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# orissa POST



## Ananya's vision

Actor Ananya Panday shares how she envisions the next two to three years of her career in the industry

LEISURE | P2



## Khan, wife in trouble

Pakistani court sentences former PM Imran Khan and wife Bushra Bibi to 17 years each in state gift fraud case

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Incessant selling

Foreign institutional investors have net sold shares worth ₹21,104 crore in December, but there are signs of a reversal

BUSINESS | P11



## Gill dropped

In a bold move, out-of-form vice-captain Shubman Gill has been omitted from the Indian squad picked for the home T20 WC

SPORTS | P12

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 260 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | SUNDAY | DECEMBER 21, 2025

12 PAGES+SUNDAY POST | 5.00

## Protesting farmers sell paddy at ₹10/kg

POST NEWS NETWORK



**Binika, Dec 20:** Farmers here in Subarnapur district sold paddy at ₹10 per kg and staged a road blockade Saturday, protesting the delay in paddy procurement.

Mandis in the district opened December 9, but farmers said procurement has remained stalled as tokens have not been issued, preventing them from selling their produce. As a result, many farmers are unable to repay loans taken for the kharif crop and lack funds to buy seeds for the upcoming rabi season.

Angry farmers from Binika block, led by farmer leaders Dharmaraj Panda and Rintu

Panda, blocked the Kaudiamunda square on Pondikital-Sansamru road from 8 am, placing sacks of paddy on the road. As a mark of protest, some farmers began selling paddy in retail at ₹10 per kg using weighing scales by the roadside, accusing the government of failing to procure their crop. They also prostrated on the road urging the state government

to buy their harvest. Farmers said that although mandis at Shankara primary agricultural cooperative society (PACS) and other locations in the block were opened on, actual procurement has not yet started. With no tokens issued even after harvest, many are being forced to sell paddy to private traders at throwaway prices.

## RAJDHANI MOWS DOWN 7 JUMBOS

Seven elephants, three adults and four calves, were killed after a herd was mowed down by the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express in Assam's Hojai district Saturday, once again highlighting the deadly risks at the intersection of railways and wildlife habitats. At least 79 elephants have been reported killed in train collisions across India in the last five years, according to data provided by the Environment Ministry to the Lok Sabha. Assam accounts for the most train-related elephant deaths in the country, followed by West Bengal and Odisha.

AGENCIES



injured. No passengers were injured in the accident, which occurred at 2.17 am, they said.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has asked the Forest department to conduct a detailed enquiry and secure wildlife corridors, while state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi blamed "unplanned and poorly regulated development under the present government" for the accident.

Several trains have been cancelled, regulated or short-terminated following the mishap.

Nagaon Divisional Forest Officer Suhas Kadam told PTI that the accident in Changjirai

village is suspected to have occurred due to heavy fog in the area.

He claimed that the accident took place at a location which is not a designated elephant corridor. "The train driver, on observing the herd of elephants, applied emergency brakes. However, the jumbos dashed with the train," he added.

Meanwhile, the chief minister ordered a thorough enquiry into the accident.

"We are deeply saddened by the death of seven elephants - three adults and four calves - in a tragic train collision earlier today," he said in a post on X.

## No fuel sans valid PUC certificate

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack/Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** In a major step towards environmental protection in the transport sector, the state government has announced that vehicles without a valid Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate will not be supplied fuel at petrol pumps across the state.

Keeping the deteriorating air quality in mind, the Commerce and Transport Department has initiated strict measures to curb pollution caused by motor vehicles that violate motor vehicle rules. Acting on the directions of Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena, the department has formally communicated the decision to oil marketing companies.

According to the official communication, petrol pumps have been instructed not to provide fuel to any motor vehicle that does not possess a valid pollution certificate. The move aims to improve air quality standards across various districts of Odisha and significantly reduce pollution caused by the transport sector.

Under the Motor Vehicles Act, it is mandatory for all vehicles to carry a valid pollution certificate, which must be obtained through regular checks at registered pollution testing centers. Vehicles found without valid certification will face legal action as per existing laws.

## Minor gangraped in City



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** A minor girl was allegedly gangraped by two persons in Saheed Nagar area in Bhubaneswar after being lured with the promise of a job offer, police said Saturday.

Police registered a case under relevant sections of the POCSO Act and arrested the accused, both reportedly belonging to Khurda district.

The incident comes days after another 17-year-old girl was reportedly gangraped in front of her male friend in Dhauli area.

pecting girl reached the location, the accused along with his accomplice raped her.

The next day, a complaint was lodged at Saheed Nagar police station.

According to the police complaint, one of the accused called the 17-year-old girl to his rented accommodation in Saheed Nagar and promised her a data entry job December 18. However, when the unsus-

pecting girl reached the location, the accused along with his accomplice raped her.

Initially, all eight elephants were reported to have been killed, though later it was said that one of the calves was found

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## leisure

**SYDNEY SWEENEY LOVES FILMS  
EMBRACING 'FEMALE RAGE'**

Hollywood star Sydney Sweeney has shared she likes movies that "have just fully embraced female rage". The 28-year-old actress stars alongside Amanda Seyfried in *The Housemaid*, their new psychological thriller film. The actress relished smashing things and going off the rails for the movie, reports *Female First UK*.

**SHEERAN ADMITS TO LIVING  
UNHEALTHILY WHEN YOUNG**

English singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran has become more disciplined in his approach to performing. The 34-year-old pop star admits to living an unhealthy lifestyle during his younger years. However, the singer is now making a conscious effort to live more healthily, reports *Female First UK*.

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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**ARIES**

Decisions about career and finance will keep you preoccupied today. After a hectic day, all you may want to do is relax. In that case, Ganesh will send a short but pleasurable trip your way, which is sure to rejuvenate you. Group activity suggests you will make more friends, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**

This is not a day when you should be fooling around with your health. Do not take your health and fitness for granted, warns Ganesh. You will be feeling lazy and listless all day long. Chances are that you could fall ill on account of carelessness. Both physical exertion as well as mental stress should be meticulously avoided.

**GEMINI**

Today, the bond that you share with your friends will get stronger. You are also likely to fall in love. If you are already in a relationship, you will plan to validate your bond either through an engagement or marriage. If you are a student, this is a good phase for you. Along with love, you will also get good grades.

**CANCER**

There is every possibility that today, you will be probing and prying about your future, predicts Ganesh. A visit to a well-known astrologer cannot be ruled out. Also, you are likely to consult a doctor. It is all due to your bad lifestyle and habits. You had better improve your lifestyle.

**LEO**

Fortune smiles on but a few, and when it does, it can take you to places you have never even dreamt of. Today is an exceptional day, in the sense that Lady Luck is backing you in all earnestness. So go with the flow and take your chances. You will find, much to your delight, that success is easy to achieve when you are willing to work hard and have luck guiding you.

**VIRGO**

Reflect on past glories and assemble the machinery for accomplishing more in the future. New relationships will mark the road to progress. You easy-going nature will help you get along famously with people.

**LIBRA**

Today might be a good day to invest in that body armour you saw on the telly last night. At least find one that will shield you from being at the receiving end of your seniors and the daily grind of life. If you happen to be a job aspirant, be prepared to slog it out for your success.

**SCORPIO**

House renovation is in the offing. You may furnish it with portraits and artefacts. Today, you may also feel like playing the stock market game and stake your bets, says Ganesh. Have a great time at home by hosting friends over.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Personal grooming will be on your mind today. A small fortune may be spent on enhancing the way you look, especially on a new hair-do. Retail Therapy is on the cards, and you may indulge spending on clothes and jewellery.

**CAPRICORN**

It's difficult to keep calm and have a control over your temper in times of distress, but today, you will prove all who surrendered to the whims of adversity wrong, foresees Ganesh. You will be unfaltering in dealing with problems, and will overcome them with ease.

**AQUARIUS**

The day seems normal as you are unlikely to encounter unpleasant situations, says Ganesh. The high point of the day will be your consummate skill with which you will handle mundane tasks. Ganesh reminds you of the saying, "Success is one percent inspiration and 99% perspiration."

**PISCES**

Fear is a part and parcel of life, and while it can not be eliminated, it can certainly be tamed, and that is what you will be doing today. All your suppressed audacity will be on full display, says Ganesh.

**Society constantly judgemental about women: Maanvi**

**Mumbai:** Actress Maanvi Gagroo, who is all geared up for her latest offering, *Four More Shots Please*, has put forward her strong stance on society being constantly judgemental about women.

Talking to this agency, the actress questioned why it is always women who are under scrutiny for their choices and why men are rarely questioned at all, even when their actions are illogical.

"I feel there is constant judgement around what women do whether they drink or not, smoke or not, or party or not. Nobody seems to judge men for things like peeing on the roads. So why aren't men being judged in the same way? They should be, right?" asked Maanvi.

"My issue is with the clear

difference in judgement between the two genders. Actually, firstly, let's get both the genders on an equal level. Before even discussing whether the judgement is right or wrong, we need to

ask whether judging anyone is fair in the first place, to be honest," Maanvi concluded.

Maanvi Gagroo, in *Four More Shots Please*, essays the role of Siddhi Patel – a relatable, no-nonsense voice in her strong-headed, crackling friend group, juggling ambition, friendships, and life's chaos while calling out hypocrisy with wit and humour.

IANS

**Madhuri on her plans about turning director**

**Mumbai:** Actress

Madhuri Dixit, who is known to have given some tremendous performances during her career spanning around 4 decades, opened up about her plans to try her hand at direction next.

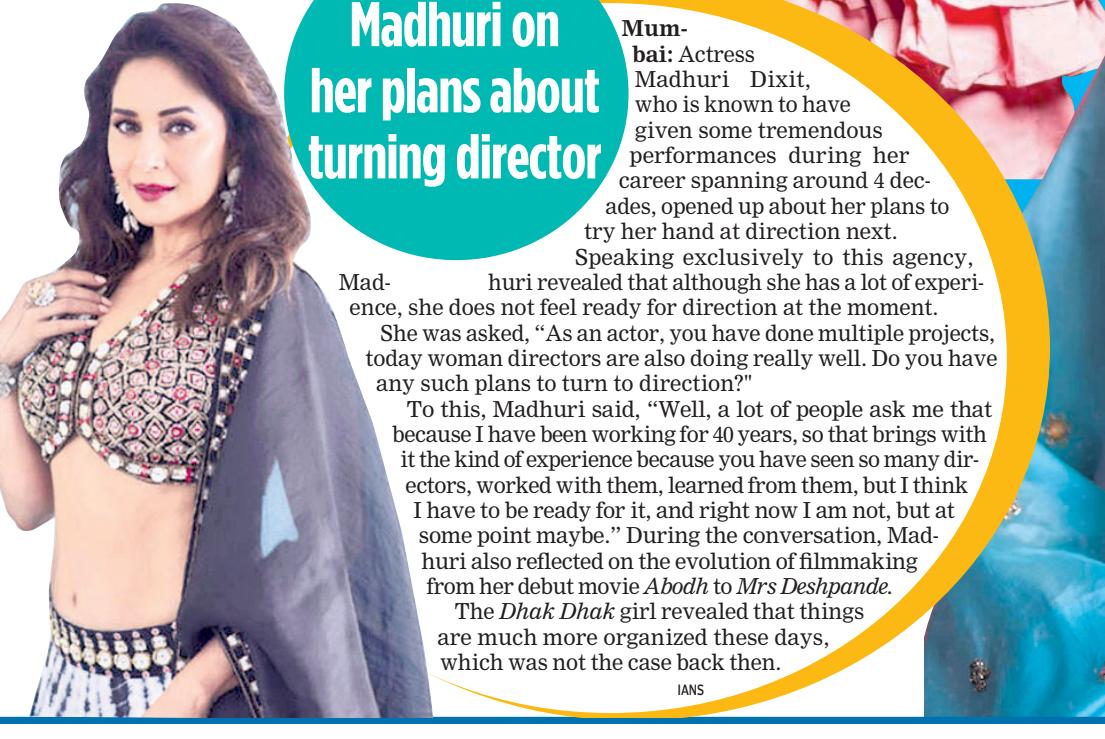
Speaking exclusively to this agency, Madhuri revealed that although she has a lot of experience, she does not feel ready for direction at the moment.

She was asked, "As an actor, you have done multiple projects, today woman directors are also doing really well. Do you have any such plans to turn to direction?"

To this, Madhuri said, "Well, a lot of people ask me that because I have been working for 40 years, so that brings with it the kind of experience because you have seen so many directors, worked with them, learned from them, but I think I have to be ready for it, and right now I am not, but at some point maybe." During the conversation, Madhuri also reflected on the evolution of filmmaking from her debut movie *Abodh* to *Mrs Deshpande*.

The *Dhak Dhak* girl revealed that things are much more organized these days, which was not the case back then.

IANS

**Dhurandhar enters all-time top 10 worldwide**

**Mumbai:** *Dhurandhar* has officially cemented its place in Bollywood box office history, emerging as the 10th highest-grossing Indian film of all time worldwide with a staggering Rs. 751.98 crore global haul. In doing so, the Ranveer Singh starrer finds itself in elite company, sharing space with some of the most iconic and culturally defining blockbusters Indian cinema has ever produced.

At its current worldwide total, *Dhurandhar* has edged past long-standing global

performers and now sits just below PK, which amassed Rs. 769.89 crore worldwide. Topping the all-time worldwide list remains *Dangal*, an unprecedented phenomenon with Rs. 1968.03 crore, followed by modern-day juggernauts *Jawan* (Rs. 1148.32 crore) and *Pathaan* (Rs. 1050.3 crore).

Films like *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, *Animal*, *Secret Superstar*, and *Stree 2* dominate the upper half of the chart.

In comparison, *Dhurandhar*'s global performance stands out for its balance.

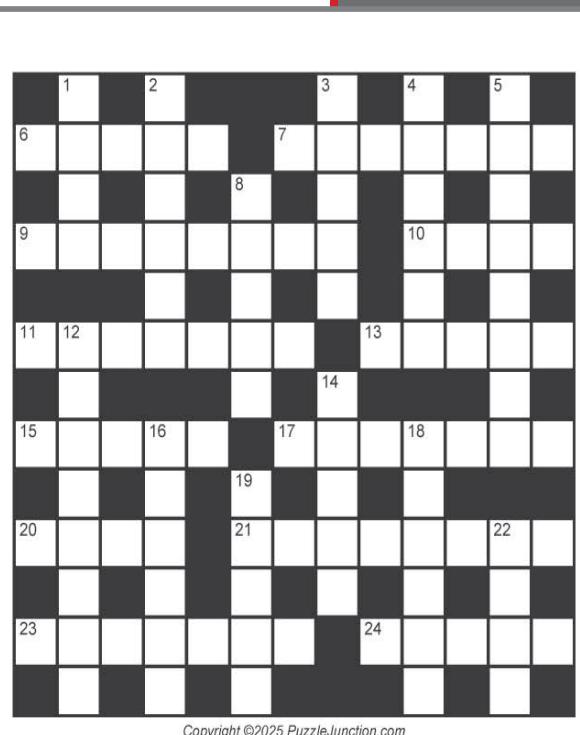
While its domestic numbers have remained extraordinarily strong, the film has also shown impressive traction overseas, helping it surpass major worldwide hits such as *Chhavaa* (Rs. 797.34 crore) is now firmly within striking distance of overtaking it in the coming days.

