



Life lessons

Actor Janhvi Kapoor talks about her biggest takeaway from Neeraj Ghaywan directed movie 'Homebound'

LEISURE | P10



US pressure tactics

US forces stop an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela for the second time in less than two weeks

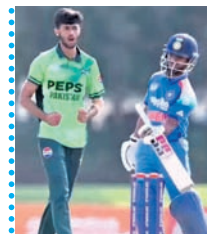
INTERNATIONAL | P9



Musk's wealth soars

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk's net worth rises to nearly \$750bn after a US court reinstates Tesla stock options worth \$139bn

BUSINESS | P11



Heartbreak for boys

India suffer a massive 191-run defeat against Pakistan in a one-sided 50-over Under-19 Asia Cup final

SPORTS | P12

Pub shooting in SA kills 9, wounds 10

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bekkersdal, Dec 21: Nine people have died and at least 10 others were injured after a group of unidentified gunmen carried out a shooting at a South African pub during the early hours of Sunday, authorities said.

The incident occurred just before 1am in the township of Bekkersdal which is located 46 km west of Johannesburg. It is the second mass shooting in South Africa in three weeks.

About 12 unknown suspects in a white minibus and a silver sedan opened fire at pub patrons at KwaNoxolo tavern, in the Tambo section of Bekkersdal and continued to shoot randomly as they fled the scene, according to police.

"Some victims were randomly shot in the streets by unknown gunmen," the police said of the incident that left nine people dead and 10 hospitalised.

Maj Gen Fred Kekana, the acting provincial commissioner of Gauteng, said at the scene that the gunmen, some of whom wore balaclavas, had one AK-47 rifle and several 9-mm pistols.

Police did not release information about the victims, but police spokesperson Brigadier Brenda Muridili confirmed that an e-hailing driver was among those caught in the crossfire. She said the driver had just dropped off a client. "He was shot and killed," she told AP.



G RAM G Bill gets President's assent

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu Sunday gave her assent to Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, the Rural Development Ministry said. The VB-G RAM G Bill, 2025, was passed by Parliament, amid Opposition protests. It seeks to replace the existing rural employment law, MGNREGA, and guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household per financial year. **P8**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The neighbourhood need not be our priority. We are Vishwaguru

Fog at Delhi: 105 flights cancelled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: More than 105 flights were cancelled and over 450 services delayed due to low-visibility conditions amid fog at the Delhi airport Sunday. An official said at least 55 arrivals and 52 departures were cancelled at the airport.

According to latest information available on flight tracking website Flightradar24.com, more than 450 flights were delayed and the average delay



GREAT AGILITY: A little Sikh devotee performs 'Gatka', an ancient Sikh martial art, during a 'Nagar Kirtan' procession ahead of the 359th birth anniversary (Gurpurab) of Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh Guru in Kolkata, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Train journey to be costlier from Dec 26

With the tourism season at its peak and travellers gearing up to ring in the New Year 2026 through destination travel, Indian Railways has announced an increase in train fares. The hike will apply to journeys exceeding 215 km in Ordinary Class, along with an increase of 2 paise per km for Mail and Express trains across both non-AC and AC classes. The revised fares will come into effect December 26, 2025. This decision comes in the aftermath of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) adoption of a cheap money policy aimed at reviving investor sentiment and stimulating economic activities. The apparent disconnect between these approaches—higher travel costs on one hand and monetary easing on the other—has sparked questions about the government's broader intent to boost demand in a sluggish market

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 21: Indian Railways Sunday announced a revision in fares with effect from December 26 this year, aimed at a ₹600-crore increase



in revenue.

Under the new ticket pricing structure, passengers will pay an extra 1 paise per km on journeys beyond 215 km in Ordinary Class, and 2 paise per km for Mail and Express non-AC and AC classes. Passengers on a 500 km non-AC journey will pay an additional ₹10 for their journey. There is no increase in ticket prices for passengers travelling on routes shorter than 215 km.

Fares have also not been raised for suburban and monthly season tickets to ensure travel remains affordable for low and middle-income families.

"Over the past decade, the Indian Railways has significantly expanded its network and operations, reaching even the remotest corners of the country. To support this higher

level of operations and further enhance safety, the railways its increasing its manpower. Consequently, manpower cost has increased to ₹1,15,000 crore. Pension cost has increased to ₹60,000 crore. Total cost of operations has increased to ₹2,63,000 crore in 2024-25," the Ministry of Railways said in a statement.

To meet the higher manpower costs, the railways said it is focusing on increasing cargo loading, along with a small amount of rationalisation of passenger fares.

"Due to these efforts on safety and improved operations, railways have been able to improve safety substantially. India has become the second-largest cargo-carrying railway in the world," the statement added.

According to the Railway Ministry, the previous fare hike in July 2025 has generated ₹700 crore revenue till date.

The freight rates have not been revised since 2018 despite an increase in input costs over the years, with the railways relying on an increase in cargo movement to raise earnings.

Indian visa centre in Chattogram suspended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 21: India Sunday suspended visa operations at its mission in Bangladeshi port city of Chattogram until further notice, according to media reports.

The move comes in the wake of a fresh wave of unrest witnessed in the country following the death of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi.

His death triggered attacks and vandalism across Bangladesh, including stone-hurling at the Assistant Indian High Commissioner's residence in Chattogram Thursday.

Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year that led to the ouster of the then PM Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was a candidate for the scheduled February 12 general elections.

He was shot in the head December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in central Dhaka's Bijoy Nagar area and died while undergoing treatment in Singapore December 18.

"Due to the recent security incident at Assistant High Commission of India (AHCI) Chittagong, Indian visa operations at IVAC Chittagong (Chattogram) will remain suspended from 21/12/2025 until further notice," the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) said in a brief statement. **P9**

CM launches ₹545-cr projects at 'Parab 2025'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 21: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday attended the fourth evening of the 'Parab-2025', a national-level tribal festival, in Koraput where he laid foundation stones for 70 development projects worth ₹521 crore and inaugurated 16 others worth ₹24 crore. Speaking at the festival, the Chief Minister highlighted the unique culture and natural beauty of Koraput, saying, "The soil of Koraput spreads the fragrance of peace, simplicity, and love. Its coffee, Kala Jeera rice, and Kotpad sarees are recognised across India and abroad."

These projects include initiatives in irrigation, healthcare, small-scale industries, urban hostels, bridges, roads, Mission Shakti buildings, forest protection committee buildings, and additional classrooms – all aimed at accelerating the southern district's development.

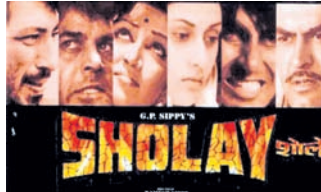
At the festival organised at Shaheed Laxman Nayak Maidan, Majhi paid tributes to local freedom fighters. Under the Shri Anna Abhiyan, nearly 72,000 hectares in Koraput are currently under millet cultivation, with women farmers and custodians leading the efforts. The Chief Minister lauded their contributions to promoting millet production.

Uncut 'Sholay' rekindles big-screen magic after 50 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: To watch Gabbar stride menacingly mouthing "kitne aadmi the", Jai-Veeru bash up baddies atop a train careening through the countryside and an anguished Thakur's thirst for revenge on a big screen is to revisit the magic of the movies – and of 'Sholay' itself.

The epic Ramesh Sippy film is back. Not on your TV screen but in a hall, where the action unfolds in a darkened auditorium with little to distract. It's an uncut version with scenes not seen before and a differ-



ent ending where Thakur Baldev Singh, played with great restraint by Sanjeev Kumar, doesn't spare the life of Gabbar Singh, an explosive debut by Amjad Khan, but kills him.

Fifty years after it first released, there is something for everybody. Still. So, a large family group of 15, ranging from 70 to 7, took in the 70-mm experi-

ence earlier this week, each enjoying it in their own way. The grandfather reliving once again the theatre experience, the father who had watched it only on the TV screen earlier and the youngster who didn't know what the film was all about but heard about it from his elders.

"I stopped watching movies long back but returned for 'Sholay' as it is the greatest movie ever made in India. I wanted to watch it with my two grandchildren who are eight and 11," Mohammad Tariq Kamal, 79, told PTI.

He saw it seven times in the theatre when it released in 1975,

and watched it now with 15 members of his family – three generations in tow.

"I have told so many stories to my children and grandchildren about 'Sholay' and it was great fun to watch it with them. It's three generations enjoying one movie," he said.

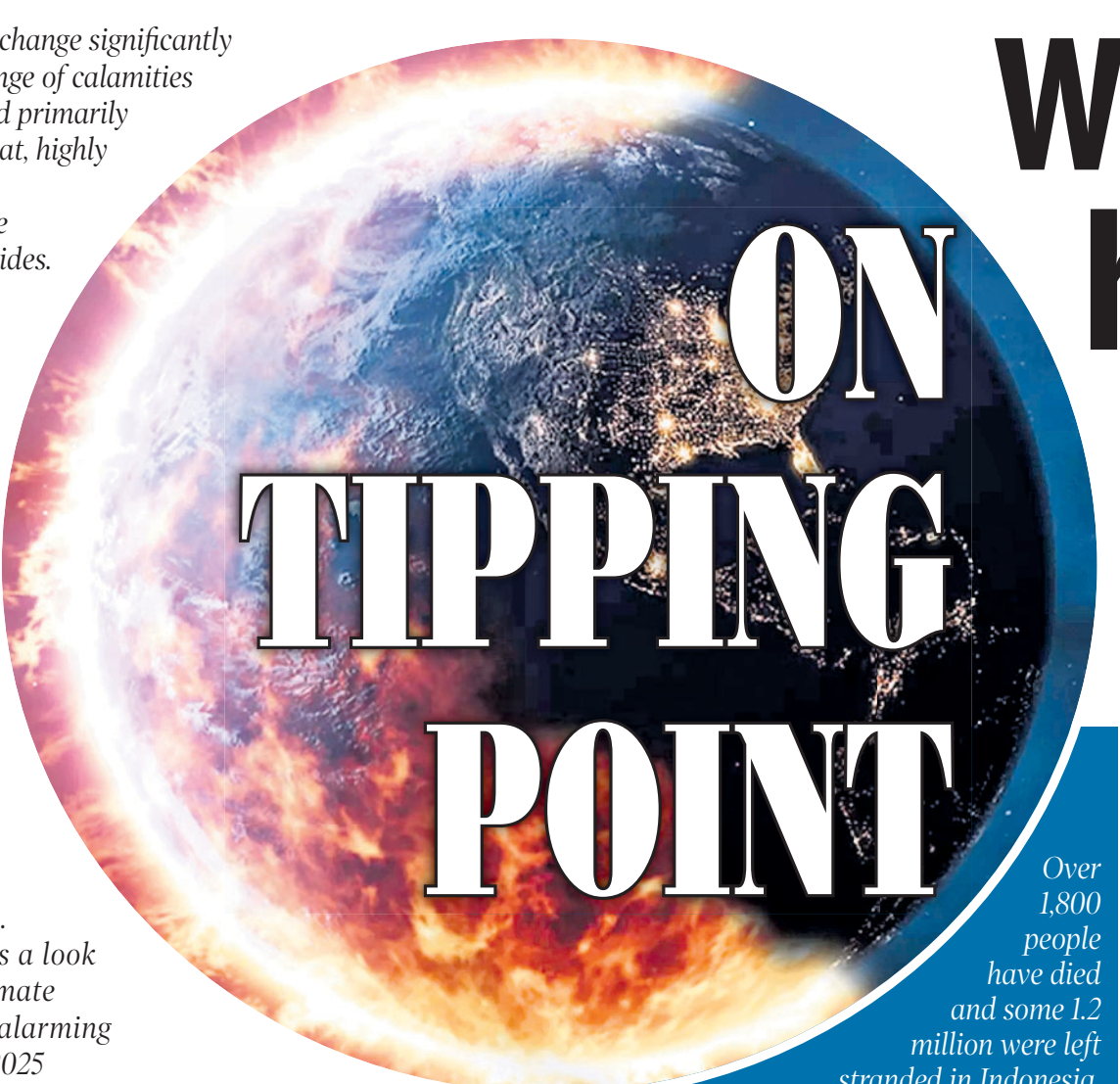
Every Indian family has their own 'Sholay' moment. And this one was clearly no different.

Abhishek Bachchan recently spoke for all millennials when he said it was his lifelong dream to watch 'Sholay', starring his father Amitabh, Dharmendra, Sanjeev Kumar, Amjad Khan, on the big screen.

While the silent generation (born 1928-45), baby boomers (1946-64) and the generation X (1965-1980) got the chance to watch it in theatres and witnessed the 'Sholay' mania unfold, millennials only grew up hearing stories about the film and saw it repeatedly on TV/VHS/DVD.

As the movie plays out in theatres, there are the expected sights – the smile fixed as it were when the RD Burman's guitar dominant casting score plays out, the dread while watching Gabbar Singh ask "woh do aur tum teen", the moist eyes at Jai's death.

In 2025, climate change significantly intensified a range of calamities across the world primarily through extreme heat, highly unpredictable rain patterns, and severe flooding and landslides. These events, exacerbated by global warming and a strengthening La Niña pattern, resulted in substantial loss of life, widespread displacement, and economic damages worth billions. Rising temperatures are driving the planet's tipping points toward critical thresholds. OrissaPOST takes a look at the extreme climate catastrophes and alarming developments of 2025



Weather whiplash hits India in 2025



As 2025 comes to an end, it's hard not to look back on a year that has been truly alarming for India's climate. If anything defines this year, it's the wave of extreme weather events that exposed just how vulnerable the country is to the growing impacts of climate change. Shifting La Niña atmospheric patterns altered monsoon circulation, reducing pre-monsoon cooling and intensifying heat buildup that worsened India's 2025 heatwave. Delhi was scorching, with temperatures shooting past 40°C. It might not sound extreme at first, but it becomes alarming when you realise it was 4°C hotter than comparable heatwaves before 1987. A ClimaMeter study pointed to human-driven climate change as the primary factor—impacting not just India but neighbouring Pakistan as well.

Climate Change, Polar Connection

Scientists are now calling India's 2025 monsoon a climate-driven monsoon, shaped by both regional and global changes. Warmer seas in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal have supercharged evaporation, sending more moisture into the atmosphere. Shifts in the subtropical westerly jet and Western Dis-

turbances, influenced by Arctic and Himalayan warming, are pushing monsoon systems northward and slowing their movement.

■ Melting glaciers and permafrost thaw in the Himalayas are amplifying floods and landslides downstream. These interconnected processes show how polar and high-mountain changes are reshaping monsoon behavior thousands of kilometers away.



CLOUDS OF CRISIS

India witnessed a 48 per cent rise in deaths due to extreme weather events in 2025, with 4,064 fatalities reported

45% of India experienced extreme rainfall, with 2,277 flood and heavy rain events recorded. August was the most destructive month, with 59 major river level breaches across nine basins, including 32 in the Ganga basin



The season ended with 108% of the long-period average (LPA) rainfall, marking the second consecutive year of above-normal monsoons

Northwest India saw 27% excess rainfall, the highest since 2001, with Ladakh recording an astonishing 342% surplus. In contrast, East and Northeast India recorded a 20% deficit, one of the lowest since 1901, with Assam and Bihar among the worst affected



A general view of an area affected by the deadly flood caused by sudden, heavy rain in Chasoti town of Kishtwar district, Indian Kashmir, August 15



Afghan boys sit on the rubble of a house following a deadly magnitude-6 earthquake that struck Afghanistan, at Lulam village, in Nurgal district, Kunar province, Afghanistan, September 3. Over 2,000 Afghans were killed in the quake, and as many as 8,000 homes were totally destroyed, in the largest disaster to hit the country since the Taliban retook control



Men waded through floodwater carrying their belongings after heavy rain in the northern states of Malaysia, bordering Thailand, in Kangar, Malaysia



A drone view of a woman sitting on a fallen post amid the damage caused by Typhoon Kalmaegi in Talisay, Cebu, Philippines, November 5



An aerial view of a wildfire near the village of Saint-Laurent-de-la-Cabrerisse, southern France, August 6. French firefighters are battling to control the country's biggest wildfire in almost 80 years, with the blaze in the southern Aude region having already swept through an area bigger than Paris

CLIMATE CHANGE 'SUPERCHARGED' ASIAN STORMS

The heavy monsoon rains and storms that triggered deadly floods across several South and Southeast Asian nations in late November were "supercharged" by climate change, an attribution study has concluded. More than 1,800 people have died and some 1.2 million were left stranded after two overlapping tropical cyclones – Ditwah and Senyar – hit Indonesia's Sumatra region and Peninsular Malaysia simultaneously, triggering deadly floods and landslides. It is one of the deadliest weather-related disasters in recent history, hitting one of the most climate vulnerable regions on Earth that is used to dealing with strong monsoon rains. The storm developed over North Indian Ocean waters that were 0.2C warmer than the historical 1991-2020 average and that would have been 1C cooler without human-caused climate change. As ocean surfaces warm, so does the air above it, causing water to be carried up to high altitudes to form clouds, while leaving a low pressure zone beneath causing more air to rush in. The warmer the air, the more water it can hold: for every extra degree Celsius of warming, air can hold 7% more moisture.



