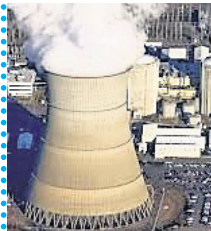


Ananya bats for Gen Z

Actor Ananya Panday says Gen Z is the first generation that's really embracing mental health and freedom of expression

LEISURE | P10



Japan's nuclear comeback

Japan approves restart of world's largest nuclear plant, marking major step since Fukushima disaster

INTERNATIONAL | P9



India-NZ conclude FTA

India and New Zealand finalise talks on a free trade deal that will give India tariff-free access to the island nation's markets

BUSINESS | P11



Spain on top

In the final FIFA men's world rankings of 2025, Spain maintain its position at the top of the global standings

SPORTS | P12

BLAST UNDER CAR KILLS RUSSIAN GEN

AGENCIES

Moscow, Dec 22: A Russian general was killed Monday morning after an explosive device detonated underneath his car in Moscow, and investigators said Ukraine could be behind the attack, the third such killing of a senior military officer in a year.

Lt Gen Fanil Sarvarov, head of Operational Training Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces' General Staff, died from his injuries, said Svetlana Petrenko, the spokesperson for Russia's Investigative Committee, the nation's top criminal investigation agency. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



True, I ordered jungles to be cut - but I also planted many trees, especially during my foreign trips

Another B'desh student leader shot in head

PNN & AGENCIES

Dhaka, Dec 22: Restoration of peace in Bangladesh appears to be a distant dream, as unidentified gunmen Monday shot in the head Motaleb Shikder, a second leader of Bangladesh's violent student-led 2024 uprising. The attack took place in south-western Khulna city, days after killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi.

"Khulna Division head of NCP (National Citizen Party) and central coordinator of the party's workers front, Motaleb Shikder, was shot a few minutes ago," NCP's joint principal coordinator Mahmuda Mitu said in a Facebook post. Mitu, a doctor, said Shikder was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

The Kaler Kantha newspaper, quoting hospital sources, said Shikder was shot on the left side of his head, and was bleeding profusely when he was brought to the facility, where the doctors started emergency treatment.

The attack came days after Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year



A FILE PHOTO

BANGLADESH SUSPENDS VISA SERVICES IN DELHI, TRIPURA

New Delhi: Bangladesh has suspended visa services in its High Commission in New Delhi and its mission in Tripura amid mounting strain in ties between the two countries. The decision to suspend the visa services was taken after groups of protesters held demonstrations outside the two missions, people familiar with the matter said. The Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi put out a public notice mentioning suspension of visa services in view of unavoidable circumstances. Also, the Assistant High Commission of Bangladesh in Tripura also made a similar announcement.

that led to the ouster of the prime minister Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was shot in the head on December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area.

The 32-year-old Inqilab Man-

cha spokesperson died while undergoing treatment in Singapore December 18.

After Monday's clandestine attack on Shikder in Khulna city's Majid Sarani area, police said they are yet in dark about the perpetrators or motive but launched an "immediate man-hunt" for their arrest. Local police station chief Animesh Mondal said KMCH authorities have shifted Shikder to its City Imaging Centre to pinpoint the state of his injury.

Meanwhile, the editors of leading Bangladeshi newspapers Monday said the country's media is facing a fight for survival and the freedom of expression has been overtaken by concerns over journalists' "right to stay alive". P9

3 die of suspected food poisoning

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Dec 22: In a shocking incident, a 56-year-old woman and her two sons died of suspected food poisoning at Itap village under Kantabania police limits in Dhenkanal district Monday morning, police said.

The deceased were identified as Golap Sahu, wife of Antaryami Sahu, and her two sons Bharat Sahu, 32, and Lipun Sahu, 24, of Ashanbani Colony in the village.

According to family members, Golap cooked poultry meat, spinach and other leaves Sunday night. The trio had dinner after Lipun returned home from duty around 10:30pm. They



were asleep in a room but didn't wake up Monday morning.

Finding no response from inside, other family members broke open the door to find the three lying unconscious.

Vomit was strewn inside the room, they said. Family members also noticed that charcoal had been burned and kept inside the room overnight. Villagers and relatives tried to revive them by sprinkling water, but

to no avail. They were rushed to the district headquarters hospital, Angul, where doctors pronounced them dead.

Kantabania police recovered the bodies and began an investigation. The bodies were sent for postmortem to ascertain the exact cause of death.

Investigators are also examining the possibility that the family used burning coal or embers inside the house to keep warm, which might have led to suffocation, officials said. Preliminary inquiry has not indicated any foul play, police said.

The puke samples collected from the scene have been sent to a forensic laboratory for analysis, the police added.

Dacoits kill retd health supervisor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Dec 22: Miscreants killed a 62-year-old retired woman supervisor of the Health department and decamped with her gold ornaments from her residence at Gadijor under Dharmagarh police limits in Kalahandi district in the wee hours of Monday, police said.

The victim, Suchitra Khuntia, had injuries on her neck and hands, suggesting she was

strangled with a shawl she was wearing, investigators said. All the gold ornaments she was wearing were missing, indicating a robbery.

After committing the crime, police said, the assailants fled the scene along with her scooter, which they later abandoned on Biju Expressway. Dharmagarh police, along with a scientific team and a sniffer dog squad, reached the spot and launched an investigation. P4

Duped of ₹8cr, ex-IPS officer shoots self

Patiala: Former IPS officer Amar Singh Chahal allegedly shot himself here Monday and in a purported note, he claimed that he had been duped of ₹8.10 crore by cyber thugs who posed as wealth management advisors. He was shifted to the hospital in a critical condition, Patiala Senior Superintendent of Police Varun Sharma said. Chahal was one of the accused in the 2015 police firing cases related to anti-sacrilege protests in Faridkot. Police found a note which shows that he is a victim of some financial fraud.



KIIT Nanhipari

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- Miss Whizkid
Girl with highest marks in quiz round
- Miss Cinderella
A graceful walk & pose and a positive attitude

- Miss Personality
Sharp intelligence, confidence & communication skills
- Miss Monalisa
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- Miss Active
Most active girl in Sports round
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FM fire sets off a streak



The year saw a series of self-immolation deaths of women. It started with Soumyashree Bisi, a second-year Integrated BEd student of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College in Balasore, who set herself on fire on the college campus July 12, sending shockwaves across the state. The young woman had earlier accused HoD of Education department Samir Kumar Sahu of demanding sexual favours from her. Sahu allegedly threatened to fail her on the pretext of irregular attendance and subjected her to repeated humiliation and mental harassment. Soumyashree took the extreme step after her repeated pleas before the higher authorities seeking action against Sahu went unheard. The College Principal had

called the student to his office for discussions. After returning from the meeting, she allegedly poured petrol on herself and set herself ablaze. She suffered nearly 95% burns. She was rushed to the DHH and later to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar for specialised treatment. Despite intensive medical care, the student succumbed to her injuries July 14.

Following the incident, police arrested Sahu and the college Principal Dillip Kumar Ghose. The state government constituted a three-member high-level committee to conduct a thorough inquiry. CM Mohan Charan Majhi assured the victim's family of justice and stringent action against all those responsible. The student's death triggered strong political reactions, with Opposition parties protesting across the state.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Gandhi described the incident as an "organised murder by the system," alleging a grave institutional failure to protect a student who had spoken out against sexual harassment. Rahul



Violence against women remained a burning issue throughout the year, marked by a disturbing rise in cases of self-immolation and sexual crimes. At least five women died by self-immolation, reportedly driven by severe atrocities, with each incident drawing widespread media attention. Public spaces such as beaches and tourism sites continued to pose significant safety risks for women and girls. Deeply entrenched gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes persist, exacerbated by inadequate enforcement of existing laws and limited public awareness. These factors collectively enable the ongoing perpetuation of crimes against women, even as we are all set to welcome the New Year 2026

Kendrapara's Sangeeta charred in betrayal fire

The charred body of a 20-year-old Sangeeta Parida was found in her house in a village under Pattamundai Rural police station of Kendrapara district August 6 morning. Family members said the girl is suspected to have immolated herself following a blackmail threat from her boyfriend. The victim was a Plus III final-year student of political science and had appeared the semester examination the previous day. The deceased's father alleged that the girl was in a relationship with a youth for the past two years and ended her life after being blackmailed by her boyfriend with whom she had broken up six months back. Kendrapara SP Siddharth Kataria and other senior police officers rushed to the village to investigate the case. Later, the NHRC had taken cognizance of the case and sought a report from the DGP.

