object on the runway at Jeddah airport"

'The aircraft landed safely in Kochi, and all guests are being connected to Kozhikode by road. We regret the inconvenience caused and reiterate that safety remains our highour operations," the spokesperson added. He also said that there were

only the tyres burst and no issues with the landing gears. Tabletop runways are constructed on hilly or elevated terrains. Also, there could be low lying areas adjacent to such runways and there could be gorges at the end of such runways. In the morning, the Cochin

International Airport Limited (CIAL), in a statement, said that it successfully facilitated the "safe emergency landing" of Air India Express flight IX 398 from Jeddah to Kozhikode, which was diverted to Kochi due to a technical issue involving the right main landing gear and tyre failure.

He insisted public life must The aircraft landed safely at 9.08 am under full emergency

HC, local courts, banks get bomb threat mails

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai/Nagpur, Dec 18: A wave of coordinated bomb emails threatening to target the Bombay High Court, several local courts, and key financial institutions across Mumbai and Nagpur Thursday caused widespread panic and paralysed legal proceedings.

Police and the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) conducted extensive sweeps be fore declaring all these threats as hoax as no explosives were found. As per the police's preliminary probe, multiple emails that warned of "RDX blasts at 2 pm" were sent by a single user from a fake account and its IP address was found to be located in Israel, although it is still being verified.

The emails were received Thursday morning at the high court, sessions court and local courts at Mazgaon, Esplanade, Bandra and Andheri in Mumbai, prompting immediate evacuation of court staff and legal professionals. The high court proceedings were halted as the BDDS swept the heritage build-



email was found to be located in Israel. But as it is a fake account, the police are trying to ascertain the exact location of the sender and a search for the person was underway

ing before declaring it clear for resumption of work.

President of the Bombay Bar Association Nitin Thakker later told reporters that all courtrooms were thoroughly searched, and hearings finally resumed at 3.00 PM. Giving details, a senior police official said, "The Bombay HC, sessions court, and magistrate courts at

Mazgaon, Esplanade, Bandra and Andheri, along with two prominent banks received bomb threat emails in the morning. The premises were immediately vacated at most of these places. The BDDS was called in, but nothing suspicious was found anywhere in the searches," a senior police official said.

"In the probe conducted so far, the bomb threat was issued by creating a fake email address All those emails were sent from the same account, in which the sender claimed that there would be RDX blasts at 2 pm," he said In the investigation, the IP address of the email was found to be located in Israel. But as it is a fake account, the police are trying to ascertain the exact location of the sender and a search for the person was underway. the official said. Meanwhile, the Nampally criminal cour complex here received a 'bomb threat' via email Thursday which was later declared a hoax after searches at the premises, police said. Following the alert staff were asked to evacuate the complex for security checks

area, killing the rider, they said.

rape toddler; held

run over by trailer

New Delhi, Dec 18: Sitting in vehicles stuck in traffic or walking along crowded footpaths as they make their way back home from work, men

in Delhi are absorbing more of the city's polluted air into their lungs than women, according to a study conducted over five years. Titled 'Respiratory deposition of particulate matter in Delhi: A five-vear assessment of exposure patterns and health risks', the study was conducted by researchers from the Netaji

ogy, Delhi, along with researchers from a Noida-based environmental consultancy. The team analysed data from

Subhas University of Technol-

39 air quality monitoring stations across Delhi between 2019 and 2023. The findings point to a clear difference between men and women in terms of lung deposition of air pollutants. While sitting, men recorded about 1.4 times higher PM2.5 lung deposition and about 1.34 times higher PM10 lung deposition than women. While walking, men inhale

more pollution, with lung deposition about 1.2 times higher than women for both PM2.5 and PM10, according to the study.

Researchers said this difference is linked to higher breathing volume and airflow in men, which leads to more polluted air entering the lungs.