BANGLADESH'S ENDLESS BATTLE WITH EROSION SCARS FAMILIES

CLIMATE MIGRATION

Every year, hundreds of families in northern Bangladesh's Kurigram district face the same fate. As riverbanks collapse, people lose not only their homes but also their land, crops, and livestock.



The Brahmaputra, Teesta, and Dharla rivers – once lifelines for millions – have become unpredictable, eroding land faster than ever before. The chars – sandy, shifting islands scattered across the country's northern plains – are among the most fragile places in Bangladesh. Scientists say what is happening in Kurigram is climate change made visible, as the melting of the Himalayan glaciers that feed the Brahmaputra and Teesta rivers accelerates. The World Bank estimates one in every seven Bangladeshis could be displaced by climate-related disasters by 2050.

SINKING TUVALU'S 1ST CLIMATE MIGRANTS ARRIVE IN AUSTRALIA



The first climate migrants to leave the remote Pacific island nation of Tuvalu arrived in Australia in December, hoping to preserve links to their sinking island home. More than one-third of Tuvalu's 11,000 population applied for a climate visa to migrate

to Australia, under a deal struck between the two countries two years ago. Tuvalu, one of the countries at greatest risk from climate change because of rising sea levels, is a group of low-lying atolls scattered across the Pacific between Australia and Hawaii. By 2050, NASA scientists project daily tides will submerge half of Funafuti atoll, home to 60% of Tuvalu's residents, where villagers cling to a strip of land as narrow as 20 metres (65 feet). The forecast assumes a one-metre rise in sea levels, while the worst case, double that, would put 90% of the country's main atoll under water.

GLOBAL WARMING

Glaciers melting, oceans rising

Glaciers, immense reservoirs of fresh water that are essential for the water cycle and life on Earth, seem timeless. Yet they are under threat. Climate change and rising temperatures are causing glaciers to melt at an alarming rate. Using a combination of satellite imagery and field studies, scientists are warning of the consequences for the planet.

published in 2025 in the journal Nature took the scientific community by surprise. Based in particular on satellite data, the study revealed that since 2000, the Earth's 275,000 mountain glaciers have contributed more to rising sea levels than Greenland and Antarctica.

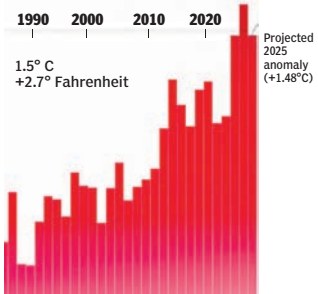
"This shows that, among the elements of the cryosphere - frozen parts of the Earth - mountain glaciers are among those that react the quickest to climate change," explains Heidi Sevestre, a glaciologist. To-

day, ice is the largest contributor to rising sea levels around the world, with thermal expansion linked to ocean warming. Between 2000 and 2023, mountain glaciers lost 6,542 billion tonnes of ice, contributing to a 18mm rise in global sea levels. This melting of glaciers and polar ice caps also disrupts ocean currents, affecting wildlife and local climates.

The rapid acceleration of glacier melt in recent decades is not a natural phenomenon, but the result of

human activity that is warming the Earth's surface. The ice is melting earlier and earlier in the year and is finding it increasingly difficult to reform in winter.

Over the past two decades, glaciers have lost around 5% of their total volume, or an average of 273 billion tonnes of ice per year, which is equivalent to the daily consumption of every person on Earth for 30 years (based on three litres per day).



This year will also likely round out the first three-year period in which the average global temperature exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period, when humans began burning fossil fuels on an industrial scale, C3S said in a monthly bulletin.

"These milestones are not abstract – they reflect the accelerating pace of climate change," said Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate at C3S.

Last year was the planet's hottest on record. The last 10 years have been the 10 warmest years since records began, the World Meteorological Organization said earlier this year.

NGT CALLS FOR BMC’S RESPONSE

Outfit alleges Bharatpur MCC flouts solid waste mgmt rules



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) to submit its response within one month regarding establishment and operation of a Micro-Composting Centre (MCC) at B1-Bharatpur, GA Colony here. NGT issued the direction while hearing a petition filed by Jana Kalyan Samiti, which alleges the MCC has been set up in violation of criteria prescribed under Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. The petitioner has challenged

the location of the MCC on the ground that it has been established adjoining residential houses without maintaining any buffer zone. According to the petition, the continued operation of the MCC has resulted in severe nuisance and health hazards, making the lives of senior citizens, women, and children in the locality unbearable. Although the MCC has a processing capacity exceeding 10 metric tonne per day, it was installed and is being operated without obtaining the mandatory Consent to Establish (CTE) and Consent to Operate (CTO) from Odisha State Pollution

Control Board (OSPCB), the petition alleged. Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 prohibit setting up of solid waste treatment facilities within 200 metre of human habitation, water bodies, public parks and water supply sources. The petition further states that the site selected for MCC was never officially notified, and due process as required under the law was not followed. It has also been alleged that the land on which the MCC has been set up is classified as Forest Land, and no forest clearance has been obtained by BMC for carrying out non-forestry activities.

The tribunal observed that if the response filed by BMC is found to be unsatisfactory, the NGT may declare the MCC illegal and order permanent closure of the unit.

Notices have also been issued to the Housing and Urban Development department, Forest and Environment department, Khurda District Collector, OSPCB; and other concerned authorities.

The matter has been posted for the next hearing on February 25, 2026.

In response, BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana said that the civic body is in the process of drafting its reply and will submit the same before the National Green Tribunal within the stipulated time. He further stated that there are plans to gradually shift the micro-composting plant, but the process will take time.

Cong to protest MGNREGA renaming

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) Sunday said its workers will stage dharnas and protests across all districts Monday, demanding withdrawal of the Centre's decision to rename MGNREGA as VB-G Ram G.

President Droupadi Murmu Sunday gave her assent to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, the Rural Development Ministry said.

The VB-G RAM G Bill, 2025, was passed by Parliament, amid Opposition protests. It seeks to replace the existing rural employment law, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA), and guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household per financial year.

Addressing the media, OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das



alleged that the Modi government has not only renamed MGNREGA, but also altered several provisions of the Act to exploit the poor.

“When you have not given anything to the poor, why are you taking away the benefits provided to them by Congress?” he asked.

He said the Act was originally introduced by the UPA government to curb migration of poor people in search of work.

He said the party has decided to hold dharna and protests before the statues of Mahatma

Gandhi in all organisational districts of the Congress Monday, he informed.

As part of the protests, Congress workers will hold protest marches and submit memorandums to District Collectors demanding withdrawal of the name-changing decision.

The party would also hold demonstrations in various Western and Southern Odisha districts in protest against alleged irregularities in procurement of paddy from farmers December 23 and 24, Das said. Slamming Tata Power for its

decision to levy additional security deposit (ASD) on domestic electricity consumers in the state, the OPCC president demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision.

Das appealed to consumers not to pay ASD to the company. Terming the move as “anti-people” and “unethical”, he said the Congress would stage a protest over the issue December 26 and 29.

Briefing reporters here Friday, Tata Power Distribution Companies CEOs claimed that ASD on electricity bills is a statutory requirement mandated under the Electricity Act, 2003 and abides by the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) regulations.

“The ASD is not new for Odisha. Similar ASD provision is also there in the states like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh,” they had stated.



FESTIVE RUSH: People through a shop selling Christmas decorative items infront of Catholic Church at Satya Nagar in Bhubaneswar Sunday PICT: BIKASH NAYAK

Forest officer under Vig net in DA case



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: Odisha Vigilance Sunday arrested a forest range officer for possession of assets disproportionate to his known source of income. The arrested officer has been identified by the vigilance as Rajendra Kumar Samantray, forest range officer, Rahama forest range in Jagatsinghpur district, an officer said.

He was arrested for possession of disproportionate assets (DA) to the tune of 232 per cent more than his known sources of income, which he could not account for satisfactorily, said K B Acharya, SP, Vigilance, Cuttack Division. During raids at four locations Saturday, the vigilance officers have found one triple storied building, a double storied building, five plots, ₹3.69 lakh cash, deposits worth ₹80.68 lakh, he said. Besides, 250 grams of gold jewellery, one four wheeler, two motorcycles and household articles worth around ₹14 lakh were found from the possession of the forest officer, the SP said.

Samantray had joined the service as a forester in 1985 with a salary of ₹1,500 and worked in that rank till 2021. Then he got promotions. “As he accumulated huge assets compared to his salary, we raided his properties and arrested him,” Acharya said.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Jitendra Behera, S/o-Late Basanta Kumar Behera, Resident of At-Haripur Road, PS-Purighat, Dist- Cuttack, Pin-753001, Odisha declare by this affidavit No. 70AA 342366, Dated 03.12.2025. That now onwards I shall be known as Jitendra Kumar Behera for all future purposes.

Over half a dozen passenger trains cancelled for 3 days

AGENCIES

Jamshedpur, Dec 21: Over half a dozen passenger trains will remain cancelled for three days from December 22 under the Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway (SER) due to the movement of elephants, a railway statement said Sunday.

The Memu train services will remain cancelled between December 22 to 24, a SER statement said.

Movement of a herd of elephants has been noticed near rail tracks between Chakradharpur (Jharkhand's Singhbhum)-Jharsuguda (Odisha) section of the division, especially

Bandamuna during night, said SER's Chakradharpur Division senior divisional commercial manager Aditya Choudhary.

The train services are being slowed down, causing traffic congestion and subsequently delaying train movements, he said. The trains which will remain cancelled due to elephant movements in the section include 68025/68026 (Ckp-Rou-Ckp), 68043/68044 (Tata-Rou-Tata), 18175/18176 (Hte-Jsg-Hte), 68029/68030 (Rou-Jsg-Rou), 58151/58152 (Brmp-Bxf-Brmp) PASS, 68125/68126 (Tata-Bbn-Tata) MEMU, 68019/68020 (Tata-Gua-Tata) Memu, 68010/68009/68006 (Ckp-Tata-Kgp-Ckp) Memu, it added.

Body found in City guest house

Bhubaneswar: Body of a 43-year-old man was recovered under suspicious circumstances from a guest house near Nalco Square here Sunday. The deceased has been identified as Sarat Chandra Bhattacharya. According to sources, Sarat booked a room at the guest house December 19. The caretakers of guest house noticed inactivity for prolonged hours and received no response when they tried to contact him, after which they informed police. After receiving the complaint, Maitree Vihar Police reached the spot, broke open the door and recovered the dead body. Sarat's body was seized and sent to Capital Hospital for autopsy. His wife alleged involvement of a woman, claiming that she was present with her husband at the guest house. Maitree Vihar Police have launched a probe to ascertain the exact reason behind the death.

SAINIK SCHOOL, OMC HOSTS 9TH MINI MARATHON

‘Contribute towards clean, green & pollution-free city’

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: 120 Territorial Army Battalion Commanding Officer Colonel Rohit Singh urged the youth to actively contribute towards making Bhubaneswar clean, green, and pollution-free, and to support government initiatives such as ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’, while addressing the participants at 9th Sainik School-OMC Mini Marathon here Sunday.

The marathon which kicked off at 6am, witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, cadets, alumni, and runners from various schools across the City. More than 1,200 participants, including 600 cadets of Sainik School Bhubaneswar, school alumni network and students from Sahodaya and government schools took part in this mega sporting event.

The event was jointly organ-



ised by Old Boys Association of Sainik School Bhubaneswar (OBEANS) and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) under the theme ‘Run for Fun’, aiming to spread awareness for a clean, green, and pollution-free bhubaneswar.

The senior category runners covered 10km route, starting and finishing at Gandhi Ground at the school campus, passing through Mancheswar Railway Colony road, OMFED Chowk, NALCO-Kalinga Hospital Square, Jayadev Vihar, Acharya Vihar Square, and Apollo

Hospital road.

The junior category followed a shorter route via Mancheswar Colony Road, OMFED Chowk, NALCO-Kalinga Hospital Square, and Gajapati Nagar Road before returning to the school campus.

The marathon was flagged off by Singh who joined as chief guest of the event, along with retired administrator and OBEANS president Madhusudan Padhi.

School Principal Colonel Pankaj Kumar, Vice Principal Commander Manorama

Pokheriya, and administrative officer Lieutenant Colonel Pritam Kamble were present on the occasion and ensured the smooth conduct of the event. Senior officials of OMC, senior OBEAN Amitav Swain, Colonel Sameer Lenka, and other distinguished alumni also graced the occasion.

In SSB Senior Boys category Cadet Vikas, in SSB Girls category Abhipsa Saraf, in SSB Junior Boys category Aman Kumar, in SSB Class VI Boys category Pratyush Patra and in SSB Class VI Girls category Shristi Tirkey received podium finish.

In Outside Schools Senior Boys category Arman Nayak, Outside Schools Girls category Shreysri Mishra, Outside Schools Junior Boys category Debajyoti Patra & Shubham Ashish Dwivedi and in OBEANS category Commander Saroj Kumar Sahu bagged positions.



Prakriti Srivastava, Reena Routray, Secretary's Foundation director Debajit Mitra, Environment Congress executive editor Sudarshan Das, Abha Mishra, RMNH director Gaurav Yadav and noted environmentalists Nirad Baran Khuntia and Sachikanta Pradhan. The session was chaired by Yadav, while Pradhan delivered the vote of thanks.

Following the inauguration, various competitions including painting, debate, and essay writing were organised, with participation from around 180 students. A special ‘Girls Gen Z Jury’ programme was also held, where 25 selected girl

students from different colleges and universities acted as jury members. They interacted with experts by posing questions and presenting their perspectives on environmental protection. Prizes were awarded to outstanding students by Kasturi Mahapatra, Aravinda Behera, Reena Routray and others.

Meanwhile, four technical sessions were conducted at Rama Devi Women's University. A session on climate change and gender issues featured speakers including Berhampur University Vice-Chancellor Giranjali Das, IFS Padma Mahanti, former CPGC, Ravenshaw University Luna Samanta and

session chairperson Bishakha Bhanja.

Another session on women's rights and environmental justice saw participation from Utkal University CPGC Mitali Chinara, senior Orissa High Court advocate Vibhu Prasad Tripathy, professor Shaktikanta Rath, Suprabha Patnaik and Bijay Pradhan.

A session titled ‘Green Jobs and Women's Participation’ included addresses by Centurion University VC Supriya Patnaik, Jayakrishna Panigrahi, Rashmi Adelek and professor Raj Kumar Joshi.

A session on tribal women and environmental conservation featured Padma awardee Sabarnati, professor Tattwamasi Palatsingh, and professor Vibhuti Bhushan Pradhan.