Bargarh schoolgirl torches self

Even as this was not enough for the state to see, a 13-year-old Class VIII girl allegedly set herself afire died of burn injuries in Bargarh district August 11. The daughter of a migrant labourer, the girl took the extreme step at Phiringimal under Padmapur sub-division. She was first taken to the district headquarters hospital and later to VIMSAR, Burla, where she succumbed to the burns.

Sundargarh minor succumbs to 90 pc burns

After a brief gap, an undergraduate female student from Lanjiberna in Rajgangpur of Sundargarh district attempted to burn herself December 5 and suffered nearly 90 per cent burn injuries. The incident marked the fifth such incident reported in the state within six months. The incident took place while the minor victim's family

members were asleep. Family members rushed the second-year student to a local hospital after hearing her screams. She was later shifted to Ispat General Hospital (IGH) in Rourkela, where doctors described her condition as "highly critical." The victim's mother said her daughter received a threatening phone call before the incident. The girl died December 7 night while undergoing treatment at the hospital. Police arrested a 25-year-old man for allegedly harassing the college student.

SHAKTISHREE FOR SAFETY

In the wake of self-immolation of the FM College student over alleged harassment by a faculty member, the state government decided to launch a special programme 'Shaktishree' to ensure safety of girl students in the state's colleges and universities. The Shaktishree Yojana features a dedicated mobile app for female students to securely report harassment (text, audio, video), access counselling via Tele-MANAS, get ICC info, and use an SOS button for emergencies, creating a comprehensive digital platform for campus safety and empowerment, linked with training, mentoring, and campus surveillance.

Key Features of Shaktishree App:

Anonymous Reporting: Submit complaints via text, audio, or video with an option to stay anonymous, directly reaching the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)

Emergency SOS: An integrated SOS button connects users instantly with their assigned mentors (Shakti Saathi/Sanjojika) for urgent help

Information Hub: Provides guidelines, contact details for ICC members, and relevant laws/rights for women

Mental Health Support: Offers access to free counselling and links to the national Tele-MANAS helpline

Broader Shaktishree Initiative Components:

Safety Empowerment Cells: Managed by female students within colleges

Shakti Apa Mentors: Five women mentors appointed per institution for guidance

Training: Mandatory training for staff and students on gender sensitisation and safety

Campus Surveillance: 24x7 CCTV and a control room

SAFE Campaigns: Biannual awareness campaigns

Purpose: To create safer, more inclusive academic environments and empower young women by providing accessible tools for reporting issues and accessing support



Balanga teen immolates self

A 15-year-old Class VIII dropout girl was allegedly set on fire by unidentified miscreants in a horrific incident in Puri district July 19, sparking widespread outrage and renewed concerns over the safety of women in the state. The teenager sustained nearly 70% burns and was rushed to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar in a critical condition. The incident occurred on the banks of Bhargabi River near Bayabara village under Balanga police limits when the girl was returning from a friend's house. As she was conscious and able to speak, police recorded her statement in the presence of a magistrate. Preliminary findings suggested that three motorcycle-borne youths intercepted her, dragged her to the riverbank, poured an inflammable substance on her and set her ablaze before fleeing the scene.

On the directions of CM Mohan Charan Majhi, the victim was airlifted to AIIMS-Delhi for advanced treatment. Despite intensive medical care, she succumbed to her injuries. The incident triggered sharp political reactions, with Opposition parties terming it a reflection of systemic failure in governance. The Congress and BJD criticised the state government for its inability to arrest the culprits even two weeks after the incident. The Supreme Court also took note of the case, describing it as "shameful" and "unfortunate" and underscoring the urgent need to strengthen safety mechanisms for women. Controversy deepened when police claimed that no other person was involved in the incident, contradicting the FIR lodged by the victim's mother. Police did not clarify how the girl sustained the burn injuries.

- Jan 10:** A minor girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in Rourkela
- Jan 18:** A 16-year-old girl from Teterkela village was reportedly sexually assaulted by six persons in Bisra
- March 3:** Rourkela police detained staff of a bus for allegedly trying to rape a six-year-old girl at a secluded location near Chandiposh railway station in Sundargarh
- April 22:** Rourkela police detained three persons, including a juvenile, for allegedly gangraping a 15-year-old girl in Sundargarh
- April 27:** A woman was allegedly kidnapped by the driver of an auto-rickshaw, gangraped and then stabbed multiple times
- May 11:** A young woman from Baliguda police station area was allegedly abducted and gangraped by three men over a period of seven days
- May 28:** Deogarh police arrested a lawyer identified as Rohit Kumar Pradhan who allegedly raped a woman on multiple occasions on the pretext of marriage
- June 8:** Berhampur police arrested four youths who allegedly abducted and gangraped two minor sisters (15-year-old and 11-year-old) during a wedding ceremony in a village under Golanthara police limits
- June 20:** Four men were arrested for alleged gangrape and murder of a 17-year-old Plus II student in Keonjhar, two days after her body was found hanging from a tree
- July 3:** A girl was allegedly gangraped by her hockey coach and two of his associates earlier this month in Jajpur district
- July 20:** A 15-year-old girl was abducted and gangraped on her way back home from a birthday party, only to be sexually assaulted again by a driver who offered her a lift after she escaped
- July 22:** A 17-year-old girl consumed poison after she was reportedly gangraped by her boyfriend and his two juvenile friends at Kansbahal within Rajgangpur police limits in Sundargarh district
- July 25:** Two brothers allegedly gang-raped a 15-year-old girl and then attempted to bury her alive after she became five months pregnant in Jagatsinghpur
- July 30:** Two boys, aged 17, have been detained and sent to an observation home, while a 19-year-old youth has been arrested for the alleged gang rape of a minor girl in Rourkela

College girl gangraped on Gopalpur beach

June 15: Amid Raja celebrations, the state was stunned by alleged gangrape of a college student near Gopalpur beach where the woman had gone with her male friend. Police said the accused allegedly dragged the woman's friend to a distance and tied him up while the others took turns to rape her. Ten men were arrested in the case that rocked the state. The NHRC had taken suo motu cognizance of the case after it made national headlines.

Odia medico gangraped in Bengal's Durgapur

Oct 10: The horrific gangrape of an Odia MBBS student in West Bengal shocked the state this year. The 23-year-old female student, a native of Jaleswar in Balasore district studying at IQ City Medical College in Durgapur's Shivapur area in West Bengal, had gone out with a male friend October 10 night when some men approached them near the college gate, took the woman to a secluded area around 1 km away from the college premises, and raped her before fleeing the scene.

Trafficked J'khand minor's rescue sparks HIV scare

Oct 16: Taking the lid off the dark underbelly of human trafficking and exploitation in Bhubaneswar, a harrowing case surfaced of a 16-year-old girl from Jharkhand, who was allegedly raped, trafficked, and found to be HIV-positive after her rescue in a distraught condition from the roadside October 16. The case led to discovery of a high-profile sex racket operating for over years in Laxmisagar area and sparked a frenzied search for at least 27 clients who were frequenting the house.

Aug 9: A 15-year-old Class X girl was allegedly gangraped by five individuals, her uncle and four others, in a village of Kendrapara district, August 9, Raksha Bandhan day

Aug 26: A 23-year-old woman alleged that she was raped by several persons for six months after she was abducted by a man of her locality in Balasore district

Aug 31: A 22-year-old woman was allegedly raped by five people in Mayurbhanj

Sept 7: An 11-year-old girl studying in Class V was allegedly raped and murdered and her mutilated body of was recovered from a nullah at Shayamsundarpur village in Angul

Sept 13: In a chilling incident in Puri, a 19-year-old Dalit college student was allegedly gangraped by two men in front of her boyfriend at Baliharchandi beach

Sept 19: Two youths accused of gangraping a minor girl and molesting another have been arrested by K Balang police under Rourkela police

Oct 22: Two tribal girls were gangraped by five men in Mayurbhanj when they were returning home after watching 'jatra' (open theatre)

Nov 9: A 14-year-old girl from Kandhamal was allegedly sold in Madhya Pradesh after being lured with the promise of a job. Police rescued the minor girl two months after the incident and arrested three persons, including a middleman

Dec 11: In a shocking incident that rattled the state capital, a minor girl was allegedly gangraped near the banks of the Daya river near Dhauli December 11 while the victim was out with her male friend

Dec 18: Barely days after the Dhauli gangrape, Bhubaneswar was once again rocked by another alleged case of sexual violence after a minor girl accused two persons of gang-raping her in a rented house under the Saeed Nagar police limits on the pretext of providing her a data entry operator job



CM: Hyd event shows growing investor confidence in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: The two-day Odisha Investors' Meet and roadshow in Hyderabad demonstrated growing investor confidence in the coastal state, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said here Monday.

