



### Old-school Ananya

Actor Ananya Panday shares that her views on love and relationships are rooted in old-school values

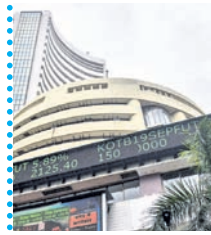
LEISURE | P10



### Epstein files

Congressional Democrats release dozens of new images from the estate of the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein

INTERNATIONAL | P9



### Markets rebound

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebound sharply after sliding for the past four sessions

BUSINESS | P11



### India clinch series

Rampant India thump South Africa by 30 runs and end 2025 with a 3-1 series victory in the fifth and final T20I

SPORTS | P12

# Anti-India protests rock B'desh

Bangladesh witnessed fresh unrest following the killing of outspoken youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi, triggering protests across Dhaka and other cities and fuelling anti-India sentiment ahead of the February 12 national elections. Although relative calm returned Friday, demonstrations continued at key locations such as Shahbagh, with protesters demanding justice and warning of further agitation. The situation was further inflamed by the lynching of a Hindu man in an incident of mob violence, deepening fears of rising communal tensions amid the political turmoil. Violence overnight included attacks on media houses such as 'Prothom Alo' and 'The Daily Star', prompting condemnation and apologies from the government. Unrest also spread to cities like Chittagong, where protesters targeted the Indian Assistant High Commission amid worsening ties with New Delhi after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India last year.

AGENCIES

**Dhaka, Dec 19:** Bangladesh's interim government urged people Friday to resist violence as police and paramilitary troops fanned out across Dhaka and other cities following protests overnight over the killing of a popular youth leader, sparking concerns of fresh unrest ahead of national elections in which he was due to run.

Although calm had returned to much of the country Friday, protesters carrying national flags and placards continued demonstrating at Shahbagh in central Dhaka, chanting slogans and vowing not to return until justice was served.

Sharif Osman Hadi, 32, the youth leader who died, was a spokesperson for the Inquilab Mancha, or Platform for Revolu-



**UNREST:** Supporters block the Shahbagh Square as they protest, demanding justice for the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, a student leader who had been undergoing treatment in Singapore after being shot in the head, in Dhaka, Friday

tion, and participated in the protests that overthrew Hasina. He was shot in the head by masked assailants in Dhaka last Friday while launching his campaign for the elections.

Hadi, an outspoken critic of India, was initially treated at a local hospital before being flown to Singapore for advanced medical care, where he died after spending six days on life support.

In Dhaka, videos circulating on social media showed mobs van-

dalising the offices of the country's largest daily newspaper, Prothom Alo, as well as the Daily Star, Thursday night. The fire service said the blaze at the Daily Star was under control. Troops were deployed to the scene, and firefighters rescued journalists trapped inside the building.

Bangladesh has been governed by an interim administration led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus since August 2024, after Hasina fled to

## HINDU MAN LYNCHED

**Dhaka:** A Hindu man was lynched and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Bangladesh, in the latest incident of violence against the religious minority in the country. The deceased, 25-year-old Dipu Chandra Das, was a factory worker in Mymensingh city, the Bangla Tribune news portal reported Friday. In a statement, the interim government Friday condemned the lynching of the Hindu man, saying there is no space for such violence in the new Bangladesh. "The perpetrators of this heinous crime will not be spared," it added. Das was first beaten up by a mob outside the factory over blasphemy allegations Thursday night and hanged from a tree, police said.

India following a student-led uprising. The government has been grappling with fresh

protests over delayed reforms, and warnings of unrest by Hasina's party, the Awami League,

which has been barred from the vote. The elections are scheduled for February 12.

Violence was also reported in a number of cities across Bangladesh, including the port city of Chittagong, where protesters attacked the Indian Assistant High Commission.

The unrest follows fresh anti-India protests this week, with ties between the neighbours deteriorating since Hasina fled to Delhi.

**MORE P9**

## SIR: 97.4L voters removed in TN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Dec 19:** A total of 97.4 lakh voters have been removed from the Tamil Nadu voter list, following the enumeration phase of the SIR exercise and the state's electoral roll now has 5.43 crore voters, Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik said Friday.

As of October 27, 2025, the pre-SIR electoral roll had 6.41 crore voters, she said.

Giving a breakdown of the total voter list as per the new draft, the number of male voters stood at 2.77 crore, while the number of female voters is 2.66 crore. The total number of third gender voters stands at 7,191, while the number of differently abled voters stands at 4.19 lakh.

Briefing reporters at the Secretariat, Patnaik said, as per the Election Commission announcement, SIR exercise has been going on in Tamil Nadu.

The enumeration phase got over December 14, and the revised list has been released Friday. The District Election Officers have released the draft rolls and have handed over the details to the registered political parties. In Tamil Nadu, as of October 27, 2025, the total electoral base was at 6.41 crore, and today's list stands at 5.43 crore.

During the enumeration phase, the BLOs and BLAs visited houses up to three times, and based on that, the draft was released," she said.

The 97.4 lakh names have been removed based on the absentee and those who have permanently shifted, she said.

"Based on the visits made by BLOs and BLAs, errors like permanently shifted voters, absentee voters, deaths and those who were enrolled at multiple places were identified. Their details have not been included in the draft voter list," she said.

## MAFIA-BABU NEXUS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** At a time when the state relies heavily on mining revenue to fund its development initiatives, the government is facing a bizarre situation wherein it is losing mining revenue of several hundred crores. A section of private firms has allegedly devised ways to misappropriate large sums of money by avoiding payment of mining-related dues, while the government appears to have turned a blind eye to the issue.

A review of official data suggests that this happens in cahoots with certain Mines department officials who are extending all possible concessions to benefit a few select companies. As a result, funds meant for public welfare schemes are allegedly being diverted into private pockets.

Mining leaseholders are gov-

erned by rules that specify the quantity of minerals they are permitted to extract on a daily or annual basis. The government has also stipulated that if any company exceeds its approved production limit, it must pay additional stamp duty and registration fees accordingly.

However, these rules appear to exist largely on paper. Despite extracting minerals beyond the permissible daily and annual limits, several leaseholders are allegedly not paying the corresponding stamp duty and registration fees. Multiple companies are reported to be extracting minerals indiscriminately and selling them without complying with these financial obligations.

Among those named for allegedly violating the rules are Tata Steel, which operates iron ore mines at Joda East, Katamati, Tiring Pahar, Bamebari,

Khandabandha and Joda West; and Indrani Pattnaik Minerals, which operates in Uchhabali iron and minerals mines. Instead of paying the additional stamp duties and registration fees for excessive extraction, these entities have filed writ petitions in the High Court challenging the government's decisions.

As a result, while the cases remain pending, the state government has reportedly been deprived of stamp duty amounting to ₹234.51 crore and registration fees of ₹93.80 crore – totaling ₹328.31 crore. There is growing uncertainty over when these cases will be finally heard and when the state will recover its rightful revenues. Officials say this approach has set a precedent, encouraging other mining companies to follow suit. By citing pending court cases, many are allegedly extracting minerals



beyond approved limits without paying the additional dues.

A senior mining official said while the cases are sub judice, the government is currently failing to maintain accurate data on the actual quantity of minerals being extracted daily by leaseholders. As a result, minerals worth several thousand crore rupees are allegedly being siphoned off from the state every day through this route.

The issue was highlighted in the Assembly December 4,

when Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena provided details of outstanding dues. According to his statement, Tata Steel Ltd owes ₹49.40 crore in stamp duty and ₹19.76 crore in registration fees for excess extraction at the Joda East iron ore mines. At Katamati, the company owes ₹61.27 crore in stamp duty and ₹24.59 crore in registration fees.

Similarly, Indrani Pattnaik owes ₹39.03 crore in stamp duty and ₹15.61 crore in registration fees. Tata Steel's dues for Tiring Pahar mining include ₹3.26 crore in stamp duty and 1.30 crore in registration fees; for Bamebari mining 3.78 crore in stamp duty and 1.51 crore in registration fees; for Khandabandha mining, 67.84 crore in stamp duty and 27.13 crore in registration fees; and for Joda West mining, 9.69 crore in stamp duty and 3.87 crore in registration fees.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He received accolades worldwide, yet he speaks only about the abuse he faced in his own country – don't know why

REUTERS

**Washington, Dec 19:** US President Donald Trump Thursday signed an order directing the loosening of federal regulations on marijuana, a move that could further reverse decades of tough-on-weed policy.

Trump's order instructs the attorney general to quickly move ahead with reclassifying marijuana. If that happens, the psychoactive plant would be listed alongside common painkillers, ketamine and testosterone as a less dangerous drug.

Such a decision would repre-

sent one of the most significant federal changes to marijuana policy in decades. It could reshape the cannabis industry, unlock billions in research funding and open doors long closed to banks and investors.

The Senate's Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, welcomed the move, while dozens of lawmakers in Trump's own Republican Party blasted the decision. Marijuana will still remain illegal federally and subject to a patchwork of local laws across the country, Trump said. Some industry experts said congressional action was still needed to



create more stable regulation.

"We have people begging for me to do this, people that are in great pain for decades," Trump told reporters at the White House. But the teetotaling president also said that controlled substances are risky and that experimentation was of no interest to him.

"I don't want it, okay," he said. "I'm not gonna be taking it. But a lot of people do want it. A lot of people need it."

Senior administration officials said the primary purpose of the order was to increase medical research of marijuana

and related products to understand their risks and potential for treatment. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services plans to allow some beneficiaries to use hemp-derived CBD products as soon as April.

Dozens of Republicans in the US House of Representatives and Senate wrote to Trump Thursday, pleading with him not to sign the order.

"Reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III drug will send the wrong message to America's children, enable drug cartels, and make our roads more dangerous," they said.



The 2024 youth-uprising in Bangladesh — which toppled the government — became the spark for a global wave of Generation Z (Gen Z) unrest across 2025. This is the new face of protest. From Nepal's capital to Mongolian streets, from Madagascar's universities to Bulgaria's squares, Gen Z — a generation of 'digital natives' born roughly between the late 1990s and early 2010s — is rewriting what mobilisation looks like. They mobilised en masse against corruption, inequality, censorship, and elite-dominated politics — carrying forward a new era of youth-driven activism and demands for accountability

# GenZ uprising: FIGHT FOR RIGHT



## GENERATIONAL DISCONTENT

### Nepal youth topple leader, choose new one on Discord

The revolution started on social media. It ended with protests, violence that claimed 76 people, and an online poll to pick the new PM

In September, large-scale anti-corruption protests and demonstrations took place across Nepal, predominantly organized by Generation Z students and young citizens.

Also known as “the Gen Z protests”, they began following a nationwide ban on numerous social media platforms including YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp, and they incorporated the public's frustration with corruption and display of wealth by government officials and their families, as well as allegations of mismanagement of public funds.

After nineteen protesters—most under the age of thirty—were killed by state forces September 8, vengeful mobs began burning buildings the



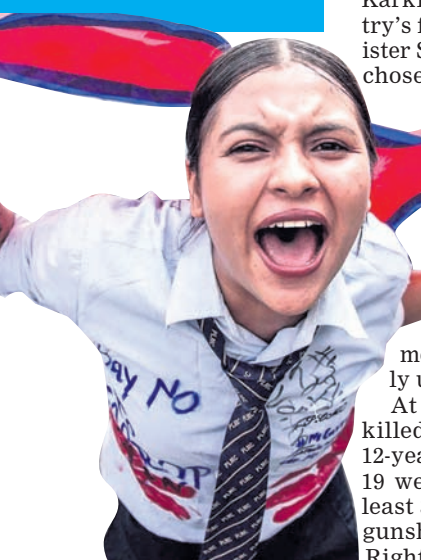
Nepal is one of the youngest countries in South Asia, with a median age of 25.3 years (the US median age is 39.1). High fertility rates in previous decades have created a “youth bulge”—the largest in the region's history

#### ‘Nepo Kid’ spark that lit the fire

The “Nepo Kid” trend had started in the Philippines and Indonesia and it erupted in Nepal too. The social media videos showed luxury cars glinting in the sun and the children of Nepali government ministers stepping out of them wearing designer clothes and expensive watches. There were reels showcasing opulent weddings, intercut with images of Nepal's impoverished communities. As the videos began to rack up millions of views and spill into mainstream news coverage, the government responded with panic. On September 4, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology ordered internet service providers to block access to 26 social-media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube, ostensibly because the companies had failed to register with the government as required by a Supreme Court directive. Coming just as the Nepo Kid videos were flooding social feeds, the government's explanation felt hollow. To Nepal's young citizens, the ban wasn't about compliance or procedure—it was about fear. The system, they believed, was terrified of transparency.

next day. Offices of the three major parties—the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist, or UML),

the Nepali Congress, and the Maoists—were torched. The Prime Minister's Office—a 122-year-old palace—went up



in flames, along with the Ministries of Home, Finance,

and Health. The Parliament was incinerated, as were the Supreme Court, several other lower courts, and the anti-corruption commission.

Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, along with a few government ministers, resigned September 9. Sushila Karki was appointed as country's first woman prime minister September 12. The youth chose their next leader in a manner unprecedented for any electoral democracy — through a virtual poll on Discord, a United States-based free messaging platform mainly used by online gamers.

At least 76 people were killed; of these, one was a 12-year-old child and at least 19 were young students. At least 34 protesters died from gunshot wounds. Human Rights Watch found that police indiscriminately fired on protesters multiple times.

From the Himalayas to the Andes, a new wave of protests unfolded across the world in 2025, driven by generational discontent against governments and anger among young people.

Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina was forced out of power and out of the country after a military mutiny, the culmination of weeks of demonstrations led by young protesters referring to themselves as “Gen Z Madagascar.”

The rage against the political establishment in the Indian Ocean island country mirrors other recent protests across the world, in countries like Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru and Morocco. These protests have been sparked by specific grievances but are driven by long-simmering issues like widening inequality, economic uncertainty, corruption, and nepotism of leaders.

But they have one thing in

What connects these youth-led protests is a shared sense that traditional political systems aren't responsive to their generation's concerns, whether that's corruption, climate change, or economic inequality. Protest then becomes the logical outlet when institutional channels feel blocked

SAM NADEL | DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL CHANGE LAB, A UK-BASED NONPROFIT THAT RESEARCHES PROTESTS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

common: Mostly leaderless, they are made up primarily of young people who brand themselves as “Gen Z,” defined as those born roughly between 1996 and 2010 — the first generation to grow up entirely in the internet age.

Though their specific demands differ, most of these protests have been sparked by government overreach or neglect.

### Will the ripples reach India?



The recent Gen Z-led uprisings in Nepal and Bangladesh have sparked a regional debate on whether similar waves of youth-driven dissent could unfold in India. In both neighbouring countries, young people mobilised rapidly—using digital platforms, student networks, and grassroots organising—to challenge issues such as lack of transparency, corruption, unemployment, and restrictions on freedom. These movements highlight a growing impatience among South Asia's younger generation towards traditional power structures. For India, these uprisings act as a mirror and a warning. They show how quickly digitally connected youth can mobilize when they feel unheard. Indian Gen Z is increasingly vocal online about job scarcity, meritocracy, freedom of expression, and political accountability. Seeing neighbouring youth force accountability may embolden Indian students, creators, and young professionals to demand greater transparency, fairness, and economic opportunity. The real ripple effect is psychological: Indian youth now see that change is possible when a generation unites with clarity and courage.