With sustained momentum still visible, *Dhurandhar*'s global box office story appears far from over, and the possibility of climbing higher on this historic list now feels increasingly inevitable.

AGENCIES

**THE LIST**

Movie	Collection (in INR)
Dangal	1968.03 cr
Jawan	1148.32 cr
Pathaan	1050.3 cr
Bajrangi Bhaijaan	918.18 cr
Animal	917.82 cr
Secret Superstar	875.78 cr
Stree 2	874.58 cr
Chhavaa	797.34 cr
PK	769.89 cr
Dhurandhar	751.98 cr

**PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****FUN POST****CROSSWORD**

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**Across**

- 6 Stratagems
- 7 Pie fillers
- 9 Long-legged carrion-eating hawk
- 10 Mah-jongg piece
- 11 Pertinent
- 13 Jostle
- 15 Sharp narrow ridge

**17 Small bag**

- 20 Forearm bone
- 21 Snail, for one
- 23 Bakery buy or pet name
- 24 Argus-eyed

**4 Savage**

- 5 Steak order (4,4)
- 8 Eagle's claw
- 12 Fraught with danger
- 14 It holds water

**16 Hypnotic state**

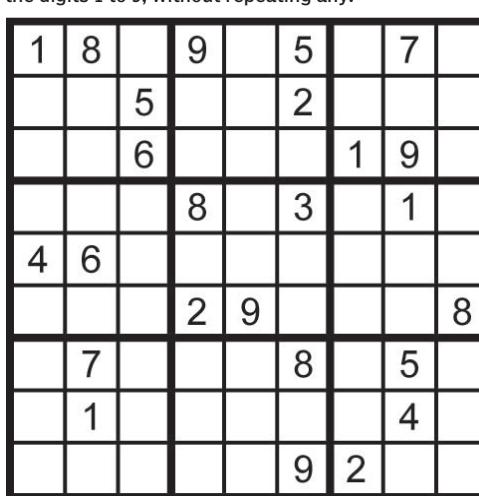
- 18 Baby's bed
- 19 Chinese boats
- 22 Diversify

**Down**

- 1 Dog biter
- 2 Go-getter
- 3 Fit for a king

**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**

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

**SUDOKU**

# downtown

## ₹8.40cr reward on 18 wanted Maoists

The police have announced cash reward of ₹1.20 crore on Ganesh Ueike, central committee member of the Maoist organisation, ₹65 lakh each on special zonal committee members Sudarshan alias Bikash, Niranjan Rout alias Nikhil, Rashmita Lenka alias Ankita, Krishna alias Sukaru and Nitu. Similarly, cash rewards of ₹37.5 lakh were announced on two military platoon commanders and ₹32 lakh for 10 divisional committee members.

nounced cash reward of Rs 1.20 crore on Ganesh Ueike, central committee member of the Maoist organisation, Rs 65 lakh each on special zonal committee members Sudarshan alias Bikash, Niranjan Rout alias Nikhil, Rashmita Lenka alias Ankita, Krishna alias Sukaru and Nitu.

Similarly, cash rewards of Rs 37.5 lakh were announced on two military platoon commanders and Rs 32 lakh for 10 divisional committee members.

The police have put up the posters in the interior pockets in Boudh district. "Help us arrest Maoists and win prizes," the police said in the poster.

In the poster, police have an-

divisional committee members.

The police has issued a contact number for providing information about such Maoists. "Anyone can contact 9437643839 to provide information assuring that their identity will remain confidential," said a senior police official.

The police have also pasted other posters appealing to the Maoists to surrender while giving information about various benefits provided by the government for them.

"As per the direction of the Government of India, we are continuing anti-Maoist operations in Boudh district. We have put up posters appealing to the Maoists to surrender before the police and join the mainstream of society," said Sarthak Ray, Additional Superintendent of Police, Boudh.

The Maoists were urged to shun violence and avail benefits provided under the surrender policy of the government, he said.

## CM visits 'Statue of Equality' in Hyd

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday visited the 'Statue of Equality' in Hyderabad and offered prayers to Ramanujacharya.

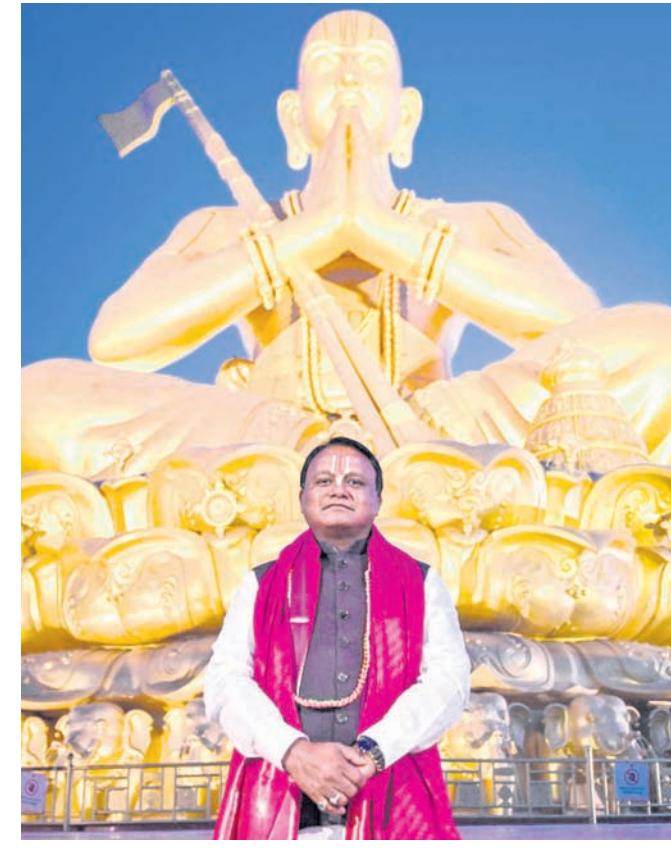
An official statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that Majhi, accompanied by Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, paid homage to the philosopher, saint, and social reformer.

The Chief Minister met Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimanta Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji, and held interactions on India's spiritual traditions, inclusive philosophy, and the relevance of Ramanujacharya's teachings in contemporary society, it said.

"Swamiji extended his blessings to the CM and conveyed his best wishes for the peace, progress, and prosperity of the people of Odisha," the statement said.

As part of the visit, Majhi also released the Odia bhajan on Ramanujacharya, authored by Sri Sri Tridandi Ahobila Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji.

The song seeks to make the life, philosophy, and spiri-



tual message of Ramanujacharya accessible to Odia devotees, further strength-

ening Odisha's cultural and spiritual connect with India's civilisational heri-

The 'Statue of Equality' is not only a magnificent symbol of India's spiritual legacy but also a powerful reminder of the timeless values of social justice, inclusiveness, and human dignity championed by Ramanujacharya, said Majhi

tage of Ramanujacharya philosophy. Sharing his experience after the visit, the Chief Minister said the 'Statue of Equality' is not only a magnificent symbol of India's spiritual legacy but also a powerful reminder of the timeless values of social justice, inclusiveness, and human dignity championed by Ramanujacharya.

He noted that such values continue to guide Odisha's vision of balanced development, social harmony, and people-centric governance.

## Mukhyamantri Bus Seva: State for strengthening SHG involvement

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The state-level steering committee on Mukhyamantri Bus Seva (MBS) Saturday emphasised the need to further strengthen the involvement of Mission Shakti women self-help groups (SHGs) in public transport service delivery across Odisha.

While reviewing ongoing reforms and outlining the next phase of the state's flagship public transport programme, Commerce and Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee stressed the importance of re-organising bus routes based on district-level inputs.

Padhee said, "Improved route planning would en-

hance connectivity to key public institutions such as schools, hospitals and other essential services."

The committee meeting reviewed several policy and operational interventions aimed at improving service efficiency, ensuring affordability and strengthening last-mile connectivity in both urban and rural areas.

Key discussions focused on the engagement of women SHGs under MBS, with SHG conductors playing a vital role in enhancing service delivery while promoting women-led livelihoods.

Other deliberations included ticket fare revisions and passenger concessions to strike a balance between affordability and financial

sustainability, along with the continuation of free bus travel for students, reaffirming the state government's commitment to equitable access to education and mobility.

The committee also examined the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for better coordination, monitoring and accountability.

Highlighting that MBS continues to be a cornerstone of Odisha's vision for accessible, safe and sustainable public transport, the committee emphasised the need to further strengthen the involvement of Mission Shakti women SHGs in public transport service delivery across the state.

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PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Boudh, Dec 20: Odisha Police has announced cash rewards of Rs 8.40 crore to people providing any information about 18 wanted Maoists, an officer said Saturday.

The police have put up the posters in the interior pockets in Boudh district. "Help us arrest Maoists and win prizes," the police said in the poster.

In the poster, police have an-



**CANINE CUTIES:** Dogs of several breeds on display during the second day of a dog show organised by Orissa Kennel Club at OUAT Veterinary College Ground in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

### G Udayagiri shivers at 4.6 degrees C

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Cold-wave conditions gripped the state Saturday, with the mercury falling below 10 degrees Celsius at several places, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

G Udayagiri in Kandhamal district was the coldest place in the state, with the mercury plummeting to 4.6 degrees Celsius. Semiliguda in Koraput district recorded 5.1 degrees, while Phulbani and Daringbadi towns in Kandhamal district recorded 5.8 and 6 degrees Celsius, respectively.

State capital Bhubaneswar and neighbouring Cuttack recorded 14 and 13.6 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The IMD has warned that coldwave conditions are likely to persist in parts of the state over the next one week.

Dense fog is expected during early hours in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda and Kandhamal districts on Sunday and Monday, the IMD said.

Besides, shallow to moderate fog is likely in the Kalahandi district, it said.

## Cheating: Real estate co MD gets 3-year RI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: A court here Saturday awarded three years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) to the managing director (MD) of a real estate company after convicting him of cheating a man who he had promised to provide a patch of land in Jharpada area earlier in the year.

The Judicial Magistrate First Class (III), Bhubaneswar convicted Sarala Realcon Private Limited MD Gayadhar Jena under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on him in a case registered at Saheed Nagar police station in the City. Defaulting on payment of penalty would invite additional three months of RI, the court ruled.

According to prosecution, Jena had taken Rs 12.50 lakh from a man, promising him to provide a patch of land at Koradakanta in Jharpada area under Saheed Nagar police limits. "However, despite repeated requests, the accused



neither returned the money, nor handed over the promised piece of land," it said.

The victim further alleged that when he approached Jena to resolve the issue, he misbehaved with him and his wife. With no way out, the victim lodged a complaint at Saheed Nagar police station, it said, adding that on the basis of the complaint, a case was registered and Jena was arrested under Section 420 of the IPC and a chargesheet was submitted before the court May 31, 2025.

During trial, the court examined five prosecution witnesses and relied on 49 documentary exhibits. After evaluating the evidence, the court found Jena guilty and awarded the sentence.

## Man arrested for casteist remarks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Infocity Police have arrested a 30-year-old man for posting a video on social media containing obscene language, casteist remarks and threats against members of a Scheduled Caste community. The accused was apprehended from Bangalore and later forwarded to court, police said Saturday.

The complainant, Nihar Ranjan Samal, a resident of Kanan Vihar Phase-II under Infocity Police Station, alleged that it was November 30 morning when he noticed a video posted on Facebook in which the accused Pratap Mallick, 30, was seen abusing people belonging to SC community using obscene and derogatory languages. The video allegedly also contained casteist remarks and threats issued to the community. Following this, Samal lodged a written complaint with Infocity Police who registered a case November 30 under Sections 296, 351(2), 351(4) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) read with Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Police said Samal is also associated with an organisation as its state unit in charge. During investigation, the police traced Mallick and arrested him from Bangalore on the basis of reliable intelligence. During interrogation, the accused reportedly confessed to the offence.



**EVICTION AFTERMATH:** Makeshift fruit shops lay in disarray at Badasankha Bazar as Puri district administration carries out an eviction drive, Saturday

## Two held for brown sugar sale in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Laxmisagar Police arrested a woman and her male accomplice for selling brown sugar near Lotus Hotel Lane, seizing 10 grams of the drug along with cash, mobile phones, and a scooter, officials said Saturday.

The arrests followed a written report filed by Sub-Inspector Sambhunath Patra, leading to a case being registered at Laxmisagar police station and an investigation initiated.

According to police, acting on reliable information about brown sugar sales, a team raided Lotus Hotel Lane December 19. During the operation,



25-year-old Sushree Nayak was caught selling the drug in small polythene packets, while her 25-year-old associate, Sagar Behera, was collecting money from buyers.

On spotting the police, both accused tried to flee but were over-

powered and detained. A personal search recovered 10 grams of brown sugar from Sushree, along with ₹1,000 in cash, two mobile phones, and a scooter.

During interrogation, both accused reportedly confessed to knowingly selling brown

◀ Acting on reliable information, police raided Lotus Hotel Lane December 19, targeting brown sugar sales

◀ During the raid, 25-year-old Sushree Nayak was caught selling the drug in small packets, while her associate, Sagar Behera, collected money from buyers

◀ The duo was booked under Section 21(b) of the NDPS Act and forwarded to court

sugar for illegal profit. They were booked under Section 21(b) of the NDPS Act and forwarded to court. Further investigation is ongoing to trace the source and network behind the illegal trade.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister encouraged the students and wished them a bright future. He emphasised that the festival's main objective is to showcase the talents of students from departmental schools and hostels and support the development of their skills.

### SARGIFUL 2025 CONCLUDES

## Festival unveils students' hidden talents: Min Gond

Minister highlighted the event's aim of providing a valuable platform for departmental schools and hostels while promoting skill development

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Sargiful symbolises purity and offers a valuable platform to discover and nurture children's hidden talents, School and Mass Education and ST & SC Development, Minority and Backward Classes Welfare Minister Nityananda Gond said Saturday. Speaking as chief guest on the concluding day of the three-day state-level festival, he noted that the enthusiastic participation of students made the event more vibrant and dignified.

At the valedictory programme, several senior officials were present, including ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Commissioner-cum-Secretary B Parameswaran; Scheduled Castes Welfare Director Laxman Kumar Mallick; Director (OBC) Jugaleswari Dash; SC-STRTI Director and Member Secretary (ATLC) Sudhakar Sabar; Special Secretary Sujata Mishra; Financial Advisor-cum-Special Secretary Banita Das; and Additional Secretary Debendra Kumar Nanda.