Addressing media at Lok Seva Bhavan in the City after returning from Hyderabad, the CM described the visit as highly encouraging and satisfying.

"The Hyderabad outreach clearly demonstrated growing investor confidence in Odisha, driven by policy clarity, infrastructure development, and proactive governance. The feedback from investors confirms that Odisha's industrial journey has moved from promise to execution," he said.

The CM said Odisha is fast emerging as one of India's most attractive investment destinations, asserting that the state is on course to become the country's next major growth engine.

During the two-day visit, the state government held 73 high-level meetings and conducted two sector-specific roundtable discussions — one with eight leading pharmaceutical companies and another with 27 defence sector companies. The CM also held 38 one-on-one meetings with industrial leaders.

"These interactions have helped position pharma and defence — currently underrepresented sectors in Odisha — as new growth drivers," Majhi said. Discussions covered investments in pharmaceuticals and medical devices, defence manufacturing, renewable energy equipment, electronics and IT, data centres, textiles and technical textiles, and advanced manufacturing.

The Hyderabad roadshow resulted in the signing of 13 MoUs involving investments worth



₹27,650 crore, expected to generate 15,905 jobs. Additionally, nine investment intention filings (IIFs) were received, indicating potential investments of over ₹39,131 crore and employment for 40,435 people.

Overall, the meet and roadshow generated investment commitments of ₹66,781 crore, with an employment potential of 56,340 jobs, making it one of the most successful investor outreach programmes undertaken by the Odisha government.

The CM said 'Enterprise Odisha' will be held in Rourkela January 28 and 29, 2026, marking a new milestone in the state's industrial roadmap. A separate industrial conclave is also planned in Kolkata.

He said the next three months will be crucial, with the government focusing on converting investment proposals into grounded projects through faster approvals and swift execution.

"To further improve the investment climate, the state government is undertaking 23 amendments across various laws to enhance ease of doing business. Outdated regulations are being reformed to align

with current industrial needs," the CM said.

"The faster projects take off on the ground, the stronger investor confidence becomes," he added.

During the visit, the CM and senior officials toured Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) in Hyderabad, a leading defence manufacturing company. Majhi said Odisha will develop a defence manufacturing ecosystem, with special focus on MSMEs, startups, skilled manpower, and precision manufacturing. Preparations are underway for missile component manufacturing within the state.

Majhi said that since Utkarsh Odisha: Make in Odisha Conclave 2025, projects worth ₹4.38 lakh crore have been approved, with employment potential for 2.55 lakh people. In the last 18 months alone, industrial projects worth ₹2.10 lakh crore have been inaugurated or grounded, creating 1.63 lakh jobs.

Sector-specific conclaves in pharma, textiles, and other industries have been held, while Odisha also signed two MoUs at the Semicon Conclave in Delhi — reflecting sustained focus

- Enterprise Odisha will be held in Rourkela January 28 and 29, 2026. A separate industrial conclave is also planned in Kolkata
- To improve ease of doing business, 23 amendments are being made to various laws

The next three months will be crucial, with the government focusing on converting investment proposals into grounded projects through faster approvals and swift execution

MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI, CHIEF MINISTER

on industrialisation.

Industrial leaders who participated in the meetings praised Odisha's transparent policies, infrastructure improvements, responsive governance, and the CM's personal monitoring of projects. Many investors expressed confidence that Odisha is poised to become India's next growth engine.

"The rising interest across pharma, defence, electronics, renewable energy, IT, textiles, and advanced manufacturing reflects Odisha's transformation into a diversified, value-driven, and employment-generating industrial economy," the CM said.

Summing up the visit, Majhi said Odisha's industrial mantra rests on trust, continuous effort, and long-term partnerships, adding that the success of the Hyderabad roadshow marks a significant chapter in the state's growth story.

Among others, Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, Handlooms and Textiles Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta, School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond and MSME Minister Gokulananda Mallik were present during the Monday's press meet.



FOR A CAUSE: OUAT students stage a sit-in on the institution premises in Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding immediate release of stipends

OP PHOTO

Retired Health dept supervisor found murdered in Kalahandi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Dec 22: A retired supervisor of the Health department was found murdered at her residence and her gold jewellery missing at Gadajor village under Dharmagarh police limits in Kalahandi district, police said Monday.

"The deceased, identified as Suchitra Khuntia, 62, had injuries on her neck and hands, suggesting she was strangled with a shawl she was wearing," they said, adding, "All the gold jewellery she was wearing was missing, indicating a dacoity."

According to preliminary information, the incident took place late Sunday night. Khuntia was alone at home as her husband, a retired high school teacher, and their two sons, both government employees, live outside the village.

Locals alerted police after



spotting a lifeless Khuntia lying in front of the house in the morning. Officials from Dharmagarh police station, along with a forensic team and a sniffer dog squad, reached the spot and launched an investigation. Police said the assailants

fled after the murder, taking away her scooter. They later abandoned the vehicle on Biju Expressway, about 2 kilometres away from her residence. It is suspected that they abandoned the scooter after running out of fuel.

According to family sources, Khuntia had retired from service in December 2024. She was a native of Mahadevstu village under Kakatpur police limits in Puri district.

After the postmortem, the body was handed over to the family.

While police were probing the case from multiple angles, family members claimed the murder may not have been committed solely for dacoity.

"A case has been registered at Dharmagarh police station. The exact reason behind her killing is yet to be ascertained," they said.

Angul's OP Jindal School hosts 2-day annual function



POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Dec 22: OP Jindal School, Angul celebrated its annual function December 19 and 20 at Eden Garden in Jindal Nagar in a vibrant and festive atmosphere.

The two-day event featured cultural programmes — 'Me-lange' on the first evening and 'Punarbharat' on the second.

While Jindal Mahila Samiti's Seema Malhan and Anita Mittal graced the first evening as chief guests, Jindal Steel's Vice President and Head of Administration Colonel Sudip Majhi attended as the event as guest of honour.

On the second evening, Angul Superintendent of Police Rahul Jain was the chief guest. Jindal Steel, Angul Executive Director (In-Charge) and Chairman of the School Management Committee Pankaj Malhan, Executive Director (Projects & Iron Zone) and Vice Chairman Damodar Mittal and Jindal

Steel, Angul President (Human Resource) and CHRO Dillip Kumar Sinha attended the event as guests of honour.

The function was inaugurated with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp.

Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries motivated students to strive for excellence and become responsible citizens, while appreciating the school's academic and co-curricular achievements. Principal Ashwini Kumar Sahu welcomed the guests and presented the annual report.

Around 600 students from Nursery to Class V performed on the first day, while nearly 500 students from Classes VI to XI showcased their talents on the second day. A total of 160 students were felicitated for academic excellence, attendance, and overall performance. Successful alumni qualifying in NEET, JEE Main and other competitive examinations were also honoured.

Mercury dips below 10°C at 9 places

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Normal life was affected in several parts of the state Monday, as the mercury dipped below the 10 degrees Celsius-mark at nine places, weather officials said.

According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), Koraput in south Odisha recorded the coldest temperature at 5.5 degrees Celsius, followed by G Udayagiri in Kandhamal at 6.8 degrees Celsius and Darlingbadi at 7 degrees Celsius.

Phulbani and Semiliguda recorded 8 degrees Celsius each, while Nabarangpur (8.8 degrees Celsius) and Boudh (9.2 degrees Celsius) also experienced chilly conditions. Chiplima and Rourkela recorded 9.9 degrees Celsius, it added.

The weather office said cold wave conditions are likely to persist in several parts of the state over the next week as there will be no large change in night temperatures.

The IMD said dense fog is likely to occur during early hours in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal, Bolangir and Subarnapur districts Tuesday and Wednesday.

Farmers stage protest over delay in opening of mandis

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharigaon, Dec 22: Farmers staged a blockade in three blocks of Nabarangpur district Monday to protest delays in opening of mandis, distress sale of paddy and maize, and a sharp cut in maize prices to ₹600 per quintal.

The agitation led by the Chashi Mahasangh affected Jharigaon, Umerkote and Raighar blocks. The outfit warned that the protest would continue for seven days unless the district administration intervenes and resolves the issues.

At Jharigaon bus stand, farmers staged a sit-in, displaying sacks of paddy and maize. Jharigaon tehsildar Sumant Kumar Patra reached the spot



and held discussions with the protesters, urging them to withdraw the blockade. However, the farmers said the agitation would be called off only after the district Collector personally assures a solution in writing.

The Biju Janata Dal and the Congress extended support to the protest. Leaders from both

parties joined the sit-in alongside farmers.