### B'DESH JULY UPRISING LEADER'S DEATH SPARKS FRESH FURY

Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent leader of Bangladesh's student July Uprising last year and a vocal critic of India, died while undergoing treatment at a Singapore hospital days after being shot by masked assailants in Dhaka. Hundreds of mostly young protesters then flooded Dhaka's streets December 19, ransacking and setting ablaze the offices of Prothom Alo, the nation's largest daily, and The Daily Star. Their charred shells stood as grim evidence, windows shattered and interiors gutted. Printing presses at Bangladesh's two leading newspapers went silent for the first time in decades after mobs torched their offices in the worst attack on the media ahead of February's national elections. The country of nearly 175 million people has been on edge since a student-led uprising in 2024 toppled Sheikh Hasina's long-standing government. With Hasina sheltering in New Delhi, Bangladesh's ties with India have strained. The latest violence has rattled the interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who has faced criticism for failing to restore order since taking office in August 2024. In December 2024, Hadi had accused the Awami League of orchestrating secret killings of the students involved in the July uprising. Interestingly, the attack on Hadi had come just months ahead of the polls, and a day after the country's Election Commission announced the polls schedule saying the 13th parliamentary election would be held February 12, 2026.



### WHAT'S DRIVING THIS WAVE

**GENERATIONAL FRUSTRATION & ECONOMIC PRESSURES:** Many Gen Zers face high youth unemployment, economic inequality, and poor prospects. Governments perceived as unresponsive are increasingly being challenged.

**BROKEN SOCIAL CONTRACTS & CORRUPTION:** Corruption, nepotism and misuse of public funds are common triggers; youths are demanding accountability, transparency, and real opportunity.

**DESIRE FOR STRUCTURAL REFORMS, NOT JUST COSMETIC CHANGE:** Protesters demand better education, healthcare, jobs, social services; many resent superficial reforms or elite capture.

#### WHY IT MATTERS — AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR 2026

**YOUTH ARE NO LONGER SILENT VOTERS:** They are active actors: The success of these movements suggests young people are increasingly willing to challenge entrenched power structures.

**POLICY SHIFTS & POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOLLOW FAST:** Several protests in 2025 (Nepal, Bulgaria, Morocco) have already resulted in resignations, policy rollback, or government reforms.

**GLOBAL RIPPLE EFFECT:** As networks spread across countries, young activists are learning from each other — making this a potentially sustained, transnational wave rather than isolated protests.

**DIGITAL ACTIVISM RAISES NEW CHALLENGES:** Governments are responding with tactics like misinformation, surveillance and online suppression — leading to clashes not just on streets but also in the digital public sphere.



### The role of social media

In 2025, social media played a crucial role in Gen Z-led protests across Nepal, Morocco, and Bulgaria. In Nepal, young people used TikTok and VPN-accessed platforms to organise after the government banned 26 major social media sites, a move that sparked nationwide demonstrations until the ban was lifted. In Morocco, the ‘GenZ212’ movement relied heavily on TikTok, Instagram, and Discord to coordinate protests demanding better public services and jobs, with online networks rapidly expanding as demonstrations spread across cities. In Bulgaria, social-media-savvy youth mobilised through influencers and online groups to protest a controversial draft budget, contributing to the government's decision to withdraw the proposal. Across all three countries, social media served as a decentralised tool for coordination, rapid information sharing, and amplifying Gen Z's political demands.

### UNITING BEHIND A MANGA PIRATE FLAG

Carried by a band of pirates who stand up to corrupt and repressive rulers, the meaning of the One Piece flag has resonated across Asia

Across multiple countries, a singular pop culture symbol has emerged: a black flag showing a grinning skull and crossbones wearing a straw hat. The flag comes from a cult Japanese manga and anime series called “One Piece,” which follows the young captain Luffy and his crew, the Straw Hat Pirates, as they challenge corrupt powers, including the autocratic world government. In Indonesia, it was hung outside homes, on motorbikes, cars and trucks, in a sign of discontent with the government that boiled over into deadly protests railing against lavish perks enjoyed by politicians. In Nepal, it was draped on the golden

gates of the palace that houses parliament, as young people toppled their government. In the Philippines, it was raised at rallies by protesters furious at alleged government corruption. A series of reports stating that people had been targeted by the police and military after showing the flag prompted Amnesty International to issue a statement warning that such actions were a violation of people's freedom of expression. One Piece, by Eiichiro Oda, holds the record for the most copies published in the same comic book series by a single author, with 500m copies printed worldwide.









CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Kundra. I Baburam Gouda, S/o. Sundra Gouda, At-Bhaliapadar, PO-Taraput, PS- Kundra, Dist -Koraput declared by this Affidavit No.316,Dtd-17.12.2025 that in my daughter's actual name is Monalisha Gouda which has mentioned in her birth certificate vide no.1430 Dt.15.11.2018 but in Adhar Card vide no-xxxxxxx1598 has been wrongly mentioned as Mamali Gouda. So I swear that Monalisha Gouda and Mamali Gouda is one and same person that my daughter's name only.

Baburam Gouda  
Deponent

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Kesinga dated 19.12.2025, I, Parbati Devi (73), W/o Suratha Saha, D/o Upendra Bishi, At/Post - Laitara, P.S. - Kesinga, Dist. - Kalahandi, Odisha. My name is mistaken recorded in my Aadhaar Card vide No. xxxx xxxx 7396, my name is Prabati Saha instead of Parbati Devi. Henceforth I shall be known as Parbati Devi for all purposes.

LOST

Notice is hereby given that I, K. Narin Kumandan, S/o Late K. Kodandaram Kumandan, residing at New Colony, Rayagada, Odisha, have misplaced/lost a file containing original title deeds pertaining to my property, while travelling from New Colony to Lions Club, Rayagada on 09.12.2025. Despite my diligent search, the documents could not be traced as on date. The lost documents are as follows:  
Original Sale Deed No. 779/1984  
Original Sale Deed No. 668/1985  
Original Rectification Deed No. 10/1991  
Original Rectification Deed No. 11/1991  
Original ROR & Sale Deed relating to Khata No. 2/720, Plot No. 14/1/1074  
The above documents were to be deposited in the bank for obtaining a bank loan. In this regard, I have executed an affidavit dated 10.12.2025 affirming the loss of the documents and lodged an FIR/ GD Entry No. 10 dated 17.12.2025 at Rayagada Police Station for record. Any person having any objection, claim or information regarding the above-mentioned documents is requested to contact the undersigned within 15 days of this publication. If no objection is received, it will be presumed that no one has any claim over the said documents. If the documents are found at any later point, I shall immediately deposit the original title deeds with the concerned bank, as required.  
Name: K. Narin Kumandan  
Address: New Colony, Rayagada, Odisha  
Phone: 9437024810

Ashok Basa appointed as WFEO internal auditor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paris/Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** Former president of Institution of Engineers (India) and an alumnus of NIT, Rourkela, Ashok Basa has been appointed as the internal auditor of World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO) for the period 2025 to 2027. WFEO executive board (EB) made the following appointment in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.

In its communication, WFEO EB notified that Ashok Basa has been appointed as WFEO internal auditor considering his experience, professionalism, and dedication to the engineering community which make him exceptionally well suited for the role. The term of appointment has commenced from December 12, 2025 and is renewable in accordance with WFEO statutes.

Notably, Basa is the first Indian to be appointed the position since its inception in

1968. Earlier, he had successfully completed his tenure as WFEO Executive Vice President (2022-2025), becoming the second Indian to be elected to this prestigious global leadership position. He also served as the chair of WFEO Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).

Basa will be responsible for independent review and assessment of WFEO's internal functions, including but not limited to financial processes, compliance mechanisms, and governance systems. He will also prepare reports for the EB and support the federation's overarching commitment to transparency, accountability, and sound institutional governance, while participating as a non-voting member of the EB and executive council.

The appointment is widely seen as a matter of pride for the Indian engineering fraternity and recognition of Basa's sustained contributions to engineering leadership at the national and global levels.



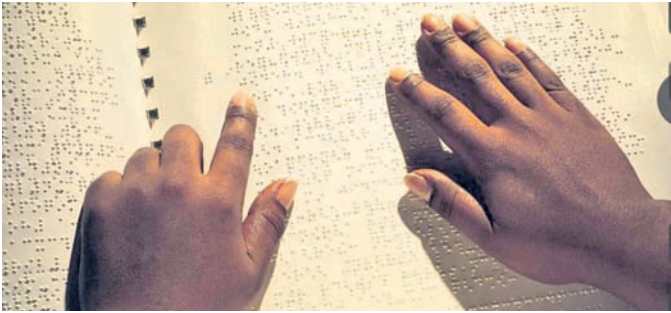
Odisha flags Braille textbook shortage

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** Visually impaired students enrolled in Under Graduate (UG) and Post Graduate (PG) courses in government-run higher education institutions in Odisha are contending with shortage of Braille textbooks, the state's Higher Education (HE) department informed the Orissa High Court recently.

The court had earlier directed the HE department to ensure that issues faced by the differently-abled are addressed uniformly across all institutes in the state so that they are not deprived from pursuing their studies for lack of facilities to which they are constitutionally entitled.

In response to query by the court on the issues relating to differently abled girls students in Sailabala Women's Autonomous College, Cuttack, the department stated "It's not practically feasible to arrange Braille books for them owing to the reason that such books are not available in Berhampur and even Dehradun where Braille press are usually available."



The computerised Braille Press in Berhampur is the sole Braille printing facility while the National Institute of Visually Handicapped, Dehradun, an autonomous body of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, has also Braille printing facility.

The department further stated that for UG and PG, there are prescribed and reference books available as per syllabus for general students, but there are no specific books exclusively prescribed for visually challenged students.

As an alternative if Braille writer machine, required software, computer, printing

papers and trained personnel will be provided to each and every institution it will be easier on the part of the institution to provide required number of books as per the choice of the visually challenged students, the department apprised the court in an affidavit.

HE department director Kali Prasanna Mahapatra intimated the court that information regarding differently abled students has been collated.

The matter shall be taken up with Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department so that steps taken in Shailabala Women's (Autonomous) College shall be replicated throughout the state, he

informed.

Responding to the query of court regarding steps taken relating to differently abled students in the schools, Mahapatra also assured that they will convey the concern of this court to the concerned departments and concerted effort shall also be made them.

Financial assistance will be provided to HE institutions according to strength of differently-abled students, making the campus accessible and inclusive. HE institutions will be instructed to identify disability of every PwD student and accordingly coordinate with District Social Security Officer (DSSO) for provision of wheelchairs, crutches, walking sticks and other orthopaedic aids.

All the universities and colleges shall assist the differently-abled students to acquire a Unique Disability Identification UDID card (if not already), for easier access to government benefits, services and tracking progress. The admission portal of HE department will be modified for inclusion of UDID number of the students.

Illegal sand mining threat to Bhargavi embankment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pipli, Dec 19:** While the terrifying memories of a massive damage caused by floodwaters due to a breach at Phulupal on Bhargavi River in 2008 are yet to fade from public memory, allegations have now emerged that illegal sand mining at the same location has raised fears of another breach at Phulupal.

The All India Mool Nibasi Sangh (AIMNS) has submitted a written complaint to the Puri Collector in this regard. In 2008, a breach had occurred on the western embankment of the Bhargavi River. Despite this, no upgraded embankment strengthening work has been undertaken by the concerned department since the flood to ensure the safety of areas such



as Laxminarayanpur, Gobindapur, Jagannathpur, Nugasasan, Dandamukundapur,

Mangalpur, Teishipur, Jasuapur and Satashankha.

The complaint states that

Poets stress role of lit in promoting schemes

**Bhubaneswar:** A distinguished group of poets, academicians, citizens, and former senior government officers visited Press Information Bureau (PIB) regional office here Friday for an interactive session with PIB ADG Akhil Kumar Mishra. The meeting focused on the power of literature and creative expression in amplifying the reach of Central government initiatives. Participants discussed how poetry, regional languages, and other forms of creative writing can play a crucial role in effectively communicating public welfare schemes to citizens and fostering social cohesion. Mishra highlighted PIB's commitment to disseminating authentic information and encouraged writers, scholars, and literary enthusiasts to contribute creatively in promoting government programmes. He emphasised that literature could serve as a bridge between the government and the public, making developmental initiatives more relatable and impactful. The session concluded with a mutual agreement to explore collaborations between literary communities and the government to enhance public awareness and participation in national schemes.

Garg reviews OSCRGP with World Bank officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg Friday held a high-level review meeting with the World Bank Mission Team to assess the progress of the Odisha State Capacity and Sustainable Growth Policy Programme (OSCRGP).

The review meeting saw participation of key state officials, including the CEO of the Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC), Special Secretary of the State Planning and Coordination department, Director of the Directorate of Finance and Statistics, and representatives of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA). The OSCRGP, supported by the World Bank and the Union government, has been operational since 2023-24 and will continue until April 2028. The programme focuses on strengthening state capacity and promoting sustainable development through technology-enabled governance.



Its key objectives include ensuring effective delivery of government schemes to all eligible beneficiaries through integrated digital platforms, expanding social and economic security coverage for citizens, disseminating timely information to the public for disaster forecasting and mitigation, improving transparency in policy-making, planning, and institutional reforms to enhance accountability and efficiency and modernising the state statistical system to facilitate evidence-based policy formulation and implementation.

During the meeting, Garg reviewed the annual progress of the programme and emphasised the need to expedite ongoing initiatives to accelerate fund utilisation. She also directed that the

State Information Management Committee meeting be convened at the earliest to further strengthen information management mechanisms. The World Bank officials discussed leveraging their support to enhance Odisha's disaster management capabilities, particularly in improving the warning system for multi-faceted hazards such as lightning and cold waves. The OSDMA was advised to focus on making disaster warnings more timely, accurate, and effective to minimise damage.

This meeting underlines Odisha's commitment to leveraging technology, improving governance, and strengthening disaster resilience, ensuring that developmental benefits reach every citizen efficiently.

Khurda Road-Puri section gets DDS system

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneshwar, Dec 19:** East Coast Railway (ECOR) has achieved noteworthy progress in the ongoing Double Distant Signaling (DDS) work in Khurda Road-Puri section of Khurda Road Division, a critical safety and capacity enhancement project sanctioned during the financial year 2024-25.

This important initiative is aimed at enhancing passenger safety, improving operational efficiency and enabling higher permissible train speeds on this vital rail corridor.

The DDS system is being implemented to facilitate an increase in sectional speed up to 130 kmph. By providing advanced signal information to locomotive pilots, DDS allows better anticipation of signal aspects, smoother speed regulation and safer high-speed train operations, especially on



a busy passenger and pilgrim route like Khurda Road-Puri.

The signaling and telecommunication component of the project involves extensive upgradation across the section, covering 8 stations, 10 level crossing gates and one intermediate block hut. As part of system integration, major signalling modifications have been undertaken, including Electronic Interlocking (EI) al-

terations at six stations—Haripurgram, Sakhigopal, Birapurustottampur, Delang, Malatipatpur and Puri—Route Relay Interlocking (RRI) alteration at Khurda Road station and Panel Interlocking (PI) alteration at Motari station. All System Integration Plans (SIPs) have been duly approved to ensure safe and seamless incorporation of the upgraded signalling architecture. Since the award of the tender in November 2024, the project has recorded substantial progress. Commissioning has already been completed at Khurda Road, Haripurgram, Motari and Delang stations, along with three level crossing gates at KP-5, KP-9 and KP-11 in the section.

The entire DDS work in Khurda Road-Puri section is targeted for completion by January 2026. Upon completion, trains will be able to operate safely at enhanced speeds of up to 130

kmph, resulting in reduced travel time, improved punctuality and greater passenger convenience.

DDS is not merely a technical upgrade but a passenger-centric improvement with direct public benefits. Higher permissible speeds will lead to faster journeys, while advance signal visibility significantly enhances safety by reducing the chances of sudden braking and signal-related incidents. Improved speed regulation contributes to better punctuality and more reliable train services.

Passengers will also experience smoother and more comfortable travel due to fewer abrupt speed changes, benefiting elderly passengers, children and long-distance travelers in particular. Enhanced signaling efficiency improves line capacity, enabling the Railways to introduce more train services in the long term.