Using an internationally accepted scientific model, the re-



'Men have higher lung pollutant deposition in Delhi'

searchers calculated how much particulate matter actually enters and settles in different present in the air.

parts of the lungs, rather than only measuring the pollution

The study said this dosebased approach highlights the urgent need for immediate policy changes to reduce everyday exposure, especially for commuters and outdoor workers.

After comparing men and women, the researchers assessed how Delhi residents fare against the safety limits. The study found that lung deposition of fine particulate matter among Delhi residents was about 10 times higher than what would be expected under India's air quality standards, and nearly 40 times higher than the levels estimated under the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards prescribe a daily PM2.5 limit of 60 micro-

grams per cubic metre and a PM10 limit of 100 micrograms per cubic metre. The WHO's daily guidelines are stricter, at 15 micrograms per cubic metre for PM2.5 and 45 micrograms per cubic metre for PM10. The study said lung expo-

sure in Delhi far exceeds doses corresponding to both bench marks. The study compared activity levels and found that walking resulted in two to three times higher particulate matter deposition in the lungs than sitting, across both men and women. Among all the groups an-

alysed, men while walking recorded the highest lung deposition, followed by wom en walking, men sitting, and women sitting.

international



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

RARE SMOG SPIKE HITS BEIJING

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



increasingly com mon to drag the language of faith into political bat-

tles, to bless nationalism, and to justify violence and armed struggle in the name of religion

POPE LEO | HEAD OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

Eleven months ago,



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

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

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 "numUS 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
- 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.

'China believes the international community understands and supports Venezuela's position in defending its legitimate rights and interests," Wang

US AGGRESSION

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged the de-escalation of tensions, asking the US and Venezuela to honour their obligations under international law, including the UN Charter and any other applicable legal framework to safeguard peace in the region. The presidents of Mexico and Brazil have also urged restraint and dialogue.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a phone call to Maduro last week, "reaffirmed his support for the policy of N. Maduro's government, aimed at protecting national interests and sovereignty in the face of growing external pressure."

Venezuela requested the UN Security Council meet to discuss the "ongoing US aggression", according to a letter to the 15-member body seen by Reuters, Wednesday.

China supports Venezuela's request for an urgent meeting of the council, a Chinese for eign ministry spokesperson said Thursday, when asked at a regular news briefing what role China, as a "responsible' major power, would play.

Asked whether what Caracas has described as US "aggression" could put China and the US on a collision course in the region, the spokesperson reiterated Wang Yi's comments and did not say more.

US rolls out \$10bn

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 an-

nounced 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. Chi na'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 hardearned 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.

India resumes visa Trump lists administration's services in Dhaka



Dhaka, Dec 18: India Thursday resumed operations at its visa application centre in Dha ka, 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 Raishahi 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 protesters 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. PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York/Washington, Dec 18: US President Donald Trump touted his administration's successes on immigration and in ending eight wars as he listed the various accomplishments of his second term in the White House in a year-end address to the nation. "Eleven months ago, I inherited a mess, and I'm fixing it," Trump said as he began his 19-minute special prime time address to the na tion Wednesday.

Trump listed his administration's achievements since he took office for a second term in January this year, including securing the border, "reverse migration", bringing prices down, ending conflicts, using tariffs to bring billions of dollars into the country, enabling job creation and cracking down on immigration.

"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," Trump said.



successes in year-end address

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 invad-

ed. 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," Trump said the Biden ad-

ministration 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.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Kathmandu, Dec 18: Ousted

re-elected party chair

Deposed PM Oli

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

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 com mittee 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 defeat ed Surendra Pandey, former finance minister, who contested the election from Pokharel's

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 Rai Bhatta, Yogesh Bhattarai and Raghubir Mahaseth, Bhattara 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.