Jharigaon, Umerkote and Raighar account for a major share of maize cultivation in Nabarangpur district. Farmers alleged that the government maize mandis have not been opened yet, forcing them to sell produce at distress prices.

3 get 10-yr RI for drug peddling

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: A court here Monday awarded 10-year rigorous imprisonment (RI) to three persons after convicting them of peddling brown sugar in the City in 2020.

The 3rd Additional District Judge-cum-Special Judge, Bhubaneswar, Khurda held Sk Sagha, Tanmay Kumar Sahoo and Sk Fakir guilty in a drug peddling case

(06/2020) registered at STF Police Station under Sections 21(c) and 29 of the NDPS Act, 1985. The court also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh on each of the convicts. STF sleuths nabbed the three near Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar while they were trying to peddle brown sugar January 19, 2020. The sleuths recovered 324 grams of brown sugar, one motorcycle and other incriminating materials from their possession.

2 drown in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bonai/Lahunipara, Dec 22: A young man and a woman drowned in Brahmani river near Biratola temple under Chandiposh police limits in Sundargarh district Monday.

The deceased were identified as Gyanendra Swain and D Monalisa Rao, both residents of Rourkela area. Chandiposh police registered two unnatural death cases (23/25 and 24/25) and began an investigation. Locals spotted a motorcycle and clothes lying near the riverbank around 10am and alerted the police and Fire Services personnel. Police recovered them from the water body and rushed them to Bonai sub-divisional hospital, where they were declared dead.

Odia IT professionals decry lack of opportunities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Numerous Odia IT professionals are working outside Odisha and abroad due to lack of adequate opportunities in the state, speakers said at the 'Global Odia SAP Summit 2025' organised at Dhauli Garden Sunday.

Participants said many professionals are compelled to seek jobs outside Odisha as the state does not offer enough opportunities, while those willing to work with IT companies based in Odisha are often offered comparatively lower salaries.

They said that if more IT companies are encouraged to set up operations in Bhubaneswar, professionals work-



ing outside the state could return to work on their home soil and contribute to Odisha's development.

In the era of digital transformation and AI, the importance of the IT sector has increased significantly, and the state government should give greater focus to the sector, speakers said.

Around 550 Odia profes-

sionals, including men and women working in Odisha, other parts of the country and abroad, attended the event. The meet saw discussions on the growth of the IT sector in Odisha, available opportunities and various challenges faced by the industry.

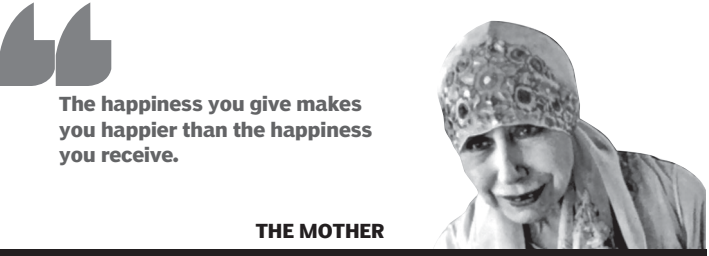
Speakers expressed concern that despite BJP being in power

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	89.65 ▲ 0.38	SENSEX	85567.48 ▲ 638.12	GOLD	₹136,528 ▼ ₹2332
EURO	105.41 ▲ 0.53	NIFTY	26172.40 ▲ 206.00	SILVER	₹213,559 ▼ ₹5,120

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	26.7°	25.0°	Fog or mist in morning and partly cloudy sky later.
Min Temp	13.6°	12.4°	
Humidity	77%	90%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



Far-Right Chile

Far-Right politics has claimed yet another South American country – Chile - with the recent victory of the ultraconservative lawyer, Jose Antonio Kast who defeated his rival, the Left party candidate Jeannette Jara in the presidential race. Jara is a minister in the outgoing Communist government. Kast's victory marks the latest win for the resurgent Right in Latin America. He joins Ecuador's Daniel Noboa, El Salvador's Nayib Bukele, Argentina's Javier Milei and Bolivia's Rodrigo Paz who ended in October almost two decades of socialist rule in his country.

The election result of Chile was a foregone conclusion with the combined vote share of the Far-Right and Right forces far exceeding that of the Left candidate in the first round of election that failed to produce a clear-cut winner making the run-off inevitable. The surprising element of the outcome is that Chile is the most stable and peaceful among South American countries where the space for ultra-Right politics was supposed to be limited. However, crimes and entry of migrants from neighbouring Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela have been problematic for the average Chilean population. It is said that a common refrain of the average Chilean has been that day to day life is no longer as peaceful as before. This is an oversimplification of the reality since official crime data shows people taking refuge in Chile are much less prone to committing crimes than homegrown criminals. But, Kast eloquently leveraged voter fears over rising crime and migration to take the country to its sharpest rightward shift since the end of a ruthless dictatorship clamped by General Pinochet in 1990. He secured 58.30 per cent of the vote in the runoff with Leftist candidate Jara, managing to get 41.70 per cent.

The political background of Kast reveals his rightist bent of mind from the beginning of his career and he conducted his presidential campaign in a clever manner, avoiding many of the controversial issues such as his family's closeness to Pinochet, abortion and same-sex marriage. Being the father of nine children, he is a staunch opponent of abortion. His strategy was not to harp on issues on which his position is well known. Instead, he focused on a severe crackdown on crimes, setting up super-secure jails, creating a police force inspired by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement to rapidly detain and expel illegal migrants in the country. He has also touted massive cuts in public spending and embracing a market economy with least government control as the answer to the livelihood crisis. He is an admirer of US President Donald Trump's politics and has declared he would replicate the Trump-style Make America Great Again (MAGA) to safeguard Chile's economic interests first.

However, Kast's more radical proposals are likely to face pushback from a divided Congress. While Right-wing parties won seats in both legislative houses in a November general election, most of those gains came from more traditional parties. The Senate is evenly split between Left and Right-wing parties, while the swing vote in the lower legislative body belongs to the populist People's Party. For example, changing the country's abortion laws would require the support of more than half of the Congress to pass.

Chile is the world's largest copper producer and a major producer of lithium. Expectations of less regulation and market-friendly policies have already buoyed the local stock market and equity benchmark.

Among the contributory factors to the rise of the Far-Right is the people's frustration due to the failure of the liberal political parties to deliver. In Chile's case a section of the population is not also averse to the return of the dictatorial politics represented by Pinochet's regime. The past close ties between Kast's family and the Pinochet government do not make him untouchable to this section of the people. However, during the campaign Kast rather kept silent over facts such as his father being German and an ardent supporter of Nazism and his brother a minister during Pinochet's rule.

The challenge before Kast will be how he can demonstrate his political skill to get his job done in the Congress where he will not have an absolute majority. He will need to forge a coalition with the right party if he hopes to govern without trying to trample down the country's democratic gains, however noticeable or otherwise.

WISDOM CORNER

The truth is a snare: you cannot have it, without being caught. You cannot have the truth in such a way that you catch it, but only in such a way that it catches you.

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Through pride we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, something is out of tune.

CARL JUNG

We're so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it is all about.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1815:** Jane Austen published her fourth novel, Emma, which centres on a precocious young woman whose misplaced confidence in her matchmaking abilities occasions several romantic misadventures.

■ **1888:** The incident at the Yellow House. Vincent van Gogh cut off part of his own left ear on this day in 1888 after a heated argument with fellow artist Paul Gauguin, with whom he had been sharing a house in the south of France. Van Gogh reportedly then delivered his ear to a nearby brothel. Art historians have debated the incident for decades.

■ **1941:** Early in World War II, invading Japanese forces defeated U.S. troops at the Battle of Wake Island.

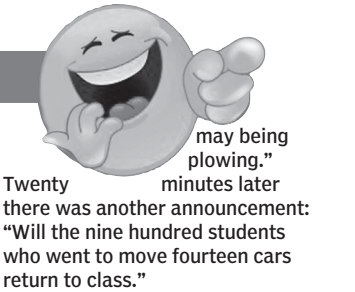
■ **1968:** Eighty-two crewmen of the USS Pueblo were released after being held in captivity for 11 months by North Korea, which claimed the U.S. Navy intelligence ship had crossed into its waters.

■ **1990:** Slovenian referendum on independence from Yugoslavia. The Eastern European country had joined the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a socialist republic state in 1945. Actual independence for the country did not occur until June of 1991, when the Slovenians rejected Yugoslavian interference in the form of a 10-day war that ended on July 7, 1991. A new constitution for the country came into force on December 23, 1991.