Addressing the gathering,



state-level event.

Highlighting government efforts to reduce school dropout rates, Minister Gond said students are receiving financial support through the Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme. Initiatives like the Child Tracking Survey and the "Aasa School Jiba" campaign are helping reintegrate dropout children, and he stressed that the collective efforts of all stakeholders are crucial for their success.

The festival saw participation from 1,160 students and teachers across 22 competitions. Meritorious students were awarded by the chief guest, while five top-performing Ekavaya Model Residential Schools were felicitated. Ten students who excelled in CBSE board exams from Ekavaya schools were also honoured. Additionally, the department recognised 50 best high schools and 10 best higher secondary schools under its administration.

**OEC KICKS OFF AT RDWU**  
**'Gender justice crucial for climate and environment'**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** Emphasising the inseparable link between gender and environment, former Kerala Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Prakriti Srivastava said, "Without gender justice, environmental protection and solutions to climate-related challenges cannot be achieved," during the inaugural session of 16th Odisha Environment Congress (OEC) at Rama Devi Women's University (RDWU) here Saturday.

Women are more adversely affected by environmental imbalance and climate change, but existing gender inequalities further aggravate their vulnerability, Srivastava noted. "There is an urgent need to integrate gender justice into environmental governance. Out of 3,100 Indian Forest Service officers, only 284 are women. Similarly, out of 2.5 lakh field-level forest staffs, women count only 5,000. This is deeply concerning when women play a vital role in forest protection," she said.

## City seminar focuses on regional variations in migration patterns



the structural nature of forced migration, urging policies to be human-centred and region-specific.

At the event, NCDS project director and associate professor Sandhya Rani Mahapatro shared her groundbreaking research which reframes migration as a multidimensional wellbeing issue, moving beyond economic perspectives to explore social, emotional, and health dimensions.

"Migration is a story of resilience, adaptation, and opportunity," Mahapatro noted. Her findings reveal regional inequalities in migration trajectories and the need for migrant-sensitive policies tailored to local realities.

Speaking from policy implementation perspective, Odisha Labour Commissioner Indramani Tripathy highlighted state's

proactive initiatives and said,

"We are working towards making migration safer and more rewarding."

Tripathy cited toll-free helpline (18003456703), help desks in destination states,

portability of welfare schemes, and creation of a comprehensive migrant database.

He also pointed out that these initiatives help ensure timely compensation,

grievance redressal, and access to social protection for Odisha's migrant workforce.

International Institute of Mi-

gration and Development Chair-

man and former professor at

Centre for Development Studies,

Kerala, S Irudaya Rajan stressed

the critical importance of robust

data in shaping policies.

Citing references to Kerala's pione

ering migration surveys and Odisha's own 15,000-household study, he underlined the value of numbers in

guiding evidence-based decisions.

## Madhu Babu Memorial Museum to come up in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 20:** A Madhu Babu Memorial Museum will be set up on the campus of Shailabala Women's Autonomous College, Cuttack, to honour the life and contributions of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, popularly known as Madhu Babu. The decision was made at a high-level meeting Saturday, chaired by Higher Education, Sports & Youth Services and Odia Language, Literature & Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj.

The museum will be developed by the Odia Language, Literature and Culture department at a site of historical significance within the college premises, where Madhusudan Das's conference hall and residential office once functioned.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Suraj said, "Madhusudan Das and Shailabala Das laid a strong foundation for women's education in Odisha. The proposed memorial museum will serve as a source of inspiration for future generations and keep alive Madhu Babu's vision, values and legacy."

Welcoming the dignitaries, NCDS Director Prakash Chandra Mohanty emphasised the transformative potential of an evidence-driven research and sighted a survey of over 650 households, which delves into regional variations in migration patterns, adaptation behaviours, and wellbeing outcomes.

"Migration is not a problem to be solved. It is an opportunity to improve lives, enhance social security, and empower families," Mohanty remarked, highlighting the silent challenges faced by older persons and children, and

the structural nature of forced migration, urging policies to be human-centred and region-specific.

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## Inception workshop to formalise CSA Alliance

POST NEWS NETWORK



(OCSAA) will serve as a platform to showcase and implement climate-smart technologies prioritised by CSTEP across the state through various partner organisations.

The Alliance aims to integrate climate resilience into agricultural planning and programmes, promote climate-resilient crops, diversified farming systems and horticulture, and mobilise public, private and blended finance for scalable climate-smart agriculture solutions, Padhee said.

Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) Vice-Chancellor Prof Pravat

Kumar Roul said the impacts of climate change are real and increasingly evident, underscoring the need for collective efforts to make agricultural fields climate-smart. Such measures, he said, are essential to mitigate adverse impacts and ensure food and nutrition security for the growing population, both globally and in the state.

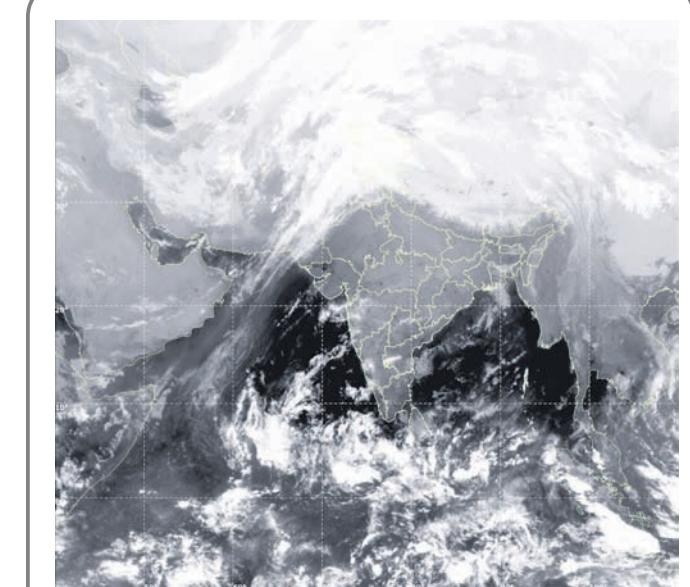
Soil Conservation and Watershed Development Director Subrat Kumar Panda said at the workshop that climate-smart agriculture is no longer optional but is central to safeguarding farmer livelihoods, ensuring food

security and securing long-term agricultural sustainability.

Sector Head at CSTEP Indu K Murthy said, "The CSA Alliance places farmers at the centre of climate action. As part of the Climate Resilience Cell and anchor of the Alliance, CSTEP aims to co-create solutions that are locally relevant, economically viable and scalable, ensuring climate resilience directly enhances livelihoods while safeguarding natural resources."

Co-founder and Director of Catalyst Management Services (CMS) Shiv Kumar said, "The Alliance draws its strength from its partners—each bringing distinct capabilities, experience and commitment—and together forming a collective capable of delivering climate-smart agriculture at a scale no single institution can achieve alone."

He added that by standing together, partners reduce risk, accelerate learning and unlock statewide impact and finance, ensuring climate-smart solutions move beyond pilots into sustained adoption across Odisha.



### WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	27.8°	25.6°	Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later
Min Temp	14.0°	13.6°	
Humidity	94%	88%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



# Luna River's dipping water level worrisome

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Dec 20:** The falling water level of Luna River, which flows through Kendrapara district, has raised concerns over the town's drinking water supply and the future of agricultural land along its basin.

Officials said the intake feeder near Kalapada has been dry since November. To ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply to Kendrapara town, the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO) is digging a canal — 700 metres long, 25 feet wide and 10 feet deep — into the riverbed to channel water to the intake point.

Despite this temporary measure, the river's water level continues to decline rapidly. Residents fear that the situation could worsen during the summer, leading to a complete disruption of drinking water supply. Agriculture in the downstream areas is also at risk, with an estimated 10,000 hectares facing potential crop failure.

Local environmental concerns have further intensified due to illegal sand mining, which residents say, is altering the river's natural course. Intellectuals in the district argue that interlinking Kendrapara's rivers could offer a long-term solution.

Manoj Kumar Singh of Khadianga said the PHEO and Water Resources department draw drinking water for the town from the Luna River at Kalapada. "The pump house area has remained dry since October. Even the 150-metre channel dug



earlier has now dried up. If this continues, the town will face a severe water crisis in summer," he said.

Local villager Santosh Kumar Kar noted that check dams at Padagayapur, Gayasapur, Thauri, Chadheguan, Rajgarh and Angulai were built to support irrigation and drinking water needs. But the declining water level has put both objectives at risk.

Former Zilla Parishad member Ganesh Chandra Samal said the 73-kilometre-long Luna River once served as a navigational route during British rule. "Lack of maintenance, illegal sand and soil lifting, and encroachment have diverted the river's path. There is no arrangement for draining waterlogging from 850 hectares of farmland. Likewise, 32,350 hectares of agricultural land in the district are saline. In addition, during the rainy season, floodwater inundates 34,952 hectares of land. A total of 84,910 hectares in the district have been declared drought-prone. De-

spite repeated demands before the district council for proper water management of the rivers and main canals, no effective results have been achieved.

Social activist Banambar Sahoo added that earlier, the river supported cultivation of paddy, rabi crops, sugarcane and vegetables. "Water levels have been falling for years. Dams built upstream in Chhattisgarh along the Mahanadi have contributed to this crisis," he said.

Farmer leader Bidhubhusan Mohapatra stressed the need for interlinking the district's seven rivers and building barrages at strategic locations. "This would solve irrigation issues across the district. But neither the administration nor political leaders have taken concrete steps," he said.

Executive engineer of the Water Resources department Umesh Chandra Sethi said several proposals to rejuvenate the Luna River are in progress and funds have been sanctioned. "Residents will soon begin to see the benefits," he said.

## JUMBO CALF ELECTROCUTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Odapada, Dec 20:** An elephant calf was electrocuted Friday night at Mahadia village under Gadashila forest section of Odapada block in Dhenkanal district, forest officials said.

According to sources, a herd of elephants had moved out of the Matharagadi forest in search of paddy crops when the calf came in contact with a solar fence erected around a farmland to protect crops. The calf reportedly got entangled and failed to free itself, leading to its death.

Officials suspect the fence may have been illegally connected to a power supply line or was carrying high voltage. The exact cause of death will be confirmed after the postmortem report, forest personnel said.

After the incident, the mother elephant was seen staying near the calf for some time. She later pushed the body with her legs for a short distance towards a mango orchard in the Mahadia village and left it inside the grove before moving away. Forest personnel remained at the spot, keeping watch on the mother elephant's movement.

Dhenkanal Divisional Forest Officer Sumit Kar, along with other forest officials, visited the site, conducted an inquiry and carried out the postmortem Saturday afternoon. The carcass was later buried at the spot after a post-mortem.

Forest officials said appropriate action would be taken against those responsible once the postmortem report is received.



## Elderly woman's charred body found in Rayagada



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Ambadola, Dec 20:** The charred body of a 75-year-old woman was found inside her house at Kumudabali village under Ambadola police limits in Muniguda block of Rayagada district Saturday, with police suspecting a premeditated murder linked to gold theft.

The deceased was identified as Chandana Tula Dangari, who lived alone in the house. Villagers became suspicious after noticing a strong burning smell from the house Saturday morning. On entering the house, they found the door broken and intact condition of the house have strengthened suspicions of murder.

According to locals, the woman used to wear gold ornaments. Police suspect the crime was committed to loot her jewellery.

The recovered remains were sent to FM&T, Berhampur, for post-mortem examination. Police said further investigation is underway.

## Man held for raping 12-year-old disabled

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, Dec 20:** Police in Malkangiri district Saturday arrested a man accused of raping a differently-abled minor girl, authorities said.

Police produced the accused identified as Deepak Baroi, 45, in the court from where he was remanded to judicial custody after his bail pleas were rejected.

The matter came up before police after the girl's family members lodged a complaint at the Malkangiri police station. Police registered a case (666/25) and took the accused into custody. Further investigation is underway.



The incident occurred when the girl's parents were away from home December 15. Deepak entered their home when the girl was alone and raped her, police said. The girl's elder sister and a neighbour noticed the act and raised an alarm.

The accused allegedly threatened to kill the girl if she disclosed the incident and fled the scene, the complaint states.

## Miscreants loot 4 temples in a night

**Chhatrapur:** Miscreants have posed a challenge to Chhatrapur police after looting four temples in a single night in Ganjam district. The targeted temples are located near the newly-constructed police colony, which houses residential quarters for police personnel. The robbers allegedly stole silver valuables, including crowns, cobra figurines and necklaces, from four temples within a span of a few hours. When priests opened the doors of the Lord Bireswar, Sri Sai, Lord Ganesh and Goddess Durga temples Friday morning, they found that valuables attached to the deities were missing. The incidents were immediately reported to Chhatrapur police, who have launched an investigation. Police have collected CCTV footage from the temples and sent it for further examination. A scientific team and a dog squad were also deployed to analyse the pattern of the robberies. The Chhatrapur MLA inspected the affected temples, assessed the situation and directed police to expedite the investigation and arrest those responsible.

### COURT NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE DISTRICT JUDGE-VI CUM MOTOR VEHICLE CLAIM TRIBUNAL AT JAMSHEDPUR M.L.C. CASE NO. 15/2024 RAKESH BHAKAT ..... APPLICANT VERSUS THE NEW INDIA INSURANCE CO. LTD & OTHERS ..... OPP. PARTIES To, Rabindra Das, S/o Bishnu Pada Das R/o C/o Susanta Sahu, At H.No.22, Raghunathpur, P.O. & P.S. Baripada, District- Mayurbhanj, Pin No.757001 ..... Owner of vehicle bearing No. OD11-3423) Whereas above named applicant instituted a motor Accidental claim case U/s 166 M.V. Act 1988 (Amended) against you but you did not appear before Hon'ble Court on fixed dated. You are hereby directed to appear before my Court in the above named case personally on 05.01.2026 at 10:30 A.M. and file reply.

Take notice and if you fail to appear before my court on the date filed the motor Accidental claim case will be hereby ex parte against you.

Give under my hand seal of this the 25th day of August 2025.

Sd/- District Judge VI East Singhbhum, Jamshedpur

### COURT NOTICE

NATIONAL CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION (Constituted under Consumer Protection Act 1986) UPBHOKTA NYAY BHAWAN, F Block, General Pool Office Complex INA, New Delhi-23

REVISION PETITION NO. 1761 OF 2022

(Against the order dated 14.09.2022 in First Appeal No. 394 of 2016

Of the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Orissa)

International Cars & Motors Limited &Anr., ...Petitioner Vs.

Sri Partap Kumar Pattnaik & Ors., ...Respondent To

1. Sri Pratap Kumar Pattnaik s/o Late Naba Kishore Pattnaik r/o Village Bhagbanpur, Plot No 216/1561, PO Patrapada, PS Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar, Distt Khordha.