India, Oman sign historic trade deal **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 devel-

opments and reaffirmed their

commitment to regional peace

and stability. They reaffirmed

to come. The Comprehensive **Economic Partnership Agreement** (CEPA) will energise our ties in the 21st century NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER, INDIA

relations, whose positive

impact will be felt for decades

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

will unlock opportunities in all major sectors of the economy, enhance economic growth, create jobs and boost investment flows between both countries. This is Oman's second FTA

with an individual country and the first FTA they have done in about 20 years Modi said he also discussed

with Sultan Haitham ways to further boost trade and investment linkages. "Financial services also offer great scope for working together. We talked about how sectors like energy, critical minerals, agriculture, fertilisers and healthcare have rich potential for closer ties," he said.

"We discussed how cultural and people-to-people linkages can be enhanced. This includes student exchange programmes and other such ways to ensure our youth connect regularly, Modi said.

creating a stable framework. It Today, we are taking a historic step forward in India-Oman



eisure



Karan's spooky

Mumbai: Actor Karan Tacker, who is

receiving great reviews for his recently

released show *Bhay: The Gaurav Tiwari*

Mystery, recalled a strange and unsettling

experience while shooting for the project.

sively with this news agency, he said,

'We were shooting this one scene be-

tween me and a character whose name

is Niharika, and at any given time, we

Explaining the scene further, he added, "So I was wearing my close shot, and

there was a camera kept at one corner

that was shut." He admitted that at one

Further, explaining the technical

setup, he elaborated, "So there was

a camera at one corner and anoth-

er camera that was recording my

close-up from another angle. Now,

<u>like for any c</u>amera, you obvi-

ously have to press a button to record it."

Creating an intense

moment. Karan added,

atmosphere around

"But the cam-

era which

was shut

record-

ed the

whole

scene

What

made the

incident even more eerie, he

gle of the shot.

PEANUTS

WHAT AM I GOING TO

DO, CHARLIE BROWN? 1

CAN'T GET MY BLANKET

AWAY FROM THAT CAT

'It recorded the

whole scene from a

very interesting, weird

Dutch angle," he explained.

point, an uneasy feeling crept in.

Sharing details of the incident exclu-

<u>encounter</u>

have two cameras.

WHY JENNIFER LAWRENCE **DOESN'T WATCH HER MOVIES**

Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Lawrence revealed she avoids watching her own films, admitting discomfort seeing herself on screen. Speaking to Leonardo DiCaprio for Variety.com, she joked she'd only rewatch something like Titanic, recalling once drunkenly playing American Hustle to check if she could act

LEONARDO DICAPRIO ON HIS ACTING DRIVE

The award-winning film star Leonardo DiCaprio developed an interest in acting because he says he wanted to "get out of (his) neighbourhood". DiCaprio said: "I think a lot of my propulsion to want to act as a kid was to get out of my neighbourhood



Madhuri on

direction

Deshpande.

Mrs Deshpande?'

evolution of

Mumbai: Actress Madhuri Dixit re-

flected on the evolution of filmmaking

over the years from her debut movie

Abodh to her upcoming drama Mrs

During an exclusive interaction

with this news agency, she shared that

things are much more organised these

days, which was not the case back then.

completed almost 40 years in the in-

dustry. How was it like being directed

back in the 80s and 90s, and how much

the scene has changed from Abodh to

Reacting to this, the Dhak Dhak girl told, "I think at that time there were

only five or six very organised pro-

ducers, like Yash Chopra, BR Chopra,

Subhash Ghai, Rajshri Productions.

and a few more, and the rest was pret-

ty unorganised. Today, it is very or-

ganised. Back then, we relied more on

spontaneity; today, we can prepare for

a role. You get a script, along with ame-

nities such as the RVs, where

you can chill after every

shot or get ready. At that

time, we did not have

all this; we used to sit

under the sun, with

our heads.'

an umbrella over

Madhuri was asked, "So you have

accuracy • reliability • trust

You are very sensitive, and some people will disturb your peace of mind today. However, getting irritated will only make matters worse. Reflect in isolation what may be at the root of the problem. Ganesha says it is closer to you than you think.