Speakers across sessions highlighted the importance of gender equality, women's rights, and the role of indigenous communities in environmental protection. The valedictory ceremony will be held today.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	27.6°	25.0°	Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	15.1°	12.6°	
Humidity	79%	84%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Tribal dropout alarmingly high in Nabarangpur dist

Poor midday meals, lack of teachers and infrastructure blamed



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharigaon, Dec 21: Despite a host of schemes, tribal students are dropping out of schools in Nabarangpur district, with the rate remaining alarmingly high at 66.66 per cent.

According to census data, about 55.8 per cent of the district’s population belongs to tribal communities. Education is crucial for their overall development, but the penetration of education among tribal children remains unsatisfactory despite programmes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and the Right to Education Act.

In Nabarangpur, the school dropout rate among scheduled caste students stands at 18.18 per cent. However, among tribal students it is alarmingly high at 66.66 per cent. Among other categories, the rate is 15.16 per cent. This means, out of every 10 students enrolled in Class I, nearly two students drop out before completing Class VIII.

The reasons are varied and complex. Poor quality of mid-day meals, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of academic support are

among the main factors.

Experts point out a clear gap between official data on tribal school dropouts and the reality on the ground, revealing that much more needs to be done to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all.

In several tribal-dominated villages, many children either skip school regularly or drop out midway through their studies. Some attend classes for a few days and stay home for weeks. Though girls often perform better academically than boys, they too are irregular in attending school.

The government’s mid-day meal scheme, meant to encourage attendance, is reportedly faltering in quality. In some areas, students are served sub-standard food. With rising prices of vegetables, oil, pulses, and eggs, the government’s allocated budget for meals has become inadequate. Schools are also reportedly receiving less rice than the sanctioned amount. As a result, teachers often inflate attendance figures to match the meal records, showing more students present than actual attendance.

Many children from impoverished families skip school

to work and help earn a livelihood. Education experts stress that improving the quality of education in tribal and backward areas is critical.

They emphasise that not just schooling, but quality education and dedicated teachers are essential. Parents must also be made aware of the importance of education for their children’s future.

In several areas, unsafe routes to school and long distances discourage attendance. Intellectuals suggest that government-run buses or transport facilities could solve this problem. Many schools also suffer from a shortage of teachers, with student-teacher ratios falling below prescribed standards.

Adding to the problem, several schools lack proper classrooms, secure buildings, clean and usable toilets, safe drinking water, boundary walls, and playgrounds. Though the Education department conducts monthly cluster-level meetings and teacher training programmes, these efforts are not translating effectively at the school level.

Despite multiple government initiatives and training drives, students in tribal-dominated districts like Nabarangpur continue to remain deprived of quality education.

When contacted, District Education Officer Chhatrapati Sahu said the number of school dropouts in the district has declined sharply compared to previous years. Sahu said the Education department is working to bring the remaining out-of-school boys and girls back to the classrooms.



ALL DECKED-UP: A large permanent gate welcomes visitors to Mathura Nagar, which is the new name of Bargarh, the venue of the world's largest open-air theatre Dhanu Jatra. The Bargarh Dhanu Jatra will start from December 24 and conclude January 3

OP PHOTO

Villagers block police vehicle for 3 hrs over youth’s death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 21: Tension prevailed at Mayabara village under Bolangir Sadar police limits after villagers and family members of a deceased youth blocked a police vehicle for nearly three hours Sunday, demanding a thorough probe into what they alleged was a case of murder.

The body of Akshay Suna, 20, was found hanging from a tree behind a poultry farm in the village Friday. While the exact cause of death remains unclear, the incident has sparked widespread speculation locally. Villagers claimed the youth



was assaulted following a love affair, leading to his death. The family later lodged a complaint at Bolangir Sadar police station, alleging murder.

Police reached the village three days after the incident to conduct inquiries. However, villagers, along with the deceased’s family members,

staged a sit-in on the road, blocking the police vehicle and demanding immediate arrest of those responsible. They also insisted that the District Collector visit the village before allowing the police to leave.

The police vehicle remained stranded for about three hours. Following discussions with the family, police officials assured them that the case would be investigated thoroughly and strict action would be taken against the culprits if murder was established.

After the assurance, the villagers lifted the blockade, police said. Investigations into the youth’s death are ongoing.

Tourist drowns in Chilika lake

Brahmagiri: A tourist drowned while bathing at the mouth of Chilika lake Sunday, highlighting ongoing concerns over visitors’ safety at one of Odisha’s most popular tourist destinations. The deceased was identified as Kushagra Didya, a native of Jharkhand, who was visiting Chilika along with employees of a private company based in Bhubaneswar, sources said. According to information available, the group had arrived by bus and parked the vehicle near Baghamunda jetty before proceeding on a boat ride to explore Chilika. When the boat reached the Nuamuhana area, four to five tourists reportedly entered the water to bathe. During this time, Kushagra was swept away by strong currents at the lake mouth. On being alerted, personnel from the Brahmagiri fire services department, along with local residents, launched a search operation. The body was recovered later in the afternoon.

Mystery shrouds death of 28-year-old youth

ATHMALLIK: Mystery shrouds the death of a 28-year-old man whose body was found hanging from a tree at the southern end of Manikpathar village under Athmallik police limits in Angul district Sunday. The deceased was identified as Sanjay Bhoi, a resident of Manikpathar village. The matter came to light after villagers and family members spotted the body hanging from the tree and raised an alarm. Family members cried foul and his father, Sammaru Bhoi, lodged a complaint at the Athmallik police station. Police reached the spot and launched an investigation. As police made arrangements to bring down the body with the help of fire services personnel, villagers and family members insisted on the presence of scientific team and sniffer dog before removal. Police persuaded the villagers and the body was brought down by fire services personnel only after the forensic team and sniffer dog arrived at the scene. After a post-mortem examination, the body was handed over to the family. Athmallik IIC Prakash Chandra Majhi said further investigation is underway to ascertain the circumstances leading to the death.

Youth killed in elephant attack

Lakhanpur: A 22-year-old youth was killed in a wild elephant attack at Jamgaon village under Rengali police limits in Lakhanpur block Saturday evening. The deceased was identified as Balaram Dansana, a resident of the village. According to sources, a tusker that had reportedly strayed from neighbouring Chhattisgarh was roaming in the area for nearly a week. The elephant entered agricultural fields near Panchgaon Saturday evening. Balaram had gone to the spot to see the animal when he was suddenly attacked. The tusker reportedly grabbed him with its trunk and dashed him on the ground leading to his death on the spot. Forest department personnel later recovered the body, but the victim’s identity could not be established immediately. The body was identified Sunday, following which a post-mortem examination was conducted and the body was handed over to the family. The incident has triggered panic among villagers, who have demanded immediate measures to prevent further human-elephant conflict in the area.

Mule account racket busted; four cyber criminals arrested



PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, Dec 21: Odisha Police Sunday busted a well-organised mule account racket and arrested four brokers, who allegedly opened several bank accounts in the name of others by offering cash incentives to assist cyber criminals.

The accused have been identified as Pabitra Pradhan (25), Anil Kumar Patra (24), Gagan Dalai (25) and Shankarshana Sahu (23). All are from Ganjam district.

Pradhan acted as the main agent to open the mule accounts, while the other three acted as sub-agents, police said. Five mobile phones, two bank passbooks, Aadhaar cards and an ATM card have been seized from their possession, said Chandan Ghadei, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Chhatrapur.

He said several other persons might be involved in the racket, and investigation was on to nab them. Police suspect that the main accused was from New Delhi, who was operating the racket by engaging agents to open the mule accounts.

Sabyasachi Malla, Inspector-In-Charge, Chhatrapur police station, said they have detected two mule accounts opened in the name of two persons from Chhatrapur by the sub agents in May by offering ₹2,000 cash incentive to each, while their documents for the account was with the main accused person in New Delhi.

The police have also found ₹9 lakh in the deposit in these two accounts without the knowledge of the account holders, he said.

“We suspect the sub agents might have opened over 100 bank accounts in the name of some people in the area by offering cash incentives, which were then transferred to a handler in New Delhi,” said Malla.

The police inspector said that the sub-agents get commission on every new account, while they provide ₹ 2,000 for opening of the new accounts.

“The main agent, Pradhan, also got commission in each new account from the main accused in New Delhi. It was a well-established racket, and we are trying to nab all its members,” he added.

Teacher dies in mishap

Boinda: Headmaster of Boinda Dharanidhar Public School Sourabh Kumar Mohanty, 42, died after his motorcycle rammed into a pickup van from rear on National Highway 55 near Kamarei under Handapa police limits in Angul district late Saturday night, police said. According to sources, Mohanty, a native of Jamshepur area, was residing in a rented accommodation in Rairakhol. He was travelling from Boinda towards Rairakhol on his motorcycle Saturday night, when the mishap occurred. Near Kamarei, his bike reportedly hit a pickup van (MP-09 DW 7381) that was travelling from Angul towards Sambalpur. Locals, along with Handapa police, rushed a critically-injured Mohanty to Kishorenagar CHC, where doctors declared him dead. Handapa police seized both the motorcycle and the pickup van and registered a case in connection with the incident. An investigation is underway.

Sambalpuri Dhanu Yatra from Jan 18

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 21: The Sambalpuri Dhanu Yatra, now in its third year, will be held from January 18 to 22, organisers said.

The five-day festival will once again resonate with the thunderous laughter of Kansa as Gangadhar Mandap comes alive with performances by local artistes. Culture lovers are expected to be enthralled by Sambalpuri dialogues, traditional dances and folk songs presented during the festival.

Organising committee president Sanjay Babu said efforts are being made to make this year’s event more attractive and grander than previous editions. Addressing a news conference at the local Sambadika Bhavan, he said preparations have reached the final stage.

As in previous years, Gangadhar Mandap has been trans-

formed into Mathura Nagari with Kansa’s royal court, while Chaunrpur on the other side of the Mahanadi has been decorated as Gopapur. Special emphasis is being laid on improving the artistic finesse of the performances, he said.

Babu added that the organisers have made a concerted effort to give the entire production a distinct Sambalpuri flavour from dialogues and stage design to costumes using the Sambalpuri language throughout the enactments.

Committee secretary Guna Ranjan Salima, executive president Kamal Lochan Panda, vice president Shankar Behera, directors Bablu Bag and Prashant Moharana, joint secretary Lilima Nayak, cultural secretary Krushnachandra Bag, and actor Phanindra Panda, who plays the role of Kansa, were present at the news conference.

1 held, 8 detained over Tarbha student death

SONEPUR: Five days after a 17-year-old student was found dead under suspicious circumstances at PM Shri SSD Government Higher Secondary School at Charbhata in Tarbha block, Tarbha police Sunday arrested one person and detained eight minor boys for assaulting the victim. Police Sunday said Aryan Suna died after being assaulted by classmates at the government-run school in Subarnapur district. Police have confirmed the case as murder. Police said Fajit Haripal, 19, a Plus II second-year Science student has been arrested and produced before the JMFC Court, Tarbha that rejected his bail plea and sent him to Subarnapur sub-jail. The remaining eight accused are: Plus II second-year students of Science and Commerce streams. After medical examinations at Tarbha CHC, they were produced before Subarnapur Juvenile Justice Board. Acting on the board’s directions, the juveniles were sent to a probation home in Boudh, police said.



Following the impact, both riders were thrown off the road. Jay died on the spot, while Gangadhar sustained critical injuries and was rushed to the Subarnapur district headquarters hospital by ambulance. Doctors

declared him dead on arrival.

Police from the Haradkhol outpost reached the spot, recovered the bodies and seized the damaged motorcycle. A search has been launched to trace the unidentified vehicle involved in the accident.

Angered by the incident, local residents blocked National Highway 57 at Haradkhol, demanding compensation for the victims’ families. The blockade led to traffic disruption in the area. Administrative officials reached the site and held discussions with the protesters to resolve the situation.

केन्द्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड
(शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अधीन एक स्वायत्त संगठन)
CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
(An Autonomous Organisation under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
PUBLIC NOTICE
22nd December 2025

Subject: Extension of last date for submission of online application form for DRQ2026.

In continuation to the advertisement No. **CBSE/Rectt.Cell/14(88)/2025** Dated **02.12.2025**, it is hereby notified that the last date for submission of the online application form for Direct Recruitment Quota Examination 2026 (DRQ2026) has been extended as per the schedule given below.

Events	Earlier Date	Extended Date
Online submission of application form	22nd December 2025 (Upto 11.59 P.M.)	27th December 2025 (Upto 11.59 P.M.)
Last date for submission of examination fee (through Credit Card/ Debit Card/Net Banking/ UPI)	22nd December 2025 (on or before 11.59 P.M.)	27th December 2025 (Upto 11.59 P.M.)

In case of any difficulty in applying for DRQ2026, the candidate may contact on 011-24050353, 011-24050354, or email at drq2026@cbse.shiksha.in.

Director, Professional Exam Unit, CBSE
cbc 21107/12/0011/2526

THE ODISHA STATE POLICE HOUSING & WELFARE CORPORATION LTD.
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)
Janapath, Bhoinagar, Bhubaneswar - 22, Ph.: 0674-2541545, 2542921
E-mail: ophwc.od@od.nic.in, Website: www.ophwc.com
e-Procurement Notice No. 23/OPHWC/2025-26

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

No. CAD-2753: The Chief Engineer (OSPH&WC), Odisha, Bhubaneswar invites percentage rate bid in Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE only, for the works as detailed below:


1	Nature of Work	Building Works
2	No. of Works	07 Nos.
3	Value of Tender	Rs.57.39 Lakh to Rs.734.30 Lakh
4	Class of Contractor	'B' Class to 'Spl.' Class
5	Cost of Bid document (to be paid online)	Rs.11,800.00
6	Availability of Bid documents in the website	Dt.22.12.2025 to Dt.06.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.
7	Last date/time of receipt of Bids in the portal	Dt.06.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.
8	Date of Opening Bid	Dt.07.01.2026 at 10.30 A.M.
9	Date of Technical Presentation (among qualified bidders only)	Date & time will be notified after opening of the Technical Bid
10	* The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can also be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in . Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender shall not be published in Newspaper and can only be seen in the said website. * The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids and terminate the tender process without assigning any reason thereof.	

Sd./- Chief Engineer (OSPH&WC)
N.B.: The quoted rate should be all inclusive but excluding G.S.T. as applicable under works contract.
OIPR-12025/11/0064/2526

“

Peace is the first condition, without which nothing else can be stable.

SRI AUROBINDO



Diplomatic Failure

Bangladesh has once again been gripped by violent unrest following the death of youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi, deepening political uncertainty in India’s immediate neighbourhood. Hadi’s killing has triggered widespread protests across several cities, intensified anti-India sentiment, and led to targeted attacks on media outlets perceived as sympathetic to New Delhi. Hadi, a spokesperson for the “Inquilab Mancha” outfit and a candidate in the upcoming general elections, was shot in the head by masked assailants in Dhaka last Friday while launching his election campaign. After receiving initial treatment at a local hospital, he was airlifted to Singapore for advanced medical care. After spending six days on life support, he succumbed late Thursday. His death has since become a rallying point for angry supporters and activists.

An outspoken critic of India’s role in Bangladesh’s domestic politics, Hadi had frequently accused New Delhi of meddling in the country’s internal affairs. His stance resonated strongly after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India following last year’s uprising, a development that continues to fuel public anger against India in Bangladesh. In the aftermath of Hadi’s death, conspiracy theories have proliferated online, with claims that the attackers escaped to India. Some youth leaders and politicians have echoed these allegations, further fuelling tensions. Videos circulating on social media showed mobs vandalising the offices of leading newspapers, including Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, both widely regarded as mainstream and, by critics, pro-India. Protesters also set fire to the main office of the left-leaning cultural organisation Udichi Shilpigoshthi in the capital shortly after Hadi’s body was brought back from Singapore. Sporadic violence was also reported from other parts of the country. In a particularly disturbing incident in Mymensingh, a Hindoo man was lynched and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy. The victim, 25 year old Dipu Chandra Das, was a factory worker. The killing has heightened fears of communal violence amid the broader political turmoil.