LOL

MOVE YOUR CARS

It had been snowing for hours when an announcement came over the intercom: "Will the students who are parked on University Drive please move their cars so that we



power post

FOCUS VB-G RAM G

A STEP BACKWARD

The passage of the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 called the VB-G RAM G Bill, marks a decisive break from one of India's most consequential social legislations. It replaced the landmark National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of 2005, which was later named after Mahatma Gandhi. While the government insists that the new law is a reform that raises the ceiling of guaranteed work from 100 to 125 days, this claim does not survive even cursory scrutiny. What the new Bill does, in substance, is far more troubling: it dismantles the justiciable right to work, recentralises control, shifts the fiscal burden to states, and weakens labour's bargaining power in rural India.

NREGA was never just another welfare scheme. It was a legal innovation that translated Article 41 of the Constitution - the state's obligation to secure the right to work - into an enforceable entitlement. If work was not provided within 15 days of demand, the state was legally bound to pay an unemployment allowance. Under NREGA employment was demand-driven, universal, and the right was justiciable. NREGA was a proxy for genuine unemployment insurance, a social security measure, which is still a distant dream despite the new Labour Codes. VB-G RAM G replaces this rights-based, demand led framework with a supply-driven, budget-capped scheme whose guarantees are conditional on Central allocations and administrative discretion.

Recall that the roots of NREGA were in Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS). Born out of the devastating droughts of the early 1970s, EGS was financed through a dedicated tax on urban workers and backed by a statutory guarantee of rural employment. Its genius lay in its simplicity: work on demand, locally determined public works, and wages paid as a matter of right. For



A programme that modestly improves the bargaining power of labour in one of the most unequal labour markets in the world should be celebrated, not dismantled

over three decades, EGS acted as an unemployment insurance programme for rural Maharashtra. It became the intellectual and institutional template for NREGA. The design of EGS itself was inspired by pilot projects implemented in the early 1960's, under the leadership of VS Page, a dhoti-clad Gandhian, who was the speaker of Maharashtra's Legislative Council for a record eighteen years.

EGS also revealed a political truth that remains relevant today. By setting a floor on wages and offering workers an exit option, it reduced labour's dependence on landlords and contractors. Unsurprisingly, it faced resistance from the landed elite who complained about "labour shortages" and rising wages. That resistance never disappeared; it merely went underground. The new Bill's provision allowing a 60-day pause in employment during peak agricultural seasons — ostensibly to "facilitate labour availability" — reads less like neutral policy design and more like a concession to agrarian power structures that have long resented NREGA's impact on rural labour markets. Even at its peak, NREGA has provided a tiny fraction of total person-days of employment in rural areas. So, its distortionary impact on the labour market is overstated.

The centrepiece of the government's defence is the increase in

guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days. But this is largely symbolic. Even under NREGA, only a small fraction of households actually received the full 100 days of work in most years. Raising the ceiling without ensuring an enforceable demand-based provision is like promising a taller ladder while quietly removing the ground beneath it.

More importantly, the new Bill caps total expenditure through "State-wise normative allocations" determined by the Centre. Any spending beyond this ceiling must be borne by the states, following procedures prescribed by the Centre itself. A right that depends on fiscal discretion is not a right; it is a favour. By embedding budget caps in the statute, the Bill converts a legal guarantee into a Centrally-rationed programme.

NREGA, for all its flaws, embodied a workable form of cooperative federalism. The Centre bore the full wage cost and most of the material cost, recognising that poorer states with higher unemployment also have weaker fiscal capacity. VB-G RAM G overturns this logic. The proposed 60:40 cost-sharing pattern shifts a significant additional burden onto the states — estimated at over ₹50,000 crore annually — at a time when the fiscal autonomy of the states has already been eroded by GST and borrowing constraints. This is not merely a fiscal issue; it

is a constitutional one. Employment and public works fall squarely within the State List and the domain of local self-government under the Eleventh Schedule.

Defenders of the Bill argue that NREGA was inefficient, corruption-prone, and administratively rigid. But these were problems of implementation, not of design. The response to delayed payments, biometric failures, and exclusion errors should have been institutional repair, not legal dilution.

NREGA's most radical feature was its universality. It did not rely on poverty lines, beneficiary lists or targeting errors. Anyone willing to do unskilled manual work could demand employment. This self-targeting design minimised exclusion and leakage, a point repeatedly affirmed by empirical research. VB-G RAM G departs from this principle by allowing the Centre to notify specific rural areas where employment will be provided. A guarantee that applies only where the Centre chooses to apply it is a contradiction in terms. During the COVID-19 shock NREGA acted as a shock absorber, sustaining rural demand and preventing mass destitution. It has also raised the labour force participation of women, improved bargaining power for the poorest workers, and reduced distress migration. These were not side effects; they were central to its design. A programme that modestly improves the bargaining power of labour in one of the most unequal labour markets in the world should be celebrated, not dismantled.

A nation aspiring to be "Viksit Bharat" by 2047 should be expanding the scope of social citizenship and social security, not shrinking it. Reforming NREGA was both necessary and desirable. Replacing a justiciable right with a discretionary scheme is neither reform nor progress. It is a constitutional, economic and moral step backward.

The writer is a noted economist.
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SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

The Transatlantic Rupture

The North Atlantic is undergoing sweeping historical changes as the rift between Europe and America widens. Under President Donald Trump, the US is seeking to create a world order based solely on spheres of interest, and dominated by the "big three" global powers: the US, China, and Russia. To achieve this, the Trump administration is prepared to abandon the traditional foundations of US influence: its network of alliances to the values that have underpinned American democracy for 250 years.

As Trump and his MAGA movement see it, Europe is the second major battleground (after the US itself) that needs to be conquered. And because this will require breaking up the EU, the decades-long transatlantic alliance has given way to enmity in remarkably short order. It is worth dwelling on how radical a break this is. The US emerged from World War II as the principal victor in both the European and Pacific theaters. It then went on to defeat the Soviet Union in the Cold War, which was not just a costly thermonuclear arms race between two superpowers, but also a struggle between two

socioeconomic and normative systems. The Western combination of individual liberty, democracy, and the market economy was pitted against the Soviet one-party police state, with its sclerotic planned economy. The choice between two alternatives was clear, and America's model ultimately prevailed. The Soviet Union collapsed, dissolved, and vanished, leaving a Russian rump that, unable to reconcile with a post-imperial identity, became increasingly revanchist.

But with Trump's election and then re-election, Americans made clear their frustration with serving as the world's policeman and shouldering whatever burden that entailed. Thus, Europe's great failure over the past decades after the end of the Cold War is that it did not assume more responsibility for defending its own borders — a precondition for preserving sovereignty. From the Kremlin's perspective, Europe's vulnerability was an opportunity.

The new US National Security Strategy, together with Trump's plan to end the war in Ukraine — which largely endorses Russia's maximalist positions — leaves no doubt about this administra-

tion's objectives. In a typically deranged fashion, Trump and his MAGA acolytes claim that the EU is an anti-American project that must be destroyed. Countries that have been friends and allies for eight decades are now being portrayed as adversaries, while Vladimir Putin's Russia is to be admired.

By staking out these positions, Trump has effectively dismantled the transatlantic West. In its place, he is creating an imperial America to mirror Russia's imperial dreams, as well as those increasingly being pursued by China. In this new world order, raw power, not the rule of law, is all that matters.

In pursuit of this vision, Trump has made George Orwell's gifts of prophecy look even more impressive. In Orwell's classic dystopian novel, 1984, the world is similarly divided between three continental powers. Under Trump, the traditional values of American democracy have become obstacles to sweep aside, while foreign authoritarian regimes have become models to emulate.

Perhaps Trump hopes that by betraying Ukraine — and, by extension, Europe — and siding

with Putin, he can draw Russia onto his side in the struggle with China. But Putin is not going to play ball. He knows that without China at his side, Russia is far too weak to maintain its precarious great-power status. Besides, both China and Russia are seeking a reordering of the global hierarchy at America's expense.

Betraying longstanding US allies will not make Putin more inclined toward peace. On the contrary, he will be further emboldened. Drunk from his victory over the West in Ukraine, he will start planning his advance westward. A ceasefire on his terms is nothing but a tactical pause.

Already, the risk of a wider war is rising along Eurasia's main axes: in the Far East between China and Japan, over Taiwan, and on NATO's eastern flank. Europe must prepare for hard times ahead. This dangerous geopolitical crisis has been compounded by its own weak growth and failure to keep pace with China and America technologically. This gap must be closed. Sovereignty may come at a high price, but Europe's freedom is priceless.