Today, says Ganesha, you will are likely to encounter someone who is bent upon provoking and getting on your nerves. You are urged not to retaliate and do things unbecoming of your good nature. Keep calm and unruffled. Respond and behave in a manner befitting your better nature. Do not allow the other to spoil your composure, your graciousness

You will keep your emotions aside and concentrate solely on your work today. You wil have to waste a lot of time in fulfilling the demands made by those around you. However, the more demands you fulfill, the more their expectations will rise, says

CANCER

GEMINI

The day is very favourable, savs Ganesha. You will feel a sense of joy and happiness with your valuable possessions. You may fall into love or have a strong romantic ties with someone. A great time for lovers. Ganesha foresees chance of having new contacts and ties.

Your entire day will be spent at work. Those working in large corporations will have to fulfill heightened expectations from their superiors. Housewives will need to tackle other work, apart from their daily chores. It is an important day for you, says Ganesha.

You will stay away from partnership ventures. Ganesha says you have the ability to control large-scale projects on your own. ou have leadership qualities, and will be able to coordinate team work and direct your colleagues to get the required amount of work from them

Ganesha says you will put

everything aside to pay more attention to your outward appearance and your beauty as you will be more aware about it. People will get attracted to your beauty today. You will be able to share your own ideas and thoughts with people, at the same time you will learn about their views and from their experiences.

SCORPIO

You are ready to take up the challenges that life has to throw at you. Thanks to the confidence within you, which gives you power to fight it out against all odds. Even if you take up a mammoth task, you are bound to succeed today, predicts

SAGITTARIUS The day begins on a bright note and you decide to flaunt your sunny side up. foresees Ganesha. At home front, sharing of work with your partner will keep the home atmosphere peaceful and harmonious. Both of you discover a joy is cleaning and cooking together.

CAPRICORN

Practical and creative, you are able to utilise your talent in the best possible manner. You will smartly solve family issues, with out favouring or hurting anybody, says Ganesha. You'll like to play the role of a peace maker, as it gives you satisfaction from within. Also, you will love to help others as much as you can.

AQUARIUS

Be it about solving financial issues or concerns about income, money matters will keep your mind occupied through out the day. You will have a gala time with your friends later on the day, predicts Ganesha. Not that you don't value your friends, but today, you will realise how important you are for one another.

PISCES

You are fond of traveling and are always looking for an excuse to set off. Hence it comes as no surprise if you pack your bags and decide to embark upon a journey on a whim today. It is a much needed break too, from the daily stresses of earning a livelihood. While you are seeking solitude, you will take your friends and relatives along with you on the trip, says Ganesha.



Mumbai: Former Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Sandhu opened up about a slippery moment she experienced at a recent event.

In her recent post on Instagram, she quoted the former Miss Universe Organisation President Paula Shugart, saying, "It's not about the fall, it's how you get up," to emphasise that setbacks or small accidents aren't important—what matters is how you handle them. Harnaaz then adds a personal touch by revealing that she almost slipped at an event, but she faced it with resilience. Sandhu posted a video of her ramp walk from the event and wrote, "As @realpaulashugart said "it's not about the fall, it's how you get up" Fun fact: did you know I almost slippedheart full of love and gratitude.

Harnaaz served as a jury member at Miss Cosmo International 2025, held in Vietnam. For the event, she dazzled in a gown featuring stunning golden and orange tones.

In 2023, the Baaghi 4 actress had a near-slip while taking the stage for the final time during her reign as Miss Universe. During her emotional farewell walk, she momentarily tripped over her gown but quickly regained her balance, continuing with remarkable grace and confidence.