The developments in Bangladesh are viewed as a “greatest strategic challenge” to India since the Liberation War of 1971 according to the assessment of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor. The committee has sought to analyse the turbulent India-Bangladesh relation of the past two years and said that Bangladesh is witnessing a “shift” and that New Delhi could end up losing the “strategic space” in Dhaka without necessary recalibration.

The relation between India and Bangladesh coming to such a pass is highly unfortunate since India had played a pivotal role in the creation of Bangladesh. But all that history has been buried deep due to mismanagement in relations between the two countries, primarily in the last decade. A major blame for this situation lies on India’s defective foreign policy apparatus. Indian diplomacy has failed to gauge the mood of Bangladesh’s common citizens. It supported Hasina’s regime in the last decade while she was fast losing popularity and was being seen as an autocrat in her country. Instead of promoting people-to-people engagement, New Delhi engaged exclusively with the unpopular regime in Dhaka simply because Hasina had satisfied the business interests of the Adani group by purchasing electricity at a higher rate and had signed a 25 year contract for power supply with that company. The result is for everyone to see how a staunch enemy has been created on the eastern frontier.

Here, India can learn a lesson or two from Malaysia and Singapore. Once a part of Malaysia for a brief period of two years, Singapore later became an independent nation and carved its own niche in the world. Despite the separation, the two countries remain engaged in all forms of diplomatic activities and have managed very difficult negotiations skillfully. There is strong people-to-people connection between both countries, while trade and commerce continue to flourish.

If the Bangladesh experience is anything to go by, it is highly likely that India might face a similar predicament with another neighbouring country – Myanmar (Burma). Given New Delhi’s present policy of closer ties with the military junta ruling over Myanmar, it has already risked alienating the country’s broader population. The military leaders now in power are not permanent. Their exit, sooner or few years later, is a given event. Then, when ever a civilian democratic government takes over the reins, the first geographical enemy will be India.

At a time when India’s ties are deteriorating with almost every single country in its immediate neighbourhood, diplomacy should focus on realpolitik, not false bravado and jingoism. This down grading or souring of relations had started with Nepal in 2017 and has fast spread to other neighbouring countries. India’s intelligence and diplomatic failures must be camouflaged by brave talk in the home media. Immediate and drastic revamping of these wings should be the first priority for New Delhi.

WISDOM CORNER

“If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.”

WILLIAM BLAKE

“We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them.”

KAHLIL GIBRAN

“If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you'll never get it done.”

BRUCE LEE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1666:** Guru Gobind Singh, the Indian spiritual leader who is revered as the 10th and last of the human Sikh Gurus, was born in Patna.

■ **1887:** Srinivasa Ramanujan, a self-taught Indian mathematician who made many pioneering discoveries and whose story was told in the movie The Man Who Knew Infinity (2015), was born in Erode in what is today Tamil Nadu.

■ **1891:** First asteroid discovered through astrophotography. 323 Brucia was discovered by Max Wolf and was named after Catherine Wolfe Bruce, an American patron of astronomy.

■ **1894:** French army officer Alfred Dreyfus was sentenced to life in prison for treason for allegedly selling military secrets. His conviction was based on specious evidence, and publicity around the trial was fueled by antisemitism (Dreyfus was Jewish), sparking a controversy that divided France.

■ **1972:** Rescue helicopters arrived at the crash site of Uruguayan Air Force flight 571 and evacuated a first group of survivors, two months after the plane went down in the Andes Mountains in Argentina. Of the 45 people aboard the plane, only 16 survived.

■ **1989:** The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin was reopened as East and West Germany continued moving toward reunification. Berliners had been unable to use the gate since 1961, when the newly built Berlin Wall blocked access to it.

power post

FOCUS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

THE ONLY OPTION

Where, in today’s world, do all our antagonisms and struggles for survival converge? Is there a singular point that embodies our universal predicament? It is not Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, or the scam centers in the north of Myanmar. It is Tehran.

The Iranian capital is counting down to a “day zero” when it will simply run out of water. Nor is it alone. Most of Iran is hurtling toward “water bankruptcy,” when demand will permanently exceed the natural supply. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is now talking about moving the capital and mandating the evacuation of the population (nearly ten million).

The crisis reflects several factors. The immediate cause is a severe six-year drought. Even in the rainy season, Iran has received almost no rain. Moreover, water-intensive agriculture and subsidization of water and energy have overdrawn the country’s aquifers and depleted its groundwater supplies.

Then, there is the concentration of economic activity and employment in major urban centers, particularly Tehran, which has further strained water resources. The loss of groundwater has been so severe that parts of the Tehran plateau are sinking. Even if the rains do return, less will be stored as groundwater than in the past, because the physical space for it has contracted.

Since the sinking now underway is not uniformly distributed, the entire water and sewage system of Tehran is falling apart. Gas is leaking into the open air from broken underground channels.

Iran’s leaders have known about this problem for decades but always postponed any serious attempt to deal with it. Instead, the regime allocated resources to its nuclear programme, foreign proxies like Hamas, the Houthis, and Hezbollah, and military



Neither authoritarian states nor multiparty democracies nor grassroots self-organization can address problems like those confronting Iran

production, keeping the armed forces well-equipped and building the drones that Russia has been using to bomb Ukrainian cities.

Worse, now that the crisis has come to a head, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has created a “water mafia.” Lakes and rivers that have survived for thousands of years are being drained to supply water to whoever can afford it. The average household in Tehran is spending 10% of its income on water, and many people are going without baths and other basic hygiene while the regime directly profits from the crisis.

But why has this old and ongoing problem suddenly become a global news story? Is it because the West wants to set the stage for another Israeli/American attack (this time under the guise of yet another humanitarian intervention)? Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already cynically exploited the situation, telling Iranians that if they rise up against the regime, Israel will send specialists to address the water shortages.

Aside from organizing mass prayers for rain, the regime has adopted the dubious strategy of spraying large amounts of chemical salts into the atmosphere. But rather than reliably inducing rain, such “cloud seeding” threatens to

kill off vegetation and make breathing more difficult. People are increasingly staying home, and Iranian society is beginning to unravel.

As for the plan to move the capital, Pezeshkian’s statements have been rather ambiguous. Is he talking about the bulk of the population, or just the government administration? If it is the second option, what will happen to the millions of people left behind? If it is the first, the effort would take years and impose an unsustainable financial burden on the state – all without solving the fundamental problem.

Not surprisingly, tens of thousands of people in Tehran have begun to panic. Highways north of the city are jammed with cars trying to make their way to the Caspian Sea region, where there may still be enough water. But what would happen if these thousands of evacuees became millions? Turkey is the obvious first destination, followed by Europe. But what about the wealthy Arab states in the Gulf region? Why aren’t Iran’s immediate neighbours expected to provide more help?

Although the water crisis follows from a specific mix of natural causes and policy errors, Iran is not alone. Neighbouring Afghanistan, for example, is pursuing large-scale irrigation projects to route

water toward Kabul, which is also heading for water bankruptcy. Such projects are not without controversy, because they can have implications for water supplies elsewhere, including across borders. That is why Egypt, whose survival depends on the Nile River, objects so strenuously to Ethiopian dam projects.

What is to be done? While I don’t have any concrete proposals, the general solution seems clear: the world is going to need some form of communism. I don’t mean anything like 20th-century “actually existing socialism,” but rather something more obvious and elementary.

Neither authoritarian states nor multiparty democracies nor grassroots self-organization can address problems like those confronting Iran. When we are facing threats to our very survival as a civilized community, the only choice is to proclaim a large-scale emergency, which implies a de facto state of war – not against another state, but against those in one’s own country who are responsible for the crisis.

A state of emergency should not abolish markets and nationalize everything; but it should assert public control and regulate those areas of social life that have a direct bearing on the cause of the emergency. In this case, that means controlling the distribution of water. In Iran, the “water mafia” should have been crushed immediately.

The state power (which can move the fastest) must then be complemented by locally organized acts of solidarity, together with much stronger forms of international cooperation. Utopian? Not at all. The real utopia is believing that we can survive without such measures.

The writer is Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School.

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SPECTRUM LEADERSHIP

The Last Meal: Actions beyond rule books



Shivaji Mohinta

IN TODAY’S COMPETITIVE MARKETS, ESPECIALLY IN SERVICE-DRIVEN INDUSTRIES, SUCH STORIES HUMANIZE BRANDS AND DIFFERENTIATE THEM FROM RULE-BOUND COMPETITORS

Back in the early 1980s, Sterling Price worked as a cook at a pizza restaurant in Springdale, Arkansas, and this is before there were any national sandwich chains in town like Subways.

As Sterling tells the story, “A lady came in one day and asked if we had meatball sandwiches. Well, when I told her I did not, she got very upset, like on the verge of tears. So, I told her that even though we did not have it on the menu, we did have sandwich rolls and meatballs, tomato sauce, and even mozzarella cheese. So, since we had all the ingredients, I told her I could make it for her and just ring it up as one of the other sandwiches on the menu. Well, she thanked me several times and then explained that her husband was really sick and had lost his appetite and she was desperate to get him to eat something.” She had asked him if there was anything that he wanted to eat

and he told her that he might be able to eat a meatball sandwich, and she’d been to several restaurants already but none could help her.

Sterling narrated that that they were the last stop before going home empty-handed. So, she took the sandwich home and Sterling had forgotten about it until a couple of days later when the lady called the restaurant and asked for him by his name. Then she said that her husband had eaten as much of the sandwich as he could and was very grateful that she was able to get it for him. She added that it was the most complete and enjoyable meal that he’d had in several days, and then she explained a bit more about her husband’s condition. It turns out he’d been diagnosed with stage four cancer a few months earlier, so his loss of appetite was heartbreaking for her but it was the meatball sandwich which could provide some

comfort at last. It meant a lot to her that Sterling had been so flexible with the menu. She told him that he’d passed away during the night, and that meatball sandwich was his last meal. Well, as you can imagine, by that point she’s crying and Sterling’s crying on the phone.

This “Last Meal” story, untold for decades outside the restaurant, highlights a leadership failure common in many organizations. For a national pizza chain with global reach, it represented untapped gold: a tool for training frontline staff on exemplary service, fueling PR campaigns, or inspiring brand loyalty. Yet, because no one documented it, the narrative languished, squandering its potential as a “priceless company asset.”

Paul Smith, in his book Lead with a Story, first shared this tale to underscore a vital truth: Good leaders

must capture these real-life gems—whether from customer interactions or employee heroics—and deploy them strategically. In today’s competitive markets, especially in service-driven industries like hospitality and retail, such stories humanize brands and differentiate them from rule-bound competitors.

Don’t let that happen where you work. As Smith advises, treat such stories like assets—document, refine, and amplify them to drive culture and growth. After all, the Last Meal can be a powerful lesson to all those who are responsible for delivering customer satisfaction and warmth.

(Paul Smith’s “Lead with a Story” is referenced here for educational purposes to champion empathetic customer service.)

The writer is a business consultant & start-up mentor.

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

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



Sir, Seven elephants were killed after being mowed down by the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express near Changjurai in Assam’s Hojai district. Though the loco pilot applied emergency brakes, it was too late. Intriguingly, the accident site was not a designated elephant corridor. According to official figure, 79 elephants have died after colliding with trains in the last five years. Half-hearted measures have apparently not helped. Proper track signals, loco pilot sensitisation, speed restriction, periodic review and maintenance of elephant corridors, and a unique seismic elephant detection system, overpasses and underpasses, solar powered fences and elephant proof trenches are said to be in place to minimise elephant deaths. Despite all measures, jumbos continue to lose their lives. While using modern technologies, it is imperative for the officials to correctly identify the elephant corridors.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Calibrated half-measures

Sir, If Russia were ultimately to prevail in Ukraine, future historians are likely to conclude that Western Europe and the United States failed not for lack of resources, but for lack of political will. Despite repeated declarations of resolve, the West has too often relied on calibrated half-measures rather than decisive action to counter Russian imperialism. The European Union’s latest decision to extend a large loan to Ukraine—after failing to reach consensus on using frozen Russian assets—captures this pattern of caution. The nearly \$105.5 billion loan will undeniably help Ukraine manage an acute cash shortage that could otherwise have weakened its bargaining position in any future negotiations. Structured to cover Kyiv’s financial needs through 2027, the facility allows repayment only once Russia pays reparations and, crucially, can be used for military purposes—an important departure from earlier EU assistance. The agreement also reinforces that Russian sovereign assets will remain frozen until reparations are made, and the EU has invoked emergency provisions to prevent pro-Moscow governments from undermining long-term sanctions. Yet this remains an exercise in risk avoidance rather than strategic clarity. Western support risks appearing substantial in scale but restrained in ambition—adequate to sustain Ukraine, yet insufficient to decisively shape the outcome.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

of the day


quote

The love, blessings and support extended by voters are the real source of energy for our work. This verdict is a validation of the direction of development we have taken and the faith people have shown in our capable and performance-driven candidates



AIT PAWAR | MAHA, DEPUTY CM

Our Congress government made serious efforts to detect illegal mining in the Aravalis by directing the use of remote sensing (satellite imagery). A budget of Rs 7 crore was allocated for surveys across 15 districts



ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN, FORMER CM

Today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, swadeshi is taking a new direction with the vision of a self-reliant India



NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA, CM

SHORT TAKES

J'khand: Girl dies after consuming cough syrup

Koderma:A one-and-a-half-year-old girl died allegedly after consuming cough syrup in Jharkhand's Koderma district, officials said Sunday. The incident took place late Saturday evening in Lokai Bhuiyan Tola under the jurisdiction of Koderma police station. The family of the victim, identified as Ragini Kumar, had purchased a cough syrup from a private medical store in their locality. Koderma Civil Surgeon Anil Kumar told PTI that the health department has received the report of the girl's death, and further investigation is underway.

5 drug peddlers arrested in J&K

Jammu: Five alleged drug peddlers were arrested after they were caught with narcotic substances at separate places in Udhampur, Kathua and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir, police said Sunday. A private car was subjected to checking at Jakheni on Jammu-Srinagar national highway in Udhampur, leading to the arrest of its two occupants along with 11.12 grams of heroin, a police spokesperson said. Two more peddlers were arrested along with 43 grams of heroin at Sunderbani in Rajouri district, he said, adding that they were on their way to Rajouri town from Jammu in a private car when they were intercepted by police.

Heroin worth ₹2L seized; 2 held

Itanagar: Two persons have been arrested and heroin worth over Rs 2 lakh has been seized in separate operations in Arunachal Pradesh, police said Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, police nabbed 19-year-old Asadul Islam in Nirjuli, and later seized 16.49 gm of heroin from his residence Saturday, Naharlagun Sub-divisional Police Officer Rishi Longdo said. In another incident, police arrested 21-year-old Karjo Bedi from Naharlagun and seized 2.3 gm from his possession Saturday.

11 home guards suspended

Patna: Eleven home guards have been suspended for harassing a truck driver for potatoes in Nawada district of Bihar, officials said Sunday. The incident took place on the night of November 24, when home guards deployed at the Rajauli check-post in the district allegedly forced the driver of a potato-laden vehicle to hand over potatoes.

Security scare: Cow strays towards Yogi car

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gorakhpur (UP), Dec 21: In a second security scare within a month, a cow strayed towards Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's car moments after he alighted from it, causing anxious moments to his security detail.

The incident occurred Friday evening when Adityanath arrived to inaugurate the Gorakhnath overbridge. After a video of it surfaced on Sunday, authorities ordered a probe and a municipal corporation supervisor was suspended.

The video showed MP Ravi Kishan stepping out of the vehicle first. When the chief minister followed, a cow was seen approaching and came close to the car, prompting the alert security personnel to form a cordon.

The personnel scurried to block the bovine and drive it away, preventing any harm.

Later, Municipal Commissioner Gaurav Singh Sograwal ordered an internal probe into how the animal breached the security perimeter despite standard checks.

A preliminary inquiry found negligence on part of a municipal corporation supervisor, Arvind Kumar, who has now been suspended. Kumar was responsible for monitoring civic arrangements in the area. Sograwal said any lapse in VVIP security will not be tolerated and arrangements will be reviewed and tightened to prevent recurrence.