NABARD retired employees flay delay in pension revision



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 19:** All India NABARD Retired Employees' Welfare Association (AINREWA) has accused the Union government of inordinate delay in approving pension revision for directly recruited NABARD pensioners, despite prior approval for revision of family pension. The association has also alleged unjustified delay by NABARD authorities in implementing the already approved family pension revision, along with failure to address other pension-related issues.

AINREWA members held a demonstration in front of NABARD's Regional Office at Nayapalli here, pressing a six-point charter of demands. AINREWA, which has more than 3,500 members across the country, has demanded pension revision for NABARD employees who retired before November 2017. The demands also include implementation of the centrally approved family pension revision, removal of the upper ceiling on family pension, grant of full pension after 20 years of service, and fixation of pension based on the last drawn salary or the average salary of the last 10 months.

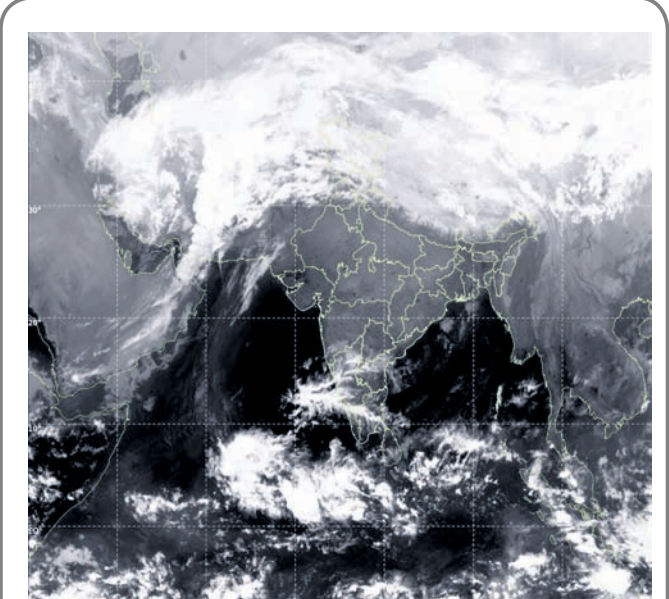
The association alleged that through its order dated July 21, 2023, the Centre has unjustly ex-

cluded NABARD-recruited pensioners from pension revision, thereby creating two categories of retirees within NABARD. This, the association said, is discriminatory, as for the last 43 years since NABARD's inception, all retirees had been treated equally without any distinction. The government order, AINREWA contended, is not only discriminatory but also violates the NABARD Pension Regulations, 1993, and infringes Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law.

The association further pointed out that despite prior approval by the government for revision of family pension and removal of the upper ceiling on family pension in line with RBI norms, there has been excessive delay in implementation. Many elderly family pensioners are struggling to survive on meagre pensions that are far below subsistence levels. Even after more than 30 months since government approval, the management has failed to implement the revised family pension, pushing family pensioners into poverty, it alleged.

On the occasion, a mass representation was submitted to the NABARD Chairman at the Head Office, and a memorandum was also submitted through the Officer-in-Charge of the Regional Office.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	89.72 ▼ 0.61	SENSEX	84929.36 ▲ 447.55	GOLD	₹134,124 ▼ ₹397
EURO	105.22 ▼ 0.74	NIFTY	25966.40 ▲ 150.85	SILVER	₹207,402 ▲ ₹3837



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.2°	25.8°	Fog or Mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later
Min Temp	12.8°	12.4°	
Humidity	86%	82%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	





# Farmers’ stir hits normal life

## Andhra should remain aunt, not try to be mother: Pujari

PNN & AGENCIES

**Sambalpur, Dec 19:** Normal life was affected in Sambalpur district Friday due to a dawn-to-dusk bandh called by farmers demanding speedy procurement of paddy.

The bandh, called by ‘Sambalpur Zilla Krushak Surakhya Sangathan’, the apex body of farmers in the district, passed off peacefully as no untoward incident was reported, police said.

Groups of farmers visited different government offices with folded hands and sought the support of officials.

“People at large and the officials in particular have been very cooperative and supportive of our cause,” Prafulla Swain, an agitating farmer, claimed.

Government and private offices, banks and financial institutions, shops, markets, malls and showrooms remained



closed due to the bandh.

The farmers were also seen picketing peacefully at several locations across the city.

Vehicular movement and emergency services, however, were exempted from the purview of the bandh.

The impact of the bandh was felt in the rural areas of the district as well. However, national highways and railway services were kept outside the purview of the bandh, and no blockade was staged.

Co-convenor of the ‘Paschim Odisha Krushak Sangathan Samanwaya Samiti’

(POKSS), Ashok Pradhan, said the bandh received a spontaneous response.

“More than 50 social organisations of Sambalpur extended support to the bandh,” he said.

Pradhan warned that if the government failed to fulfil their demands, the farmers’ organisations would decide on their further course of action.

The agitators demanded a permanent solution to issues related to paddy procurement. Although paddy procurement began November 28, they alleged that many farmers were yet to receive tokens to sell

their produce at government market yards.

Meanwhile, District Collector Siddheshwar Baliram Bondar visited several paddy procurement centres (PPCs) across the district Thursday.

He reviewed the ongoing Kharif paddy procurement operations and assessed the functioning of the mandis.

Officials claimed that Sambalpur district has recorded improvement in procurement during the ongoing Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2025-26 as compared to the previous year.

The number of registered farmers increased from 60,359 in KMS 2024-25 to 65,143 this season.

As of December 18, procurement during KMS 2025-26 covered 20,809 farmers with 9,61,560.6 quintals of paddy procured, compared to 14,896 farmers and procurement of 8,86,190 quintals during the corresponding period last year.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pottangi, Dec 19:** State Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari Friday asserted that the Kotia region belongs to Odisha and will continue to remain so, cautioning neighbouring Andhra Pradesh against bids to claim the border villages.

Addressing a public meeting organised in front of the Kotia gram panchayat office in Pottangi block of Koraput district, Pujari said Andhra Pradesh should refrain from encroaching into the border areas and harbouring misconceptions about ownership. “Let Andhra remain an aunt and not try to become a mother,” the minister said, drawing applause from the gathering.

He reiterated that the Odisha



government stands firmly with the people of Kotia and would continue to safeguard their interests. Later, Pujari held discussions with district officials at the guest house located on the panchayat premises. Koraput Collector Manoj Satyawar Mahajan, SP Rohit Varma, Sub-Collector Premal Hial, CDO Benudhar Sabar and BDO Ramakrishna Nayak were present. The minister reviewed the implementation of various government schemes in the panchayat.

Pottangi MLA Ramachandra Kadam, Koraput MLA Raghuram Machha and Kotpad MLA Rupu Bhatra also attended the programme.

Pujari assured residents that the government would give special attention to Kotia and work to strengthen its economic conditions.

## PG courses soon at Angul medical college

**Angul:** State Health Secretary Aswathy S Friday conducted a comprehensive review of the healthcare system in Angul district during a two-day visit, in line with clear instructions from the Chief Minister. During the visit, the health secretary inspected the district headquarters hospital, the medical college hospital, the trauma centre and the eye department, focusing on treatment facilities, patient care, availability of equipment and the progress of ongoing developmental works. District Collector Abdaal M. Akhtar and Chief District Medical Officer Dr Madan Mohan Pradhan accompanied her during the review.

## Hardcore Naxalite killed in encounter

**Malkangiri:** One Naxalite, carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh, was killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh’s Bijapur district bordering Malkangiri district Friday, a police official said. The exchange of fire broke out this morning in the forest of Aadwada-Kotmeta under Bhairamgarh police station area when a team of District Reserve Guard was out on an anti-Naxalite operation based on the presence of Maoist cadres in the area, he added. After the gun-battle ended, the body of a Naxalite along with one .303 rifle, a 9MM pistol, explosive materials was recovered from the encounter site, he said.

## Class X student found pregnant; 1 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kuanrmunda, Dec 19:** The discovery of a minor Class X student’s five-month pregnancy in the Biramitrapur police station area of Sundargarh district has caused widespread concern. Police Friday arrested the accused and forwarded him to the Sundargarh POC SO Court.

The accused has been

identified as Kuldeep Hansdah, 23. Biramitrapur police have registered a case under Section 6 of the POC SO Act and are continuing the investigation.

According to police, the accused allegedly sexually assaulted her in June after finding her alone and later threatened her with dire consequences to prevent her from disclosing the

incident. The case came to light two days ago when the girl complained of abdominal pain. Family members took her to a hospital, where medical examination revealed that she was five months pregnant. Following this, the family lodged a complaint at Biramitrapur police station Thursday leading to the youth’s arrest.

## 2 more Ganjam beaches set to get Blue Flag tag

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Dec 19:** In a significant boost to tourism, Gopalpur-on-Sea beach and Biju Patnaik beach in Nolia Nuagan near Podampeta village in Ganjam district are set to be upgraded to the Blue Flag Beach category.

Ganjam district has a 61-kilometre coastline, and Sunapur beach is currently the only Blue Flag certified beach in the district. With the addition of two more beaches, Ganjam is poised to have the highest number of Blue Flag beaches in the state.

Ganjam Collector V Keerthi Vasan and Berhampur Municipal Commissioner Prathamesh Arvind Rajshirke recently inspected the district’s coastal stretch to assess the feasibility of the proposed upgrades. Officials said Gopalpur-on-Sea, already a well-known



tourist destination, has the potential to meet the required infrastructure norms. Biju Patnaik beach near Podampeta, though relatively unexplored, holds strong potential to emerge as a major attraction once developed.

The Collector said detailed project reports (DPR) for both beaches have been prepared by the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) and submitted to the state Tourism department. An amount of Rs 30 crore has been sanctioned for the development of Gopalpur-on-Sea beach, and the tender process is currently underway.

“Once the tender process is finalised, work

will begin soon to create all the facilities required for Blue Flag certification,” the Collector said, adding that the municipal corporation will execute both projects.

Blue Flag certification is awarded to beaches that meet strict international standards for cleanliness, safety, environmental management and accessibility.

Local residents and tourism experts have welcomed the initiative, expressing hope that the projects will lead to increased tourist inflow and economic growth in the region. They said improved infrastructure and global recognition would help position Ganjam as a major coastal tourism hub.

Officials said the projects are expected to be completed in phases, with a focus on sustainable development and environmental protection.

### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

SRI AUROBINDO MARG, NEW DELHI - 110016

#### NCERT DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS - 2025

Applications are invited for the award of NCERT Doctoral Fellowships in the field of education and other disciplines directly related to education. The last date for the receipt of application is 30 days from the date of advertisement in the newspaper. For detailed information about eligibility, procedure etc., please visit NCERT’s website [www.ncert.nic.in](http://www.ncert.nic.in). Note : There are total ten fellowships out of which 4 fellowships are reserved for Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) one each for Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Mysore (if found suitable)

cbc 21104/12/0010/2526

### ZONAL OFFICE

18/1, Ainthapali Road, Sambalpur, Ph.: 0663-2540640

### POSSESSION NOTICE

Appendix - IV [See Rule 8(1)]

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of **UCO Bank, Rourkela Bazar Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of Powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. within **60 days** from the date of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **POSSESSION** of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **UCO Bank, Rourkela Bazar Branch** for an amount with interest and expenses thereon. **The Borrower’s attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.**

ROURKELA BAZAR BRANCH / Name and Address of the Borrower	Outstanding Amount	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Property
<b>Borrower: M/s. Maa Tarini Steel Furniture, Prop.: Mr. Pradeep Acharya, S/o.: Dinabandhu Acharya, Business Address: Shop No.: CTS-10, Basanti Colony, RTU-38, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundargarh, Odisha-769012. Residential Address: AM/47, Basanti Colony, RTU-38, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundargarh, Odisha-769012</b> <b>Place: Sambalpur, Date: 19.12.2025</b>	<b>₹ 30,17,793.70 as on 25.07.2025</b> + future interest & Expenses thereon	<b>21.08.2025 / 15.12.2025</b>	All that part and parcel of the Property in the name of <b>Mr. Pradeep Acharya, S/o.: Dinabandhu Acharya,</b> bearing Khata No.: 7, Plot No.: 276, Shop No.: CTS-10, Area: 272.5 Sq.ft., situated at Mouza: Durgapur, Area No.: 17, Basanti Colony, P.S.: Udit Nagar, Sub-Registry: Panposh, Dist.: Sundargarh, Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) North: Plot No.: CTS-11, South: Road, East: Road, West: Plot No.: CTS-9

**Authorised Officer, UCO BANK**

**Advertisement No. ECIL 01/2025**

**Government of India**

**Department of Atomic Energy**

Invites applications for the post of Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) in Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL)

Last date of receipt of application is 20.01.2026 upto 17:00 Hrs.

For details login to website <https://www.dae.gov.in>

cbc 48138/12/0007/2526

### ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ନିୟାମକ ଆୟୋଗ

#### ODISHA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

BIDYUT NIYAMAK BHAWAN

PLOT NO.4, SHAILASHREE VIHAR, BHUBANESWAR -751021

TEL. No. 2721048, 2721049

E-MAIL: [oerc@odisha.gov.in](mailto:oerc@odisha.gov.in) / [oerc@gmail.com](mailto:oerc@gmail.com)

WEBSITE: [www.oierc.org](http://www.oierc.org)

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**CASE No. 129 of 2025**

**Hearing of application of TPWODL Truing up for FY 2024-25 along with reconsideration/revisit of Truing up for FY 2023-24.**

TPWODL has submitted its application to the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission on 29.11.2025 for approval of Truing up for FY 2024-25 along with reconsideration/revisit of Truing up for FY 2023-24, which has been registered as **Case No. 129 of 2025**. The application has been filed under Sections 62, 86 (1) & 94(1)(f) and other applicable provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with OERC (Terms and Conditions for Determination of Wheeling Tariff and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2022 and OERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004. The Commission has decided to dispose of the case through a public hearing along with the ARR & RST application for FY 2026-27 of the applicant in **Case No.128 of 2025**.

The petition along with all Annexure submitted by M/s. TPWODL in this regard is available in TPWODL’s website [www.tpwesternodisha.com](http://www.tpwesternodisha.com) as well as in Commission’s website [www.oierc.org](http://www.oierc.org). The Interested persons / organizations those who were parties to the previous year Tariff Proceedings i.e. for FY 2023-24 & 2024-25 and want to participate in the above proceeding may file their objections/suggestions, if any, on the present petition of M/s. TPWODL by **16.01.2026** with a copy to TPWODL. TPWODL is to file its rejoinder to the objections/suggestions of the Respondents by **27.01.2026** with a copy to the Respondents. Those who are interested to participate in the public hearing through video conferencing should also indicate their e-mail address & mobile number respectively to the Commission at OERC e-mail ([oerc.vc@gmail.com](mailto:oerc.vc@gmail.com)) beforehand.

**By Order of the Commission**  
**Sd/- SECRETARY**

Dated. 17.12.2025

### ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ନିୟାମକ ଆୟୋଗ

#### ODISHA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

BIDYUT NIYAMAK BHAWAN

PLOT NO.4, CHUNOKOLI, SHAILASHREE VIHAR, BHUBANESWAR -751021

TEL. No. 2721048, 2721049, E-MAIL: [oerc@odisha.gov.in](mailto:oerc@odisha.gov.in) / [oierc@gmail.com](mailto:oierc@gmail.com)

WEBSITE: [www.oierc.org](http://www.oierc.org)

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**CASE No. 126/2025**

**In the matter: An application of TPNO DL for approval of Open Access Charges, Surcharges for FY 2026-27 for HT/EHT consumers availing Open Access.**

M/s TP Northern Odisha Distribution Ltd. (TPNODL) has filed an application for approval of Open Access Charges for the Financial Year 2026-27 under Section 42 of the Electricity Act, 2003 and in accordance with OERC (Terms and Conditions of Intra-State Open Access) Regulations, 2020 applicable to HT & EHT open access customers for use of Intra-State transmission/distribution system.