'In the greatest films, the work of tech-

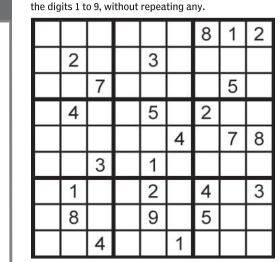
DOST

invisible. #Dhurandhar is a big moment for Indian cinema. Let's make the technicians of this marvel visible and applaud them @castingchhabra when every actor is so perfect, it starts at a perfectly chosen cast," she wrote. Reflecting on the film's impact, Shraddha highlighted that authenticity, power and raw energy are never accidental. "When a film looks so authentic, badass, powerful, it's never by chance. It was created by @vik_now, @ sainisjohray, @smriti.schauhan, @shivkumarpanicker, @preetishe When you feel that 'resonance' and your pulse changes with every scene, there are master craftsmen in the audio dept making it happen @ shashwatology, @bishwadeepchatterjee, @irshadkamilofficial Needless to say, @adityadharfilms, @dhar_lokesh #JyotiDeshpande formed the bedrock to build this greatness on. #Dhurandhar," she added.

nicians is

The actress had earlier penned a note on Dhurandhar and had said it's "truly terrible" of filmmaker Aditya Dhar to make people wait for "part 2".

SUDOKU To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains



SOLUTIONS

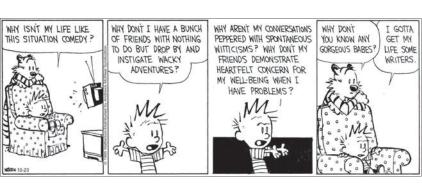
E M I R I P E N

CROSSWORD

CALVIN AND HOBBES

WHY DON'T YOU SURPRISE HIM? DROP DOWN ON HIM FROM

A HELICOPTER



A HELICOPTER ?

BREVITY



Copyright ©2025 PuzzleJunction.com 18 Green-eyed Across 1 Diseasemonster 20 Medical

causing bacterium

- 5 Sleeveless garments
- 8 Links hazards 9 Beryl variety
- 10 Twosome
- 11 Olympic sled
- 12 Barbershop call
- 14 Pastor
- 15 Stabbed

- 1 Hushed 2 Cacophony
- Down

breakthrough

21 Mongrel

23 Pasta dish

25 Toothsome

26 Rock bottom

27 Football stat

- 22 Verse
- 19 Brilliant

3 Antiquated

4 Vitality

6 Jabber

13 Aardvark

16 Reddish

17 Chastity

purple

5 Pool tool

7 Knocked out

14 Grade insignia

CROSSWORD

- 24 Paddle

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

business

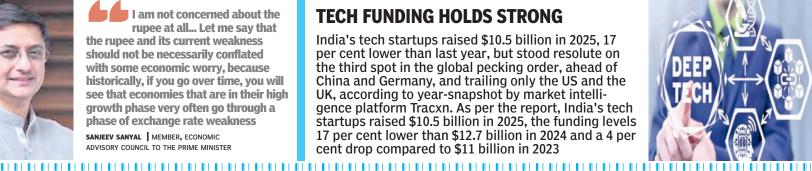


I am not concerned about the rupee at all... Let me say that the rupee and its current weakness should not be necessarily conflated with some economic worry, because historically, if you go over time, you will see that economies that are in their high growth phase very often go through a phase of exchange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

SANJEEV SANYAL | MEMBER, ECONOMIC

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





opportunity only in scale, but in inclusion. By sup porting AI adoption across MSMEs,



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



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 Akhoury.

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

Accenture revenue up

prices from next month

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 the top of the company's guided range. Accenture

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

BoM opens 60th

branch in Odisha

Maharashtra, one of the premier

public sector banks, has opened

a new branch at Niali in Cuttack

addition, the bank has now six

in the state and 2678 branches

announced its plans to further

customer reach in the state of

inaugurated by Dharma Ranjan

Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar

Zonal Manager Sanjib Kumar

Dash and Branch Manager of

Zone Dilip Kumar Raulo, Deputy

Niali Branch Binodini Behera, In

this occasion BDO Niali Dharma

Ranjan Panda appreciated the service render by the public

sector banks and stated that

by the public sector banks.