The issue of stray cattle in Uttar Pradesh has often been raised by opposition leaders, including Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav.

On December 2, a visibly drunk man had broken through Adityanath's security cordon and advanced towards the stage during the Kashi Tamil Sangam 4.0 event at Namoh Ghat in Varanasi.

Centre seeks report on elephant deaths in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gosaba, Dec 21: Union Minister Bhupender Yadav Sunday said the Centre has sought a report on the death of elephants in a train collision in Assam's Hojai district and asserted that no relaxation has been granted on the protection of the Aravalli region.

Speaking to reporters after meetings on Project Elephant and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) at the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in West Bengal, Yadav said all states have been asked to monitor elephant movement along railway tracks and coordinate with forest departments.

"Railway authorities have been directed to work with state forest departments on elephant movement along the tracks. A report on elephant deaths in Assam has been sought," the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change said.

Seven elephants were killed after a herd was hit by the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express early Saturday, and a calf later succumbed to its injuries.

On Aravalli protection, the minister said mining is allowed only in 0.19 per cent of the 1.44 lakh sq km area, with the rest fully preserved.

The Centre will implement the Supreme Court's guidelines immediately, he added.

The top court on November 20, 2025, accepted the recommendations of a committee under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on the definition of Aravalli Hills and Ranges.

According to the new definition, "Aravalli Hill is any landform in designated Aravalli districts with an elevation of 100 metres or more above its local

Let us all party leaders and workers gear up for preparation for the next assembly polls to be held in 2029 from the grassroots level from as early as next year



PREM SINGH TAMANG | SIKKIM, CM



Speaking to reporters after meetings on Project Elephant and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) at the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in West Bengal, Yadav said all states have been asked to monitor elephant movement along railway tracks and coordinate with forest departments

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relief" and an "Aravalli Range is a collection of two or more such hills within 500 metres of each other".

Yadav also highlighted preventive measures for human-elephant conflict, noting that 1,100 elephant accident zones have been identified nationwide.

"District magistrates have been asked to keep forest departments updated on elephant movement along highways," he said. A special team including local stakeholders, forest officials, and railway personnel has been formed in Assam and other elephant habitats.

"A team was formed with the DRM Railways, DFO and local people as stakeholders in the area concerned in Assam and in every such locality where elephant habitat and train lines exist," Yadav said.

SABARIMALA GOLD THEFT: SIT FLAGS KEY ROLE OF BHANDARI, RODDAM

The SIT has told a Vigilance Court that Pankaj Bhandari of Smart Creations and Ballari-based jeweller Govardhan Roddam played a central role in a conspiracy to steal gold from artefacts of the Sabarimala temple. The SIT probing the Sabarimala gold missing case Friday arrested both Bhandari and Roddam



PM unveils ₹10,601-cr fertiliser plant in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Namrup, Dec 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday laid the foundation stone of a Rs 10,601-crore brownfield ammonia-urea plant in Dibrugarh district of Assam, and asserted that it would usher in a new chapter of industrial progress in the region.

The facility – Assam Valley Fertiliser and Chemical Company Ltd (AVFCCCL) – will have an annual urea production capacity of 12.7 lakh metric tonnes and the project is scheduled for commissioning in 2030.

The PM, on the last day of his two-day Assam visit, laid the foundation stone of the plant here, located within the existing premises of the Brahmaputra Valley Fertiliser Corp Ltd (BVFCL).

After unveiling the project, Modi addressed a public rally, where he criticised the Congress for allegedly not modernising technology at fertiliser plants, and not doing enough to protect the interests of the farmer community.

Noting that it is a historic day for Assam and the entire north-east, he said the long-awaited dream of Namrup and Dibrugarh has been fulfilled, as a new chapter of industrial progress begins in the region. "Around Rs 11,000 crore will be invested in the fertiliser project, which will produce more than 12 lakh



metric tonnes of fertiliser annually. With production taking place locally, supply will be faster and logistic costs will be reduced," the PM said.

Emphasising that the Namrup plant will generate thousands of new opportunities for recruitment and self-employment, he said that associated work such as repair, supply and other related activities will also provide jobs to the youth.

"The Namrup fertiliser plant in Assam will become the epitome of the country's industrial growth. It is sad that the Congress did not make efforts to modernise the plant, and find solutions to problems faced by farmers," he said.

He said that Namrup had long been a centre of fertiliser production, and at one time, the fertiliser produced here strengthened the fields of the northeast and supported farmers' crops.

'Sing only secular songs': Bengali singer harassed

Kolkata: Popular Bengali singer Lagnajita Chakraborty has alleged that she was harassed during a musical programme held at a private school West Bengal's Purba Medinipur district, leading to the arrest of one of the event organisers. Confirming the development, a senior police officer said the main accused, Mehbub Mallik, a co-owner of the school where the event was held, was arrested on Sunday based on the singer's written complaint. Lagnajita claimed that the incident took place on Saturday evening during a cultural programme at the school, located in Bhagabanpur, where she was performing. "After rendering several songs, I began singing 'Jago Maa' from the film Devi Chowdhurani. At that point, objections were raised by one of the organisers, Mehbub Mallik, who insisted that only 'secular songs' should be performed," she said. "I stopped the performance and came down from the stage," she said. Following the incident, Chakraborty lodged a formal complaint at Bhagabanpur police station. Purba Medinipur SP Mitun Dey said the accused was arrested and legal proceedings have been initiated. "The matter is being taken seriously," he told reporters.

Ch'garh lynching: Congress, family demand compensation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Palakkad (Kerala), Dec 21: The Congress and the family of a Chhattisgarh native who died in an alleged mob lynching incident here have demanded compensation and an investigation under stringent laws, including the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The brother of the 31-year-old victim, Ramnarayan, told reporters Sunday that they would not accept the body until their demands, including compensation of Rs 25 lakh, are met.

Ramnarayan was allegedly beaten to death Wednesday evening after being accused of involvement in a theft at Kizhakeattappallam near Walayar.

"My brother has two children. Our demand to the (Kerala) government is that the children should be provided immediate compensation of Rs 25 lakh," he said. He also said that they belong to the Scheduled Caste community and that the accused must be charged under the SC/ST (Pre-

The brother of the 31-year-old victim, Ramnarayan, told reporters Sunday that they would not accept the body until their demands, including compensation of ₹25 lakh, are met

Ramnarayan was allegedly beaten to death Wednesday evening after being accused of involvement in a theft at Kizhakeattappallam near Walayar

vention of Atrocities) Act. He also urged the government to invoke mob lynching charges against the accused.

He said the family has not received any assistance from the government so far. Police said the post-mortem examination of the victim has been completed and the body is being kept at the mortuary of a government hospital here. Five people have been arrested so far for allegedly beating Ramnarayan to death on suspicion of theft. As per the FIR, the incident occurred before 7.40 pm. The injured man was rushed to

the Palakkad District Government Hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, V D Sathesanan, wrote a letter to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, urging him to take urgent steps to provide financial assistance to the family of Ramnarayan. Referring to the mob killing of a tribal youth called Madhu in Attappady in Palakkad in 2018, Sathesanan said taking the law into one's own hands by a mob cannot be accepted.

"It is also not befitting a civilised society. Those responsible for the killing must be ensured punishment," he said.

The Congress leader said alleging him to be a thief, a group subjected Ramnarayan to a mob trial and brutally assaulted him. The police arrived only after four hours and took Ramnarayan to hospital, but his life could not be saved, he said. "Justice must be ensured for Ramnarayan, who lost his life after becoming a victim of a mob trial that has brought disgrace to Kerala," he said.

President grants assent to SHANTI Bill

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu has granted assent to the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, passed by Parliament during the Winter Session. A government notification said that the President granted assent to the SHANTI Bill Saturday. The Bill subsumes all laws dealing with the civil nuclear sector and also opens it up for participation by private players. The SHANTI Bill repealed the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, which had proved to be an impediment in the growth of the civil nuclear sector in India. The law enables private companies and joint ventures to build, own, operate and decommission nuclear power plants under a license from the government. It states that mining of uranium and thorium, enrichment, isotopic separation, reprocessing of spent fuel, high-level radioactive waste management and heavy water production will remain exclusively with the central government or government-owned entities.

INSPACe plans 7 space labs at higher edu institutions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: In a bid to bolster the space technology ecosystem, India's space sector promoter INSPACe has floated a proposal to set up 'Antariksh Prayogshala' at seven institutes across the country.

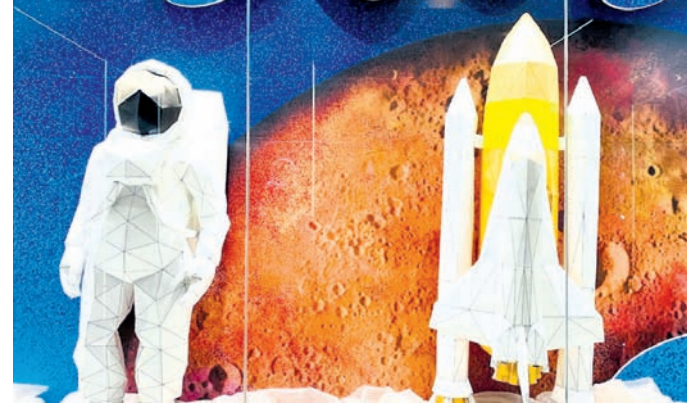
The 'Antariksh Prayogshala' is billed as a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at creating state-of-the-art space laboratories within Indian academic institutions to provide hands-on training and exposure to students pursuing space tech courses.

The Indian National Space

Promotion and Authorisation Centre (INSPACe) has rolled out a Request for Proposal (RfP) to establish Antariksh Prayogshala (space labs) at select academic institutions across India.

Several higher education institutions have started offering space technology courses and such space labs will allow students to receive practical training and help provide talent for the private space sector taking root in the country.

This initiative is intended to enable meaningful industry-academia collaboration, and support India's long-term vision of becoming a leading global space



economy, said Vinod Kumar, Director, Promotion Director-

ate, INSPACe. Under the scheme, up to sev-

en academic institutions will be selected in a phased manner from seven different zones across the country.

INSPACe will provide financial support of up to 75 per cent of the total project cost, with a cap of Rs 5 crore per institution, to be released on a milestone-linked basis.

According to the RfP issued by INSPACe, institutions that are at least five years old, have an NIRF ranking under 200, and a course in space technology will be eligible to apply for setting up the space lab.

Kumar said by creating shared spaces for students,

researchers, and industry, these labs will enable applied research, early-stage innovation, and skill development aligned with real industry needs.

"This is a practical step towards building depth, scale, and sustainability in India's space ecosystem," he said.

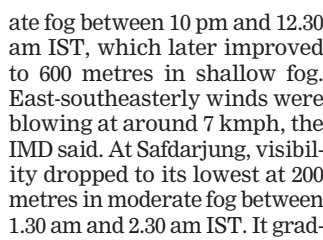
The institutions are expected to encourage industry collaboration for technology development projects. India's space economy, currently at USD 8 billion, is expected to rise to USD 44 billion by 2033 and would require trained manpower to fuel this growth.

In the national capital, a day after the coldest December day this season, the minimum temperature settled at 9.4 degrees Celsius, 1.3 degrees above the season's average whereas the maximum temperature settled



New Delhi also urged the interim government in Dhaka to bring to justice the perpetrators of the 1971 genocide, a prominent face in the anti-government protests that forced the collapse of the Sheikh Ha-

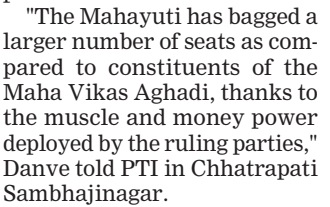
In the national capital, a day after the coldest December day this season, the minimum temperature settled at 9.4 degrees Celsius, 1.3 degrees above the season's average whereas the maximum temperature settled



It mandates payment of wages on a weekly basis or, in any case, within fifteen days of completion of work. In cases of delay beyond the stipulated period, delay compensation will be payable.

"The police stationed at the spot dispersed the group after a few minutes. Visual evidence of these events is available publicly for all to see. India

Talking to reporters, Raut said, "If you see Vidhan Sabha numbers of the BJP, Shiv Sena and the NCP and now in the civic body polls, they are the same. The machines(fixed) that were used during Vidhan Sabha are the same. Setting (of the machines) is the same and (the way) money used (during



The weather department has forecast moderate fog on Monday with maximum and minimum temperature expected to hover around 21 degrees Celsius and 9 degrees Celsius, respectively.

international

of the day quote

The country's Jewish community was completely unbreakable after attending a memorial at a Sydney synagogue for the victims of a mass shooting attack on a seaside Hanukkah celebration

ANTHONY ALBANESE | AUSTRALIA, PM

An armed intervention in Venezuela would be a humanitarian catastrophe in the face of escalating actions from the United States toward regional neighbor Venezuela

LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA | PRESIDENT, BRAZIL

The situation in Bangladesh is tense and volatile as the election is approaching

MOHIBUL HASAN CHOWDHURY | BANGLADESH'S FORMER MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Pak gets 2nd MILGEM ship from Turkey

Islamabad: The Pakistan Navy Sunday received the second MILGEM class ship constructed by Turkiye under a transfer of technology agreement between the two countries. The commissioning ceremony of PNS Khaibar was held at the Istanbul Naval Shipyard. Turkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistan's Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf attended the ceremony, the Pakistani military's media wing said in a statement. "PN MILGEM ships are the most technologically advanced surface platforms.

5 killed after bus overturns

Kabul: At least five people were killed and 44 others injured after a bus overturned in the Salang area of Afghanistan's Baghlan province, according to an official statement Sunday. In a statement shared on X, Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) spokesperson Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas stated that the incident happened in the Shawal area, north of Salang, at around 2 am Saturday (local time), local media outlet Pajhwok Afghan News reported.

26 South Koreans nabbed in police raid

Seoul: 26 South Korean nationals were apprehended during a joint police crackdown at a scam centre in a Cambodia-Vietnam border town last week, with one Korean freed from confinement, police said Sunday. A joint team of South Korea and Cambodia Thursday raided the site located in the province of Mondulkiri, eastern Cambodia, near the Vietnamese border, and took the 26 South Koreans into custody for suspected involvement in scam operations, according to the National Police Agency (NPA), Yonhap News Agency reported.

Israeli Cabinet approves new Jewish settlements

Tel Aviv: Israel's Cabinet Sunday approved a proposal for 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, the far-right finance minister said. The settlements include two that were previously evacuated during a 2005 disengagement plan, according to Finance Minister Betzalel Smotrich, who has pushed a settlement expansion agenda in the West Bank.

South Korea, Russia hold talks in Moscow

Seoul/Kyiv: South Korea and Russia recently held closed-doors talks in Moscow on North Korea's nuclear programme and other pressing regional security issues, diplomatic sources said Sunday.