The copy of the aforesaid application may be downloaded from the Commission’s website ([www.oierc.org](http://www.oierc.org))/ licensee’s website [www.tpnodl.com](http://www.tpnodl.com) or it may be obtained from the Office of the Commission by paying photocopy charges of Rs.100/- (Rupees one hundred) only. The Commission has decided to dispose of the matter through a public hearing along with the ARR & RST application of the applicant for FY 2026-27 in **Case No.124 of 2025** and the date & place of hearing shall be communicated later on.

Interested Persons/ Institutions/ Organizations may file their views/suggestions/objections supported by affidavit before the Commission on or before **16.01.2026** serving copy to the applicant TPNO DL. TPNO DL is to file its rejoinder to the objection/suggestions of the Respondents by **27.01.2026** with a copy to the Respondents.

**By Order of the Commission**  
**Sd/- SECRETARY**

Dated : 17.12.2025

### ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ନିୟାମକ ଆୟୋଗ

#### ODISHA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

BIDYUT NIYAMAK BHAWAN

PLOT NO.4, CHUNOKOLI, SHAILASHREE VIHAR, BHUBANESWAR -751021

TEL. No.: 2721048, 2721049

E-MAIL: [oerc@odisha.gov.in](mailto:oerc@odisha.gov.in) / [oierc@gmail.com](mailto:oierc@gmail.com), WEBSITE: [www.oierc.org](http://www.oierc.org)

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**CASE NO. 137 OF 2025**

**In the matter : An application of TPCODL for approval of Open Access Charges for FY 2026-27 for HT/EHT customers availing Open Access.**

M/s TP Central Odisha Distribution Ltd. (TPCODL) has filed an application for approval of Open Access Charges for HT & EHT Consumers availing Open Access for the Financial Year 2026-27 under Section 42 of the Electricity Act, 2003 and in accordance with OERC (Terms and Conditions of Intra-State Open Access) Regulations, 2020 applicable to HT & EHT open access customers for use of intra-State transmission/distribution system.

The copy of the aforesaid application may be downloaded from the Commission’s website ([www.oierc.org](http://www.oierc.org)) / licensee’s website [www.tpcentralodisha.com](http://www.tpcentralodisha.com) or it may be obtained from the Office of the Commission by paying photo copy charges of Rs.100/- (Rupees one hundred) only. The Commission has decided to dispose of the matter through a public hearing along with the ARR & RST application of the applicant for FY 2026-27 in **Case No.136 of 2025** and the date & place of hearing shall be communicated later on.

Interested Persons/ Institutions/ Organizations may file their views/suggestions/ objections supported by affidavit before the Commission on or before **16.01.2026** serving a copy to the applicant, TPCODL. TPCODL is to file its rejoinder to the objection/suggestions of the Respondents by **27.01.2026** with a copy to the Respondents.

**By Order of the Commission**  
**Sd/- SECRETARY**


Dated. 17.12.2025



“

Evolution OF consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Strategic Recalibration

When India quietly decided to send Rahul Rasgotra to Port Louis as National Security Advisor (NSA), it wasn't just another routine posting. It was a deliberate signal.

For years, the Mauritius NSA position has typically gone to officers with a strong external intelligence or military background. Rasgotra breaks that mould. A retired IPS officer whose career was shaped by domestic intelligence, counterinsurgency and border management, first in the Intelligence Bureau and later as Director General of the ITBP, he brings a very different sensibility to the role. That difference is precisely the point.

Mauritius today is no longer merely a friendly island bound to India by history and diaspora ties. It has emerged as a strategic gateway in the Indian Ocean Region, central to maritime security, cyber networks, financial intelligence and counter-radicalisation efforts. At the same time, China's footprint on the island has been expanding steadily, if quietly. In this setting, sentiment counts for little; situational awareness counts for everything.

Rasgotra's appointment suggests India is rethinking how it defines "external" security. Many of today's threats are hybrid in nature—cyber intrusions, illicit financial flows, extremist networks and grey-zone influence operations. These do not respect borders or bureaucratic silos. They demand an officer who understands how internal security vulnerabilities spill outward, and how external pressures seep inward.

Seen this way, the choice is less a departure and more a recalibration. India appears to be prioritising ground-level intelligence, institutional coordination and threat anticipation over traditional diplomatic optics. Mauritius, after all, is no longer just a friendly outpost; it is a strategic listening post in a crowded ocean.

### The VRS wave in Uttar Pradesh

There's something quietly unsettling about the recent spate of voluntary retirement pleas by senior IAS officers in Uttar Pradesh. This isn't the usual background grumbling of a stressed cadre. When experienced babus start opting out mid-career, it begins to look like a pattern.

Officially, the reasons are predictable—health, personal priorities, family considerations. Unofficially, the whispers are louder and far less benign. Career stagnation, stalled empanelments, blocked central deputations and a growing sense of professional suffocation feature prominently in private conversations. For many, the prevailing sentiment seems to be that the system no longer rewards competence or experience, but rather proximity and visibility.

What sharpens the unease is the perception that only a handful of districts and postings act as real career springboards. If you're not in the right place at the right time, your trajectory flattens early. Over time, that breeds disengagement. And disengagement, in a service built on motivation and institutional pride, is corrosive.

Equally telling is the near-complete silence of the UP IAS Association. Once a forum for collective introspection and quiet course correction, it now appears largely ornamental. When officers stop even voicing concern internally, it usually means they've concluded that speaking up achieves little.

This matters because Uttar Pradesh isn't just any state. It prides itself on scale, ambition and governance reform. But reforms need seasoned hands to execute them. When senior babus choose exit over endurance, the state doesn't just lose numbers, but it loses institutional memory, administrative ballast and mentorship for the next rung.

### A red card for the steel frame?

The removal of IAS officer Santosh Verma in Madhya Pradesh is one of those rare moments when the system doesn't just clear its throat politely but actually raises its voice. Between a viral video with deeply offensive caste remarks and serious questions about how his own promotion papers were stitched together, the state government clearly decided this wasn't something that could be managed with a quiet transfer and a stiff note in the file.

What tipped the scales wasn't just Verma's now-infamous comment on reservation and inter-caste marriage — tone-deaf, incendiary, and astonishingly casual for a senior babu. It was the uncomfortable possibility that the man making these remarks may not even have been entitled to wear the rank he held, thanks to alleged forged documents and a questionable integrity certificate. That combination is toxic: prejudice on camera and procedural impropriety on paper.

The government's decision to recommend dismissal, which really is the nuclear option in service law, suggests this case has moved well beyond damage control. It's about institutional credibility. The IAS isn't just another job; it trades heavily on moral authority. When an officer appears to misuse both speech and system, the fallout isn't personal; it's structural.

Of course, Verma will get his day in court, and due process must run its course. But the larger question lingers: how did things get this far without alarms going off earlier? Was everyone asleep at the wheel, or was it one of those cases where inconvenient facts were politely ignored?

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](mailto:dilipthecherian@twitter.com). Let's multiply the effect

## WISDOM CORNER

- “

The only solutions that are ever worth anything are the solutions that people find themselves.

SATYAJIT RAY
- “

Man is a genius when he is dreaming.

AKIRA KUROSAWA
- “

Every time I go to a movie, it's magic, no matter what the movie's about.

STEVEN SPIELBERG

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1812:** Brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published the first volume of stories that would make them famous. Among the 200 or so stories that became known collectively as Grimm's Fairy Tales are "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow White," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Sleeping Beauty."
- **1946:** Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, a drama starring Jimmy Stewart, premiered and later became a holiday classic.
- **1971:** Following the end of the Bangladesh Liberation War and 1971 India-Pakistan War, President Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan of Pakistan transferred power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who put him under house arrest.
- **1974:** Ethiopia was declared a socialist state under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam.
- **1999:** Centuries of Portuguese rule ended in Macau when it became a special administrative region under Chinese sovereignty, 12 years after China and Portugal reached an agreement on its status.

FOCUS

DEVELOPMENT

# BRAZIL'S BOLD TURN



**Lula's industrial policy signals a major shift in Brazil's national-security strategy. To boost self-sufficiency in defense production, the administration has set an ambitious target of producing half of the country's critical defense technologies domestically**



Jayati Ghosh

**At a time when many governments around the world are retreating from their climate commitments, Brazil is doubling down on decarbonization**



BABUDOM BYTES  
Dilip Cherian

**The VRS wave in Uttar Pradesh**

For many in the developing world, Brazil is a rare beacon of hope in an otherwise bleak global landscape. Along with his South African counterpart, Cyril Ramaphosa, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is among the few world leaders who have stood up to US President Donald Trump with dignity and a measure of success.

Brazil has succeeded in reversing some of Trump's most punitive measures, despite lacking the bargaining power of countries like China. The 40% tariff he imposed on Brazilian agricultural exports, for example, was quietly rolled back without any concessions from Brazil. Likewise, the absurd US sanctions against Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who presided over the conviction of former President Jair Bolsonaro, were lifted without fanfare.

At a time when many governments around the world are retreating from their climate commitments, Brazil is doubling down on decarbonization. Since returning to office, Lula has accelerated efforts to curb deforestation and announced plans to triple renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030.

Even in what many regard as a less ambitious third term, and despite being constrained by strong opposition in Congress, Lula's administration has launched several important reforms. Most notably, it has simplified the Brazilian tax system and addressed some of its most regressive features, although much remains to be done to make it genuinely progressive.

Lula's industrial policy, launched in early 2024, marks a clear departure from the market-led approach that has dominated recent economic policymaking, offering in its place a mission-oriented reindustrialization program structured around six priority areas. Beyond strengthening agro-industrial supply chains through increased mechanization, the program seeks to

increase the share of domestically produced drugs, vaccines, and medical equipment in national consumption, and to improve urban well-being through investment in sustainable infrastructure, sanitation, and mobility.

The program also seeks to accelerate the digitalization of productive enterprises and boost the technological capabilities in emerging sectors, and aims to reduce carbon emissions by 30% by the end of 2026 through greater reliance on biofuels – a strategy that raises its own set of concerns.

Finally, Lula's industrial policy signals a major shift in Brazil's national-security strategy. To boost self-sufficiency in defense production, the administration has set an ambitious target of producing half of the country's critical defense technologies domestically.

Lula plans to advance these priorities through a combination of public and private investment, including approximately R\$300 billion (\$54 billion) in government spending over three years. The reindustrialization program also relies on strategic public procurement to incentivize domestic production and sourcing, along with special credit lines, regulatory reforms, and changes to intellectual-property laws.

On the surface, macroeconomic conditions look favorable, even amid global uncertainty and US tariff pressures. Unemployment has declined to 5.4%, inflation has fallen below 4.5%, and Brazil continues to run a trade surplus, even though the current-account deficit stands at around 2.5% of GDP. Moreover, the country has almost no foreign-currency debt.

Even so, many economists remain deeply pessimistic about Brazil's economic outlook. At a recent economic conference in São Paulo, few believed that the premature deindustrialization that has marked the Brazilian economy over the past few decades could be reversed.

That pessimism has far less to do with external conditions than with monetary and fiscal policy. Brazil's benchmark interest rate, the Selic, is among the highest in the world, at 15% – and that's merely the base rate from which other interest rates are derived. The country's real interest rate, at 9.4%, is second only to Turkey's. Given how difficult it is to imagine any private investment projects being viable at such levels, it is hardly surprising that Brazil's investment rate has remained stubbornly low, at around 18% of GDP.

High interest rates persist not because they are economically rational, but because of political choices. Since the early 2000s, successive progressive governments have entered into a Faustian bargain with private banks and financial investors, tolerating exceptionally high returns in exchange for the political and financial stability needed to pursue limited progressive social policies. The fact that a significant share of Brazil's public debt is held by non-residents, even though it is denominated in reais, further intensifies fears of capital flight.

With few controls on cross-border capital flows, exchange-rate policy is often used to curb inflation by limiting import-price pressures. But the combination of high interest rates and currency appreciation also erodes the competitiveness of Brazilian firms and discourages precisely the kind of productive investment that the government's new industrial policy intends to stimulate.

High interest rates also place a heavy burden on public finances. Interest payments on debt have accounted for between one-quarter and one-third of total public expenditure over the past decade – an extraordinarily high share, particularly given that Brazil's public debt, at around 85% of GDP, is modest by international standards. Brazil now allocates roughly 6% of GDP to servicing its debt, more than any other G20 country.

Such self-imposed constraints are not merely the result of political bargains. They also reflect the restrictions on domestic policy autonomy that come with exposure to global capital markets. In this sense, Brazil offers yet another revealing example of how financial globalization has undermined the development objectives of middle-income countries.

*The writer is a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.*

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

## SPECTRUM NATION

# Stress on duties: Can rights be ignored?



Dhurjati Mukherjee

**THE MANNER, IN WHICH MODI HAS BEEN ASKING CITIZENS TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES, IS A SUBJECT OF CONCERN**

Modi may be right in quoting Gandhi who said rights of individuals flowed from the duties, but the latter was always concerned about the poor and the marginalised getting their due share of rights. Gandhi himself moved a resolution on Fundamental Rights in 1931 in the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress and it, among others, contained, Freedom of Press, Freedom to Profess Religion, equal rights and obligations of all citizens, without any bar on

account of sex and above all religious neutrality of the state.

Further, in a letter to MS Masani on June 4, 1934, almost three years after he moved the resolution on Fundamental Rights, he wrote, "What is necessary is that labourers or workers should know their rights and should also know how to assert them". While saying so, he also remarked, "And since there never has been any right with-a corresponding duty, in my opinion a manifesto is incomplete without emphasising the necessity of performance of duty and showing what that duty is."

The manner in which Modi has been asking citizens to carry out their duties without any obligation of the State to ensure basic rights to the citizens, which have been eroded in recent years, is no doubt a subject of concern.

Tragically, Modi or his government is little concerned

about rights, which are not being enjoyed by a large section which includes unorganised workers, farm labourers, child workers, bonded labourers etc.

The sermon about duties may sound somewhat authoritarian, given the fact that a democratic State has the dual responsibility to ensure that duties are performed by its citizens while also seeing to it that they are not deprived of their rights.

While there is much talk of the economy moving fast in terms of GDP growth, there is no analysis of how much money is allocated for the welfare of the lowest 20 percent, who are not only poor and marginalised but are also victims to environmental hazards like floods, cyclones and sea-level rise, almost every year. The reason for this is obvious as those who formulate government strategy – whether politicians, bureaucrats

or technocrats – have little knowledge and concern about how the poorer sections have to struggle for earning their livelihood.

It goes without saying that basic rights must be ensured to all sections of the population to ensure that happiness and justice prevail in society.

Finally, we may refer to Gandhi who had cautioned in the late 30s of the previous century – "...there are no such two classes here that one of them should exercise only rights and the other discharge only duties". He remarked: "If a ruler shirks his duties while the people do theirs then the people become the ruler." A ruler by doing his duty and considering himself as the trustee of his people would survive, he observed, but cautioned "if he becomes authoritarian, he cannot survive in this age."