The writer is a former foreign minister of Germany. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

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
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Bangladesh turmoil

Sir, Bangladesh is heading into its February 12 parliamentary elections amid instability, underscoring the fragility of the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus. The immediate trigger for the unrest was the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, a leader of the July movement and an election candidate, which sparked violent protests in Dhaka and other cities. Mobs attacked media houses, public infrastructure and Indian diplomatic premises, alarming citizens and neighbours. Although the interim administration declared a day of mourning and appealed to people to resist mob violence by "fringe elements," its response has failed to inspire confidence. The crisis has exposed Yunus' limited ability to control rival political forces, Islamist hardliners and street mobilisation. Anti-India slogans and graffiti have become common since former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's departure to New Delhi, turning India into a convenient political target. For New Delhi, the implications are serious. Communal violence and radical mobilisation affect border security, while China and Pakistan exploit the vacuum. People to people ties are eroding, goodwill is diminishing, and uncertainty over Hasina's stay in India complicates diplomacy. The election outcome will shape regional stability.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Simplify language

Sir, The renaming of laws and regulations in complex, Sanskritised Hindi risks widening the existing resentment against Hindi in non-Hindi states, a challenge the government at the Centre is already confronting. In regions like Punjab, many citizens struggle to pronounce, spell or remember new titles such as BNS replacing IPC, MGNREGA by VB GRAM G Act making laws feel distant and intimidating. Instead of promoting unity, such linguistic complexity alienates people. If renaming is unavoidable, terms should be simple, short, brief and easily understood across regions. Governance should aid smooth assimilation, not fuel linguistic anxiety. Laws exist for the common citizen, not just for scholars and examiners; simplicity builds acceptance, complexity breeds resistance.

RS Narula, PATIALA

of the day **note**

HERE, NOW
In particular, the votes of the minorities, women and marginalised sections of the people are going continuously to the DMK. Such votes did not go to the BJP despite their efforts. Hence, the SIR exercise was devised to search and delete votes of such people; approximately 97 lakh votes have been struck off the electoral rolls in Tamil Nadu and in Chennai alone about 14 lakh votes have been removed

UDHAYANIDHI STALIN | TN DEPUTY CM

The removal of the Mahatma's name was only the tip of the iceberg. The very structure of MGNREGA, so integral to its impact, has been annihilated

SONIA GANDHI | CONG PARL PARTY CHAIRPERSON

In BJP rule, hatred, inflation, unemployment and corruption are rising unabated, while everything else is shrinking, then how can MGNREGA survive? That's why MGNREGA cards are being deleted

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

ARAVALLI DEFINITION ISSUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 22: AICC general secretary Sachin Pilot Monday said that the Congress will hold a massive protest in Jaipur December 26 against the Centre on the Aravalli definition issue.

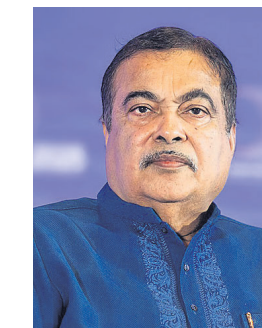
He was referring to the recent recommendations of a committee under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on the definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges, accepted by the Supreme Court November 20.

According to the new definition, "Aravalli hill is any land-form in the designated Aravalli districts with an elevation of 100 metres or more above its local relief", and an "Aravalli range is a collection of two or more such hills within 500 metres of each other".

Speaking to reporters here, Pilot said a massive protest will be held to stop the government from doing what it intends.

"To my mind, the only incentive could be to oblige few people who make money in the mining sector. Whoever may be involved -- there should be a judicial probe as to who started it, who is doing and behind all this."

Pilot said he will take part in the march December 26 in Jaipur to raise a voice against the

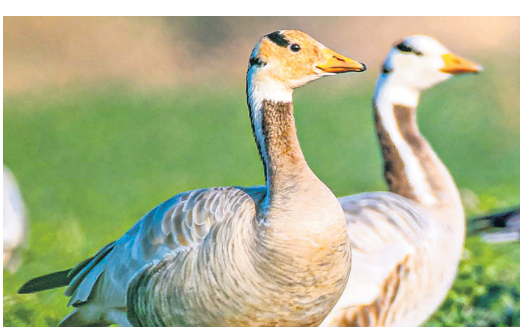


The progress of the country, resources, and technologies are important, but what is more important is the futuristic technology and knowledge. The future of any country is based on what type of futuristic technology it possesses

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

RARE MIGRATORY BIRDS SPOTTED AT LATUR LAKES

Migratory birds like the Bar-headed Goose (Anser indicus) and the Common Crane (Grus grus) have begun arriving at the Pangaon and Kamkheda lakes in Latur's Renapur tehsil, wildlife experts said Monday



DRAFT ROLLS

Mamata blames EC for 'gross errors'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 22: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday lashed out at the Election Commission, alleging that there were "gross errors" in the draft rolls published following the enumeration phase of the SIR in the state.

Addressing a meeting of TMC's Booth Level Agents (BLAs) at the Netaji Indoor Stadium here, she dubbed it an exercise "riddled with blunders from A to Z".

Banerjee also accused the poll panel of housing "a BJP agent in its office" and "altering electoral rolls as per his advise". She alleged that the EC was appointing observers without informing the state government, and working to foster the interests of the saffron camp.

"The EC is working only as per the directions of the BJP. There are gross errors in mapping of voters during the enumeration phase of the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in the state. The exercise is a blunder from beginning to end," the CM asserted.

Alleging that thousands of "legitimate voters" have found their names deleted from the draft rolls, Banerjee said, "We don't know how the problems of so many genuine electors can be solved in so little time."

In the draft electoral rolls published after the enumeration phase, 58,20,899 names have been excluded, reducing the electorate to 7.08 crore in West Bengal.

Around 1.36 crore entries

have also been flagged for "logical discrepancies", while 30 lakh voters were categorised as unmapped -- a significant percentage of whom are likely to be called for verification hearings. The TMC supreme also asserted that central officers who have been appointed micro observers for SIR hearings have "little knowledge" of the local language, and are "unfit" to conduct hearings.

"Several central agencies have played a role in appointing BLOs. They have also appointed observers without our knowledge. The state will extend all cooperation to them, but I must know the details of all these people, including where they live and which departments they serve."

The chief minister accused the EC of "forcefully" conducting the exercise, "which takes two years to complete", within two months, ahead of the assembly elections, so that the state is unable to carry out its development activities.

Banerjee warned the BLAs that "indiscriminate" use of AI in mapping of rolls has also resulted in wrongful deletions.

Without directly referring to Banerjee's own Bhabanipur assembly seat in south Kolkata from where nearly 45,000 names were deleted in the draft rolls, Banerjee said, "Several wards in the Kolkata municipal area underwent delimitations recently on account of which many addresses were realigned. That led to faulty mapping in the SIR rolls. This isn't BLO fault, it's an error of the commission".

Cong to protest against Centre



CONG SPREADING LIES: BHUPENDER

NEW DELHI: Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav Monday accused the Congress of spreading "misinformation" and "lies" on the issue of the new definition of the Aravallis and stressed that mining can be carried out legally in only 0.19 per cent of the area covered by the mountain range. At a press briefing, he said the Narendra Modi government remains "fully committed" to protecting and restoring the Aravallis. "The Congress, which allowed rampant illegal mining in Rajasthan during its tenure, is spreading confusion, misinformation and lies about the issue," the minister alleged.

intention of the BJP ruled governments to allow the Aravalis to disappear. "It is a death warrant, as I can see it, in the next few years, what is going to happen to the Aravallis."

"The Aravallis issue is something that the central government and more importantly the BJP leadership has to answer. All the four states where the Aravalli exists -- Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi -- are ruled by BJP," Pilot said.

He further said no matter what excuses they make, the fact of the matter is that today, for the first time ever the Aravalli range is in absolute risk and that will be catastrophic not just to that region, but even for areas around it.

"The Aravallis have served as a safeguard to the NCR, Delhi region, by stopping the desertification, and supporting monsoon, crops, irrigation, all of those things for a millennium," he said.

LEADERSHIP ROW

No issues in K'taka Cong to resolve: DKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 22: A day after Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the leadership row involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar was at the local level and not the high command, the deputy CM Monday said no such confusion exists locally.

Siddaramaiah reiterated that the party high command and top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should decide on the matter and that everyone will abide by it.

After showing signs of abating in the wake of the breakfast diplomacy by the CM and Shivakumar, the leadership row has once again come to the forefront over the past few days.

AICC General Secretary Sachin Pilot sought to play down the power tussle, saying the two top leaders were working like "brothers," even as Shivakumar sought to blame the media over the matter.

"There are no issues to resolve. You (media) are creating



issues. I have said what I have to. The chief minister has said what he has to. Kharge has said whatever he has to..." Shivakumar told reporters.

He urged the media not to worry about the party's internal dynamics.