The state is ready to move on to the second phase - namely (confiscating weapons) north of the Litani River - based on the plan prepared by the Lebanese army pursuant to a mandate from the government

NAWAF SALAM | LEBANON, PM

SL'S RADIO SERVICE TURNS 100

Sri Lankan radio service that was once popular across India as just 'Radio Ceylon' and popularised 'Binaca Geetmala,' a one of its kind weekly count-down show of Hindi film songs, turned 100 this week



BANGLADESH UNREST

Indian visa centre in Chattogram suspended



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 21: India Sunday suspended visa operations at its mission in Bangladeshi port city of Chattogram until further notice, according to media reports. The move comes in the wake of a fresh wave of unrest witnessed in the country following the death of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi. His death triggered attacks and vandalism across Bangladesh, including stone-hurling at the Assistant Indian High Commissioner's residence in Chattogram Thursday. Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year that led to the ouster of the prime minister Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was a candidate for the scheduled February 12 general elections. He was shot in the head December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area and died while

undergoing treatment in Singapore on December 18. "Due to the recent security incident at Assistant High Commission of India (AHCI) Chattogram, Indian visa operations at IVAC Chittagong (Chattogram) will remain suspended from 21/12/2025 until further notice," the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) said in a brief statement. The announcement for reopening the visa centre will be made after reviewing the situation, the statement added. The decision came into effect Sunday. There are five IVAC facilities across Bangladesh at Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Chattogram and Sylhet. An IVAC official told PTI that the other four offices have remained operational as of Sunday. India Thursday resumed operations at its visa application centre in Dhaka, a day after closing it over escalated security concerns, but closed for a brief period two other identical

Two more held over Hindu man's lynching

Dhaka/New Delhi: Two more persons were arrested Sunday in connection with the lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh, according to a media report. With the latest arrests, 12 people have been held for their alleged involvement in the murder, The Daily Star newspaper reported, quoting police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) sources. Dipu Chandra Das, a 25-year-old garment factory worker, was lynched to death by a mob and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Baluka in Mymensingh Thursday. According to the police, Das was first beaten up by a mob outside the factory over blasphemy allegations and hanged from a tree. The crowd then left the body of the deceased on the side of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and later set it on fire.

facilities in Rajshahi and Khulna as anti-India protestors tried to march towards the Indian missions there. On Saturday, security was strengthened at the Indian Assistant High Commission office and the visa application centre in Bangladesh's Sylhet city. The enhanced security measures were put in place to ensure that "no third party can exploit the situation," Additional Deputy Commissioner (Media) of the Sylhet Metropolitan Police Saiful Islam was quoted as saying by The Dhaka Tribune newspaper Saturday. Hadi, 32, was laid to rest Saturday amid extra-tight security beside the grave of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam near the Dhaka University mosque.

Ukraine talks proceeding 'constructively': Russia



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, Dec 21: A Kremlin envoy said peace talks on a US-proposed plan to end the nearly four-year war in Ukraine were pressing on "constructively" in Florida, while the Ukrainian president said they were moving "quickly." The talks are part of the Trump administration's monthslong push for peace that also included meetings with Ukrainian and European officials in Berlin earlier this week. "The discussions are proceeding constructively. They began earlier and will continue today, and will also continue tomorrow," Kirill Dmitriev told reporters in Miami Saturday. Dmitriev met with US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported. Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram Sunday that diplomatic efforts were "moving forward quite quickly, and our team in Florida has been working with the American side." This came after Ukraine's chief negotiator said Friday his delegation had completed separate meetings in the United States with American and European

partners. The French presidency Sunday welcomed Putin's willingness to speak with President Emmanuel Macron, saying it would decide how to proceed "in the coming days." "As soon as the prospect of a ceasefire and peace negotiations becomes clearer, it becomes useful again to speak with Putin," Macron's office said in a statement. "It is welcome that the Kremlin publicly agrees to this approach." The statement came after reports that Putin was open to holding talks with the French president if there was mutual political will. Macron's office said any dialogue would aim "to contribute to a solid and lasting peace for Ukraine and Europe, in full transparency with President Zelenskyy and our European partners." In Ukraine, the country's human rights ombudsman, Dmytro Lubinets, accused Russian forces of forcibly removing about 50 Ukrainian civilians from the Ukrainian Sumy border region to Russian territory. Writing on Telegram, he said that Russian forces illegally detained the residents in the village of Hrabovske Thursday, before moving them to Russia Saturday.

Imran calls for nationwide protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 21: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan urged his supporters to gear up for countrywide protests following a 17-year jail term handed to him and wife Bushra Bibi in a corruption case. Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were sentenced to 17 years in jail each by a court Saturday in the Toshakhana 2 corruption case. Khan, 73, who has been in jail since August 2023, faces multiple cases launched against him since his ouster from power in April 2022. The Toshakhana 2 case involves alleged fraud in state gifts

that the former first couple received from the Saudi government in 2021. In a conversation with his lawyers in Adiala Jail after the "military-style trial decision" Khan urged his supporters to stand up in protest after the decision, according to a midnight statement posted on Khan's X account. "I have sent a message to (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister) Sohail Afridi to prepare for the street movement. The entire nation will have to rise for its rights," he said, and added: "Struggle is worship, and I am even ready to embrace martyrdom for the true freedom of Pakistan!"

'US pursuing third oil tanker near Venezuela'

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 21: The US Coast Guard is pursuing an oil tanker in international waters near Venezuela, officials told Reuters Sunday, in what would be the second such operation this weekend and the third in less than a week if successful. "The United States Guard is in active pursuit of a sanctioned dark fleet vessel that is part of Venezuela's illegal sanctions evasion," a US official said. "It is flying a false flag and under a judicial seizure order." Another official said the tanker was under sanctions, but added that it had not been boarded so far and that interceptions can take different



forms — including sailing or flying close to vessels of concern. The officials, who were speaking on the condition of anonymity, did not give a specific location for the operation or name the vessel being pursued. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment Sunday. US President Donald Trump last week announced a "blockade" of all oil tankers under sanctions entering and leaving Venezuela. Trump's pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nico-

las Maduro has included a ramped-up military presence in the region and more than two dozen military strikes on vessels in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea near the South American nation. At least 100 people have been killed in the attacks. The first two oil tankers seized were operating on the black market and providing oil to countries under sanctions, Kevin Hassett, director of the White House's National Economic Council, said in a TV interview Sunday. "And so I don't think that people need to be worried here in the US that the prices are going to go up because of these seizures of these ships," Hassett said on CBS's "Face the Nation" program.

Donald Trump set to expand immigration crackdown in 2026

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 21: US President Donald Trump is preparing for a more aggressive immigration crackdown in 2026 with billions in new funding, including by raiding more workplaces — even as backlash builds ahead of next year's midterm elections. Trump has already surged immigration agents into major US cities, where they swept through neighborhoods and clashed with residents. While federal agents this year conducted some high-profile raids on businesses, they largely avoided raiding farms, factories and other businesses that are economically important but known to employ immigrants without legal status. ICE and Border Patrol will get \$170 billion in additional funds through September 2029 - a huge surge of funding over their existing annual budgets of about \$19 billion after the Republican-controlled Congress passed a massive spending package in July. Administration officials say they plan to hire thousands more agents, open new detention centers, pick up more immigrants in local jails and partner with outside companies to track down people without legal status. The expanded deportation plans come despite growing signs of political backlash ahead of next year's midterm elections.

Bangabandhu Hall renamed Osman Hadi Hall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 21: The Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall at the Dhaka University has been renamed in memory of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent youth leader who was part of the July Uprising that toppled Sheikh Hasina's government in Bangladesh last year, local media said Sunday. Hadi died Thursday, six days after he was shot in the head in the capital. The hall union, a students' body, erased the nameplate at the main gate and replaced it with a new one, 'Shaheed Sharif Osman Hadi Hall' Saturday, the Dhaka Tribune said. He was shot in the head December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area.

What really threatens strongmen rulers?

Not long ago, optimism about democracy appeared well founded. Countries once trapped behind the Iron Curtain—and even some former Soviet republics—transitioned into stable democracies. Others, including Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, erupted in mass protests against rigged elections and entrenched corruption, driven by popular aspirations to align with the West. Free trade was again celebrated as a pathway to peace, and Immanuel Kant's theory that democracies rarely fight one another enjoyed renewed attention. Western efforts to promote democracy, however clumsy, unsettled authoritarian rulers. Their increasingly shrill warnings about Western-backed "color revolutions" only seemed to confirm that democracy's advance was real. In the early 2010s, this momentum extended into the Middle East and North Africa, where spontaneous uprisings shook long-entrenched autocracies. Even hardened regimes in China, Iran, and Russia appeared vulnerable. Iran saw mass protests in 2009, Russia experienced demonstrations after Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2011–12, and some believed China's Xi Jinping might emerge

as a reformer after assuming power in 2012. That moment passed quickly. Authoritarian leaders reversed the trend with force. Arab autocrats crushed dissent, Iran's clerical regime tightened its grip, Putin intensified repression, and Xi consolidated power on a near-imperial scale. Meanwhile, anxiety spread within democracies about the erosion of liberal norms and institutions. Authoritarianism, once seemingly on the defensive, regained the initiative. Modern autocrats refined a toolkit to neutralize democratic pressure. Independent organizations were branded "foreign agents," opposition figures were sidelined through legal and tax harassment, and media spaces were tightly controlled. More strikingly, these regimes used technologies developed in free societies to interfere directly in democratic politics abroad. While continuing to decry imaginary Western plots, authoritarian leaders began exporting instability. In a bitter irony, some democratically elected leaders now openly admire and emulate these regimes. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that the world has entered a permanent "age of autocracy." Authoritarian systems, formidable as they appear,



are riddled with weaknesses. They can mobilize immense resources but are undermined by corruption, cronyism, and overreach. They often endure longer than expected, yet remain vulnerable to sudden crises. Democracies, despite their loss of confidence, retain deep resilience and the capacity to regain momentum. Understanding authoritarianism is essential. At its core, it is defined by weak or non-existent institutional limits on executive power. Modern authoritarian regimes rule "in the name of the many" while power remains concentrated among the few. Unlike totalitarian systems, they lack a single all-encompassing ideology or mass mobilization, instead maintaining limited pluralism while suppressing genuine po-

litical competition. Authoritarian survival rests on several key dimensions. The first is repression. No such regime can endure without security forces capable of domestic coercion. These states devote extraordinary resources to surveillance, censorship, and overlapping security agencies designed as much to monitor one another as to suppress society. Paranoia is endemic. While these coercive systems ensure regime survival, they also generate internal rivalries that can threaten rulers from within. The second dimension is money. Authoritarian governments prefer revenue streams that do not depend on public consent. Natural resources—oil, gas, minerals—are especially valuable, as are illicit ac-

tivities such as cybercrime or forced labor abroad. Russia's war economy, funded heavily by energy exports, illustrates how cash flow sustains repression and aggression. But these same revenue streams create vulnerabilities, since commodities must pass through global markets and infrastructure that can be disrupted. The third dimension is narrative. Authoritarian regimes rely on stories to legitimize themselves: tales of national humiliation, hostile foreign conspiracies, and promised restoration of past greatness. Anti-Western rhetoric lies at the heart of these narratives. Yet storytelling also exposes weakness. Regimes must continually reconcile propaganda with lived experience, leaving openings for counter-narratives that highlight corruption, repression, and historical truth. The fourth dimension is control over life chances. When the state dominates employment, housing, education, and mobility, individuals are pressured into compliance. Fear becomes embedded in everyday life. Still, private economic activity—even limited—can provide pockets of autonomy that dilute state power. The fifth and final dimension is the international en-

vironment. For decades, the US-led global order, despite its democratic ideals, proved remarkably accommodating to authoritarian regimes. Access to Western markets, technology, and finance enabled countries like China and Russia to grow stronger without political liberalization. The hope that trade would lead to reform—"change through commerce"—proved misguided. Yet leverage remains. Authoritarian regimes still depend heavily on exports, technology, and global finance. Coordinated action by democracies can raise the costs of repression and aggression. Just as important, democracies must strengthen their own institutions and restore confidence at home. Their greatest weapon remains example, not coercion. Authoritarianism is not immutable. Every strongman faces succession, internal dissent, and structural fragility. The goal need not be regime change but rather shaping conditions that constrain authoritarian power and reduce its capacity for external coercion. History offers no guarantees, but it does offer a lesson: regimes built on fear and falsehood are outwardly strong yet inwardly brittle. Democracies, if they renew themselves, retain the advantage.



leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You feel like a champ! Your cherished goals will seem within your grasp today. Whatever stress you're feeling will soon dissipate, as you will realise that even if you don't have success, you have the love and support of your family, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
You will tackle your problems with a human touch as your inner self reigns supreme today, predicts Ganesha. Worries and troubles will chide you but let the barking dogs lie and focus on spending quality time with loved ones. Just be approachable and outgoing tonight and it will appeal like never before to your lover, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI
There are strong indications that you will find it easy to assume a leadership role and set the agenda at work today, says Ganesha. In the afternoon, you will be busy looking for an expensive gift for someone very important to you. You may not be able to find the right gift, but that is only because you want it to be really special.

CANCER
You are likely to be in good spirits throughout the day. With you brimming with confidence and positive energy, others around you will also feel upbeat. The entire day, you will be looking forward to the evening, so that you could spend some quality time with your loved ones. It will be worth the wait.

LEO
Something piques the demon within you today, says Ganesha, making you emotional and zealous. But then, we must all wage a war against our personal demons every time they rear their ugly heads. Ganesha foresees you emerging victorious in this battle today, and regaining your happy-go-lucky attitude in the latter part of the day.

VIRGO
Ganesha predicts that your leadership qualities may come to the fore today, and you may control the work agenda. You may go window-shopping in the afternoon, checking out on gifts that you want to give to your beloved. And in the evening, you will spend the time discussing your long-term goals with a close member of your family or a good friend.

LIBRA
It's all about family today. In fact, the bigger the better since Ganesha foresees it is quite likely that both close and distant relatives will fill your heart with glee today. It might be some good news worthy of raising a toast to.

SCORPIO
It is quite likely that you will have an outstanding field day today, predicts Ganesha. At the workplace, you will possibly feel that you are stuck in the rut doing regular activities day after day. In relationship matters, evening will be full of surprises and excitement for you, expects Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Handicraft business is likely to draw your attention. People around you will marvel at your commitment and dedication to work and family alike. Ganesha advises you to bite the apple of love and share some romantic moments with your spouse.

CAPRICORN
Not many know how stupendous is your wealth of wisdom; today will be a good day to make a display of it, says Ganesha. You will have your wits about you and will impress many with your show of intellect. In the social circuit, you will indulge in spreading the message of love while at work, your excellent managerial skills will ensure that everything is under control. Peace is what you will look forward to at night, and peace will come to you, indeed.

AQUARIUS
The explorer that you are, to-day your restlessness will get the better of you! Your plans will finally take off, whether it is a new entrepreneurial or educational course or a trip to your home town. It's a promising day, says Ganesha, and you never know what you may find!

PISCES
There is a lot of brain-racking in store for you today, as you try to conjure up ways to convert your extraordinary brilliance into exceptional performance. Keeping in mind that your family is the foundation of your success could provide some vital insights, says Ganesha.



TIMOTHEE CHALAMET SHUTS DOWN ALTER EGO RUMOURS

Actor Timothee Chalamet has seemingly put an end to online speculation linking him to British rapper EsDeeKid, while offering fans an unexpected twist -- a musical collaboration. Chalamet and EsDeeKid shared a snippet of a remixed version of the track *4 Raws* on Instagram



Patriotism can never be a formula: Vicky

MUMBAI: 2025 has proven to be a landmark year for Vicky Kaushal, both professionally and personally. The actor delivered one of the biggest blockbusters of his career with Laxman Utekar's *Chhaava*, while also embracing a new chapter in life by welcoming his first child with actor Katrina Kaif. Recently, Vicky attended an award ceremony where he shared his thoughts on the growing presence of patriotic themes in Hindi cinema. Addressing the topic, Vicky Kaushal shared, "Patriotism can never be a formula. I think calling patriotism a formula is an insult to patriotism." The actor added, "Patriotism is our truth, and we will always continue to express that truth through entertainment, films, and literature." Vicky went on to add, "On the world map, if we can show this through any medium and put a foot in the door, we can say that we are proud of the diversity of our country, our legacy, and the truth of the nation." Vicky was last seen in *Chhaava*, a historical drama based on the life of Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. The film emerged as a massive success, crossing Rs 800 crore at the worldwide box office.