### G RAM G concerns

Sir, VB-G RAM G is often misrepresented as a "revamp" of MGNREGA, but it fundamentally undermines its essence. Unlike MGNREGA's rights-based, demand-driven framework, this new scheme centralises control in Delhi and limits access through rationed allocations. It weakens the autonomy of states and villages, curbing local decision-making and accountability. Rural communities, which rely on guaranteed employment for livelihood security, may now face uncertainty and bureaucratic delays. True reform should strengthen, not dilute, citizens' rights. Centralised schemes risk marginalising vulnerable populations, replacing empowerment with dependence. Policymakers must reconsider: development cannot succeed if it diminishes the agency of the very communities it aims to serve. By shifting power away from panchayats, the scheme erodes decades of democratic decentralisation. Grassroots institutions, best placed to identify need, are reduced to passive recipients of centrally determined quotas.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

### Decisive shift

Sir, The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill signals a decisive shift in India's approach to nuclear power by permitting private companies to operate small modular reactors and by easing liability norms for equipment manufacturers. In the long term, the reform could significantly expand electricity generation, a critical requirement as energy-intensive data centres for artificial intelligence drive the next wave of global industrialisation. India cannot afford to remain power-constrained and miss the economic gains of this technological transition. Private participation promises fresh capital, advanced expertise, foreign investment inflows and job creation in a sector long dominated by the state. Yet, the risks are equally profound. Entrusting nuclear power to profit-driven private entities raises serious concerns about safety and oversight in the world's most populous country. Recent crises in other privatised sectors highlight the dangers of cost-cutting and regulatory lapses. A similar failure in nuclear energy would be catastrophic. The government must therefore implement the Bill with exceptional caution, robust regulation and unwavering accountability, as these reforms will shape its legacy for generations.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE



of the day  
**Quote**

Any nation's strong economic policy and ideological vision determine its balanced pace of development, stability, and future direction

**MOHAN YADAV** | MP CM

Today, we salute the courage and sacrifices of the bravehearts who restored Goa's rightful place in Bharat

**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CM

I do not care about the CM's threats and intimidation. Let him continue to do so. These days, people of the state no longer care about what he (CM) says

**GAURAV GOGOI** | CONGRESS LEADER

**SHORT TAKES**

**PM to open new airport terminal**

**Guwahati:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to pay a two-day visit to Assam from Saturday, during which he will inaugurate and lay foundation stones for several projects and address public meetings. The PM, inter alia, will inaugurate the ₹4,000 crore new terminal of the Guwahati airport, which, he said, will give a major boost to Assam's infrastructure. During the visit, he will also pay homage to the martyrs of the Assam movement, a six-year-long violent anti-foreigner agitation that began in 1979.

**Four sentenced to life for gangrape, murder**

**Sambhal (UP):** A court here Friday sentenced four men to life imprisonment for raping a 38-year-old woman and burning her alive in 2018, an official said. Additional District and Sessions Judge Avdhesh Kumar Singh delivered the verdict and also imposed a fine of ₹1.12 lakh each on the accused, he said. "One of the accused, who was a juvenile at the time of the crime, is being tried separately before the Juvenile Justice Board," said Assistant District Government Counsel Hari Om Prakash.

**Severe cold wave grips Bihar**

**Patna:** Severe cold wave conditions gripped Bihar Friday, with dense fog affecting visibility in several parts of the state, officials said. In view of the situation, the district administration of Patna changed the timings of all schools. As per an official order, all private and government schools, anganwadi centres and coaching classes will hold academic activities from 10 am to 3.30 pm from December 20 to December 25. Gayaji was the coldest place in the state in the last 24 hours, with the mercury dipping to 12.2 degrees Celsius. Saran recorded 12.3 degrees C, while both the minimum and maximum temperatures at Dehri in Rohtas remained at 12.5 degrees C.

**National Herald: ED moves Delhi HC**

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday approached the Delhi High Court challenging a trial court's order refusing to take cognisance of its charge sheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others in the National Herald case. The plea is likely to be listed for hearing next week. The ED has challenged the trial court's December 16 order in which it was held that cognizance of the agency's complaint in the case was "impermissible in law" as it was not founded on an FIR.



They have removed Mahatma Gandhi's name from the Bill, as if they are having any enmity with him. The Bill has several provisions which are against the interests of poor people living in villages. Though the Opposition had urged the government to withdraw the Bill or send it to a select committee, the Modi government somehow managed to pass it in Parliament

**RAJEEV SHUKLA** | CONG LEADER

**'Air purifiers for 10K classrooms'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood Friday announced that air purifiers will be installed in 10,000 classrooms to ensure clean air for students.

Addressing a press conference, Sood said that the government is committed towards tackling the pollution problem through long-term administrative reforms and policy measures.

"We are not those who flaunt IIT degrees and do campaigns like Odd-Even or 'Red Light On, Gaadi Off' campaign. We are tackling the issue of pollution through long-term administrative measures rather than treating it as a PR exercise," he said, taking a dig at the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government. The Odd-Even scheme, first introduced by the AAP government under the then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, was implemented twice in 2016, from January 1 to 15 and again from April 15 to 30.

The scheme aimed to curb vehicular pollution by restricting the movement of private vehicles based on the last digit of their registration numbers.

According to Sood, there are roughly 38,000 classrooms in Delhi, and air purifiers will be installed in them in a phased manner. "We want our children to study smart and breathe smart air. In the first phase, air purifiers will be installed in 10,000 classrooms. Tenders have been floated today," he added.

Official data shows there are 1,047 government and government-aided schools.

**DELHI CHOKES**



The minister, who also holds the urban development portfolio, said the Public Works Department, using the environmental cess, will also procure mechanical road sweepers for each of the assembly constituencies. "MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) is being provided money to procure mechanical road sweepers. The AAP government did nothing for the MCD. Salaries were not released for sanitation workers. They were at the helm in MCD for two years, but what did they do?" he asked.

Citing a CAG report, Sood said that in 2017-18, 30 per cent of air quality monitoring stations were deliberately installed in green areas to conceal the actual pollution levels.

He said the weather conditions in surrounding states determine the weather in Delhi.

"We are committed towards elimination of pollution. I want to assure the people of Delhi that we are taking all possible steps, the results of which will be shown on the ground very soon," he added.

The minister said pollution

in Delhi is not a seasonal issue, but an outcome of years of administrative negligence. He accused the previous government of misleading public through advertisements and manipulated data instead of delivering real solutions.

Sood said that from October 11 this year, the use of recycled construction material has been made mandatory in construction works, and payments for civil works will not be released without compliance.

The Bhalswa landfill is targeted for complete remediation by September 2026 and a tender has been floated for the disposal of 18 lakh metric tonnes of waste. Biogas plants have been commissioned at Nangli Sakrawati and Ghoga dairies for scientific disposal of dairy waste. The ₹45 crore Electric Vehicle subsidy, withheld by the previous government, has been cleared by the current government.

Bottlenecks in projects such as Metro Phase-IV and RRTS are being removed to strengthen public transport, the minister added.

**Guj: 73.73L voters removed from draft lists after SIR**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Dec 19:** As many as 73.73 lakh voters were removed following the special intensive revision (SIR) drive in Gujarat, reducing the number of registered voters in draft electoral rolls to 4.34 crore from the earlier 5.08 crore, officials said.

The draft electoral rolls were published by the Election Commission on Friday.

The names of 73,73,327 voters were omitted after the SIR undertaken by the Election Commission to clean up voter lists, said state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Harit Shukla.

Before the SIR, a total of 5,08,43,436 voters were registered in the state. After the publication of the draft electoral rolls, the number is 4,34,70,109, he said.

The names of 73,73,327 voters were removed for various reasons. Of these, 18,07,278 voters are deceased, 9,69,662 voters were absent, 40,25,553 persons have migrated outside the state, while 3,81,470 voters were registered in two places. Besides, 1,89,364 voters were removed for other reasons, the release from CEO's office said.

The SIR was conducted through door-to-door survey by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) following wide publicity, said Shukla.

The counting phase of the SIR started across the state from October 27 and went on for one and a half months.



A metro train runs ahead of the inauguration of the Bhopal Metro in Bhopal. The metro service will be formally inaugurated December 20, with commercial passenger services commencing from December 21

PTI PHOTO

**6 dead as water tank collapses**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nagpur, Dec 19:** Six persons died and nine were injured after a water tank collapsed at an industrial unit on the outskirts of Nagpur city Friday, a police official said.

The incident occurred around 9.30 am at Avaada Electro Private Limited, a solar panel manufacturing factory located in MIDC

Butibori area, the official told PTI. While three persons had died at the time of the incident after getting trapped under the debris, three others who were rushed to hospital have also succumbed to injuries, he informed. Expressing grief over the incident, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the state government will give ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh each to the kin of the deceased. In addition, the company concerned has agreed to pay ₹ 30 lakh each to the families of those who lost their lives, while the injured workers will be given ₹10 lakh each along with coverage of their medical treatment expenses, an official statement said.

Fadnavis said the accident was "extremely unfortunate", adding that he was in touch with the Nagpur district collector, who is coordinating with concerned agencies to ensure relief and follow-up action.



*The court observed in its judgment Tuesday, "No one has the right to interfere in the personal liberty of the two adults, not even the parents of two adults can interfere in their relationship, but the Right to Freedom or Right to Personal Liberty is not absolute or unfettered: it is qualified by some restrictions also. The freedom of one person extincts where the statutory right of another person starts"*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Prayagraj (UP), Dec 19:** The Allahabad High Court has ruled that a married person cannot legally enter into a live-in relationship with a third party without first obtaining a decree of divorce.

With this observation, the court dismissed a writ petition seeking protection filed by a couple in a live-in relationship. Justice Vivek Kumar Singh observed that the freedom of personal liberty is not absolute and cannot infringe

upon the statutory rights of an existing spouse. The petitioners had approached the court with a prayer that both petitioners are major and living together as husband and wife and they have apprehension of a life threat from the respondent.

On the other hand, the state counsel opposed the prayer made by the petitioners and submitted that the act of the petitioners is illegal as petitioner no. 1 is already married to one Dinesh Kumar and has not obtained a decree of divorce.

The court observed in its

judgment Tuesday, "No one has the right to interfere in the personal liberty of the two adults, not even the parents of two adults can interfere in their relationship, but the Right to Freedom or Right to Personal Liberty is not absolute or unfettered: it is qualified by some restrictions also. The freedom of one person extincts where the statutory right of another person starts."

A spouse has the statutory right to enjoy the company of his or her counterpart and he/she cannot be deprived of that right for the sake of personal liberty and no such protection can be granted to infringe statutory right of the other spouse, the court said, adding hence, the freedom of one person cannot encroach or overweigh the legal right of another person.

"If the petitioners are already married and have their spouse alive, he/she cannot be legally permitted to enter into a live-in relationship with a third person without seeking divorce from the earlier spouse," the court said.

With the above observation, the court said that it is not inclined to issue any writ, order or direction in the nature of mandamus for protection to the petitioners who are in a live-in relationship without obtaining a decree of divorce from a competent court.

**HC SETS ASIDE LOKPAL ORDER AGAINST MAHUA**

In a relief to Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, the Delhi High Court Friday set aside an order of the Lokpal granting sanction to the CBI to file a chargesheet against her in the alleged cash-for-query scam



**BONDI BEACH ATTACK**

**Police: Sajid visited Hyderabad six times**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, Dec 19:** Sajid Akram, the slain suspect in the recent mass shooting in Australia, visited Hyderabad six times over a span of 27 years after leaving India in 1998, Telangana DGP B Shivadhar Reddy said Friday.

He said the Telangana police initiated an inquiry after the address mentioned in Sajid Akram's Indian passport was traced to Hyderabad.

During the inquiry, police found that Akram was born in Hyderabad and visited the city for the first time in October 2000 after migrating abroad in 1998 for education and employment. He was accompanied by his European wife during that visit.

He later visited Hyderabad in 2004 and again in February 2009, following his father's death, though the visit was not for attending the funeral, the DGP said. Akram subsequently visited the city in July 2012 and March 2016 to settle property-related matters with his family members.

"His last visit was in July 2022, ostensibly to meet his


mother and sister. This is all the information we have regarding his links to Hyderabad. We have no information suggesting his radicalisation took place here or that he had any such links in the city," Reddy told reporters.

He was responding to a question on whether Akram's visits to Hyderabad could have contributed to his alleged radicalisation or if he had any local connections.

According to Telangana Police, Akram's visits to India after migrating to Australia were primarily for family-related reasons, including property issues and visits to elderly relatives.

At least 15 people were killed during a Hanukkah celebration at Sydney's Bondi beach in a mass shooting December 14.

Australian authorities have described the incident as a terrorist attack inspired by the Islamic State. According to officials, the suspects were a father and son, aged 50 and 24. The older man, identified as Sajid Akram, was shot dead, while his son is undergoing treatment at a hospital.



**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER**  
**PHULBANI (R&B) CIRCLE, PHULBANI**  
Email : [sernphulbani@gmail.com](mailto:sernphulbani@gmail.com)

No.B-821

Letter No.2084  
**1<sup>st</sup> Corrigendum to EOI Identification No. CCEPLBC-01/2025-26**  
**Expression of Interest**  
The following changes are made to EOI Identification No. CCEPLBC-01/2025-26 vide No. 2037 dt. 10.12.2025.

1.

Letter of invitation of the Authority along with all other relevant details of Expression of Interest (EOI) will be available in the website: [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in) from 10:30 A.M of 29.12.2025 to 4:00 PM of 27.01.2026. Further details with any addendum, corrigendum and cancellation can be seen from [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).

2.

Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be received only "On-line" latest by 4:00 PM on 27.01.2026.

3.

Proposals received "On-line" shall be opened at 11:00 A.M. on 28.01.2026 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Phulbani (R&B) Circle, Phulbani-766001 in the presence of bidders who wish to attend. Bidders who participated in the bid can witness the opening of bids after logging on the site through their DSC.


4.

If the office happens to be closed on the stipulated date of opening of Bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

All other terms & conditions remained unchanged.

Sd./- Chief Construction Engineer,  
Phulbani (R&B) Circle, Phulbani

OIPR-34129/11/0034/2526



**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**Office Of the Chief Construction Engineer**  
**Rayagada (R&B) Circle, Rayagada**  
Email : [sepwd\\_rgda@yahoo.com](mailto:sepwd_rgda@yahoo.com), Phone/Fax : 06856-223049

No.B-831

**INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) (e-Procurement)**  
**EOI Identification No. CCE RANDB RGDA - 01/2025-26 No.2118**  
**Dated : 10.12.2025**

1.

The Chief Construction Engineer, Rayagada (R&B) Circle, Rayagada (the "Authority") on behalf of the Works Department, Government of Odisha (the "Government") invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible registered service providers as mentioned below :

2.

Nature of work : Non-Consultancy Service for arrangement of Venue Set-up, Logistics and other allied activities associated for State level functions.

3.