2. M/s Ananta International Cars & Motors, Plot No 94, Pahal, Bhubaneswar, Distt Khordha. Represented through Director Shri B.R. Sekhar Subudhi.

3. M/s Maa Bhagabati Auto Centre, Authorised Service Centre Sonalika International Car & Motors Pvt Ltd, Plot No 26 Pahl, Bhubaneswar, Distt Khordha.

### NOTICE

WHEREAS International Cars & Motors Limited has filed a Revision Petition No 1761 of 2022 against the order dated 14.09.2022 in First Appeal No. 394 of 2016 the State Commission, Orissa. The above mentioned Revision Petition is pending before the National Commission, New Delhi wherein

you have been arrayed as Respondent.

WHEREAS this Commission has ordered vide order dated 18.03.2024 to effect service upon you by this Publication

NOW, THEREFORE, TAKE NOTICE that you are hereby directed to appear before this Commission in person or through your counsel/authorised representative on 26.12.2025, at 10.30 a.m., failing which the Petition will be disposed of ex parte on merits.

Dated this the 18th March, 2024.

SECTION OFFICER



## 3 of family from Gajapati killed in Andhra accident

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, Dec 20:** Three members of a family from Gajapati district were killed in a road accident near the foothills of Simhachalam in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh while returning after offering prayers at the shrine Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Kantarao, his wife Sandhya and their daughter Maheswari—residents of MN Peta village under Gosani block in Gajapati district.

Kantarao had been working for the past few years at a private company in Visakhapatnam to support his family. Kantarao, his wife and daughter Thursday travelled to Simhachalam on a motorcycle to offer prayers. While returning, their motorcycle met with an accident near Goshala Chhak at the foothills. Kantarao died on the spot, while his wife and daughter succumbed to their injuries while being shifted to hospital, police said.

The deceased couple's 11-year-old son, Gurunath, survived as he had not accompanied them on the trip. With the death of his parents and sister, the child has been left orphaned. Sources said the family has no other immediate members. Pendhutti police in Andhra Pradesh have registered a case and launched an investigation to ascertain the exact cause of the accident.

Post-mortem examinations of the bodies were conducted Saturday.

## Harassment, inaction alleged at Mayurbhanj varsity

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Dec 20:** Allegations of harassment involving a post-graduate student and a guest faculty member have surfaced at Maharaja Siriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University in Baripada, raising questions about administrative inaction despite findings by the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).

Complaints were filed against two faculty members with the ICC, which reportedly examined the cases and submitted its findings to the university authorities. However, no disciplinary action has been initiated so far, the

complainants alleged. The issue has drawn attention in the wake of statewide outrage following the death of an FM College student in Balasore, who allegedly set herself on fire after authorities failed to act on harassment complaints against a teacher.

According to sources, a guest faculty member in the Department of Sanskrit, who is also pursuing a Ph.D. under the supervision of the head of department (HoD), lodged a complaint with the ICC October 25, alleging harassment by the HoD. ICC Chairperson Prof. Sanghamitra Sahu said the committee submitted its

report to the Vice Chancellor and Registrar within 35 days after examining all evidence. However, no action has been taken even 20 days after submission of the report.

Separately, a postgraduate student of the Odia Department filed a complaint with the ICC December 1, alleging harassment by an assistant professor.

Two more students later came forward with similar allegations against the same faculty member. The inquiry in this case is ongoing, sources said.

The complainants said the delay in action has caused them severe mental distress.

Registrar Sumita Singh said action would be taken within two to three days based on the ICC report related to the Sanskrit Department complaint, and the Chancellor would be informed. Vice Chancellor Pramod Kumar Satapathy said the ICC was constituted as per guidelines and action was being taken in phases. He added that administrative responsibilities of the concerned department head would be withdrawn and disciplinary proceedings initiated.

Committee sources said the ICC has up to 90 days to submit its report in the Odia Department case.

Post-mortem examinations of the bodies were conducted Saturday.

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In silence lies the source of the highest inspirations.

THE MOTHER

## Rushed Laws

**O**n December 17, Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra asked the Lok Sabha to send the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee For Rozgar And Ajeevika Mission Bill, 2025, to the Standing Committee for suggestions and changes. Opposition MPs said that the Bill was made available on the members' portal at 5 pm, and amendments were sought by 545 pm. MPs said that they should be given at least one day to first read and understand the Bill.

The requests were turned down and the bill was passed by voice vote on December 18. MNREGA, one of our most important laws, has been finished off and we do not really know why.

This passing of bills without parliament, including the treasury benches, having any real understanding of what they contained through any rigorous process has accelerated through the Modi era. In the 14th Lok Sabha (2004-09), 60 per cent of the bills were referred to committees for scrutiny. In the next Lok Sabha (2009-14), this number was 71 per cent. In the first Modi government, this fell to 25 per cent. In the second Modi government (2019-2024) this fell to 16 per cent. It wilfully undid the parliamentary convention of referring bills to department-related parliamentary standing committees for scrutiny and examination.

The Right to Information law was gutted similarly by pushing through changes in 2019 without sending it to a committee. As a direct consequence, India's global ranking on the RTI index fell from 2nd to eighth and then ninth. In 2019, Telugu Desam MPs had joined MPs from the Congress, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to express concern at the 'hurried passing' of bills without scrutiny. They wrote that public consultation—in which groups and individuals engaged with particular subjects are invited by legislators to put forward their views on proposed legislations—had also stopped. 'Public consultation is a long established practice where parliamentary committees scrutinise bills, deliberate, engage and work towards improving the content and quality of the legislation,' they wrote. This had no effect on Modi, and in 2020, not a single bill was sent to a committee for scrutiny.

What is the point of writing this now? It is that the government must learn that often this haste and arrogance produces outcomes that are unwanted.

On 20 September 2020, ordinances that had cleared the Lok Sabha were pushed through the Rajya Sabha on a 'voice vote' and not a division vote, meaning an actual vote where a 'yes' and 'noes' are counted.

The excuse given then was that the individual in control, deputy chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh, was distracted by the disorder in the House and did not notice that a division vote had been demanded. Rajya Sabha television stopped its live broadcast while this was happening and the microphones of the MPs were switched off. (The BJP took the cue and followed the same pattern elsewhere. In the Karnataka Legislative Council, where it lacked a majority, the BJP passed its anti-cow slaughter bill through a voice vote, ignoring the demand for a division vote.)

The two laws given birth in this manner were the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 and the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. To remind readers: The first law removed the monopoly of government-run agriculture markets, or mandis, and allowed the sale of produce outside these. It also forbade the taxing of these new spaces. This meant that, over time, the mandis, which are taxed, would become redundant.

This would damage the interests of farmers in those states where the mandis were efficiently run and procurement happened to the satisfaction of farmers. The second law made contract farming possible. However, the law said that aggrieved farmers could not move court in case the buyer defaulted—they could only approach the State bureaucracy for resolution. A third law undid the banning of hoarding of essential commodities, allowing corporations to stock up as much grain as they wanted.

The Modi government said it had the farmers' interests in mind when it wrote up these legislations (the intent, it was said, was to double the incomes of farmers, which had stagnated over years). But if that was the case it was unexplained why the laws had provisions which seemed to deliberately go against the interest of the farmers. Other than the manner in which they were passed, the laws also appeared to violate the Constitution under which agriculture is a state subject. It is for the states to legislate laws on the subject and not the Union. Here, the excuse given was that these laws really regulated trade and not agriculture itself. The bills were signed by the president a week later and became law, triggering a protest that became a mass movement.

Like MNREGA, these were laws that would deeply impact the lives of crores of Indians. The government did not consider what the reaction from these Indians would be. It was at first surprised and taken aback that there was any pushback at all.

When it became clear that it could not actually get the laws implemented, the prime minister ignored the fallout for a full year. Eventually he apologised and retreated. But why get into this position in the first place? Why mess with the lives of crores of people with this level of casualness and arrogance? It is hard for the writer and indeed for the reader to say. One has to believe one has been gifted unlimited power and authority to consider such moves and only one person in this country thinks in that fashion.

## WISDOM CORNER

**I** pay no attention whatever to anybody's praise or blame. I simply follow my own feelings.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

# CIVILIZATIONAL SUICIDE

## FOCUS POLITICS

**E**arlier this month, the Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov offered a succinct description of the Trump administration's new National Security Strategy (NSS), calling it "largely consistent with our vision." He's right. The NSS offers not even a hint of criticism of Russia, neither for its increasingly authoritarian domestic policies, nor for its blatant military aggression against Ukraine. Instead, it singles out Europe – America's longstanding democratic friend and ally – for special abuse.

True, when the first Trump administration issued its NSS in 2017, there was plenty of talk about national sovereignty trumping everything else. But that document still recognized the value of America's allies, stating that "the United States and Europe will work together to counter Russian subversion and aggression." Moreover, this effort fit into a broader strategy of "great power competition," where China loomed large.

Since then, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and China has loomed only larger. But the second Trump administration is bowing to Russia, criticizing the Europeans, and describing the threat from China only in economic terms. Apparently, great-power competition has given way to great-power camaraderie. The US now says it is more interested in "stability," which supposedly can be achieved by working with Russian President Vladimir Putin and through a "G2" with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The implicit message is that great powers think alike. Each wants its own sphere of influence and prizes power over principle.

As many commentators have noted, the NSS represents



**By heaping abuse on Europe and handling Russia and China with kid gloves, the Trump administration's National Security Strategy represents a radical departure from past US policies. But even as America rejects everything it once stood for, Europeans' only choice is to double down on their own principles**

a radical departure from past US policies and doctrines. It envisions a pivot back to the Western Hemisphere, and signals that profits will come before principles on just about every issue. The Middle East, for example, is primarily seen as an investment destination. Politics are complicated; but commercial dealmaking is easy.

Still, the vociferous denunciation of Europe stands out, not least for the flaws in the underlying argument. The NSS claims that "within a few decades at the latest, certain NATO members will become majority non-European," and that Europe, doomed to "civilizational erasure" (language many see as the handiwork of Vice President JD Vance), cannot be a reliable ally. But this is just false. There is not a single European country where "non-Europeans" will be a majority at any point in the foreseeable future.

It remains to be seen what will come of this. Aligning with Trump is not exactly a winning electoral strategy, so US efforts to meddle in Europe may prove to be as unsuccessful as Russia's have been. They could be far more damaging, though, considering how much the transatlantic

tic relationship has already soured.

To be sure, we Europeans have our fair share of problems. We urgently need to revive our entrepreneurial, competitive, and global trading spirits, beef up our defenses, and extend our successful project of integration across the continent. Managing migration is certainly a challenge, just as it is for the US.

Overall, though, we are extraordinarily successful societies, and we must not lose sight of that. Assassination attempts and political violence are extremely rare here. We do not have politicized mobs storming our parliaments. Our democracies remain open and vibrant, most of them topping global rankings for press freedom. The share of our people in prison is one-fifth that of the US, and our murder rates are a small fraction of America's. We don't have a massive trade deficit with the rest of the world. Our health systems deliver better outcomes and longer lives than anywhere else, and overall, EU member states have better-educated populations.

We certainly are not at risk of going "extinct," as the NSS absurdly puts it. Few places on Earth provide a better quality of life for a larger share of the population than Europe does. Rather than trying to placate Trump's America, we must stand taller, re-commit to our own values, and hold out hope that the ideological confusion across the Atlantic soon passes. Bar-

ring that, it is not us who will be committing civilizational suicide.

*The writer is a former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden.*

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## SPECTRUM PERSONAL FINANCE

# IPO mania: Check fresh issue before investing



Chander Gupta

**INFUSION OF MORE CAPITAL IN THE COMPANIES, WHICH IS POSSIBLE THROUGH FRESH ISSUE, IS A GOOD SIGN**

**A** constant spate of Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) has been hitting the Indian markets steadily. A layman investor would think that more and more money is being infused in the companies' balance sheets with mobilisation of funds through IPOs. A naive investor would presume that Indian companies are expanding their operations with the infusion of funds gathered through IPOs. But do all the IPOs really strengthen the company's balance sheet?

Every company going public must file a Red Herring Prospectus (RHP) with ROC. The RHP can be viewed on SEBI's website [sebi.gov.in](http://sebi.gov.in). An RHP is a voluminous document generally consisting of more than 500 pages. But the most critical information is contained on page 1 of RHP itself. Even a small retail investor intending to apply for shares in an IPO should look for key pieces of information in the RHP.

The equity shares which are offered to public through an IPO can be either i) Fresh Issue or ii) Offer for Sale (OFS). An IPO can be exclusively Fresh Issue or exclusively Offer for Sale or even a combination of both. Only the Fresh Issue subscription money goes to company's balance sheet. Fresh Issue amount expands the capital base of the company, thereby helping it to grow and diversify. Fresh Issue amount enhances the Net Worth of a company. Fresh Issue means money being poured into the economy, in a broader sense.

In the case of OFS, the promoters/investors are only divesting their stake through the IPO. Sometimes, the size of the IPO is split between Fresh Issue and OFS. An IPO can be a Fresh Issue of equity shares or Offer for Sale (OFS) of equity shares by Promoters/ Investors, or a combination of both.

If you go through the RHPs of companies which have

floated IPOs during the current Financial Year (2025-26) so far, you will notice that 65% to 75% of the equity shares offered through IPOs have been OFS. Only 25% or so has been Fresh Issue. What is more concerning is that not only Investors, but Promoters too have been exiting the companies by selling their stake through IPOs. Why would a promoter exit the company which has a promising future?

A retail investor looking to invest in IPO must see whether it is a Fresh Issue or an Offer for Sale. Further, promoters selling their stake, through the medium of IPO, in the company they promoted is a negative signal. Do not think that IPOs necessarily mean more capital for the companies. Infusion of more capital in the companies, which is possible through Fresh Issue, is a good sign. But sadly, there are more of OFS than Fresh Issue in the IPOs hitting the stands. Further, equity shares under IPOs are sold at hefty

premiums. In the cases where IPOs are OFS, the premium is pocketed by selling promoters/investors.

The other thing that a small retail investor must know is whether the company launching IPO complies with Regulation 6(1) of the SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements). A Regulation 6(1) company meets with laid down requirements of assets, profit, and net worth. A company which does not meet with 6(1) requirements is classified as Regulation 6(2) company. A Regulation 6(2) company - which does not meet basic requirements of assets, profit, and net worth - is obviously a risky proposition to invest in.

The best option to invest in an IPO, for small retail investors, is a company both offering Fresh Issue and also complying with Regulation 6(1) of SEBI (ICDR Regulations).