Raulo, Zonal Manager, Bank

of Maharashtra, Bhubaneswai

inaugurate one more branch in

and strategically important in

Odisha. This would be a step

to provide banking services

to customers through a fast-

and other channels.'

expanding network of branches

Cuttack district, a rapidly growing

ahead to support our commitment

Zone said, "We are happy to

the people of Niali should come forward to avail themselves of

the services and benefits offered

Commenting on the recent branch

expansion in Odisha, Dilip Kumar

Panda, BDO, Niali in presence of

Odisha. The new branch was

strengthen its presence and

branches in Cuttack, 60 branches

district Thursday. With this

across India. The bank also

BHUBANESWAR: Bank of



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-

Silver's rally this year, up nearly 130 per cent year to date, has also been underpinned by tightening inventories and strong retail and industrial demand, particularly from the rapidly expanding solar, electric vehicle, and data centre sector

JIGAR TRIVEDI ANALYST, RELIANCE SECURITIES

ment rate rising to a four-year high and November job additions failing to offset the slowdown seen in October.

Spot silver slipped 0.25 per cent to \$66.04 per ounce in the overseas markets. In the previous session, the white metal had increased by \$3.13, or 4.91 per cent, to hit a record of \$66.88 per ounce. In the current calendar year, from its record highs, silver prices have risen by \$37.32, or 126.3 per cent, from \$29.56 per ounce, recorded January 2, 2025.

Analysts said the white metal is witnessing its fifth straight year of supply deficit, a trend expected to persist and keep prices elevated in 2026.

TP Odisha Discoms clarify legal basis of ASD on power bills

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.

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 Commis-

sion 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 Reu-

ters, 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 execu-

tive 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 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 regula tory scrutiny, schedule cuts and a nporary 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.

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 mar-

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 buving, which could be due



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

+1.51 %

+0.48 %

GAINERS

1



near-term, foreign investors will resort to a sell-on-rally strategy," he said. IT stocks rose 1.2% and were

the biggest gainers among ma jor sectors Thursday. India's largest IT company, Tata Consultancy Services, added 2% after it outlined a strategy to become the world's largest artificial intelligence-led tech

services firm. IndiGo jumped 2.7% after its CEO said the worst was behind for India's largest airline.

Tata Motors jumped 3.7% after JPMorgan initiated cover age on the commercial vehicles maker with "Overweight".

Shares of asset management and brokerage firms jumped after the capital markets regula tor eased mutual fund fee rules

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

access, predictable on-ground expenses, and lower exposure to long-haul, dollar-linked trav-It also said that rather than

destinations that offer easy visa

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

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 book-

ings are coming from families

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.

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

ellers aged 55 and above now

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.

fessionals, friends' groups, and first-time international travel lers are choosing Vietnam for its ability to offer diverse experiences within a single itinerary, it added. Beyond destination-specific trends, Cox & Kings notes a

shift in traveller profiles. Be-

yond backpackers, young pro-

broader behavioural change among Indian travellers this winter. Consumers are mak ing quicker decisions, choosing shorter holidays, and prioritis ing experiences over long stays. There is also a clear pref-

erence for destinations with visa-on-arrival or streamlined e-visa processes. This season countries like Oman, Sri Lan ka, and Bali are also seeing a steady rise in last-minute interest, though Dubai and Vietnam lead by a significant

quarter of FY26, landing at follows a September-August financial year.





It also observed that trav-

This season has also seen a

margin, it stated.

Kabbadi controversy: Pak player represents India Eng's Ashes hopes | Mabbadi Federation, Rana Sar| War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| ing of the PKR had been called | | War, said an emergency meet| war, said an emergency meet| war, said an emergency meet| war

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

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

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

Al-Rayyan (Qatar), Dec 18:

Paris Saint-Germain boss Lu-

is Enrique expressed his ex-

citement after the European

champions defeated Flamengo

on penalties to win the FIFA In-

tercontinental Cup for the first

time, stating his team has made

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.

a successful year on a high note

by defeating CF Flamengo 2-1

in a penalty shootout to win

the FIFA Intercontinental Cup

after a 1-1 draw in regulation

time. Flamengo fought back to

Paris Saint-Germain finished

history once again.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

HISTORIC YEAR

PSG clinch first-ever

Intercontinental Cup

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

We've made histo-

ry 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

"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-

Parisian midfielder Vitinha

was named the best player in

the 2025 FIFA Intercontinen-

tal Cup final and received his

award from FIFA President

py," Enrique said.