Available of Bid document in the website : From 11.00 A.M. of 22.12.2025 to 4.00 P.M. of 12.01.2026

4.

date of opening of Bid : Dt.13.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M.  
The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd./- Er. Satya Narayana Khura  
Chief Construction Engineer  
Rayagada (R&B) Circle, Rayagada

OIPR-34154/11/0025/2526



**OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER**  
**ANGUL KENDU LEAVES DIVISION, ANGUL**  
At/Po-Hakimpada, Dist-Angul, Pin-759143, Phone No.06764-234157  
Email: [dfoklangl@gmail.com](mailto:dfoklangl@gmail.com)  
No.290/1F (Acct.) Dt.18.12.2025

No.MM-407

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**Bid Identification No.DFO-ANGUL-KL-02 Online/2025-26**

<b>The Divisional Forest Officer, Angul KL Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in Single Cover &amp; Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE.</b>	
1. Nature of Works	:(i) Construction of Range Office (ii) Construction of Range Office-cum- Residence
2. No. of Works	: 02 (Two)
3. Bid Cost	: 10,000/- each
4. Class of Contractor	: "A" Class, "B" Class, "C" Class
5. Date & Time of availability of the bid documents in portal	: From 05.00 P.M. of Date 19.12.2025 to 05.00 PM of Date 29.12.2025
6. Last date & time of receipt of bids in portal	: Upto 5.00 P.M. of Date 29.12.2025
7. Date of Opening of Bid	: At 11.30 AM of Date 30.12.2025
The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <a href="https://tendersodisha.gov.in">https://tendersodisha.gov.in</a> . Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	

Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer  
Angul (KL) Division

OIPR-08152/11/0003/2526







of the day quote

Account-ability and justice for all Syrians is vital to ensure a successful and sustainable political settlement in Syria

YVETTE COOPER | SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS, UK

It's a potential opportunity for the United States, but it's not an assured opportunity for the United States. It's part of a bigger discussion in terms of our trading relationship, because we have other partners around the world, in Europe for example, who are very interested in participating

MARK CARNEY | PRIME MINISTER, CANADA

Egypt will spare no effort in continuing its tire-less endeavours to keep Lebanon away from any escalation

MOSTAFA MADBOULY | PRIME MINISTER, EGYPT

SHORT TAKES

UK appoints new US ambassador

Britain named Christian Turner as its next ambassador to the United States, handing the veteran diplomat one of the country's most prestigious and politically sensitive postings at a pivotal moment for transatlantic ties, Thursday. The appointment of a career diplomat to the high-profile post represents a shift in strategy from Prime Minister Keir Starmer, after his decision to send in political appointee Peter Mandelson to build relations with the Trump administration backfired earlier this year. Mandelson was fired in September over supportive emails he sent to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein that came to light, revealing a much closer than previously acknowledged relationship.

NASCAR's Greg Biffle dies

**Statesville:** A business jet crashed Thursday while trying to return to a North Carolina airport shortly after takeoff, killing all seven people aboard, including retired NASCAR driver Greg Biffle and his family, authorities said. The Cessna C550 erupted into a large fire when it hit the ground. It had departed Statesville Regional Airport, about 72 kilometres north of Charlotte, but soon crashed while trying to return and land, the North Carolina State Highway Patrol said. Flight records show the plane was registered to a company run by Biffle. The cause of the crash wasn't immediately known, nor was the reason for the plane's return to the airport in drizzle and cloudy conditions.

Taipei stabbing leaves 3 dead

**Taipei:** Three people were killed and five injured when a knife-wielding attacker went on a rampage in central Taipei Friday, before then dying during a police chase after falling from a building, the premier said. The man had let off smoke bombs at Taipei's main train station, and then ran to a nearby subway station in a busy shopping district, attacking people on the way, Premier Cho Jung-tai said. The deceased suspected attacker had a prior criminal record and outstanding warrants and his house has been searched, Cho told reporters. Violent crime is very rare in Taiwan. "We will investigate his background and associated relationships to understand his motives and determine if there are other connected factors," he added, identifying the man only by his last name, Chang.

Democrats reveal Epstein files

REUTERS

**Washington, Dec 19:** Congressional Democrats released dozens of new images from the estate of the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein Thursday, a day before the US Justice Department is required by law to release unclassified files from its investigation of the disgraced financier.

The latest batch of images includes close-ups of sentences from "Lolita," a book about a man's obsession with a 12-year-old girl, scribbled in black ink across a woman's body — chest, foot, neck and back; redacted identification cards of women from Russia, Morocco, Italy, Czech Republic, South Africa, Ukraine and Lithuania; and a late-night text thread about sending girls for someone identified as "J" for \$1,000 each.

The 68 photos are among some 95,000 that Epstein's estate released to the House Oversight Committee. Last week, oversight Democrats released 19 photos, including some featuring now-President Donald Trump, who dismissed the images as "no big deal." Billionaire Microsoft founder Bill Gates, professor and polit-



- Images include scribbled sentences on a woman, ID cards and a text thread
- Photos aim to provide transparency into Epstein's network, Democrats say
- Justice Department required by law to release Epstein files by Friday
- DOJ must release documents by Friday after Congress vote last month
- Just 44% of Republicans approve of Trump's handling of Epstein issue
- DOJ can withhold personal information on Epstein victims, anything that could jeopardize an active investigation

ical activist Noam Chomsky and former Trump aide Steve Bannon are also pictured in the latest images.

Representatives for Gates, Chomsky and Bannon did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Committee Democrats said the images released Thursday "were selected to provide the public with transparency into a representative sample of the photos" and "to provide in-

sights into Epstein's network and his extremely disturbing activities."

Democrats said they had thousands more images, "both graphic and mundane," which they are continuing to analyze.

"Oversight Democrats will continue to release photographs and documents from the Epstein estate to provide transparency for the American people," said California Representative Robert Garcia,



Michael Edwards, better known as Eddie the Eagle, center right, plays Professor Crackpot as he performs with fellow actors in the pantomime "Beauty and the Beast" at Watersmeet Theatre, in Rickmansworth, England

Pakistan accuses India of IWT breach

*Dar mentioned that 'India's manipulation of water' has prompted Pakistan's Indus Commissioner to write a letter to his Indian counterpart seeking clarification on the matter*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Dec 19:** Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar Friday accused India of consistently attempting to undermine the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), claiming the current material breaches strike at the heart of the pact.

Dar, who is also the Foreign Minister, was addressing the media a day after Pakistan sought clarification from India

regarding variations in the flow of the Chenab river.

"We witnessed in April this year India's unilateral abeyance of the Indus Waters Treaty... But what we are witnessing now is material breaches by India that strike at the heart of the Indus Waters Treaty with escalating consequences both for regional stability and the sanctity of international law," he said.

A day after the Pahalgam ter-



ror attack April 22, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan that included putting the 1960 vintage Indus Water Treaty in "abeyance."

EU loan boosts Ukraine



REUTERS

**Brussels, Dec 19:** Ukraine thanked the European Union Friday for deciding to provide it with 90 billion euros (\$105.46 billion) of support over the next two years - even if the bloc failed to agree on an ambitious plan to finance it using frozen Russian assets.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the EU had backed away from the plan to use its frozen assets because it would have faced serious repercussions.

The stakes for finding money for Kyiv were high because without the EU's financial help, Ukraine would run out of money in the second quarter of next year and most likely lose the war to Russia, which the EU fears would bring the threat of Russian aggression against the bloc closer.

"This is significant support that truly strengthens our resilience," Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy wrote on the Telegram app after the agreement was reached at a summit of EU leaders.

The decision followed hours of discussions on the proposal for an unprecedented loan based on Russia's assets, which turned out to be too politically demanding to resolve at this stage. Instead, the EU will borrow cash.

'DAYLIGHT ROBBERY'

Putin said the initial plan to use Russia's frozen assets to back the loan would have amounted to "daylight robbery."

"Why can't this robbery be carried out? Because the consequences could be grave for the robbers," he said during his annual end-of-year press

conference.

"This isn't just a blow to their image; it's an undermining of trust in the euro zone, and the fact that many countries, not just Russia, but primarily oil-producing countries, store their gold and foreign exchange reserves in the euro zone."

GERMANY FAILED TO CONVINCE

The main difficulty for the reparation-loan plan was providing Belgium, where 185 billion euros of the total Russian assets in Europe are held, with sufficient guarantees against financial and legal risks from potential Russian retaliation for the release of the money to Ukraine.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who had pushed hard for a reparations loan backed by the frozen Russian assets, argued this was still a good deal.

"This is good news for Ukraine and bad news for Russia and this was our intention," he said.

'PERFECT IS THE ENEMY OF GOOD'

Ukraine said this was still hugely welcome.

"Indeed, there are moments when one should keep in mind that 'Perfect is the enemy of good'. It was a long night for European leaders but they were able to come up with a workable result," said Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergiy Kyslytsya. Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro research at ING in Frankfurt, also welcomed the deal.

"If Europe hadn't found a solution, I must say, it would have been a symbolic disaster," he said, adding: "I think there should be enough investor appetite for the new loan."

REUTERS

**Dhaka, Dec 19:** Printing presses at Bangladesh's two leading newspapers went silent Friday for the first time in decades after mobs torched their offices in the worst attack on the media ahead of February's national elections.

The country of nearly 175 million people has been on edge since a student-led uprising in 2024 toppled Sheikh Hasina's long-standing government. Hasina is now sheltering in New Delhi, straining ties with India.

Tensions spiked further after youth leader and election candidate Sharif Osman Hadi - a vocal critic of India - died Thursday night in a Singapore hospital, days after being shot by masked assailants in Dhaka.

Hundreds of mostly young protesters then flooded Dhaka's

streets, ransacking and setting ablaze the offices of Prothom Alo, the nation's largest daily, and The Daily Star. By Friday, their charred shells stood as grim evidence, windows shattered and interiors gutted.

STAFF TRAPPED FOR HOURS IN BURNING OFFICES

Journalists and a government source said the newspapers may have been targeted for being seen as pro-Hasina and pro-India, though both say they are independent. The Daily Star said in an online report that the mob had called them "Delhi's lapdog" and "Sheikh Hasina's enabler".

"There have been sporadic attacks on newspaper offices but never at this scale," Kamal Ahmed, the newspaper's consulting editor, told Reuters.

"When they set fire to the building, the staff members in-



Mob attacks newspaper offices after youth leader dies

Journalists trapped for hours on roof of burning building

Papers may have been targeted for being perceived as pro-Hasina

Violence another test for Yunus' interim government

side could not escape. They went up to the rooftop, and they were trapped ... for about five hours. Our employees were gasping for

breath in the dark smoke."

They were finally able to exit the building after 4 in the morning with the help of military re-

inforcements, he said. The paper said in a statement "certain elements and quarters have exploited the public anger (after Hadi's death) to incite mobs against two newspapers that have always stood for objective journalism".

YUNUS GOVERNMENT UNDER FIRE

The latest violence has rattled the interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who has faced criticism for failing to restore order since taking office in August 2024.

The Bank of Japan raised interest rates on Friday to levels not seen in 30 years.

"This is a reflection of the interim government's failure to control the rise of mobocracy," said political analyst Asif Shahan, a professor at the University of Dhaka. "The monster has been unleashed and the key challenge

for the next government is to tame this leviathan."

Yunu' press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, said he was sorry that he could not help the journalists in time despite him receiving "frantic, tear-choked calls for help". "I made scores of calls to the right people, trying to mobilise help, but it did not arrive in time," he said in a social media post. "I wish I could dig up a great piece of earth and bury myself in shame."

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS CONTINUE

Bangladesh ranks 149 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, two places ahead of neighbour India. Anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International says harassment of journalists, writers and activists persists under the interim government.



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

accuracy

reliability

trust

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

ARIES

Today, you feel free and liberated! And in that spirit, you want to travel or do things you loved doing as a child. A good time for a family outing, says Ganesha. Keeping in mind your mood, you may even make plans for the future for your near and dear.

TAURUS

You must learn to get to the root of a routine to keep things fresh today, feels Ganesha. Just learn the basic psychology of people and analyse the facts. All action and decision has a motive, you will need to understand the chain to get the most out of things, advises Ganesha.

GEMINI

You have a certain degree of equanimity when it comes to reacting to praise and criticism. Today, however, you will be emotional, and it won't be too bad. You will get appreciated at work and your liberal show of emotions will only make others like you more. Your colleagues will say three cheers for you. But avoid an emotional outburst as it may turn cheers into jeers.

CANCER

Today, Cupid will send its arrow right through your heart. You will be trembling with pain – the sweet pain of lust and love. But the overzealous Cupid may not stop at just that. Just to be completely sure, it will virtually do shooting practice at you. You can do nothing but tell your love interest how badly you have been hit.

LEO

It is good to be impulsive sometimes; but if one were to ask you today, you would be all for a meticulously planned approach to life. So much so that from now on, planning will become almost a part and parcel of your life, predicts Ganesha. So, it is expected that you plan everything to perfection today, although the execution of your plans may be a different story.

VIRGO

You will start the day by scribbling down things to do. But don't just jot them down; instead, set realistic goals and prioritise them. Items you mark highest will demand quick actions, cautions Ganesha.

LIBRA

It's a spiritual and harmonious mood that grips you today, feels Ganesha. You may want to focus on meditation, as you essentially seek peace. This may have something to do with the fact that at work, your subordinates may attempt to throw around their weight to force you to make drastic changes. But do not let it bother you too much. Just ensure that you consider all things at hand before you take any decision.

SCORPIO

It is more than likely that you will find yourself in a tricky situation today, says Ganesha. You may start the day feeling lonely and empty but yet, at the same time, you will have some responsibility that will prevent your from showing it. Try to keep your mind off negative thoughts. Work and friends will help you cheer up later in the day.

SAGITTARIUS

Stay stern, says Ganesha, as it might be necessary to exercise your grit to get the desired results today. Your presence may be dominating at the workplace, but your subordinates will find your manner pleasing as you hold them in awe of you. Do not get carried away by your success or the tables may turn, suggests Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You will prioritise your needs, and the most critical would be the need to manage finances to save for the future. Also, the company you choose to keep will reflect the kind of person you are. So, beware of who you befriend, warns Ganesha.

AQUARIUS

Today, you will have a lot of fun with your siblings! Though generally well-organised and methodical, you will enjoy going with the flow of what your siblings and friends plan for you. Sometimes, spontaneity is a good thing, says Ganesha.

PISCES

There are indications you will be in hot pursuit of leisure today, says Ganesha. This will probably be in the form of a short trip to recharge your batteries, and is probably fuelled by your satisfaction in the realisation that the role you play within your organisation is consequential, satisfying as well as rewarding.

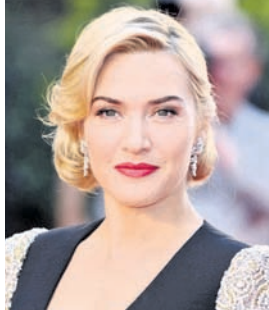


## I'M FASCINATED WITH PAIN: COLIN FARRELL

Colin Farrell has made a striking and deeply personal confession about what fascinates him most about the human condition. While speaking with Jessie Buckley for *Variety's Actors on Actors* series, the Irish actor admitted that the darker sides of life have long intrigued him, both personally and professionally

## WINSLET'S HACK TO KEEP TOXIC ENERGY AT BAY

Academy Award-winning actor Kate Winslet revealed she follows a "totally nuts" superstition, placing salt in her shoes and pockets, believing it helps protect her from negative energy and "tricky individuals" while navigating challenging environments



# Ananya for old-school romance

**Mumbai:** During the trailer launch of her upcoming film *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri*, Ananya Panday spoke openly about her views on love and relationships, revealing that her romantic ideals are shaped more by old-school values than modern dating culture. The actor admitted she does not connect with the idea of casual dating, describing herself as "a very 90s love story person." She added that fleeting relationships and the 2025 hook-up culture do not resonate with her outlook on romance.

Emphasising her deeply family-oriented nature, Ananya shared that emotional connection and commitment are non-negotiable for her. She expressed a desire for long-term bonding, saying she hopes her partner's family would eventually become her own, highlighting how important togetherness and stability are to her idea of love.

Ananya also revealed that these beliefs helped her relate strongly to her character Rumi in *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri*, which stars Kartik Aaryan in the lead role. According to her, the character's emotional depth closely mirrors her own values when it comes to relationships.

While she prefers to keep her personal life private, Ananya's dating history has often drawn public attention. She has previously been linked to Karan Jaising, Kartik Aaryan, Ishaan Khatter, Aditya Roy Kapur, and most recently, model Walker Blanco, though she has largely chosen to stay silent on such speculation.



**Mumbai:** Radhika Apte, now widely admired for her versatility across a career spanning nearly two decades, recently reflected on her first film and admitted she prefers to forget the experience entirely. In a candid interview, the actor opened up about the difficult circumstances surrounding her debut in *Vaah! Life Ho Toh Aisi!*, stressing that her discomfort had little to do with her performance and everything to do with how she was treated during the film's production.