*The writer is a retired banker*

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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## Wallets without choice

**S**ir, The IRCTC e-wallet, projected as a convenience tool, has instead become a source of avoidable inconvenience. Users are required to park money in advance, creating a large idle float, yet are charged an additional Rs 10 for every booking. While IRCTC freely holds and uses these deposits, no interest is paid to customers. More troubling is the absence of on-demand withdrawal; even when funds are urgently needed, users are told that balances can be refunded only after closing the wallet altogether. This one-sided arrangement neither aligns with customer convenience nor with fair practice. If advance deposits are mandated, interest-free float and transaction charges are unjustifiable. At the very least, IRCTC should allow partial withdrawals, remove the wallet usage fee, or credit nominal interest on idle balances. Digital convenience must empower users, not bind them.

**Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI**

## Fair elections

**S**ir, The reported deletion of nearly 97 lakh names in Tamil Nadu and 74 lakh in Gujarat from electoral rolls points to grave electoral irregularities that border on vote theft. Such manipulation is usually carried out through silent mass deletions, faulty data matching, misuse of Aadhaar linkage, and bureaucratic opacity that keeps voters unaware until polling day. These practices strike at the very root of democracy by denying citizens their constitutional right. Credit must go to whistleblowers and vigilant critics whose timely intervention prevented a far bigger erosion of public trust. Had these actions surfaced after elections, the damage to the credibility of the Election Commission would have been irreparable. To curb such malpractice, continuous public audit of voter rolls, transparent deletion notices, time-bound grievance redressal, and joint oversight by the EC, political parties, civil society, and media are essential. Only collective vigilance can ensure clean, truthful elections and safeguard the nation's democratic soul. Additionally, mandatory publication of deletion lists in local newspapers and on polling-booth notice boards, door-to-door verification drives, SMS and IVRS alerts to every registered mobile, and open data APIs for citizen-led cross-checks must be institutionalized.

**RS Narula, PATIALA**

# Punjab to be major hub of aviation industry: CM Mann

Emphasising that his government's focus is to create job providers rather than job seekers, Mann said the upcoming aviation museum at the Patiala Aviation Complex, built at ₹7 crore, will not only preserve India's flying heritage but also inspire the new generation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patiala, Dec 20:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Saturday said his government is building a robust aviation ecosystem by providing quality, affordable and world-class training aligned with industry needs.

Mann said the state will be positioned as a major hub of the aviation industry in the coming years while interacting with aircraft engineers and trainees at the Patiala Flying Club, according to an official release.

Emphasising that his government's focus is to create job providers rather than job seekers, Mann said the upcoming aviation museum at the Patiala Aviation Complex, built at ₹7 crore, will not only preserve India's flying heritage but also inspire the new generation.

Mann said he was elated to be here for a dialogue session with the students taking training from this prestigious institute at Patiala Flying Club, with 32 trainee pilots and 72 students from Patiala Aircraft Mainte-

nance Engineering College.

"Among the 32 trainee pilots, most belong to the first generation in their families entering the aviation sector. In private institutes, it costs Rs 40 to 45 lakh to become a commercial pilot, while at the Patiala Flying Club, there is about a 50 per cent subsidy, reducing the fee to Rs 22 to 25 lakh," the chief minister said.

With a reduction of fee by nearly Rs 20 lakh, students from ordinary households like shopkeepers, teachers, farmers, clerks and others can now dream of becoming pilots.

According to the release, a new website of the Department of Civil Aviation was also launched on the occasion.

Mann said the Patiala State Aviation Council, Punjab, aims to give every child a chance to fulfil their dream of flying high in the sky.

The aviation museum at Patiala will showcase MiG aircraft, second-generation helicopters, simulators, and aviation heritage, he said.

The Patiala Flying Club has

broken the decades-long barrier, where training to become a pilot was possible only for the very wealthy, he said.

The club was established in 1965 and spans 253 acres, making it one of the largest aviation training campuses in India, Mann said.

He said the club ranks seventh nationwide and currently it operates seven training aircraft, including five single-engine planes, two multi-engine planes and one Tecnam P2006T (newly added, purchased from Italy for ₹5 crore).

"The facilities include night landing capability at Patiala airfield and training experience at Amritsar International Airport," he said.

"The aviation career is not limited to becoming a pilot, as many students want to work in aviation but not necessarily as pilots," he added.

For them, Mann said that the Punjab government offers affordable technical education at Patiala Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (AME) College, which runs India's most economical AME and B.Sc (Hons) programs.

He claimed that a three-year B.Sc (Hons) plus three-year Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)-approved AME programme costs only ₹3 lakh in total, whereas in other states, the same course costs ₹5 to ₹8 lakh.

About one-third of seats are reserved for students from the SC and OBC categories, he said.

It is a matter of pride that more than 4,000 trained professionals from the Patiala Flying Club and College are working in major companies, earning an average starting salary of ₹1.5 lakh per month, he said.

The chief minister said that key Indian airlines are the main employers for the students of this prestigious institute.

## IMD issues 'orange alert' for dense fog in parts Jharkhand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Dec 20:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Saturday issued an 'orange alert' (be prepared) for very dense fog likely in parts of Jharkhand over the next two days, and a 'yellow alert' (be updated) for the next three days.

The districts for which the 'orange alert' has been issued include Garhwa, Palamu, Latehar, Chatra, Hazaribagh, Koderia, Giridih, Ramgarh, and Bokaro. Early morning visibility is expected to drop significantly in these districts to less than 50 metres. Very dense fog is likely to be affected December 21, 10 districts December 22, and 8

districts December 23.

The districts likely to be affected Sunday include: Gumla, Lohardaga, Ranchi, Khunti, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Jamtara, Deoghar, Dumka, Godda, Pakur, and Sahibganj. Morning visibility is expected to drop in these districts to between 50 and 200 metres, it said.

"Light south-easterly to easterly winds are prevailing in the lower tropospheric levels over Jharkhand. Dense fog is likely to prevail in most parts of the northern and some central districts. This situation will continue until December 23," said Abhishek Anand, Deputy Director of the Ranchi Meteorological Centre. "No significant change in the minimum temperature is likely in the next five days," he added. He also advised caution during early morning travel due to low visibility.



A person pushes his bicycle through a thick foggy street in Ranchi, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

## PUNJAB AMENDS ABADI DEH ACT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

amend Section 11 of the Punjab Abadi Deh (Record of Rights) Act, 2021, to replace the specific time periods with "within time notified by the government," in order to reduce the period for filing objections and their disposal from the existing 90 and 60 days, respectively, to 30 days each. This step will further accelerate the resolution of objections and appeals, benefiting the public significantly.

The 'Mera Ghar Mera Naam' scheme aims to bestow property rights to people who are living in houses that are situated within the Lal Dora of villages and cities. 'Lal Dora' refers to land

that is part of the village 'abadi' (habitation) and is used for non-agricultural purposes only.

In another decision, the cabinet approved an amendment to the Industrial and Business Development Policy (IBDP) 2022, which replaces the requirement to provide a bank guarantee (BG) for availing fiscal incentives.

The decision follows numerous representations from industry associations highlighting that the existing bank guarantee requirements were blocking substantial amounts of working capital.

This liquidity crunch was identified as a major hurdle,

limiting the funds available for industrial expansion, research and development, and job creation.

The amendment will be applicable from the effective date of the policy, which is October 17, 2022.

The cabinet also gave a go-ahead to the redistribution of 253 acres of land of Guru Nanak Dev Thermal Plant in Bathinda to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A piece of 10 acres will be used for battery energy storage system installation, 10 acres for a new bus stand shall be retained by the Bathinda development authority, and 20 acres shall be retained by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for residential and commercial purposes.

The cabinet also gave its concurrence to amend Rule 3 and 16 (1) of the Punjab Management and Transfer of Municipal Properties Rules, 2021, for the modification of the payment schedule for high-value properties, defined herein as "Chunk Sites," to be sold or transferred by the Municipalities and urban local bodies.

## Punjab to convene special Assembly session



BJP-led Centre of attempting to finish the Constitution.

Referring to the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeet-

vika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, Cheema said the state government was against the amendments being brought under the employment scheme.

For discussing how "rights of the poor in Punjab or the country will be snatched", a one-day special session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha will be convened December 30, Cheema said.

The Cabinet gave consent to

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA e-mail: <a href="mailto:erw_sunabeda@yahoo.co.in">erw_sunabeda@yahoo.co.in</a>	
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNABEDA	
e-Procurement Notice for Road Works	
<b>No. O-1837</b>	Identification No. Online Tender/09/RWD-SBD/2025-26
<b>Letter No. 5183</b>	Date: 19.12.2025
1. Name of the Work	Road Works Semiliguda, Nandapur, Pottangi, Laxmipuri, Bandhugon, Narayanpatna.
2. Total Number of Works	13 No. Works
3. Estimated Cost	9.00 to 50.00 lakhs
4. Class of Contractor	"B", "C" & "D" Class
5. Period of Completion	02 Months
6. Other details	
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.
1	From
2	To
Superintending Engineer R.W. Division, Sunabeda	Online Tender/09/RWD-SBD/2025-26
	22.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M. upto 05.00 P.M.
	01.01.2026
	Further details can be seen from the website: <a href="http://www.tendersissa.gov.in">www.tendersissa.gov.in</a> .
	Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Sunabeda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Dec 20:** Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema Saturday said the government will convene a one-day special session of the state assembly December 30 to discuss "how rights of the poor will be snatched" under the VB-G RAM G Bill.

The House will also discuss

## Veer Birsa Munda Cyclothon culminates in Ranchi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Dec 20:** The first leg of the Veer Birsa Munda Cyclothon, aimed at celebrating the legacy of tribal icon Birsa Munda and promoting national unity, concluded in Ranchi Saturday.

Jharkhand Sports, Tourism, Arts, Culture and Youth Affairs minister Sudhiva Kumar welcomed the participants of the Cyclothon in a grand function at Ranchi's Morabadi ground, organised by the NCC Directorate Bihar and Jharkhand under the aegis of NCC group headquarters, Ranchi.

Conducted under the theme "Shaurya Ke Kadam, Kranti Ki Ore", the cyclothon, flagged off Thursday from three different locations, promoted the ideals of fitness, social harmony, environmental consciousness and national pride while paying tribute to the legendary tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda.

Describing the cyclothon as a powerful symbol of the enthusiasm, discipline, and nationalistic spirit of Jharkhand's youth, Kumar said, "It is a proud initiative for the state."

The minister said the selected NCC cadets will now depart on a journey to New Delhi.

Addressing the gathering, Kumar said, "All these cadets heading towards Delhi are the proud ambassadors of Jharkhand. Wherever they go, they will represent our state's culture, identity, traditions, and the immortal inspiration of the brave Birsa Munda."

Group Commander of NCC Headquarters, Ranchi, Brigadier RK Singh, senior Army officials, state dignitaries, NCC cadets, and a large gathering of enthusiastic citizens were also present on the concluding function.

Vibrant cultural performances by NCC cadets beautifully showcased the rich cultural heritage of

Jharkhand and reflected the spirit of unity and discipline embodied by the Cyclothon.

The cyclothon was flagged off by Latehar deputy commissioner Utkarsh Gupta from his district December 18. Khunti SP Manish Toppo from Torpa and principal of BN Jalan College, Sisai, Dr Amitabh Bharti, from Gumla, the NCC said in a statement.

The Cyclothon was started at Mandar for Ranchi by former minister Bandhu Turkey and at Lohardaga by Sushma Neelam December 19. Project Director, Integrated Tribal Development Agency. At Ulihatu, the birthplace of the tribal icon, Khunti Deputy Commissioner R Ronita flagged it off.

The second leg will be a challenging and inspiring journey from Ranchi to New Delhi, covering almost 1,300 km through Bihar, UP, Haryana and Delhi over 20 days, which will be flagged off from the Birsa Munda Jail Complex here December 28, the NCC statement said.

"This journey from Ranchi to New Delhi will carry the message of unity, courage and cultural pride across the nation by a team of two officers, two permanent staff and 16 NCC cadets, including girl cadets. This leg will culminate in a grand homecoming at the Prime Minister's Rally January 27, 2026, in New Delhi, which will be a befitting tribute to Dharti Aba Veer Birsa Munda at the highest national platform," it added.

### OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, ATHMALLIK FOREST DIVISION

AT/PO : ATHMALLIK, DIST : ANGUL-759125

E-mail : [dfioathmallik@gmail.com](mailto:dfioathmallik@gmail.com) Mob : +91 9437004236

Letter No. 5966/1F Section/(55/2025-26)/Dt.17 Dec., 2025

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

E-Procurement Bid Identification No. DFO(AKL)-FE & CC-02/2025-26

1. The Divisional Forest Officer, Athmallik, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate in Single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for the work Construction of staff barrack at Ghodagadi under Madhupur Range.

2. Nature of Work

: Building Works

3. Class of Contractor

: C & D Class

4. Estimated Cost

: 1504726.00

5. Completion Period

: 2.5 Calendar Months

6. Availability of Bid Documents

: 22.12.2025 (11.00 A.M.) to 04.01.2026 (05.00 P.M.)

7. Last Date for Receipt of Bids

: 04.01.2026 up to 05.00 P.M.

8. Opening of Bids

: 05.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal [www.tendersissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersissa.gov.in). The Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender, if any, will be hosted on the website only.

Sd/- Divisional Forest Officer

Athmallik Forest Division

No. MM-44

Office Order No. 9516 /Dt. 19/12/25

Bid Identification No. EEPHBSR-46 (01) /2025-26 Dt. 12.11.2025

1) The Tender ID: 2025\_PHEO\_121297\_1 for the work "Supply of ISI Marked Centrifugally Cast(Spun) Ductile Iron K-9

# national

**of the day** **quote**

**The feeling of 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam' -- the philosophy of treating the entire world as one family -- is the biggest need of the hour for world peace today**

**DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT**

The Congress gave protection to infiltrators who grabbed forests and land, threatening the security and identity of Assam... The BJP government has been correcting mistakes the Congress kept making for decades in the northeast

**NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER**

MGNRE-GA was associated with Mahatma Gandhi's personality, with his greatness, with his name. They have removed it. A question arises about what benefit anyone will get by it and what purpose it will serve

**SALMAN KHURSHID | CONGRESS LEADER**

A number of centres of power and influence have emerged. No country, however powerful, can impose its will on all issues

**S JAI SHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER****SHORT TAKES****Auto driver rapes girl; jumps off flyover**

**Gurugram:** A 29-year-old auto-rickshaw driver allegedly kidnapped two minor sisters and raped one of them in a secluded area near Manesar, police said Saturday. The incident happened December 13, when Sarvesh, a native of Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, abducted two sisters, aged six and eight, while they were playing in a field in a village near Manesar. According to police, Sarvesh took the girls to a secluded spot and raped the older girl, while her sister sat in his autorickshaw.

**Court orders framing charges against Alka**

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court has ordered framing of charges against Congress leader Alka Lamba in a case related to an assault on police personnel during a protest at the Jantar Mantar in 2024, saying there was a 'prima facie' case against her. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Ashwani Panwar was hearing the matter in which the Congress leader was accused of obstructing police and blocking a public road while holding a protest in support of women's reservation at the Jantar Mantar July 29, 2024.