ERIVO CALLS WICKED A CULTURAL MOVEMENT

Cynthia Erivo has called the *Wicked* films a "cultural movement," reflecting on her role as Elphaba. The actress said the green witch ushered her into an unimaginable new chapter of life, adding she feels grateful to bring the character to life and that Elphaba will always hold a special place in her heart



Shraddha's desire

MUMBAI: Actress Shraddha Kapoor has expressed her desire to have coffee with the Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan. During a recent episode of the reality game show, *Kaun Banega Crorepati*, Big B came across a contestant who claimed to be a die-hard fan of Shraddha. Speaking to Amitabh, he even shared his wish to go on a date with the Stree actress. Big B sweetly offered to take the proposition to Shraddha, while hilariously warning the contestant that her father is none other than Shakti Kapoor. In an adorable gesture, Big B even made an appeal to the Baaghi actress on behalf of the contestant. Re-posting a clip of the interaction from *Kaun Banega Crorepati* on the Stories section of the Instagram handle, Shraddha said that first of all, Big B should go for coffee with her. "@amitabhbachchan Sir, since I'm your biggest fan, sabse pehle aap mere saath coffee piyo (sic)," Shraddha wrote. Appreciating Amitabh for his hosting skills, she added, "You can make everything classy, dignified and beautiful. Best host in the world." Refreshing your memory, Shraddha got a chance to share screen space with Big B back in 2010 in the action thriller *Teen Patti*, which also starred Ben Kingsley, R. Madhavan and Raima Sen. This also happened to be Shraddha's debut movie. **AGENCIES**



JANHVI on empathy

MUMBAI: Janhvi Kapoor was honoured with the Actor of the Year (Female) award at a prestigious ceremony in Delhi, marking a significant milestone in her evolving film journey. The award recognises her performance in *Homebound*, a film that has earned widespread critical acclaim and international attention, including an Oscar nomination, further cementing her growing presence on the global cinema stage. Taking to Instagram to express her gratitude, Janhvi shared a heartfelt note reflecting on the film's journey and the recognition it has received. She wrote, "My biggest takeaway from the journey of this very special film is that to really see people without your own baggage of judgement, and to feel truly seen in return, is perhaps the great-

est gift we are capable of giving and receiving as human beings".

Homebound has been widely praised for its sensitive storytelling and emotionally nuanced performances. Janhvi's portrayal, in particular, stood out for its depth, restraint and authenticity, with critics and audiences alike calling her character the emotional core of the film. The Oscar recognition has further elevated the project's stature, making the award win even more meaningful.

Currently streaming on Netflix, *Homebound* reinforces Janhvi's steady rise as a performer carving a credible and meaningful space in both Indian and international cinema. **AGENCIES**



MUMBAI: Radhika Apte, who made a strong mark in the digital space with projects like *Lust Stories*, *Sacred Games* and *Ghoul*, recently, revisited a painful chapter from the early years of her career. While promoting *Saali Mohabbat*, the actress opened up about the traumatic sexism faced in South Indian film industry during the late 2000s.

In a recent interview, Radhika revealed that she took up those roles largely out of financial necessity, but the emotional toll was severe. Recalling an incident on a small-town set, she said she was the only woman surrounded by men and was pressured to add padding to her body to meet "visual" expectations. She firmly refused, questioning how far such objectification would go, and asked the team to inform

Radhika makes shocking claims

the director that she would not comply.

She also spoke about being denied the right to have her own team, leaving her without a manager or agent and heightening her sense of vulnerability. She described the experience as deeply isolating and traumatic, admitting she never wants to be placed in such a situation again.

Reflecting more broadly, the actress expressed disappointment that many women in powerful positions fail to challenge such practices. She called the lack of ethical and political clarity within the industry "deeply disturbing," underlining the urgent need for accountability and meaningful change. **AGENCIES**



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

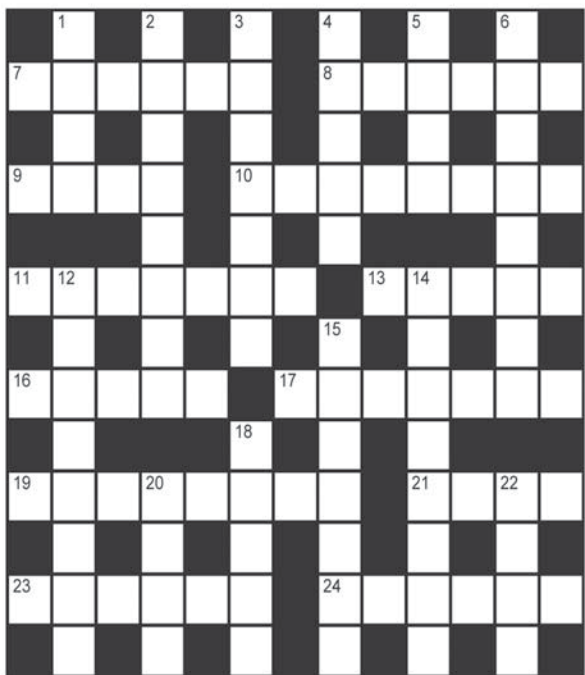


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Take your pick
 - 8 Gentle breeze
 - 9 Telescope part
 - 10 Feeler
 - 11 Soon
 - 13 Threshold
 - 16 Siesta
 - 17 To the point
 - 19 Bouffe
- Down**
- 21 Sensed
 - 23 Colouring tool
 - 24 Dress style
 - 1 Clarified butter
 - 2 Economise
 - 3 Tortoise, for one
 - 4 Thunderstorm product
 - 5 Samoan capital
 - 6 Dangerous storms
 - 12 Chopper's spot
 - 14 Striped bass
 - 15 It can be smoked
 - 18 Grove of trees
 - 20 Some stingers
 - 22 Goldbrick

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

F	D		R	B	W
P	L	O	S	B	E
E	N	T	G	U	L
C	A	R	A	C	A
M	P	L	L	A	D
A	P	R	O	S	E
E	N	B	N		
A	R	E	T	S	A
T	R	J	S	R	
U	L	N	A	U	N
O	N	N	N	D	A
C	U	P	C	A	K
S	E	S	E	Y	

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

of the day

quote

We expect GST benefits to fully unfold in 2026, driving industry growth to 7-8 per cent annually, which will fuel employment generation within the country. In line with market demand, in both domestic and export markets, we will expand our capacity to meet consumer needs

HISASHI TAKEUCHI | MD AND CEO, MARUTI SUZUKI

By 2047, coal's share is expected to come down from the current levels to around 30-35 per cent. We understand that. But as long as that 35 per cent remains, we must develop responsibly

PM PRASAD | FORMER CHAIRMAN AND MD, COAL INDIA

The relaxed GST regime is going to augur ease of doing business in the CBG ecosystem. We anticipate that a reduction of 7 per cent in the applicable GST rate for CBG sector shall significantly improve project viability, and the direct impact would translate into 4-5 per cent increase in new investments in the industry over the short to medium term

GAURAV KEDIA | CHAIRMAN, IBA

SHORT TAKES

Mcap of 6 of top-10 firms rises ₹ 75,257cr

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most-valued firms climbed ₹75,256.97 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys emerging as the biggest winners. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 338.3 points, or 0.39 per cent. While Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), State Bank of India, Infosys, and Larsen & Toubro were the gainers, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) faced erosion from their valuation. The market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) jumped ₹22,594.96 crore to ₹11,87,673.41 crore. Infosys added ₹16,971.64 crore taking its valuation to ₹6,81,192.22 crore. The valuation of State Bank of India climbed ₹15,922.81 crore to ₹9,04,738.98 crore and that of Reliance Industries edged higher by ₹12,314.55 crore to ₹21,17,967.29 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Bharti Airtel advanced ₹7,384.23 crore to ₹11,95,332.34 crore and that of Larsen & Toubro went up ₹68.78 crore to ₹5,60,439.16 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most-valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and LIC.

Startup funding zooms 2.6X to \$364 million

New Delhi: Indian startups saw a strong jump in funding activity this week, with 30 companies raising a total of \$363.9 million across early-stage and growth-stage deals. This marked a sharp rise compared to the previous week, when 22 startups had raised around \$137.68 million. Growth and late-stage funding dominated the week, crossing the \$300 million mark through nine deals. The biggest raise came from customer engagement platform MoEngage, which secured an additional \$180 million as part of its Series F round from ChrysCapital and Dragon Funds, along with Schroders Capital. City-wise, Bangalore continued to lead the startup funding scene with 15 deals, followed by Delhi-NCR with six deals.



Today my home loan portfolio is more than Rs 9 lakh crore...this is the single largest business unit in the bank, over 20 per cent of our total assets

CS SETTY | CHAIRMAN, SBI

NORTH KOREA CRYPTO HEIST

North Korea has emerged as the biggest threat to cryptocurrency security in 2025. The data compiled by blockchain analytics firm Chainalysis said hackers linked to North Korea allegedly stole a record \$2.02 billion worth of cryptocurrency this year. This marks a sharp 51% increase compared to 2024 and takes the country's total crypto thefts over the years to an estimated \$6.75 billion. In 2025 alone, the DPRK accounted for nearly 76% of all major crypto service breaches worldwide



Musk closer to become world's first trillionaire

Tesla and SpaceX CEO's net worth soars to nearly \$750 billion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 21: Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk's net worth rose to nearly \$750 billion after a US court reinstated Tesla stock options worth \$139 billion.

According to Forbes' billionaires index, this development has taken Musk closer to become the world's first trillionaire.

Earlier, the Delaware Supreme Court in the US restored Musk's 2018 pay package from Tesla, overturning a lower-court decision that had struck it down as "unfathomable".



The ruling reverses a 2024 decision that rescinded the package and found that total rescission "leaves Musk uncompensated for his time and efforts over a period of six

Earlier this week, the Tesla CEO became the first person ever to surpass \$600 billion in net worth over reports that SpaceX was likely to go public

years," the 49-page ruling said, according to reports.

The 2018 package was worth about \$139 billion based on Tesla's closing stock price Friday, and if Musk exercises all stock options from the pay package,

his stake would rise from about 12.4 per cent to 18.1 per cent of an expanded share base.

The 2018 pay deal provided Musk options to buy about 304 million shares at a discounted price if Tesla met specific milestones. Tesla's board had warned that Musk, the world's richest person, leading the SpaceX rocket venture, could leave the electric car company if his pay was disrupted.

Earlier this week, the Tesla CEO became the first person ever to surpass \$600 billion in net worth over reports that SpaceX was likely to go public. With his company SpaceX

reportedly launching a tender offer, valuing the firm at \$800 billion, Musk's net worth has surged by \$168 billion to an estimated \$677 billion.

SpaceX is aiming for an initial public offering (IPO) next year that may value the firm at around \$1.5 trillion. Also, Musk's 12 per cent stake in electric vehicle maker Tesla is worth \$197 billion, excluding stock options.

Moreover, Musk's xAI Holdings is reportedly in talks to raise new funding at around \$230 billion valuation. Musk owns a 53 per cent stake in xAI Holdings, worth \$60 billion.

GeM helps to rake in ₹2,200 crore via e-waste, scrap sale



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: Public procurement portal GeM has enabled government departments and entities to raise Rs 2,200 crore over the last about four years through the disposal of assets such as scrap, e-waste, old vehicles, machinery, and leasehold properties, an official statement said Sunday.

The government e-marketplace (GeM) operates as a digital platform through which ministries, departments, and public sector entities procure goods and services. In addition to this function, GeM facilitates disposal of government assets through its "Forward Auction" module, introducing online competitive bidding and improving transparency, efficiency, and value discovery in a process that was traditionally fragmented and paperwork-intensive.

"Between December 2021 and November 2025, GeM's Forward Auction module facilitated auctions worth more than Rs 2,200 crore, conducted over 13,000 auctions, onboarded more than 23,000 registered bidders and enabled participation from over 17,000 auctioneers," the commerce ministry said.

These figures underscore that forward auctions are no longer a pilot initiative but have evolved into a nationwide digital mechanism for government asset disposal, it said.

A forward auction is a digital bidding process through which government departments sell assets such as scrap, e-waste, old vehicles, machinery and leasehold properties, including buildings and land, to the highest bidder. In this process, the government lists an item on the platform, registered bidders place competing bids and the highest offer is declared successful.

Through GeM's secure digital interface, departments are able to set reserve prices, define participation conditions and monitor bidding in real time, ensuring efficiency and transparency throughout the auction lifecycle.

Adani's big aviation bet

The group plans to enter engine MRO, passenger aircraft-to-freighter conversion space

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 21: Adani group plans to foray into engine MRO as well as passenger-aircraft-to-freighter (P2F) conversion, as the diversified conglomerate bets big on the domestic aviation market, according to a top group official.

Besides airports, the diversified conglomerate is also present in the MRO and pilots training business.

"We have separated the two (aviation). One is the airport infrastructure and the other one is the aircraft services business. So that can include dual use, defence and civilian use. So, between Indamer and Air Works (MROs), we are now combining the platform into a single giant MRO company," Jeet Adani, Director of Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL), told PTI during an interaction last week.

Stating that the MRO is a fast-growing segment, Jeet Adani said, "Now we are expanding that as well to increase our capabilities on landing gear, paint, P2F (passenger-to-freighter) conversions, and hopefully at some point, engines."

The group entered the MRO segment last December following the acquisition of aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services firm Air Works for an enterprise value of Rs 400 crore, strengthening its foothold in the defence MRO sector. Further expanding its presence in the MRO space, Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Ltd (ADSTL), through its venture Horizon Aero Solutions Ltd, in partnership with Prime Aero Services LLP, last month signed a definitive agreement to acquire a 100 per cent stake in MRO services provider, Indamer Technics Pvt Ltd (ITPL).

And last month, ADSTL said it will buy a 72.8 per cent



Adani group last week announced that it will infuse ₹1 lakh crore in its airports business over the next five years and projected a 10-15 per cent growth in the domestic aviation market, including airports and airlines, during the next 10-15 years

stake in Flight Simulation Technique Centre (FSTC) for Rs 820 crore, marking the conglomerate's foray into the pilot training segment.

"We are also expanding our bases. So, we are expanding in Ahmedabad which doesn't exist today as an Air Works base. Guwahati and Bhubaneswar (too) which don't exist as Air Works bases. So, we will see some expansion," he said.

Noting that flight training has bigger prospects in terms of expansion, Jeet Adani said, "Because FSTC right now is running with 15 simulators, I personally believe that India has the ability to absorb 40-50 simulators if we are able to execute."

"So now for the next, because it is a recent acquisition, we are just putting in place the right processing systems," he

said. "But the clear vision is in the next 2-3 years how do we get this business up to 45-50 simulators all across the country," Jeet Adani said.

Indian carriers are scheduled to induct some 1,700 aircraft over a period of time.

India will need an additional 30,000 pilots once the pending orders for 1,700 aircraft from the Indian carriers are delivered, Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu had said last week.

On the investment in these businesses, he said, "On the MRO and FSTC side, it's a little early to say because we are still in the process of finalising a long-term strategy and then putting a number to it."

"At the end of the day, we are deep into it and want to keep growing our expertise and our depth," he said.

India adds 50GW RE capacity with ₹2L-cr investment in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: While major powers slowed their push on renewable energy, India - often portrayed as a champion of fossil fuels - did the unthinkable. In 2025, it achieved a major climate milestone, with 50 per cent of its installed power generation capacity now coming from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of its 2030 target under the Paris Agreement signed in December 2015.

The world's fastest-growing economy now has a total installed generation capacity of about 510 gigawatts, comprising 247 GW of fossil-fuel sources and 262 GW of non-fossil fuel sources (including 254 GW from renewable energy sources).

India added around 50 GW of renewable energy capacity in 2025, backed by investments of nearly Rs 2 lakh crore, taking its total non-fossil fuel capacity to about 262 GW. The government expects to sustain a similar pace of capacity addition in 2026, even as challenges related



Outlook for the new year remains bright. We expect growth momentum in new installations to continue. More domestic manufacturing capacity is expected to come on stream, reducing the share of imports and forex outgo

VINAY RUSTAGI | CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER, PREMIER ENERGIES

to land acquisition, right-of-way issues and delays in signing power purchase agreements continue to constrain fresh projects.

Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi told PTI that India witnessed record growth in 2025, with about 45 GW of renewable capacity added between January and November, led by nearly 35 GW of solar in-

stallations. "By the end of December, we will touch nearly 48-50 GW. The future is sunny and will be powered by renewables," he said, adding that momentum is expected to continue in 2026.

Industry estimates put investment requirements at around Rs 4 crore per MW, implying Rs 2 lakh crore for every 50 GW of capacity.