Recalling the early days of her journey, Radhika did not hold back while describing her experience with the producers. She revealed that she was neither provided accommodation nor paid for her work. When she and her mother requested a formal contract, they were reportedly dismissed with comparisons to senior actors, which she said reflected the unprofessional and disrespectful treatment she endured. While she praised director Mahesh Manjrekar as supportive and kind, she described the overall production experience as "awful," adding that it is the primary reason she chooses not to associate herself with the film.

Radhika also shared how she landed the role after Manjrekar noticed her performance in an award-winning stage play, *Brain Surgeon*. Following the film, she chose to complete her college education before returning to acting, which is why she does not consider the project part of her true body of work. Today, Radhika Apte is earning widespread acclaim for her powerful performance in *Saali Mohabbat*, a psychological thriller on ZEE5, underscoring how far she has come since her challenging beginnings.

## Radhika shares her traumatic experience

## Chitrangda's career choices

**Mumbai:** Chitrangda Singh has joined the *Raat Akeli Hai* franchise with *Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal Murders*, aiming to leave a strong impression in the much-anticipated sequel to the acclaimed 2020 thriller. The film also marks the return of Nawazuddin Siddiqui as the sharp and relentless cop Jatil Yadav. As excitement around the project grows, Chitrangda has been open about her career choices and the criticism she has encountered over the years.

Ahead of the film's release, the actor addressed the backlash surrounding her participation in commercial projects like *Housefull 5*. In an interview, she responded to criticism directed at the dramedy, which starred Akshay Kumar alongside Jacqueline Fernandez, Sonam Bajwa, Nargis Fakhri and Soundarya Sharma. The film faced sharp scrutiny for its portrayal of female characters, leading to questions about the cast's decisions.

Speaking about being judged, Chitrangda stressed that creative satisfaction comes from exploring new territories rather than repeating familiar roles. She shared that she refuses to let public opinion dictate her professional path and believes experimentation is essential for growth. The actor also spoke about stepping into spaces she had never imagined for herself, including special or item songs, which she found creatively fulfilling.

AGENCIES



**Chennai:** Stating that when people warned her about forties, nobody warned her about the freedom, the clarity and the strength that one got, well known actress Vijayalakshmi has now said that if this was aging she'd take it.

Taking to her Instagram page to post a picture of herself being fit, the actress wrote, "They warned me about my 40s. Nobody warned me about the freedom. The clarity. The strength. Best headspace. Best shape."

She went on to say, "Doing everything I postponed in my 20s. Without permission, Without apology. If this is "aging"... I'll take it. #earned #not #given #happy #soul."

The actress is known to often share her thoughts and observations.

## Vijayalakshmi on positives of aging

ations with her followers on Instagram.

Earlier this year, the actress, in another touching post on Instagram, had narrated how her young son had floored her with his answer to her question on what God was.

Vijayalakshmi said, "Flu got us all... we quarantined ourselves. Routines paused. Homebound. With steams and soups, kashayams and comfort food, healing is in full swing. But the silver lining was introducing Nilan to some of life's beautiful movies."

"When Anbe Sivam The whole him that checked... Kanna? on the said,

ended, he sat in silence. idea was to teach love is God. So, I 'What is God He kissed me cheek and 'It's you ma... You are love. Love is God. So, you are God.'"

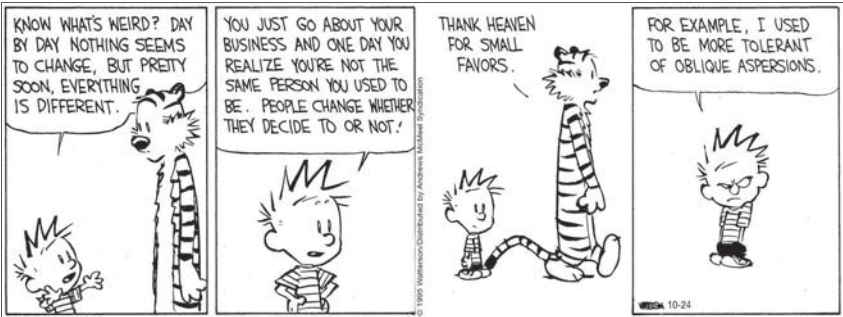
AGENCIES



## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

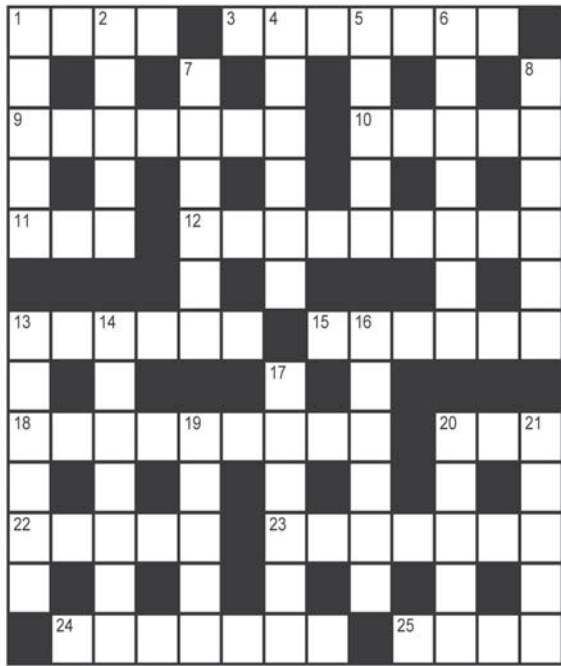


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



- Across

1 Sugar unit

3 Nutty

9 Rust

10 Big cat

11 Jabber

12 Wise

13 Renounce

15 Like a unicorn

18 Marvelous

20 Mountain pass

22 Settee
- Down

1 Sidekick

2 Dirigible

4 Dig up

5 Kind of nerve

6 Like some toenails
- 7 Carpenter's tool

8 Deleted

13 Mar

14 Capital of Puerto Rico (3,4)

16 Mystical

17 Daze

19 Pallid

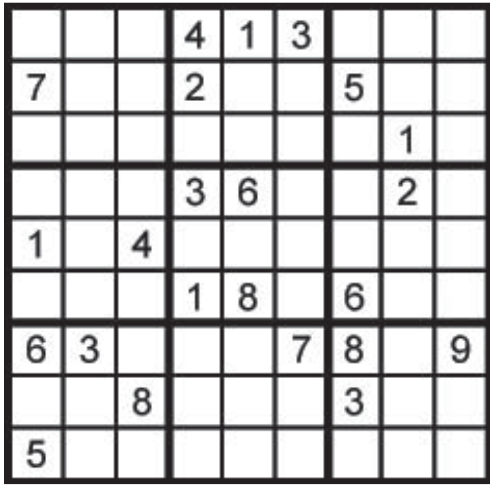
20 "That's a \_\_\_!"

21 Handbag

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## SUDOKU

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

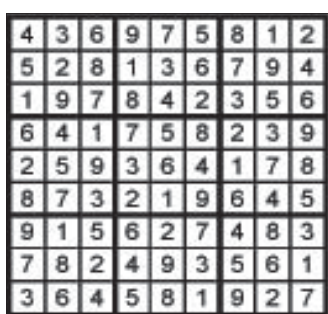


## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU





of the day

quote

India's import bill from China is anchored in electronics, machinery, chemicals and materials that are difficult to substitute quickly, explaining the persistence of a large bilateral trade deficit despite efforts to diversify supply chains

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

We have a lot of rare earth in our country. We have not worked on it very diligently. So therefore, we have not explored the rare earth mineral wealth in our country

SAJJAN JINDAL | CHAIRMAN, JSW GROUP

India possesses the talent and ambition to lead the world in AI & Quantum. Fluency in frontier technologies will define economic competitiveness, scientific progress and societal transformation

ARVIND KRISHNA | CHAIRMAN AND CEO, IBM

SHORT TAKES

Silver takes a breather

**New Delhi:** Silver prices retreated from the record level in the national capital Friday, with the white metal plunging by Rs 3,500 to Rs 2,04,100 per kilogram due to emergence of fresh selling from stockists and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. It had surged Rs 1,800 to scale a fresh peak of Rs 2,07,600 per kg Thursday. In the local bullion market, gold prices are traded almost flat at Rs 1,36,515 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Thursday's closing of Rs 1,36,500 per 10 grams. In the international markets, spot gold slipped by \$10.09, or 0.23 per cent, to \$4,322.51 per ounce. On the other hand, spot silver was trading 0.56 per cent higher at \$65.85 per ounce in the overseas trade.

Forex reserves jump

**Mumbai:** India's forex reserves jumped by \$1.689 billion to \$688.949 billion during the week ended December 12, the Reserve Bank of India said Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves increased by \$1.033 billion to \$687.26 billion. For the week ended December 12, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$906 million to \$557.787 billion, according to the data. Value of the gold reserves increased by \$758 million to \$107.741 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) surged by \$14 million to \$18.745 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF rose \$11 million to \$4.686 billion in the reporting week.

Tax mop up grows 8%

**New Delhi:** Net direct tax collection grew 8 per cent to over Rs 17.04 lakh crore this fiscal till December 17 on slower refunds and higher advance taxes from corporates, the income tax department data showed Friday. Net corporate tax mop up grew 10.54 per cent to over Rs 8.17 lakh crore. Non-corporate tax (which includes taxes paid by individuals, HUFs, firms) grew 6.37 per cent at Rs 8.47 lakh crore. Net revenue from Securities Transaction Tax (STT) rose marginally year-on-year at Rs 40,195 crore till December 17 of the current fiscal. In the current fiscal (2025-26), the government has projected its direct tax collection at Rs 25.20 lakh crore, up 12.7 per cent year-on-year. The government aims to collect Rs 78,000 crore from STT in FY26.



On the airport side, Rs 1-lakh crore (investment) in the next five years

JEET ADANI | DIRECTOR, ADANI AIRPORTS

ICICI PRUDENTIAL DEBUT DAZZLES

Shares of ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company surged 23% on their trading debut Friday, giving India's second-largest asset manager a market valuation of \$14.4 billion, as investors pinned hopes on robust domestic capital flows in Asia's third-largest economy. This makes the company India's most valuable listed asset manager, ahead of HDFC Asset Management and Nippon Life India Asset Management which are valued at \$12.8 billion and \$6.3 billion, respectively



HISTORIC DEAL

Japan's MUFG to buy 20% stake in Shriram Finance for ₹39,618cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 19:** Japan's Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc (MUFG) will acquire a minority stake of 20 per cent in non-bank lender Shriram Finance Ltd for Rs 39,618 crore (around \$4.4 billion), marking the largest cross-border investment in India's financial sector to date.

MUFG will pick up the minority stake through preferential equity shares, Shriram Finance said in a statement.

The signing of definitive agreements with MUFG Bank reinforces confidence in India's lending and financial services sector fundamentals and future growth potential, the statement said, adding that it will also strengthen SFL's capital base and accelerate its growth trajectory. The proposed investment by MUFG Bank is subject to shareholder approval, regulatory clearances and customary closing conditions, it said.

The Indian financial services firm said it would issue 47.11 crore shares at Rs 840.93 per unit to the Tokyo-based MUFG Bank.

"This collaboration combines SFL's established domestic franchise and extensive distribution network with MUFG Bank's global expertise and



financial strength. The fund infusion will significantly enhance SFL's capital adequacy, strengthen its balance sheet, and provide long-term growth capital," it said.

This partnership is further expected to unlock synergies in technology, innovation, and customer engagement, driving sustainable growth, it said.

The partnership will also improve access to low-cost liabilities and potentially strengthen SFL's credit ratings, while aligning governance and operational practices with global best standards, it added.

This investment reflects MUFG Bank's confidence in India's dynamic financial services sector, it said, adding the investment in SFL will be MUFG's largest investment in India.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), MUFG Bank's parent entity, has a legacy of over 130 years in India, having invested \$1.7 billion and created approximately 5,000 jobs.

SFL executive vice chairman Umesh Revankar said, "MUFG is one of the largest financial institutions, with an extensive international network and strong values rooted in substantial growth and financial inclusion. The entry of MUFG as a key investor reinforces global confidence in India's financial services sector and our role as a leader within it."

₹ forward premiums touch three-year high



Cost of hedging against rupee weakness is hovering at multi-year highs

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Dec 19:** US dollar/Indian rupee forward premiums rose to three-year peaks Friday, spurred by excess dollar liquidity, traders unwinding positions and hedging demand in the non-deliverable forward market, bankers and FX advisors said.

The one-year annualised dollar-rupee premium climbed to 2.84% Friday, the highest since October 2022 and up over 60 basis points in December so far.

Forward premiums initially jumped this month after the rupee repeatedly slid to record lows, prompting increased hedging and speculative interest.

However, they have continued to climb over the past three sessions despite the currency's recovery, bankers said, on concerns over excess dollar

There is a dollar glut as RBI's (dollar) selling in spot does not seem to have been sterilised to the full extent

ABHISHEK GOENKA | CEO, IFA GLOBAL

liquidity, which is reflected in last-day December/first-day January swap points hitting 14 paise. On Friday, the rupee climbed to 90 per US dollar, extending a recovery that was spurred largely by the Reserve Bank of India's intervention.

UNABATED SURGE

Banks can place dollar deposits to manage excess liquidity, but regulatory constraints inhibit them from doing so at the end of calendar years and quarters, bankers and analysts said. So banks manage exposure limits around the turn of the year by using dollar-rupee

Bank of Baroda inaugurates Udala Branch

**Udala:** Bank of Baroda inaugurated a new branch at Udala in Mayurbhanj district. The branch was formally inaugurated by Swapna Bandyopadhyay, General Manager & Zonal Head, Bhubaneswar Zone. Pradeep Kumar Behera, Regional Head, Cuttack Region, Goutam Kumar Paul, Deputy Regional Head, Gopal Chandra Sahu, Branch Head, Udala Branch along with other staff members were present on this occasion. More than 100 customers attended the function. Bank of Baroda is India's second largest public sector bank and has a presence of 202 branches in Odisha and seven branches in Mayurbhanj district.



Khimji Jewellers expands footprint in Odisha, opens 11th store

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, Dec 19:** Khimji Jewellers, Odisha's most trusted name in fine jewellery, Thursday opened its 11th showroom in Odisha at Jajpur Road (Vysanagar). Spread over 6,000 sq ft, the newly inaugurated outlet is the largest jewellery showroom in Jajpur Road.

The showroom was inaugurated in the presence of Managing Director Mitesh

Khimji, Director Sumeet Khimji, members of the Khimji family and other dignitaries.

Designed with a modern and luxurious ambience, the store showcases an extensive range of gold, diamond and silver jewellery, along with fashion jewellery and corporate gifting solutions.

Speaking on the occasion, Mitesh Khimji said, "Jajpur Road represents Odisha's industrial strength as well



as rising aspirations. With this showroom, we bring our

legacy of trust and craftsmanship along with contempo-

RBI minutes flag scope for more easing as growth seen slowing

The six-member monetary policy committee cut the key repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25% earlier this month, taking cumulative cuts in 2025 to 125 basis points – the most aggressive easing since 2019

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Dec 19:** India's interest-rate panel has indicated that a potential moderation in growth next year, alongside subdued inflation, could open space for more rate cuts, minutes of the December meeting



showed Friday.

The six-member monetary policy committee cut the key repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25% earlier this month, taking cumulative cuts in 2025 to 125 basis points – the most aggressive easing since 2019.

The panel retained a "neu-

tral" policy stance, with five members backing it and one voting for a shift to an "accommodative" stance.

The South Asian economy expanded 8.2% in the July-September quarter, its fastest pace in six quarters, but growth is expected to moderate as the full

Although domestic economic activity remains resilient in Q3, weakness in some leading high-frequency indicators is suggestive of a deceleration in the growth momentum in H2 vis-à-vis H1

SANJAY MALHOTRA | GOVERNOR, RBI

impact of up to 50% U.S. tariffs hits exports and sectors from textiles to chemicals.