**Lalu undergoes eye surgery**

**New Delhi:** RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav underwent a successful cataract and retinal surgery at a private eye hospital in the national capital and is recovering well, the hospital said. The procedure was carried out at Centre for Sight, New Delhi, under the supervision of Dr Mahipal Singh Sachdev, Chairman and Medical Director of the Centre for Sight group of eye hospitals.

**Bhopal gets metro rail service**

**Bhopal:** Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and state minister Kailash Vijayvargiya Saturday inaugurated Bhopal's metro rail service by flagging off a train from Subhash Nagar station on the network's 'priority corridor'.

**Married man stabs lover; held**

**New Delhi:** A 35-year-old woman in Delhi was stabbed multiple times allegedly by her lover following an argument over her forced abortion, police said Saturday.

## Fog envelopes northern states



A man wearing a shawl rests on a roadside amid dense fog on a winter morning, at Mayur Vihar area, in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** As the year draws to a close, mercury hovered around its wintry lows and normal life was affected across northern states due to foggy conditions, with red alert warning issued in Uttar Pradesh Saturday.

The national capital experienced its first cold wave of the season, recording its coldest December day this year so far.

The Sun was largely obscured by clouds and pollutants lingering in the atmosphere, leading to reduced visibility. At least 129 flights were cancelled at the Delhi airport Saturday due to dense fog, according to an official.

The hilly state and UT of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir are set to witness a spell of wet weather, with predictions of rain and snow at several places, according to the local weather departments.

A day ahead of the onset of the 'Chillai-Kalan' -- the 40-day harsh winter period in Kashmir -- the local meteorological department Saturday forecast moderate to heavy snowfall in the higher reaches.

Chillai Kalan begins on December 21 every year and ends January 31.

A spell of wet weather December 20-21 in Kashmir is likely to coincide with the yearly phenomenon, while light to moderate precipitation may affect the plains, the weather

office said.

Chances of snowfall are maximum and most frequent during this period, with temperatures dropping sharply across the valley.

The valley has not witnessed any major wet spell so far this winter. The dry weather has led to an increase in ailments such as cough and the common cold.

Officials further said the night temperature improved across the valley, with Pulwama emerging as the coldest place with a minimum of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, according to the Met office.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, about 2 degrees up from the previous night's minus 2.1 degrees Celsius, they said.

A thick layer of fog engulfed Srinagar and most other parts of the valley Saturday morning, especially near the water bodies.

In south Kashmir, Pahalgam, one of the base camps for the Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 1 degree Celsius, while Kokernag and Qazigund recorded 0.8 and minus 1 degree Celsius, respectively.

The temperature in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at minus 0.7 degrees Celsius, the weather department said.

In Gulmarg, the minimum temperature settled above the freezing point at 2 degrees Celsius, it said.

In Himachal Pradesh, the Local Met office issued a yellow warning for dense fog over and around parts of the reservoir area of the Bhakra dam in Bilaspur district and over parts of the Balh valley in Mandi district during early morning or in the morning and late night hours. It also predicted light snow and rain at isolated places in high hills and a few places in middle hills Sunday and pointed out that a fresh feeble western disturbance is likely to affect the western Himalayan region from December 25.

The weather remained mainly dry over the day, and dense fog was observed in Bilaspur, while shallow fog was seen in Mandi. There was no significant change in the minimum temperatures, and Kukumseri in the tribal Lahaul and Spiti district was coldest at night with a low of minus 5.7 degrees followed by Tabo at minus 2.9 degrees Celsius.

The state received zero rainfall against the 20.5 mm of normal rainfall, a deficit of 100 per cent in all 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh in December so far. This, along with the gradual rise in mercury, has caused concern, especially among farmers and orchardists.

The national capital, meanwhile, for the first time this winter, met the 'cold wave day' criteria, with two of its five monitoring stations -- Safdarjung and Palam -- recording cold wave conditions, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

## Delhi air on verge of severe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** The sky remained shrouded in dull grey, while a thick haze descended upon the capital Saturday, with the air quality on the brink of 'severe'.

At 4 pm, Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 398 -- just two points shy of the threshold -- while several monitoring stations across the city reported readings in the 'severe' category.

Meanwhile, hourly AQI readings from the CPCB's SAMEER app showed that air quality worsened during the evening hours, slipping into the 'severe' category at 401, at 5 pm.

Of the 40 monitoring stations across the city, 22 recorded air quality in the 'severe' range, while 17 logged readings in the 'very poor' category.

Chandni Chowk reported

the worst air quality, with an AQI reading of 464, in the 'severe plus' category.

With the sun largely obscured by clouds and suspended pollutants, visibility was greatly reduced.

Amid prevailing cold-wave conditions, the average air quality in the capital deteriorated to 398 on Saturday, compared to 374 Friday and 373 on Thursday, according to official data.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), an AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51-100 'satisfactory', 101-200 'moderate', 201-300 'poor', 301-400 'very poor', and 401-500 'severe'.

According to data from the Decision Support System for Air Quality Management, vehicular emissions emerged as the largest contributor to air pollution, accounting for up to 17.5 per cent, while industries in and around Delhi-NCR contributed 8.9 per cent.

The former party president said it was "such a revolutionary step,"

## Modi govt bulldozed MGNREGA: Sonia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi Saturday accused the Modi government of bulldozing the MGNREGA, and asserted that the "black law" that seeks to repeal it will be defied by the lakhs of party workers across the country.

In a video message, she said that by weakening MGNREGA, the Modi government had attacked the interests of crores of farmers, labourers, and landless across the country. She alleged that over the past 11 years, the Centre had ignored the interests of the rural poor.

Addressing the rural population, Gandhi said she vividly remembers the day 20 years ago, when Manmohan Singh was prime minister, and the MGNREGA Act was passed in Parliament by consensus.

The former party president said it was "such a revolutionary step,"

and became a means of livelihood for the deprived, the exploited, and the poorest of the poor.

She said, due to MGNREGA, migration in search of work came to a halt, a legal right to employment was provided, and gram panchayats were empowered. "Through MGNREGA, a concrete step was taken towards realising the dream of an India based on Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj," she said. "But it is a matter of great regret that just recently, the government ran a bulldozer over MGNREGA. Not only was Mahatma Gandhi's name removed, but the form and structure of MGNREGA was changed arbitrarily without any deliberation, without consulting anyone, without taking the opposition into confidence," the Congress leader alleged.

She said under the new law, who gets how much employment, where and in what manner, will be decided



It was a scheme connected to the national interest and the people's interest. By weakening this law, the Modi government has attacked the interests of crores of farmers, labourers, and landless poor in the rural sector across the country

**SONIA GANDHI | CONG PARLIAMENTARY PARTY CHAIRPERSON**

the Congress had a major role in bringing and implementing MGNREGA, she said it was never a party-specific matter.

"We are all ready to counter this attack. Twenty years ago, I too fought to secure the right to employment for our poor brothers and sisters; today, I remain committed to fighting against this black law. All Congress leaders like me and lakhs of workers stand with you," Gandhi said in her video statement.

The Congress earlier claimed that it would take its fight against the repeal law to the grassroots. Parliament Thursday passed the VB-G RAM G Bill that seeks to replace the 20-year-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, or MGNREGA.

The proposed Bill that guarantees 125 days of rural wage employment every year was met with vociferous protests by the Opposition.

the government in Delhi, which is far removed from the ground realities. Claiming that

## INDIAN CYBER AGENCY FLAGS WHATSAPP 'HIJACK'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

using pairing codes without authentication requirement."

"This newly identified cyber campaign called GhostPairing enable cyber criminals to take complete control of WhatsApp accounts without needing password or SIM swaps," the advisory said.

A response from WhatsApp to the revelation is awaited. The Indian computer emergency response team (CERT-In) is the national technology arm to combat cyber attacks and guarding of the Indian Internet space.

The advisory said that the "high" severity attack campaign usually begins with the



victim receiving a message like "Hi, check this photo" from a "trusted" contact.

The message contains a link with a Facebook-style preview. The link leads to a "fake" Facebook viewer that prompts users to "verify" to

see the content. Here, the attackers exploit WhatsApp's "link device via phone number" feature by tricking unsuspecting users into entering their phone numbers, the advisory said.

This way, the victims

"unknowingly" grant the attackers full access to their WhatsApp accounts.

The 'GhostPairing' attack tricks users into granting an attacker's browser access, as an additional trusted and hidden device, by using a pairing code that looks authentic.

The advisory said that once



## GAGANYAAN: ISRO COMPLETES DROGUE PARACHUTE TESTS

A series of qualification tests for drogue parachutes, which have been carried out to develop a deceleration system for ISRO's Gaganyaan crew module, were successful, the space agency said Saturday



## J'khand offers job, flat to Bihar doctor after naqab row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Dec 20:** Jharkhand Health Minister Irfan Ansari Saturday said he has offered a job with ₹3 lakh monthly salary, a government flat and desired posting to a woman doctor from Bihar following the naqab controversy during distribution of appointment letters.

Ansari alleged that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar tried to demean naqab and the Muslim community by removing the veil of a woman.

"The way a doctor, and a woman, was humiliated and treated with indecency by pulling her naqab is not merely an attack on one individual but a direct assault on human dignity, honour and the Constitution itself," he said. The incident, a video clip of which has been circulated widely and sparked a major political row, took place Monday at the chief minister's secretariat in Patna when Ayush doctors had gathered to receive their letters of appointment. When the woman came up for her letter, Kumar saw her naqab, said "what is this?", and then removed the veil.

In some places, the ruling alliance partners, including the BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, and Ajit Pawar's NCP, are contesting against each other.

The poll battle became multi-dimensional with the BJP-led Mahayati and the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) locking horns, interspersed by "friendly fights" among the alliances.

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## national

of the day quote

Not to talk of bringing the economy on track, the present government is undoing the efforts of the previous governments to strengthen the economy



JAI RAM THAKUR | HP LEADER OF THE OPPONITION

If anyone meets anti-India forces and insults Bharat from foreign soil, it's none other than Rahul



We are waiting impatiently for snow. It has been dry since November. And we are feeling a little shortage of water everywhere. Pollution has also increased in both, Jammu and Kashmir regions. Whether it is rain or snow, the air will be cleaner.

But the big thing is that our winter tourism season will start

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

## X POST OF THE DAY

This will break your heart. People were brought in WB to show crowd at Modi's rally. Sadly 4 people died near the rally ground at railway track, but rally didn't stop. Modi didn't stop. Imagine the value of a common man's life #ModiMustResign  
@mr\_mayank

### SHORT TAKES

#### EC introduces new BLO option

**Kolkata:** The Election Commission has introduced a new option in the BLO application to re-verify logical discrepancies in West Bengal, aiming to resolve nearly 32 lakh cases of voters not linked to the 2002 electoral rolls, an official said Saturday. The application, titled 'Re-verify logical discrepancies', is expected to substantially reduce the number of voters being summoned for hearings, the official said.

"The new feature allows BLOs to resolve mismatches caused by differences in spelling, inclusion of middle names, or changes in titles or designations," he said.

#### Man assaulted in Baran; 8 held

**Kota (Rajasthan):** Eight people were detained Saturday for allegedly assaulting a man, who was returning from a condolence meeting, here in the Baran Sadar area, police said. The incident occurred at around 4.30 pm Saturday when Naresh Meena was returning from a condolence meeting in Aakhidi village, the former Sarpanch Tolara, his two sons and around eight others with them allegedly abused Meena and attempted to hit his vehicle, Baran city DSP Hariram Soni said.

#### Two held with narcotics, arms

**Jaipur:** Hanumangarh Police Saturday arrested two drug peddlers and seized 6 kilograms of MD, 3 kg of opium, a pistol and three cartridges, officials said. SP Hanumangarh Hari Shankar told reporters that this is the district's biggest-ever MD drug seizure. Acting on a tip-off, the police conducted a raid at a place on Bharatmala Road and arrested Santosh Bishnoi and Ramesh Chandra Bishnoi and recovered the narcotics and arms from their possession, the SP said.



The Mahayuti government has no concern for people's issues. Farmers, unemployment, women's safety and law and order have been completely neglected

RAMESH CHENNITHALA | MEMBER OF THE KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## WEST BENGAL RENAMES 'KARMASHREE' SCHEME

The West Bengal government Saturday issued a notification stating that its 100-day employment scheme, Karmashree, will be renamed 'Mahatmashree' from the next financial year



### ATTACKS ON HINDUS IN B'DESH

#### BJP supporters stage protests across WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Dec 20:** Supporters of BJP and right-wing outfits Saturday staged protests across the city and its outskirts against incidents of arson, loot and killing of minority Hindu community members in Bangladesh.

In Kolkata's northern outskirts Sodepur, Trinamool Congress Dum Dum MP Saugata Roy had to get down from his vehicle and walk around 1km before boarding an auto-rickshaw as BJP supporters continued to block the Sodepur-Madhyamgram Road.

Similar protests were reported in the CIT Road-Beck-bagan area of the city, as well as in Howrah and other parts of the state, with saffron-clad youths blocking traffic for around half an hour, demanding protection for Hindus in Bangladesh.

In Sodepur, Roy, who was heading towards the Panihati Utsav winter carnival to inaugurate the festival, was stranded in his car for about half an hour as protesters refused to lift the blockade and allow his vehicle to pass.

Around 100 BJP youth wing activists of North 24 Parganas district burnt tyres on the road and shouted slogans against Bangladesh interim government's chief adviser Muhammad Yunus and Islamist fundamentalists and the anti-India demonstrations in the neighbouring country.

"We strongly protest the barbaric killing of a Hindu youth by Islamic zealots. From the killing of a Hindu youth in public to the arson at Tagore music academy Chayanaut and acts of vandalism at newspaper offices, it is clear Islamic jihadis are in control of the situation in Bangladesh. Our protest is aimed against this anarchy and attacks on minorities," a BJP leader said.

The top court adjourned the matter for further hearing in the first week of January.



## Court will always lean towards animals who suffer silently: SC

The hotels and resorts in the wildlife areas are aggrieved as they have been asked to vacate the forest area after the Tamil Nadu government notified elephant corridors in the Sigur Plateau in the Nilgiris

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

these animals who are silent victims of these commercial developments."

The hotels and resorts in the wildlife areas are aggrieved as they have been asked to vacate the forest area after the Tamil Nadu government notified elephant corridors in the Sigur Plateau in the Nilgiris.

The Madras High Court September 12 approved the recommendation of the apex court appointed panel, which had declared that the land purchased by private parties on the elephant corridors in the Sigur Plateau was illegal and that these constructions needed to be dismantled

The bench said, "All of you are there for commercial purposes and in the elephant corridor. These constructions interfere with elephant movement... The benefit must go to

Earlier, the top court was informed that there were over 800 constructions, including 39 resorts and 390 houses, inside

The Madras High Court September 12 approved the recommendation of the apex court appointed panel, which had declared that the land purchased by private parties on the elephant corridors in the Sigur Plateau was illegal and that these constructions needed to be dismantled

the Sigur elephant corridor.