According to an IREDA

study, India will require investments of about Rs 30.54 lakh crore between 2023 and 2030 to meet its 500 GW non-fossil fuel target. Public sector financial institutions have already deployed about Rs 10.79 lakh crore into renewable projects since 2014, including Rs 2.68 lakh crore in 2024-25 alone.

"We have witnessed a record growth in the renewable energy sector in 2025. We have installed a total capacity addition of around 45 GW achieved from January to November 2025, with solar energy leading the remarkable surge with almost 35 GW. By the end of the year in December, we will touch nearly 48 to 50 GW. I am very optimistic about the future growth prospects of the sector. We expect to continue the momentum in the coming year in 2026," Joshi said.

The minister added that from 2014 till 2024-25, an amount of Rs 10.79 lakh crores (approximately) has been deployed by public sector banks,

IREDA, PFC, REC, IIFCL, SIDBI and NaBFID (excluding private banks) towards renewable energy projects.

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, an amount of Rs 2.68 lakh crore (approximately) has been deployed by these institutions, he stated.

Vinay Rustagi, Chief Business Officer at Premier Energies, said that 2025 has been a highly charged year for renewables.

New project commissioning has grown by more than 50 per cent over the previous year, with a big boost coming from PM Surya Ghar Yojana and PM Kusum scheme, he noted.

The government has prepared a roadmap to give a boost to domestic manufacturing of cells and ingot-wafers to meet the entire domestic demand, he said.

This has led to several companies announcing large investment plans in the sector. It was also a breakthrough year for storage, where the government announced another large

capital subsidy scheme, leading to a spurt in storage tenders and auctions, he noted.

He pointed out that growing renewable power capacity has led to an imbalance in the grid, causing curtailment of power and delays in transmission capacity addition are slowing down project execution, particularly in Rajasthan.

He said the signing of a US-India trade treaty would help provide an attractive market avenue for Indian manufacturers.

Hitachi Energy MD and CEO, India & South Asia, N Venu suggested that the focus should be on strengthening the transmission network, expediting the development of renewable energy zones, enhancing energy storage capabilities, and shifting from project-based to programme-based initiatives.

With focused efforts in 2026, India can enhance its energy security and strengthen its position in the global clean energy sector, he added.

Shock defeat for Boys in Blue

India overpowered by Minhas' big hundred and pacers as Pakistan clinch title

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dubai, Dec 21: India faltered against the big-hitting Sameer Minhas and the extra zip of pacers, suffering a massive 191-run defeat against Pakistan in a one-sided 50-over Under-19 Asia Cup final, here Sunday.

Pakistan lifted their second U19 Asia Cup, and as it is the norm now, there was no formal greetings between the players of two teams.

Once Pakistan posted a mammoth 347 for eight, riding on Minhas' 172 (113b, 17x4, 9x6) they needed a lion-hearted chase to clinch a ninth title in the tournament.

But the tall Pakistan pace troika -- Ali Reza (4/42), Mohammad Sayyam (2/38) and Abdul Subhan (2/29) -- hurried their top-order with consistent hard-lengths as India folded for 156 in 26.2 overs.

India's chase began on an explosive note despite losing Ayush Mhatre early. Vaibhav Suryavanshi hammered Raza for two sixes and a four to take 21 runs in the first over.

Aaron George too began brightly, caressing Sayyam for three fours in a row in the fourth over as India raced off the block at 10 runs an over.

But the game's course changed in the last ball of the fourth over. George was jostled into a pull by Sayyam, and all he could do was to sky the



We were clear to bowl first, there were some inconsistencies in the line of the bowling. It was a simple plan to play the 50 overs. The boys really played well and tournament was good for us and some players stood up

AYUSH MHATRE | SKIPPER, INDIA

short-pitched ball to Mohammad Shayan inside the circle.

In the first ball of the fifth over, India suffered a body blow with the dismissal of Suryavanshi.

The left-hander went for a full-blooded pick-up shot off Raza, but the good-length ball, which had extra bounce on it, took the edge of the opener's bat and nestled in the gloves of stumper Zahoor Hamza.

Raza and Pakistan fielders

celebrated wildly, and a few words were exchanged before Suryavanshi trudged off dejected.

India slipped from 49 for 1 to 49 for three in the space of two balls, and it was just the beginning.

Vedant Trivedi and Kanishk Chouhan too fell to snorters as Pakistan pacers made the flat ICC Academy pitch look like the Road of Bones.

India's last hope — even if

feeble — was the presence of Abhigyan Kundu, and a drop on 12 off Subhan hinted at a possible shifting of fortune.

But all such hopes were trampled when Kundu's upper cut two balls later after his reprieve found Niqab Shafiq at third man.

Earlier, Pakistan opener Minhas struck a brilliant century as Pakistan motored to a humongous total.

Minhas, the younger brother of Pakistan T20 player Arafat, went after every Indian bowler but was especially harsh on new-ball bowlers Kishan Singh and Deepesh Devdran.

Minhas brought up his century off 71 balls with a four in the

29th over off Devdran.

This was Minhas' second hundred in the competition having cracked an unbeaten 177 against Malaysia in the opening group match.

Minhas' six in the 28th over, where he used his feet to launch a Mhatre delivery high up in the air to deep mid-wicket, had class written all over it.

The 19-year-old looked set for a double century but he was tricked by a slower delivery from Devdran (3/83) to be caught at mid-on.

It was smooth sailing for Pakistan after Hamza Zahoor (18) departed early.

Zahoor's dismissal brought in Usman Khan (35) and, together with Minhas, took the total to 123 -- a partnership that yielded 92 runs.

Left-handed Ahmed Hussain, who too has enjoyed a rich vein of form in the tournament scoring a century and half-ton, struck a fine 56 before left-arm spinner Khilan Patel (2/44) enticed the middle-order batter to play the false sweep and gave a catch at mid-wicket.

His 137-run partnership with Minhas provided the deck for Pakistan to go for a big total.

BRIEF SCORES

Pakistan U19 347/8 in 50 overs (Sameer Minhas 172, Ahmed Hussain 56; Deepesh Devdran 3-83, Khilan Patel 2-44) beat **India U19** 156 all out in 26.2 overs (Deepesh Devdran 36, Vaibhav Suryavanshi 26; Ali Raza 4-42, Huzafa Ahsan 2-12) by 191 runs

WOMEN'S T20 INTERNATIONAL

Jemimah stars in India's fierce eight-wicket win



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, Dec 21: Jemimah Rodrigues executed her shots with great skill and style en route to a scintillating, unbeaten 44-ball 69 as India crushed Sri Lanka by eight wickets in the first Women's T20 International here Sunday.

Opting to field, India restricted Sri Lanka to a modest 121 for six after the visiting batters struggled to put away the loose balls, even as dew made its presence felt earlier than expected.

India completed the chase of 122 with as many as 32 balls to spare, as Rodrigues added 54 runs with Smriti Mandhana (25 off 25 balls) and 55 with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (15 not out off 16 balls) to help the home side take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

While she played some delectable strokes during her stay in the middle, the highlight of Rodrigues' innings was the four boundaries she struck in a single over bowled by left-arm wrist spinner Shashini Gimhani.

Earlier, the swashbuckling Shafali Verma launched the In-

dia innings with three boundaries in the first over, but could not sustain that for long as Gimhani took a neat catch after the batter flicked Kawya Kavindi in the air.

Mandhana was lucky as she got a boundary off a thick inside-edge off Kawya, and then, Rodrigues played a late cut off Malki Madara to find the fence.

With India reaching 30 for one in four overs, Sri Lanka skipper Chamari Athapaththu brought herself in, and Mandhana rocked back to work the ball through backward point for a boundary before getting another four with a lofted shot over extra-cover to bring up her 4000 runs in the T20i format.

Earlier, opener Vishmi Gunaratne top-scored for the visitors with a 43-ball 39, while Hasini Perera and Harshitha Samarawickrama chipped in with 20 and 21 respectively.

Brief Scores
Sri Lanka Women: 121 for 6 in 20 overs (Vishmi Gunaratne 39; Deepthi Sharma 1/20).
India Women: 122 for 2 in 14.4 overs (Jemimah Rodrigues 69 not out, Smriti Mandhana 25; Inoka Ranaweera 1/17).

NATIONAL SHOTGUN CHAMPIONSHIP

Jindal Steel athletes shine bright



Gurjoat Singh Khangura



Mairaj Ahmad Khan

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 21: Jindal Steel is proud to announce the historic success of its supported athletes at the 68th National Shooting Shotgun Championship (NSSC), held at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, New Delhi. In a series of high-stakes performances, the Jindal Steel-backed contingent secured multiple gold and silver medals, reinforcing the company's commitment to nurturing elite sporting talent in India.

In a thrilling display of precision and composure, Gurjoat Singh Khangura clinched the 2025 National Champion title in the Men's Skeet event. Finishing the tournament at Rank 1, Khangura delivered a commanding performance in



Raiza Dhillon

the finals, triumphing over a formidable field that included

seasoned Olympians.

Rising star Raiza Dhillon emerged as the standout performer in the women's category, delivering a master-class in skeet shooting. Dhillon clinched Gold in both the Women's and Junior Women's Skeet events, showcasing exceptional skill. Her double-podium finish underscores her position as one of the most promising young talents in Indian shooting.

Reflecting the discipline of a veteran champion, Olympian Mairaj Ahmad Khan secured two Silver Medals at the championships. His consistent performance at the highest level continues to inspire the next generation of shooters, and Jindal Steel is proud to continue its long-standing support of his journey.

Mbappé equals 'idol' Ronaldo's club record



Barcelona: Kylian Mbappé scored his 59th goal for Real Madrid in 2025 Saturday to equal the club record for the most in a year held by Cristiano Ronaldo. The milestone was about to escape the France striker until he converted a penalty kick with four minutes left to complete a 2-0 win over 10-man Sevilla in Madrid's final game of the year. On his 27th birthday, Mbappé matched Ronaldo's tally from 2013. After embracing his teammates, he marked the feat with a subdued version of Ronaldo's trademark goal celebration — whereby the Portugal forward leaps up and thrusts his arms downwards upon landing — before blowing a kiss at the television cameras. The former Paris Saint-Germain star, who joined Madrid in the summer of 2024, has scored 29 times for Madrid this season, including a league-leading 18. "It's incredible, in my first (full) year to do what Cristiano did. (He's) my idol, the best player in the history of Real Madrid," Mbappé said. "My celebration is for him. I wanted to do that because he helped me adapt here and now I can help Madrid win games with my goals," he added.

Haaland beats Ronaldo's Premier League tally

London: Another double for Erling Haaland, who is motoring along at better than a goal a game and another three points for Manchester City, whose winning streak is up to five matches. That's still not enough to stop Arsenal being top of the Premier League on Christmas Day. Haaland scored in each half against West Ham to move to 19 goals in 17 matches in this campaign — in doing so passing Cristiano Ronaldo on the Premier League's all-time scoring list — and also set up Tijjani Reijnders for the other goal. Haaland has 38 goals in a combined 28 games for City and Norway in what is shaping up to be the most prolific season of his career. Injury permitting, the season will end in him going to his first World Cup. His two goals gave Haaland 104 in the Premier League, one more than Ronaldo — who had two spells at Manchester United — having played 122 games fewer.



Asian Football Confederation to launch AFC Nations League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Dec 21: The Asian Football Confederation announced Sunday it will launch an AFC Nations League to boost competition among its member countries. The move follows UEFA's introduction of a Nations League in 2018, in which European national teams are divided into tiers and play during designated international windows.

The announcement comes a day after the Confederation of African Football said it will start a similar tournament in 2029. "The effective utilization of the FIFA international match windows has become increasingly challenging due to limited opponent availability, rising operational costs and logistical complexities, often diminishing the sporting value of international fixtures," the AFC said in a statement.

"Following a comprehensive internal review and consultation process, the confederation has decided, in principle, to introduce an AFC Nations League." UEFA's Nations League was introduced to allow teams to play more games against similarly ranked sides, improving their chances of winning and improving.

Australia retains Ashes

Bazball revolution falters for England as Australia go 3-0 up with 82-run win in Adelaide

AGENCIES

Adelaide, Dec 21: Australia retained the Ashes with two tests to spare after paceman Mitchell Starc took three of the last four wickets to blunt England's defiant comeback in the third cricket test.

Australia started Day 5 needing four wickets to retain the Ashes, with England resuming at 6-207 and still 228 runs away from the victory target of 435 that would have required a world record to achieve.

Starc took the only wicket in the morning session — Jamie Smith for 60 — as England piled on 102 runs.

England's rally had narrowed the Ashes equation at lunch on the last day: Australia needed three wickets to clinch the old urn in Adelaide and England needed 126 runs to keep the five-match series alive.

With England's lower-order doggedly mounting pressure and Australia's attack missing veteran spinner Nathan Lyon, who limped off the field with an injured hamstring, the leading bowler in the series de-



Feels pretty awesome. We got it done. It's a good old fashioned grind a lot of the time and, yeah, I love the toil from all the guys today
PAT CUMMINS | CAPTAIN, AUSTRALIA
This is going to hurt quite a bit. Obviously that dream that we came here with is now over, which is obviously incredibly disappointing
BEN STOKES | SKIPPER, ENGLAND

livered for the hosts.

Starc was voted player of the match in Australia's eight-wicket wins in Perth and Brisbane, took the wickets of Will Jacks and Jofra Archer before Scott Boland finished

it off. England was all out for 352, giving Australia an 82-run victory.

Australian wicketkeeper Alex Carey was voted player of the match after posting a home ground hundred in the first innings, a half-century in the second innings in a 162-run stand with Travis Head, who top-scored with 170, and completing seven dismissals for the test.

Long, long drought

Domestic media noted Sunday that it had been 5,462 days since England last won a test match in Australia — dating back to January 2011.

Since then, the Australians have won the series Down Under 5-0, 4-0, 4-0 and are now 3-0.

Melbourne will host the Boxing Day test starting Dec.

Aussie Mavericks Kites bag maiden WTL title

SURESH ANNOUNCED HIMSELF AS INDIA'S MAN FOR THE FUTURE AS HE TOOK HIS TEAM TO TRIUMPH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Dec 21: India's Dhakshinewar Suresh helped his team take the World Tennis League 2025 (WTL) title at the SM Krishna Stadium Saturday as Aussie Mavericks Kites rode the momentum swings to beat the AOS Eagles 22-19 to clinch their first WTL title.

At the end of Day 2, the Aussie Mavericks Kites were languishing at the bottom of the table. But the dynamic tournament format, where every game matters, saw them climb up the ladder and into the finals. Saturday, in front of a capacity crowd that included cricket royalty Kapil Dev and KL Rahul, Aussie Mavericks Kites rode the momentum swings to beat the AOS Eagles 22-19 to clinch their first WTL title.

Suresh announced himself as India's man for the future during this edition of WTL. The 6'5 ace



machine took down players of the calibre of Daniil Medvedev and looked like he belonged on the big stage. The 25-year-old has taken the route of American college tennis, and is currently a student at Wake Forest university. In the final, he showcased his

big, aggressive game yet again to avenge his group-stage defeat to Sumit Nagal. Suresh won the men's singles, the final and deciding set, 7-6.

Earlier Saturday, Marta Kostyuk had given the Aussie Mavericks Kites a winning

start as she defeated Shrivalli Bhamidipaty 6-4. The AOS Eagles, who had marched into the final unbeaten, bounced back in the mixed doubles, with Shrivalli and Monfils beating Suresh- Kostyuk 6-3. But the comeback was short-lived. Kyrgios, who has entertained from the sidelines just as well, teamed up with Suresh to beat Nagal-Monfils 6-3.

Former US Open champion Medvedev headlined a star-studded field that featured French maverick Monfils, showman Kyrgios, Denis Shapovalov, 2025 Australian Open semi-finalist Paula Badosa and former World No 3 Elina Svitolina. Sharing the court with them was Indian stalwart Rohan Bopanna, a two-time Grand Slam champion who last year became the oldest World No 1 in doubles, Yuki Bhambri, Nagal and Olympian Ankita Raina.