"Although domestic economic activity remains resilient in Q3, weakness in some leading high-frequency indicators is suggestive of a deceleration in the growth momentum in H2 vis-à-vis H1," Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra said.

While the rate cut in December will stimulate demand and be growth-supportive, the

February policy decision will remain "data-dependent" and based on the evolving macro-economic outlook, he said.

At the policy, the central bank raised its GDP forecast for the current fiscal year to 7.3% from 6.8%, while lowering its inflation projection to 2% from 2.6%. However, it lowered the GDP forecast for first half of next year to 6.7%-6.8%.

India's retail inflation edged higher to 0.71% in November from a record low of 0.25% in October and is expected to stay soft in coming months, well below the central bank's target of 4% with a 2 percentage point band on either side.

SLACK IN THE ECONOMY

"Not just headline and core inflation, but most other nominal indicators of the economy are prevailing at level that indicate that the economy at this

signalled readiness for further hikes.

Meanwhile, November US consumer prices came in below forecasts, rising 2.7% year-on-year, raising expectations of a Fed rate cut. This pushed Asian markets 0.7% higher.

Lower interest rates in the US make emerging market equities like India attractive for foreign portfolio investors as Treasury yields and dollar typically decline.

Among individual stocks, Reliance Industries jumped 1.3% after its arm acquired a majority stake in heritage nutrition brand Udhaiyam.

Shriram Finance gained 3.7% to hit record high after Japan's MUFG announced plans to buy 20% stake in the non-bank lender for \$4.4 billion.

Groww soared 11.6% after Jefferies initiated with "buy" rating.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled in positive territory.

Equity markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended higher Thursday.

The worst seems to be behind with foreign investors turning buyers and the rupee stabilising. The only thing that investors need to watch out for is if there is any yen carry trade unwinding after Bank of Japan's rate hike and commentary

ANITA GANDHI | HEAD OF INSTITUTIONAL BUSINESS, ARIHANT CAPITAL MARKETS



# Men in Blue outclass Proteas

BRUTAL PANDYA SLAMS SECOND FASTEST T20I HALF-CENTURY AS INDIA THUMP SOUTH AFRICA BY 30 RUNS TO SEAL 3-1 SERIES WIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Dec 19: Rampant India rode on a smashing fifties from Hardik Pandya, Tilak Varma and Varun Chakravathy's four-for to thump South Africa by 30 runs and end 2025 with a 3-1 series victory in the fifth and final T20I, here Friday.

Pandya went hammer and tongs for a 16-ball half-century — the second fastest for India — while Tilak made a fluent 73 to lift India to daunting 231/5. In reply, South Africa were on track as long as Quinton de Kock (65) was in the middle, but lost seven wickets for 81 runs and finished at 201/8.

With India holding Jasprit Bumrah (4-0-17-2) back for later stages, De Kock went after Arshdeep Singh (1/47) as he smacked six fours and a six in two overs from the left-arm pacer in powerplay to set the tone for the Proteas.

But in a lopsided approach chasing 230 plus, De Kock alone did the heavy-lifting in the powerplay as Reeza Hendricks (13) had another disappointing outing. His stay was ended with a brilliant one-handed grab from Shivam Dube at midwicket for Chakravathy's first wicket.

Unfazed, De Kock continued to plunder runs as he and Dewald Brevis (31) put on 51 off 23 balls for the second wicket and by the halfway mark, South Africa had placed themselves perfectly to gun down the target.

With runs leaking from both ends, Bumrah foxed De Kock with one that had the left-handed giving a return catch which the Indian hung on to in the 11th over. In the next, Pandya



Indian players pose with the trophy following their victory in the T20 International cricket series against South Africa, at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, Friday

(1/41) bounced out Brevis.

But the Proteas were truly pegged back by Chakravathy (4-0-53-4) who struck twice in as many balls in the 13th over.

He pinned Aiden Markram leg-before trying to paddle sweep and then produced a beauty that sneaked through Donovan Ferreira's defence to peg the off-stump.

Earlier, Pandya (63) hit the second fastest T20I fifty for India while Tilak produced a fluent 73 to help the hosts set a

imposing 232-run target.

In a whirlwind knock laden with five sixes and as many fours, Pandya's seventh half-century (63 off 25 balls) came off only 16 balls — now the second-fastest ever for any Indian with Yuvraj Singh's 12-ball milestone against England at Kingsmead back in 2007, still perched firmly at the top.

He put on 105 off only 44 balls in a brilliant fourth wicket partnership with Tilak just when the momentum had

slowed down for India, who finished at 231/5.

If Pandya produced a minute-a-mile knock, Tilak once again showed his repertoire of strokes around the ground making 73 off 42 balls with 10 fours and a six.

Pandya walked out amidst chants of his name at his former IPL home ground as out-of-forms India captain Suryakumar Yadav (5) endured yet another failure.

It was Pandya's brute force

in the strokes that he played which stood out, sending the ball flying far into the stands of the world's largest stadium.

BRIEF SCORES

India 231 for 5 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 34, Sanju Samson 37, Tilak Varma 73, Hardik Pandya 63; Corbin Bosch 2/44) beat South Africa 201 for 8 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 65, Dewald Brevis 31; Varun Chakravathy 4/53, Jasprit Bumrah 2/17) by 30 runs

## SHORT TAKES

### Conway's 1st double ton

Mount Maunganui: Devon Conway reached a double century for the first time since his first test innings four years ago, leading New Zealand to 424-3 at lunch Friday on the second day of the third test against the West Indies. New Zealand lost the nightwatchman Jacob Duffy (17) and an out-of-form Kane Williamson (31) in the first session but Conway was immovable and reached 224 not out by lunch. Rachin Ravindra was 4 not out. New Zealand leads the three-match series 1-0 after the first test was drawn and the Black Caps won the second by nine wickets. He reached his double century after more than seven hours at the crease, from 316 balls and with 28 fours.

### Nagal, Shrivalli shine

Bangalore: Indian stars Sumit Nagal and Shrivalli Bhamidipaty played lead roles as Eagles downed Hawkes to all but seal a World Tennis League (WTL) final berth here Friday. The 22-12 win helped Eagles to swell their total points tally to 65 and Hawkes ended up with 53 points after their final set of league matches. The lone glitch for Shrivalli on the day was her defeat in mixed doubles, as she and Gael Monfils lost to Yuki Bhambri and Elina Svitolina 4-6. But Hawkes did not have any more success on the day as Shrivalli made her first appearance in the WTL a memorable affair.

### Lakshita, Sharvan bag gold

New Delhi: The Army pair of Lakshita Bishnoi and Sharvan Kumar produced a commanding performance as they overcome the challenge from Haryana's Suruchi Singh and Samrat Rana to clinch the 10m air pistol mixed team gold in the National Shooting Championships here Saturday. Lashkita and Sharvan defeated the India team regulars 16-10 to seal the title. Lakshita (290) and Sharvan (292) aggregated 582 to qualify for the gold medal match along with the Haryana duo, who also came up with an identical score of 582 but with fewer 'inner 10s'.

### Chotrani, Suraj enter QFs

Mumbai: Top four seeds in the men's category continued to have a field day in the 80th CCI Western India Squash as they moved into the quarterfinals quite easily Friday. Men's top seed Veer Chotrani got the better of Rounak Yadav 11-7, 11-2, 11-5. Second seed Suraj Chand was tested a little before he edged past Hridhaan Shah 11-9, 11-9, 11-8 on the courts of the Cricket Club of India (CCI).

## NCL-Singrauli win Inter-CIL Volleyball Tournament title



POST NEWS NETWORK

Ranchi, Dec 19: Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL)-Singrauli emerged champions of the Inter-CIL Volleyball Tournament 2025-26, defeating Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL)-Sanktoria 28-26, 25-18, 24-26, 25-20 (3-1) in a closely contested final at the CMPDI Sports Ground, as the three-day tournament concluded Friday.

Kunal Sharma of ECL was adjudged the Best Player of the tournament for his consistent performance throughout the championship. Organised by the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI), the tournament witnessed enthusiastic participation from teams representing various Coal India subsidiaries. In a significant initiative to promote inclusivity and women's empowerment, CMPDI also organised a special women's volleyball match, in which women employees and spouses of male employees participated,

highlighting strength, confidence and leadership through sports.

Coal India Director (Human Resources) Vinay Ranjan presented the trophy to the winning NCL-Singrauli team, while CMPDI Officer on Special Duty Chaudhary Shiv Raj Singh handed over the runners-up trophy to ECL-Sanktoria. Appreciating the organisers, Ranjan said, "This event not only inspires our colleagues to improve their fitness and skills but also encourages exemplary sportsmanship and organisational unity within the Coal India family."

Senior officials including CMPDI Directors Shankar Nagachari, Rajiv Kumar Sinha and Nripendra Nath, Chief Vigilance Officer Pankaj Kumar, and representatives of unions and associations were present. Teams from CMPDI-Ranchi, ECL-Sanktoria, BCCL-Dhanbad, CCL-Ranchi, WCL-Nagpur, SECL-Bilaspur, MCL-Sambalpur and SCCL-Kothagudem took part in the tournament.

## U-19 ASIA CUP

# Colts set up title date with Pak

### Malhotra, George help India crush SL by eight wickets in semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 19: Vice-captain Vihaan Malhotra's exhilarating stroke-play was well complemented by Aaron George's composure as India U-19 set up an U-19 Asia Cup summit date with arch-rivals Pakistan after crushing Sri Lanka colts by eight wickets in a rain-curtailed semi-final here Friday.

After rain reduced the match to 20-overs per side, the Indian bowling unit, which has been spot on throughout the tournament, restricted Sri Lanka to 138 for 8 in 20 overs.

In reply, left-handed Malhotra (61 not out off 45 balls), who was snapped by RCB at the recently-concluded IPL mini auction, flicked and pulled with ease to hit a couple of sixes apart from muscling a few boundaries.

His partner and India's crisis man in this event, George (58 not out off 49 balls), was technically perfect with his strokes as India chased down the target in 18 overs.

India's eighth appearance in the final was built on the unbroken 114-run stand for the third wicket between Malho-



tra and George.

In the other semi-final, Pakistan beat Bangladesh by eight wickets, and the bitter neighbours will meet in the continental final after a gap of 11 years.

The last time India U-19 beat Pakistan in the Asia Cup final in 2014, the team comprised of Shreyas Iyer, Sarfaraz Khan, Sanju Samson and Kuldeep Yadav, to name a few.

India U-19 had an inauspicious start to its chase with teenage IPL sensations Ayush Mhatre (7) and Vaibhav

# Head century crushes England's comeback

Head's hundred helps Australia to a 356-run lead in 3rd Ashes test against England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Dec 19: Travis Head took off his helmet and gloves, dropped to his knees and planted a kiss on the pitch after posting a century in a fourth consecutive test on his home ground at the Adelaide Oval.

It was trademark "Travball" on Day 3 of the third Ashes cricket test.

The freewheeling Australian batter had a huge reprieve on 99 when he slashed at a Jofra Archer delivery and was dropped by Harry Brook at gully. That was after he fended a Joe Root twaker and took off for a quick single, only to be sent back by batting partner Alex Carey.

Head faced eight balls without scoring while on 99, then went for broke and advanced down the pitch and drove the ball back over Root's head to the long-on boundary to move to 103.

It was his 11th century in 63 tests, and second in five innings since being promoted from No. 5 to open the innings in Perth. That's where his match-winning innings sealed Australia's eight-wicket win to open the series.

By stumps Friday, Head was unbeaten on 142 and his unbroken partnership with fellow South Australian Carey (52) was 122. Australia was 271-4, with a lead of 356.

Head said his new-look celebration of the century was designed to get a laugh out of his teammates.



Brook took two excellent catches in the slips to remove Marnus Labuschagne (13) and Cameron Green (7) off Josh Tongue's bowling, but the one he missed against Head was costly.

The Australians went in to bat after dismissing England for 286 just before lunch, after Ben Stokes and Archer helped cut the first-innings margin to 85 with a record 106-run ninth-wicket stand.

Stokes walked off the field yelling at himself and shaking his head after being bowled for 83 by Mitchell Starc, bringing an end to a defiant, 198-ball innings that dragged his team back into the contest.

After losing the first two tests in Perth and Brisbane and allowing Australia to post 371 in the first innings here, England's chances of keeping the five-test series alive seemed remote when Stokes went to the crease on Day 2 with the total at 71-4.

## World Tour Finals: Sat-Chi script history

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hangzhou, Dec 19: India's top men's doubles pair, Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, scripted history at the BWF World Tour Finals 2025, becoming the first Indian men's doubles pair to reach the semi-finals of the prestigious season-ending event.

The World No 3 pair sealed their place in the last four with a spirited 17-21, 21-18, 21-15 comeback win over world No 2 and Paris 2024 bronze medalists Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia Friday.

Satwik and Chirag recovered from the loss of the opening game to register a three-game victory, winning the second and third games with authority to finish as Group B toppers. The result also carried added significance as the Indian duo avenged their defeat to the Malaysians at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, completing a full-circle moment on one of badminton's biggest stages.

The Indians had already built strong momentum in the group stage, opening their campaign with a gritty comeback win over China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, followed by a commanding three-game victory against Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri. Their flawless run ensured they progressed unbeaten from a group widely regarded as the toughest in the draw.

# Ministry musings: Focus on doping crisis, football league

## INDIA HAS TOPPED THE DOPING LIST FOR A THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 19: India's shambolic doping record is being addressed aggressively and a marginal decline in the overall positivity rate in the recently-released 2024 international testing figures is evidence that awareness campaigns are making a difference as the country bids to host the 2036 Olympics, a Sports Ministry source asserted Friday.

As per the latest testing figures released by WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency), India conducted 7113 tests (6576 urine samples and 537 blood samples) last year.

Of these, 260 returned adverse analytical findings, ac-

counting for a positivity rate of 3.6 per cent, the highest among all major countries which conducted 5,000 or more tests.

India thus topped the list for a third consecutive year, something that might hurt its chances when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) evaluates its bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games in the near future.

Asked if the Sports Ministry is concerned about the impact of this doping record on the ambitious Olympic bid, a top source pointed to the marginal decline compared to 2023.

"From 3.8 per cent in 2023, the positivity rate dropped marginally to 3.6 per cent even though



significantly more tests were conducted. In 2025 too, over 7,000 tests have already been conducted and our positivity rate so far is just over one per cent. So, the improvement cannot be ignored," the source said in response to a PTI query.

"To be a bit blunt, the athletes and coaches have to rise above their desperation for government jobs which trigger doping violations. Some of the violations are inadvertent, we don't deny that, like taking a medicine which might contain prohibited substances but that's being addressed through apps like 'Know Your Medicine'," he said.

**ISL will happen**

Another major crisis that has engulfed Indian sports is the pause on the domestic football season after the national federation failed to find a commercial partner following the end of its 10-year deal with Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL).

The ministry has been closely involved in facilitating the negotiations between the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and other stakeholders like the Indian Super League and I-League clubs.

On Friday, the ISL clubs submitted a fresh proposal to the AIFF and the ministry, seeking perpetual operational and commercial rights for a club-owned league model while retaining the national federation as the sport's regulator.

"Proposals will keep coming but be assured, the league will happen. But in this entire fiasco, one must not ignore the fact that the Supreme Court has

created a very awkward situation by approving a constitution which may not be acceptable to FIFA as it allows the court to interfere," the source pointed out.

"The AIFF is not free of blame for where football is right now but the court also needs to understand that the federation's autonomy is non-negotiable," he added.

**National Sports Awards**

The long-awaited National Sports awards will be known soon, according to the ministry. "The process of scrutiny is on and the awards will be announced soon, in January most likely," he said.