Gianni Infantino.

the European champions.



ullah played for them which is

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 falsely playing under the names of Pakistan team."

Rajput has issued an apology and clarified that he was invited to play in the event in

they had named the side Indian team and I told the organizers to don't use names of India and Pakistan. In private competitions 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 after the conflict," he said.

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

On a day when temperatures reached 40 degrees Celsius (104F)and fresh controversy erupted over the "Snicko" review technology, England were 213 for eight at stumps on day two, still 158 runs short of Australia'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, Australia 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 comfortable victories in Perth and Brisbane.

There was certainly no easing back into the action for Australia's returning captain Pat Cummins and recalled spinner Nathan Lyon, who combined to blitz England's top order before "Pretty proud about how the

boys went about it," Lyon told TNT Sports. "Pat's been phenomenal 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-

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

yon moves to second on Australia"s all-time bowling list

bilitated back into his work removing Zak Crawley (9) caught behind in a partnership-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

It put the wily off spinner second 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 engulfed day one and a new one flared late on day two.

England wicketkeeper Jamie 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 Gaffaney 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 eventually 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.

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 challenging home assignment against South Africa, which has exposed a few chinks in the armour 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 -- skipper Survakumar Yaday 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, Survakumar's form has sharply nosedived in the only format he is assured a place in the XI

Having gone through 18 innings 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 conundrum. Gill's return as vice-captain in the T20I format might



ollowing the abandonment of the fourth T201 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

have been perceived as one which put Suryakumar on notice a few months ago, but the former's ordinary run with the bat since his comeback and the latest injury setback only hampers 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 cautious 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

and growing list of responsibilities 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-

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

ments and is also beginning

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

For South Africa, who have blown hot and cold particularly 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.

Sat-Chi get closer to knockouts

NAT'L SHOOTING C'SHIP

Ketan wins women's 10m air pistol gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Harvana'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 catego ry, 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 extensive qualification phase that saw over 900 shooters compete across 39 relays.

Gulia topped the qualification 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.

Inter-CIL Volleyball Tournament 2025–26 hosted

POST NEWS NETWORK

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

The tournament was formally opened by Director (Technical/CRD) Shankar Nagachari, Director (Technical/ES) Rajiv Kumar Sinha, Director (Technical/RD&T) Nripendra Nath, and Chief Vigilance Officer Pankaj Kumar, who interacted with the players and inaugurated the event by serving the ball. Several senior officials, sports enthusiasts, and mem-



Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries underlined the importance 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-organisational 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 participating in the tournament, including host CMPDI (Headquarters)-Ranchi and SCCL-Kothagudem, highlighting a spirit of healthy competition and unity across the organisation.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Dec 18: India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty dished out a solid performance to outwit the Indonesian 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 Indian 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 Chirag 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 flawless 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 Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has unveiled a new selection policy that makes attendance at national camps mandatory to be eligible for national selection, 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 Nationals 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 National Coaching Camp is mandatory for all wrestlers, including elite and iconic athletes. To be eligible for the camp, a wrestler 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 venue," it added.

It means that Vinesh Phogat, who recently announced her comeback from retirement, will have to prove herself at the domestic level before being 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.

clear that "past performances

The WFI policy makes it

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

will not be considered for selec-

The policy mentions, that "to be eligible, a wrestler must have won a medal in at least one of the following competitions of the concerned year: National Championship, Federation Cup and any other WFI-recognised competition.' Selection trials must for

international competitions

The policy also states that trials are mandatory for teams representing India in major international 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 Olvmpic 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 second 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 barring a wrestler from trials on count of indiscipline or poor attendance. The selection committee may uphold the recommendation and WFI reserves the right to take disciplinary action against wrestlers found overweight during international competition.

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