Senior advocates Salman Khurshid and Shoeb Alam, appearing for different parties, submitted that the owners of these hotels and resorts had purchased the properties much before the elephant corridors had been notified, and they should be allowed to continue with their "eco-friendly" business with a rider that they must not expand their business ventures.

Alam pointed out that some matters are coming up for hearing in January and it would be appropriate that the court hear all of them together.

The top court adjourned the matter for further hearing in the first week of January.



Acrobats perform during a show of Ajanta Circus, in Kolkata, West Bengal PTI PHOTO

## CSR must inherently include environmental responsibility: Top court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 20:** In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has said that corporate social responsibility cannot be separated from corporate environmental responsibility and companies cannot claim to be socially responsible while ignoring equal claims of the environment and other beings of the ecosystem.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and AS Chandrakar passed a slew of directions to protect the Great Indian Bustard, a species which is on the verge of extinction and faces threat from the operation of non-renewable power generators in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

"Therefore, the corporate definition of 'social responsibility' must inherently include environmental responsibility. Companies cannot assert to be socially responsible while ignoring equal claims of the environment and other beings of the ecosystem," the bench said.

It added that the Constitution of India, under Article 51A(g), imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen "to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures."

**Kota (Rajasthan):** Eight people were detained Saturday for allegedly assaulting a man, who was returning from a condolence meeting, here in the Baran Sadar area, police said. The incident occurred at around 4.30 pm Saturday when Naresh Meena was returning from a condolence meeting in Aakhidi village, the former Sarpanch Tolara, his two sons and around eight others with them allegedly abused Meena and attempted to hit his vehicle, Baran city DSP Hariram Soni said.

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Acting on a tip-off, the police conducted a raid at a place on Bharatmala Road and arrested Santosh Bishnoi and Ramesh Chandra Bishnoi and recovered the narcotics and arms from their possession, the SP said.

The ex-Agniveers shall also be exempted from Physical Standard Test and Physical

Efficiency Test, said the notification issued Friday.

By direct recruitment (including fifty per cent), vacancies shall be reserved for ex-Agniveers in every recruitment year, ten per cent for ex-Servicemen, and up to three per cent for Combatised Constable (Tradesmen) in absorption of annual vacancy, the notification said.

In the first phase, the recruitment shall be conducted by the Nodal Force for 50 per cent vacancies earmarked for ex-Agniveers, and in second phase recruitment shall be conducted by the Staff Selection Commission for candidates other than ex-Agniveers for the remaining forty-seven per cent vacancies (including ten per cent ex-Ser-

vicemen), along with the unfilled vacancies of ex-Agniveers in a specific category in the first stage, it said.

The Centre had amended the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, by

the gazette notification in June this year, inserting a new point in the second schedule under the Department of States of the Union Home Ministry, "coordinating activities for further progression of Ex-Agniveers"



### THE INCREASE HAS BEEN MADE BY AMENDING THE BORDER SECURITY FORCE, GENERAL DUTY CADRE (NON-GAZETTED) RECRUITMENT RULES, 2015

### THE FIRST BATCH OF EX-AGNIVEERS WILL ALSO GET UPPER AGE-LIMIT RELAXATION UP TO FIVE YEARS, WHILE THE REST OF THE EX-AGNIVEERS WILL GET THREE YEARS' RELAXATION

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# international

of the day quote

## Epstein release highlights Clinton



We are constructively minded. We have already held preliminary consultations with our European colleagues and are preparing for further discussions with the American side

RUSTEM UMEROV | SECRETARY OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE COUNCIL, UKRAINE

### PARAPLEGIC ENGINEER BLASTS OFF FOR SPACE

Engineer Michaela Benthäus blasted off Saturday with five others on a Blue Origin flight, becoming the first wheelchair user in space. Injured in a biking accident seven years ago, she left her wheelchair behind, floating while viewing Earth from above



REUTERS

**Washington, Dec 20:** The US Justice Department released thousands of heavily redacted documents related to the late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein Friday that made scant reference to President Donald Trump but extensively featured Democratic former President Bill Clinton.

The absence of references to Trump was notable given that pictures and documents related to him have trickled out of previous Epstein releases for years. Trump's name appeared in flight manifests listing passengers on Epstein's private plane that were part of a first batch of Epstein material the Justice Department released in February, for instance.

The release also contained other items of note, including a complaint accusing Epstein of involvement in "child pornography" that was filed with the FBI in 1996, long before law enforcement began looking into his misconduct.

Maria Farmer, who filed the complaint, said in a statement that the bureau had failed to follow up on her allegations.

"This is a moment for which I have waited three decades, over half of my life. When I was ignored and hung up on by the FBI in 1996, my world turned upside down, and I felt frozen in time," Farmer said.

Celebrities who appeared in photos made available as part of Friday's release include the late news anchor Walter Cronkite, singers Mick Jagger, Michael Jackson and Diana Ross, British entrepreneur Richard Branson and the former Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson. Many of the photos were undated and provided without context, and none of those figures have been accused of any wrongdoing in



Former US President Bill Clinton, Mick Jagger and Ghislaine Maxwell are seen in this image released by the Department of Justice in Washington, DC, US, December 19

REUTERS

- Clinton featured extensively in Epstein files, Trump references minimal
- Justice Department to release more Epstein documents, Trump may feature later
- Bipartisan vote forced release, Democrats criticize
- incomplete disclosure
- Trump ordered probe into Clinton's Epstein ties amid political pressure
- Epstein's ties to high-profile figures revealed in previous disclosures

connection with Epstein.

#### CONGRESS OVERWHELMINGLY BACKED RELEASE OF ALL EPSTEIN FILES

The partial release of the documents Friday was intended to comply with a law overwhelmingly passed by Congress in November that mandated the disclosure of all Epstein files, despite Trump's months-long effort to keep them sealed.

The scandal surrounding Epstein has become a self-inflicted

political wound for Trump, who for years had promoted conspiracy theories about Epstein to his supporters.

It was not immediately clear how substantive the new materials were, given that many Epstein-related documents have previously been made public since his 2019 death in jail, which was ruled a suicide.

Many of the files were heavily redacted — several documents with 100 pages or more were entirely blacked out — and the Justice

Department acknowledged it was still reviewing hundreds of thousands of additional pages for possible release.

The material included evidence from several investigations into Epstein, along with photos of Clinton, long scorned by Republicans. But they appeared to include few if any photos of Trump or documents mentioning him, despite Trump and Epstein's well-publicized friendship in the 1990s and early 2000s before they had a falling out prior to Epstein's first conviction in 2008.

Trump has not been accused of wrongdoing and has denied knowing about Epstein's crimes.

The Justice Department sought to draw attention to Clinton, with two agency spokespeople posting on social media images that they said showed him with Epstein victims.

REUTERS

REUTERS

**Lahore, Dec 20:** A Pakistani court Saturday sentenced former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to 17 years in prison each in a corruption case involving the under-priced purchase of luxury state gifts, the court and Khan's lawyers said.

The latest conviction adds to a series of legal troubles for Khan, who has been behind bars since August 2023, and is currently serving a 14-year sentence in a separate land graft case.

He faces dozens of cases filed since he was ousted from office in 2022, ranging from corruption to anti-terrorism and state secrets charges. Khan has denied wrongdoing in all the cases, which his party says are politically motivated.

"The court announced the sentence without hearing the defence and sentenced 17 years imprisonment to Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi with heavy fines," Khan's family lawyer Rana Mudassar Umer told Reuters.

They were handed 10 years' rigorous imprisonment under

Pakistan's penal code for criminal breach of trust and a further seven years under anti-corruption laws, the special court of Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency said in its verdict.

Khan's jail term from Saturday's ruling would begin after he has served the 14 years from the land graft case, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said.

The case relates to luxury watches gifted to Khan by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during official visits, which prosecutors said Khan and his wife then purchased from the state at a heavily discounted price in violation of Pakistan's gift rules.

Tarar said the purchase resulted in losses of several million rupees for the state.

Zulfi Bukhari, a spokesperson for Khan, said the verdict "ignores basic principles of justice" and turns the process into "a tool for selective prosecution." Khan has told his legal team to appeal the decision at the Islamabad High Court, Salman Sardar, another one of his lawyers, told reporters outside the jail where the trials were being held, Geo News reported.

REUTERS



### STRIKES HIT MORE THAN 70 ISIS TARGETS

### RETALIATORY STRIKES FOLLOW ATTACK ON US TROOPS

### TRUMP SAYS SYRIAN PRESIDENT BACKS US MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ISIS

### US HITS ISIS IN SYRIA WITH LARGE RETALIATORY STRIKES, OFFICIALS SAY



that the Syrian government fully supported the strikes and that the US was inflicting "very serious retaliation."

At a speech in North Carolina Friday night, Trump called it a "massive" blow against the ISIS members that the US blames for the Dec 13 attack on coalition forces.

"We hit the ISIS thugs in Syria. It was very successful," Trump said at a rally in Rocky

Mount, North Carolina.

US Central Command said the strikes hit more than 70 targets across central Syria, adding that Jordanian fighter jets supported the operation.

One US official said the strikes were carried out by US F-15 and A-10 jets, along with Apache helicopters and HIMARS rocket systems.

Syria reiterated its steadfast commitment to fighting Islam-

ic State and ensuring that it has "no safe havens on Syrian territory," according to a statement by the foreign ministry.

Two US Army soldiers and a civilian interpreter were killed Saturday in the central Syrian town of Palmyra by an attacker who targeted a convoy of American and Syrian forces before being shot dead, according to the US military. Three other US soldiers were also wounded in the attack.

About 1,000 US troops remain in Syria. The Syrian Interior Ministry has described the attacker as a member of the Syrian security forces suspected of sympathizing with Islamic State.

## US sanctions more relatives of Venezuelan Prez Maduro

REUTERS



**Washington, Dec 20:** The United States Friday imposed sanctions on family members and associates of Nicolas Maduro and his wife, as Washington ratchets up pressure on the Venezuelan president.

The US Treasury Department in a statement said it had imposed sanctions on seven people it said were tied to Maduro and his wife. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent accused them of "propping up Nicolas Maduro's rogue narcostate."

"We will not allow Venezuela to continue flooding our nation with deadly drugs," Bessent said.

"Maduro and his criminal accomplices threaten our hemisphere's peace and stability. The Trump administration will continue targeting the networks that prop up his illegitimate dictatorship."

Venezuela's information ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Maduro and his government have vehemently denied links to crime and say that the

US is seeking to oust him in order to take control of Venezuela's vast oil reserves.

In recent months, the administration of US President Donald Trump has been ratcheting up pressure on Maduro, executing a large-scale military buildup in the southern Caribbean.

It has carried out strikes against suspected drug vessels in the region, seized a sanctioned oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela, and declared a "blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela.

Trump has also repeatedly said that strikes on land in Venezuela are coming soon.

Friday's action sanctioned relatives of Carlos Erik Malpica Flores, the nephew of Maduro's wife, Cilia Flores.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the strikes targeted "ISIS fighters, infrastructure, and weapons sites" and that the operation was "OPERATION HAWKEYE STRIKE."

"This is not the beginning of a war — it is a declaration of vengeance," Hegseth said. "Today, we hunted and we killed our enemies. Lots of them. And we will continue," he added.

Trump said on social media

### Israeli fire kills 5 Gaza civilians

Deir Al-Balah: Israeli troops

fired over the ceasefire line

in the northern Gaza Strip

Friday, killing at least five

Palestinians, including a baby,

according to a local hospital

that received the casualties.

The killings came as the

tenuous Israel-Hamas truce

has stalled in recent weeks.

The five died in Tuffah, an

eastern neighbourhood in

Gaza City, said Rami Mhanna,

managing director of Shifa

Hospital. Israel's military said

troops identified "a number

of suspicious individuals

... in command structures

west of the Yellow Line," and

fired at them. The incident

is under review and the

military "regrets any harm

to uninvolving individuals," it

added. The Yellow Line divides

the Israeli-held part of Gaza

from the rest of the territory,

and was drawn under the US-

brokered ceasefire agreement

that went into effect in

October.

**Dhaka, Dec 20:** Tens of thousands of Bangladeshi mourners, including the country's interim government leader, attended the funeral Saturday of a slain youth leader and election candidate amid tight security.

Sharif Osman Hadi, 32, a key figure in last year's student-led uprising that toppled longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was shot in the head by masked assailants in Dhaka last week while launching his campaign for an election due in February. He died Thursday in Singapore after six days on life support.

His death has prompted a wave of unrest in the South Asian nation that included coordinated mob attacks on major newspapers and cultural insti-

tutions.

Police and paramilitary forces were deployed across the capital for Saturday's funeral but there were no reports of any renewed violence.

Interim government leader Muhammad Yunus said Hadi's legacy would endure, describing the funeral as a collective pledge to uphold the ideals he had championed.

"Today, we have come to promise you (Hadi) that we will fulfil what you stood for," Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, told the mourners, who included Bangladesh's army chief and representatives from across the political spectrum.

In a rare and symbolic honour, Hadi was laid to rest on the Dhaka University campus beside the grave of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

**BANGLADESHIS HOPE ELECTION WILL END YEARS OF INSTABILITY**

Bangladesh is to elect a new parliament on February 12 - a transition many hope will help the Muslim-majority nation of 175 million people recover from nearly two years of instability and reclaim its position as a regional success story.

But frequent bouts of violent

protests and political wrangling

among disparate groups including Islamist hardliners have punctured the national sense of euphoria that arose after Hasina was ousted in August 2024.

It has also exposed the limitations of Yunus' interim government, analysts say, raising questions over his grip on governance in the world's largest apparel producer after China.

The government has declared

that has gripped the country since Hasina's ouster.

The rights group also condemned the attacks on media as an assault on free expression.

Bangladesh ranks 149th of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index. Rights groups say continued attacks on journalists and activists could further shrink civic space ahead of the election.

Amnesty International urged prompt, independent investigations into Hadi's killing and the subsequent violence, including the burning of newspaper offices and harassment of journalists.

Human Rights Watch called Hadi's killing a "terrible act" and urged the government to act urgently to halt the violence

against the country's journalists and activists.

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## Bangladesh holds funeral for slain youth leader

REUTERS



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After due consultation with all stakeholders, we are going to form another working group to review the non-agricultural commodity derivative segment. This working group will be notified very shortly

TUHI KANTA PANDEY | CHAIRMAN, SEBI

**INDIA SECURES ADB FUNDING**

Manila-based the Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed USD 4,258 billion in sovereign lending to India in 2025, supporting projects that strengthen the country's skill ecosystem, accelerate renewable energy deployment, transform urban infrastructure, expand metro networks, improve healthcare services, and promote ecotourism



of the day quote

So how do we work out on the construction (finance), particularly on the residential real estate, is something that we are working on. But it is also a fact that many of the people who have been aggressive on the residential real estate market have burned their hands

CS SETTY | CHAIRMAN, SBI

Celebrating the opening of our 200th property in India is a defining moment for Marriott International. Over the years, our growth in India has been shaped by hotels that offer enriching experiences.

KIRAN ANDICOT | SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SOUTH ASIA, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

Pressure from due to the Indian rupee's sharp depreciation against the US dollar and euro has not eased for several months now and the input costs of raw materials and logistics have been impacted

HARDEEP SINGH BRAR | PRESIDENT AND CEO, BMW GROUP

**RESULTS CORNER****Oppo Mobiles India net profit tanks 56%**

New Delhi: Oppo Mobiles India reported a net profit of about Rs 620 crore in the fiscal 2024-25, a 56 per cent drop year-on-year, according to financial data accessed by business intelligence platform Tofler. The company, which designs, manufactures, and distributes mobile phones, clocked revenues of about Rs 32,216 crore in the financial year 2024-25, registering a 38 per cent decline as compared to a year ago. "Despite market-driven variation in results, the company remains sustainably profitable and focused on further growing profitability in the future," an Oppo India spokesperson said in an email response to a query by PTI. The company reported a net profit of Rs 620 crore during the financial year ended March 2025. This was 56 per cent fall from Rs 1,420 crore posted in the previous financial year. The company's total expenses in the fiscal year stood at Rs 31,178 crore, as per the data.

**Decathlon India sees loss of ₹65cr in FY25**

New Delhi: Sports goods manufacturer and retailer Decathlon Sports India has registered a net loss of Rs 65.03 crore and a marginal increase in revenue during FY25. Revenue from operations was up 3.11 per cent to Rs 4,133.10 crore in the financial year ended March 2025, according to financial data accessed through business intelligence platform Tofler. A year earlier, Decathlon Sports India reported a net profit of 197.19 crore, while the company's revenue from operations stood at Rs 4,008.26 crore. Total income, including other income of the company, a subsidiary of French sporting goods retailer Decathlon, was up 2.84 per cent to Rs 4,182.05 crore in FY25.

**Parle Agro net jumps manifold to ₹115.38cr**

New Delhi: Parle Agro, which owns popular beverage brands such as Frooti, Appy, SMOODH and Bailey, has recorded a multi-fold growth in its consolidated net profit at Rs 115.38 crore in FY25, while revenue rose 5 per cent to Rs 3,284.13 crore. Its total income, which includes other income, was at Rs 3,370.14 crore, up 5 per cent annually in the fiscal year ended March, 2025, according to financial data accessed through business intelligence platform Tofler. Parle Agro's net profit was at Rs 17.3 crore, and its revenue from operations was at 3,126.05 crore a year before in FY24.

# FII selling crosses ₹21K-cr

**TOTAL FII SALE FIGURE THROUGH EXCHANGES STOOD AT ₹2,30,964CR YTD IN CY25. THE TOTAL FII BUYING FIGURE FOR THE PRIMARY MARKET STOOD AT ₹73,106CR**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Dec 20:** Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have net sold shares worth Rs 21,104 crore in December, but there are signs of a reversal of foreign institutional investor outflows due to macro strength and earnings visibility, analysts said Saturday.

Strengthening of the currency in the last two days has helped to stem the tide of FII selling, they said. During the last three trading days, FIIs were buyers in the cash market with a total buy figure of Rs 3,596 crore.

"As the year 2025 draws to a close, there are signs of a reversal of FII outflows witnessed this year and indications of capital inflows in 2026. With India's GDP growth improving steadily and corporate earnings growth indicating an uptrend in the coming quarters, FIIs are likely to turn net buyers in 2026

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## T20 WORLD CUP

# Gill gets boot; Ishan, Rinku return

As India gear up for the T20 World Cup at home, the selectors have backed a squad built on impact, and versatility

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 20:** Taking a bold call with an eye to maximise impact over reputation, the Indian selectors on Saturday dropped Shubman Gill from the T20 World Cup squad and brought back wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan along with Rinku Singh.

Gill's omission is the most interesting decision of the selection meeting in Mumbai although given his form, it wasn't very surprising. In his place, Axar Patel is the new vice captain of the side.

Despite being one of India's most consistent batters across Tests and ODIs, Gill has struggled to nail down a fixed role in T20Is, particularly as an opener, where India are now prioritising high-impact starts over accumulation.

His strike-rate concerns in powerplays and the emergence of more explosive options appear to have weighed against him. He only scored 4, 0 and 28 in three games against South Africa.

"Shubman Gill is short of runs at the moment and missed last WC too," chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar said at the press conference. In contrast, Ishan's return reflects the selectors' renewed emphasis on left-right combinations and aggressive wicket-keeping-batters at the top.

Kishan, who has been out of favour for much of the year following fitness and availability issues, has impressed in recent Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, leading Jharkhand to the title with a splendid hundred.

"It's not about Gill's form. We wanted to have a keeper at the top," skipper Suryakumar said on Gill's omission.

Kishan's inclusion meant



We know what a quality player he (Gill) is, but, perhaps short of a little bit of runs at the moment

AJIT AGARKAR | CHAIRMAN OF SELECTORS, INDIA

that talented Yashavvi Jaiswal had to miss out while Jitesh also lost his place on the squad.

India have doubled down on power at the top and middle order, picking Abhishek Sharma alongside Suryakumar, Tilak Varma and Kishan, while Rinku's presence continues India's commitment to a specialist finisher who can absorb pressure and explode at the death.

All-round depth remains a cornerstone of the squad.

**Strong bowling unit**

Hardik Pandya will once again shoulder the responsibility of balancing the XI, supported by Shivam Dube, whose ability to target spinners has become a major asset, and the Axar-Washington Sundar duo, offering variety, control and batting depth.

The bowling unit blends experience with experimentation. Jasprit Bumrah leads the

## SKY SURVIVES

**S**ince his return to the side during the Asia Cup as a vice-captain, Shubman Gill scored just 291 runs in 15 matches and innings at an average of 24.25 and a strike rate of above 137 with no fifties and a best score of 47. While the skipper Suryakumar Yadav has managed 218 runs at a strike rate of 123.2 in 19 innings, his worst since making international debut has got a reprieve.

pace attack alongside Arshdeep Singh, India's most reliable left-arm option in T20Is.

Harshit Rana's inclusion points to a forward-looking approach, with the selectors backing raw pace and bounce as a point of difference.

Spin will be handled by Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy, a pairing that provides both wrist-spin guile and mystery, especially effective in the middle overs on

abrasive surfaces. Washington Sundar and Axar bring in the much-needed versatility.

**Fixtures**  
India will begin their campaign on the opening day of the tournament with a game against the USA February 7. India's next match is against Namibia (February 12) before taking on arch-rivals Pakistan in Colombo February 15.

India will compete their Group A engagements with a match against Netherlands at Ahmedabad February 18. The Super 8s matches will begin from February 21 and final is slated for March 8.

**SQUAD:**

Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vc), Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Sanju Samson (wk), Washington Sundar, Varun Chakravarthy, Ishan Kishan (wk), Rinku Singh.

With holders Australia 2-0

Chasing a world record 435 runs to win, England were reduced to 207 for six at stumps, still 228 runs short of victory and having played no small part in their predicament through batting misadventure.

Jamie Smith, on two, and Will Jacks, on 11, were left to try to salvage something from the wreckage of another demolition day for the tourists.

With holders Australia 2-0

up in the five-test series after eight-wicket wins in Perth and Brisbane, they need only draw the match to retain the urn.

But there is little prospect of a rousing comeback win from an England squad that have failed to live up to expectations.

## BWF WORLD TOUR FINALS

## Heartbreak for Sat-Chi after semis defeat

The shuttlers become the first Indian men's pair to reach the semifinals of the season-ending event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hangzhou, Dec 20:** Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowed out of the BWF World Tour Finals after losing the semifinal to China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang here Saturday.

The Indians won the first game but failed to capitalise on the advantage, going down 21-10, 17-21 13-21 in the last-four contest that lasted one hour and three minutes.

Satwik and Chirag had beaten their opponents in the group stage but the Chinese pair turned the tables on them when it mattered the most.

The Indian duo was unbeaten in the group stage in the season-ending tournament but Saturday's defeat meant that they could not become the first men's pair to reach the summit clash of the coveted event.

They though became the first



Good serve and precise third shots helped the Chinese take a 6-3 lead after the change of ends, aided by a few unforced errors from the Indians. A Chirag smash and a wide shot from the Chinese brought India back to 7-7, but the local favourites edged 9-7 ahead before Liang committed a short service error.

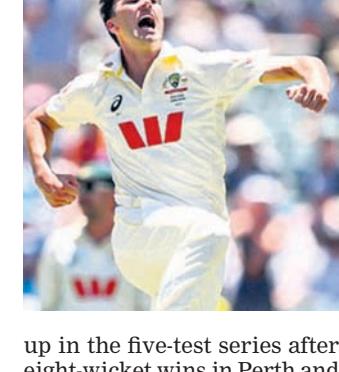
The Chinese maintained a two-point cushion at the interval. On resumption, Chirag pounced on a weak return at the net and followed it up with a scathing cross-court smash to level it at 11-11. However, an error on return of serve and a moment of indecision cost India two quick points.

With Satwik once again stepping up, covering the third shot while serving to Liang, the Indians kept a firm grip on the rallies. A run of eight straight points gave them a commanding 10-point advantage. They sealed the first game at the first opportunity as the Chinese found the net again.

## SHORT TAKES

### U-19 Asia Cup final: India to take on Pak

**Dubai:** Eyeing a record-extending 12th title, a dominant India will look to underline their supremacy over arch-rivals Pakistan when they clash in the Under-19 Asia Cup final at the ICC Academy, here Sunday. The Ayush Mhatre-led Indian colts have been a class apart, winning all their Group A matches to finish on top ahead of Pakistan, who suffered their only group-stage defeat against India, a 90-run loss last Sunday. India carried that momentum into the semifinals Friday, brushing aside Sri Lanka by eight wickets. Pakistan, on the other hand, reached the final by knocking out defending champions Bangladesh. In September, India's senior team had swept Pakistan three times en route to lifting the Asia Cup (T20) title, a trend the junior side will hope to continue. As in previous encounters, players from both teams are expected to adhere to the no-handshake policy. Pakistan have been champions of the Asia Cup once in 2012 and since then they have been runners-up twice (2013-14 and 2017).



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But there is little prospect of a rousing comeback win from an England squad that have failed to live up to expectations.

## 24-YEAR PRO CAREER

## Wawrinka set to hang racquet in 2026



Every book needs an ending. It's time to write the final chapter of my career as a professional tennis player. 2026 will be my last year on tour

STANISLAS WAWRINKA

"Every book needs an ending. It's time to write the final chapter of my career as a professional tennis player. 2026 will be my last year on tour," Wawrinka wrote on Instagram.

"I still want to push my limits and finish this journey on the best note possible. I still have dreams in this sport. I've enjoyed every part of what tennis has given me, especially the

emotions I feel playing in front of you."

Wawrinka won 16 ATP titles and had a career-high world ranking of three. He also captured Olympic doubles gold alongside Roger Federer in 2008 and helped deliver Switzerland's maiden Davis Cup title in 2014.

The announcement comes with Wawrinka currently 157th in the world after injuries and knee surgeries sent him tumbling down the rankings.

### India vs SL 1st T20I: Youngsters in focus

**Visakhapatnam:** India's quest to find stable support acts who will serve them at least until next year's World Cup will begin with the first Women's T20I of the five-match series against Sri Lanka here Sunday. The familiar faces — skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, her deputy Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepthi Sharma and Renuka Singh — are there, but it cannot be forgotten that they are either in their 30s or moving fast to that mark. In that context, Indian think tank will watch the evolution of young batter G Kamalini and promising left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma closely. The team will look to regain her T20 rhythm after a break from top-flight cricket post the ODI World Cup triumph.

## East Bengal FC crowned champions of inaugural SAFF Women's Club C'ship



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kathmandu, Dec 20:** East Bengal FC etched their name in the history books after lifting the inaugural SAFF Women's Club Championship 2025 title after a commanding 3-0 victory over Nepal's APF (Armed Police Forces) in the final at the Dasharath Stadium in Kathmandu Saturday.

The Indian Women's League (IWL) champions recently capped off an undefeated season, winning all of their matches and not conceding in any. For the second time in the

competition, Ugandan striker Fazila Ikwapat proved that she can perform at a high level, scoring both of her team's goals in the finals (21 & 46 minutes), taking her tournament total to nine goals.

The next best player for East Bengal was Shilky Devi Hemam, who scored the second goal of the finals (35 minutes), which put East Bengal in complete control of the finals.

Coach Anthony Andrews, who led East Bengal through group play in the IWL, directed his team to the finals after finishing first in their group.

Bern, Dec 20: Stanislas Wawrinka will hang up his racquet at the end of 2026, the three-times Grand Slam champion announced Friday, bringing down the curtain on a 24-year professional career that saw him gatecrash tennis's elite during the sport's golden era.

Switzerland's Wawrinka, who turned professional in 2002, will turn 41 in March, capping a journey that transformed him from perennial underdog to giant-killer.

Nicknamed 'Stanimal', Wawrinka conquered Rafa Nadal to claim the 2014 Australian Open before he toppled Novak Djokovic twice — at the 2015 French Open and 2016 US Open — each time beating the world number one in the final.

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"Every book needs an ending. It's time to write the final chapter of my career as a professional tennis player. 2026 will be my last year on tour," Wawrinka wrote on Instagram.

"I still want to push my limits and finish this journey on the best note possible. I still have dreams in this sport. I've enjoyed every part of what tennis has given me, especially the

emotions I feel playing in front of you."

Wawrinka won 16 ATP titles and had a career-high world ranking of three. He also captured Olympic doubles gold alongside Roger Federer in 2008 and helped deliver Switzerland's maiden Davis Cup title in 2014.

Paul managed to evade the heavily favoured Briton through a lacklustre first four rounds before Wawrinka found his range, knocking his opponent down twice in the fifth round and finishing him off with a devastating right hand in the sixth.

"It took a little bit longer than expected but the right hand finally found its destination," said Wawrinka, who was returning to the ring after a 15-month layoff. "Jake Paul has done really well tonight. I want to give him his props. He got up time and

time again. It was difficult in there for him but he kept trying to find a way. It takes a real man to do that... but he came up against a real fighter tonight," he added.

After the bout, which was

delivered a dose of reality to American Jake Paul Friday with a savage sixth-round knockout that left the social-media-star-turned-prize-fighter nursing a jaw broken in two places.

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