He was responding to a question on Congress president Kharge's statement that the confusion over the leadership issue in the party's Karnataka unit exists only at the local level and not with the party high

command.

Kharge had also said that the local leaders should take ownership of the internal disputes rather than blaming the high command. The power tussle has intensified amid speculations of a change in chief minister in the state, after the Congress government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on November 20. The speculation was fuelled by a "power-sharing" pact between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar in 2023.

UDF announces 3 new associates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Dec 22: Ahead of the Assembly polls, the Congress-led UDF in Kerala Monday decided to expand its base by adding three more political parties, including the Trinamool Congress, to its fold.

However, the leader of one of the parties named as a UDF associate, said they had never approached the Congress-led alliance for a tie-up. Speaking to reporters after a UDF meeting, leader of opposition in Kerala assembly, V D Satheesan, said the Trinamool Congress (Kerala unit), led by former MLA P V Anvar; the Janadhipathy Rashtriya Party (JRP), led by tribal leader C K Janu; and the Kerala Kamaraj Congress, led by Vishnupuram Chandrasekharan, will become associates of the UDF.

C K Janu and Vishnupuram Chandrasekharan were earlier constituents of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and had quit the front, Satheesan said.

'LEARN HINDI OR LEAVE'

Video of BJP councillor remarks sparks row



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: A video of BJP councillor Renu Chaudhary allegedly threatening an African national for not learning Hindi has gone viral on social media.

In the purported video, Chaudhary, who represents Ward No 196 of east Delhi's Patparganj, is heard asking the man, a football coach who teaches children at an MCD park, why he has not learned Hindi yet and giving him an ultimatum that if he does not learn the language within a month, action would be taken against him.

She is also heard telling him that

since he earns money in India, he should learn the language.

"Hindi nahi seekhi. Kyun nahi seekhi? Agar ek mahine mein Hindi nahi seekhi, toh park cheen lo inse? (You haven't learnt Hindi. Why? If you don't learn Hindi in a month, then take him off the park)," she is heard saying in the video.

Defending her remarks, Chaudhary said eight months ago she had asked the coach to learn basic Hindi, but he had not complied. She alleged that the man conducted commercial activities inside the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) park without paying the required revenue and had not addressed cleanliness issues that were pointed out.

The MCD staff faced difficulties communicating with him due to the language barrier, she said.

"He engages in commercial activities inside the MCD park and is supposed to pay revenue. He is teaching students, but when asked about it, he said he does not know Hindi. It was eight months ago that I requested him to learn the language," Chaudhary said in a separate video statement.

She claimed that she had earlier offered to pay for his Hindi tuition. "He did not pay heed to my request. Neither did he reduce commercial activities nor did he take steps to maintain cleanliness. He has been here for 14 years, he should have learnt basic Hindi by now," said the councillor, who said she did not believe she had done something wrong.

SHORT TAKES

Prohibitory orders in 2 Assam districts

Diphu: Four people were injured in police firing on protesters who went on a rampage, setting ablaze the residence of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) chief Monday, prompting the authorities to impose prohibitory orders in two districts, officials said. Besides Karbi Anglong, the restrictive orders under Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita were clamped on West Karbi Anglong district.

Delhi court reserves order on Michel's plea

New Delhi: A Delhi court reserved its order for Tuesday on a plea filed by Christian James Michel seeking release from custody in a CBI case related to the alleged AgustaWestland VIP chopper scam. Michel has sought release on the grounds that he had already undergone the maximum period of sentence of seven years for the charges against him.

More than 500 flights delayed at Delhi airport

New Delhi: More than 500 flights were delayed, and at least 14 flights were cancelled at the Delhi airport due to bad weather and low visibility conditions. An official said that 14 flights, including 6 arrivals and 8 departures, were cancelled. These also include international flights. DIAL operates the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), the country's largest airport, which generally handles around 1,300 flights daily.

HC protects Madhavan's personality rights

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Monday protected the personality rights of Bollywood actor R Madhavan by restraining several websites and online platforms from illegally using his name or images for commercial gain without his consent. The high court also restrained several defendants from using the personality traits of Madhavan through the use of artificial intelligence and deepfake technology and ordered the takedown of certain obscene content uploaded on the Internet.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, GAJAPATI, PARLAKHEMUNDI
e-mail : rwd_gajapati@yahoo.co.in
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Identification No. Online Tender - 11/GJP/2025-26

1. Name of the work : Road Works

2. Total No. of Work : 11 (Eleven) No. of Road Works

3. Estimated Cost : Rs.2.99 lakhs to Rs.34.89 lakhs

4. Class of Contractor : 'D' & 'C' Class Contractor
'C' & 'B' Class Contractor

5. Period of Completion : Furnished in Annexure

6. Availability of Tender : 24.12.2025 at 10.00 A.M. to 01.01.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.

7. Date and Time of Opening of Tender : 02.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.

8. Place of Opening : As per Annexure

Further details can be seen from the Website
www.tenderorissa.gov.in
Sd./- EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
R.W. DIVN. GAJAPATI

OIPR-25158/11/0033/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
Office of the Engineer-In-Chief,
Water Resources, Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar
Email Address : cemecch.eicwr.od@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. - CEM/MDB-11/2025-26

1. Name of the Work : Mechanical Gate Works

2. No. of Works : 01 (One)

3. Category of executors : SSI Units registered under DIC/NSIC/ MSME for Irrigation Shutters / Hydro mechanical gates.

4. Bid Identification No. : CEM / MDB - 11/2025-26

5. Estimated Cost : Rs.30.03,989.93

6. Period of Completion : 60 calendar days

7. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the Portal : From dt. 24.12.2025 (10.00 A.M.) to dt. 07.01.2026 (5.30 P.M.)

8. Last date / time for receipt of bid in the portal : Dt. 07.01.2026 (up to 5.30 P.M.)

9. Date and Place of opening of Technical Bid : Dt.08.01.2026 (12.00 Noon onwards in the O/o the undersigned)

10. Date and Place of opening of Financial Bid : To be intimated to the qualified Bidders after evaluation of Technical Bid

11. Name of the Officer inviting bid : Chief Engineer, Mechanical, O/o the E.I.C, Water Resources, Odisha, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any further issue of Addenda/Corrigenda/Cancellation Notice shall be uploaded in the aforesaid website only.
Sd./- Chief Engineer, Mechanical
O/o - Engineer-In-Chief, Secha Sadan,
Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32520/11/0104/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
E-procurement notice
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
SONEPUR (R&B) DIVISION, SONEPUR
E-mail - eepwdsnpr@gmail.com, Phone -06654-221081
BID IDENTIFICATION NO.SE/R&B/SNPR/11/2025-26
No.4801 | Dt.18.12.2025

1. The Superintending Engineer, Sonapur (R&B) Division, Sonapur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites **Percentage Rate** bids in **Single cover system in Online Mode** for Road/Building/ Electricals works detailed in the **DTCN** from the eligible Class of Contractors.

2. No. of work : 03 (Three)

3. Tender Cost : Rs.6,000/- for Serial No.1 to 3

4. Class of Contractor : "Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) authorized dealer having MOU with MV/HT Electrical Contractor" Electrical Contractor for Serial No.1
: "D" & "C" Class Contractor for Serial No.2 and 3

5. Date and time Available in Web site & receipt of Bids : From 10.00 A.M. of 24.12.2025 to 5.00 P.M. of 02.01.2026

6. Date of Opening of Tender : 03.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.

7. The Bidders have to participate in Online bidding only further details can be seen from the Website.

8. Any Corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Sonapur (R&B) Division, Sonapur

OIPR-34081/11/0026/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
GANJAM (R&B) DIVISION NO. I, BERHAMPUR
Phone / Fax : (0680) 2233693, e-mail : sem1.ganjam@yahoo.com
"e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. SE R&B Divn. No.I Bam. 44/2025-26
Lr. No. 14795 **Dated : 19.12.2025**

Name of work : E.I & Civil Work

No. of works : 12 (Twelve) Nos

Estimated Cost : Approximately Rs.1.62 to 47.47 Lakh

Period of Completion : One and Three Calendar months

Date and time of Availability of bid document in the portal : From 10.00 hours of 24.12.2025 to 16.00 hours of 31.12.2025

Last date / time for receipt of bids in the portal : Upto 16.00 hours of 31.12.2025

Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Ganjam (R&B) Division No.I, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Ganjam (R&B) Division No.I
Berhampur

OIPR-34109/11/0072/2526

of the day **note**

The railway link between Kashmir and the rest of the country has immensely benefited the valley as it has provided an all-weather connectivity for the residents here



FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NC PRESIDENT

As part of the follow-up exercise, I spoke to Swami Suvirananda, general secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kolkata, and requested him to introduce foreign language courses at Viveknagar. I am happy to share that the proposal has been approved



MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

I witnessed (developments related to) the Jhiram Valley incident. Today, I want to say with great responsibility that no one else was providing information and inside details about the Jhiram Valley incident; it was people from within their own ranks who were involved in getting their own people killed and were in contact with the Naxalites



JP NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

X POST OF THE DAY

Someone said India can't protest. Here is India. The Rajasthan Government is now on the back

foot, saying only 0.01% of trees are being cut. Why cut even that 0.01%? Did your father plant those trees? You can't ensure planting or survival, yet you cut what already stands. A tree takes decades to give the oxygen you erase in minutes. Who gave you this right? Trees are not your property. You are not the owner of the forest you're only its caretaker, a chhapraisi of that jungle

@th_anonymouse

SHORT TAKES

Sabarimala gold loss: Cong slams SIT

Kochi: The Opposition Congress Monday expressed dissatisfaction with the ongoing SIT probe into the alleged gold loss case in Sabarimala, saying it is being controlled by the state Home department. Speaking to reporters here, KPCC Chief Sunny Joseph accused the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of "failing" to find the actual perpetrators of the crime. He said the Kerala High Court itself raised concerns over the pace of the investigation by the SIT.

13 cybercriminals held in separate ops

Dhanbad/Deoghar (Jharkhand): Jharkhand Police arrested 13 cybercriminals in separate operations across Dhanbad and Deoghar districts, recovering mobile phones, SIM cards, ATM cards, cash and other materials used to dupe people, officials said Monday. In Dhanbad, five cybercriminals from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand were arrested following a late-night raid at a hotel within Bank More police station limits.

Female Asiatic lion cub dies at zoo

Visakhapatnam: An 83-day-old female Asiatic lion cub died at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park here Monday following a severe intestinal complication, officials said.



India no longer hosts any of the world's leading universities... While a few universities have now entered the top 200, none figure among the top 10 or even the top 50 worldwide

SHASHI THAROOR | SENIOR CONG LEADER

PM MODI TO CHAIR 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHIEF SECRETARIES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair the fifth national conference of chief secretaries in the national capital this week, a senior government official said Monday. The fifth national conference of chief secretaries will be held in Delhi from December 26-28, and it will be a significant step towards further strengthening the partnership between the Centre and state governments, the official told PTI



Trial of all seven accused in Zubeen death case begins in sessions court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 22: All the seven accused in the death of singer Zubeen Garg appeared virtually before a sessions court here, as the trial in the case got underway on Monday. The Kamrup (Metro) District and Sessions Court, after examining the accused via video-conferencing, fixed the next date of hearing January 3, 2026.

It will consider framing of charges on the date of the next hearing, a senior lawyer said.

The court will call for their production, either in person or virtually, to ask them whether they plead guilty or will stand for trial in the case, he said.

Garg had gone to attend the North East India Festival (NEIF) in Singapore, where he died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea September 19. The accused - NEIF chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma, his cousin Sandipan Garg, and two personal security officers (PSOs) Nandeswar Bora and Paresw Baishya appeared from the Baksa Jail, while musician Shekharjyoti Goswami and singer Amrit-prava Mahanta were present online from Haflong Jail.

The celebrated singer's sister Palmee Borthakur was present in court during the hearing, and later told reporters that the family has full faith in the judiciary. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case had charged Mahanta, Sharma, Goswami and Amritprava with murder in the chargesheet filed before the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) December 12. The singer's cousin and suspended Assam Police officer Sandipan Garg has been charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, while the two PSOs were charged with criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust by misappropriating funds or property entrusted to them.

Surgery conducted under mobile light

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hazaribag, Dec 22: A video showing a tubectomy being conducted on a woman under a mobile phone flashlight in a government health centre in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district has gone viral, prompting the administration to order an investigation, an official said Monday.

Tubectomy is a surgical procedure performed to achieve permanent contraception in women. The administration has also decided to take action against a worker who recorded the video and uploaded it on social media, the official said. The incident shown in the 29-second video clip occurred at the Community Health Centre (CHC) in Keredari. It was seen in the video that the lights suddenly went out during the surgery, but the procedure continued under a mobile phone flashlight.

Ashok Kumar, the Civil Surgeon of Hazaribagh, told PTI that a 45-year-old 'sahiya' (a community health worker) shot the video during the tubectomy operation and shared it on social media platforms.

He said that the CHC has a generator facility to supply power in case of outages, but it took some time to change the system and during that period, the phone flashlight was used.

The patient's operation was performed on December 13, while the video surfaced on social media platforms on December 18, Kumar said.

The district health department will take action against the 'sahiya', and a show-cause letter will be issued to her in this regard, the civil surgeon said. A thorough investigation into the matter is being carried out, he said.

NATIONAL HERALD CASE

Delhi HC seeks response from Gandhis' on ED plea

Justice Ravinder Dubeja issued notice to the Gandhis and others on the main petition as well as on the ED's application seeking a stay on the December 16 trial court order, which held that cognisance of the agency's complaint in the case was "impermissible in law" as it was not founded on an FIR



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The Delhi High Court Monday asked Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others to respond to a plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging the order of the trial court that refused to take cognisance of its chargesheet against them in the National Herald case.

Justice Ravinder Dubeja issued notice to the Gandhis and others on the main petition as well as on the ED's application seeking a stay on the December 16 trial court order, which held that cognisance of the agency's complaint in the case was "impermissible in law" as it was not founded on an FIR.

The high court listed the matter for further hearing March 12, 2026. Besides Gandhis, the high court issued notices to Suman Dubey, Sam Pitroda, Young Indian, Dotex Merchandise Pvt Ltd and Sunil Bhandari on the ED's plea. While Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the ED in the case, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and RS Cheema represented the Gandhis.

In its order, the trial court had said that an investigation and the consequent prosecution complaint (equivalent to a chargesheet) pertaining to the

offence of money laundering is "not maintainable"

In the absence of an FIR for the offence mentioned in the schedule to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It said the agency's probe stemmed from a private complaint and not an FIR.

During the hearing Monday, Mehta contended that the trial court has gone "horribly wrong" with its view and this would affect other cases.

He said that after investigation, the ED officials gather evidence and other material, and, like the police files a report, the ED files a prosecution complaint.

Singhvi disputed the submissions made on behalf of ED but said he will accept notice and file a reply in the matter. "I want to say something. I am only saying that there is a perspective which is contrary to what my friend is saying," he said.

The ED, in its plea, said the trial court order has in effect given a hall pass to a category of money launderers only on the ground that the scheduled offence is reported by a private individual by way of a complaint to a magistrate.

It claimed there are such grave allegations levelled against Gandhis and others which cannot be brushed aside lightly by relying upon judicial

precedents cited to conclude that the ingredients of the criminal offences alleged are lacking.

"The sole ground given for declining cognisance is that a prosecution complaint filed by an authorised officer under the PMLA cannot be based on a scheduled offence emanating from a private complaint filed by a private individual and such scheduled offence must be registered only by a law enforcement agency, that is, either by way of an FIR by the police or a complaint by a person authorised to investigate the scheduled offence," the plea said.

The ED said the special judge has failed to appreciate that cognisance taken by a competent court on a private complaint stands on a much higher footing than a mere FIR registered by police, wherein there is a possibility that cognisance may be declined after filing of a chargesheet by police.

The plea said the trial court judgment created two impermissible classes of scheduled offences leading to complete manifest arbitrariness in which a person who commits a scheduled offence will not be prosecuted for generation and laundering of proceeds of a crime only because it is based on a private complaint to a magistrate, of which cognisance was taken by applying judicial mind.

Delhi to seal polluting units without notice



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The Delhi Pollution Control Committee has ordered the closure of 411 industrial units found operating without mandatory consent and causing visible air and water pollution across the national capital.

A joint inspection of 28 notified industrial areas and 27 redevelopment areas is being carried out the DPCC, along with the Revenue Department and the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC).

During the survey, a total of 1,586 units in notified industrial areas were inspected till December 20, of which 232 were found operating without the consent of DPCC and causing visible pollution. In redevelopment areas, 1,102 units were inspected and 179 were found violating pollution norms, according to officials.

Based on the findings, DPCC issued closure orders December 21 to all 411 non-compliant units, an official said. He said the three agencies launched the inspection following the directions of Delhi Environment and Forest Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

The survey, which began December 9, is still underway. Apart from this, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is also conducting inspections.

'Canada, US, UK top destinations for Indian students'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Canada, the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia and Germany have emerged as the top five international higher education destinations for Indian students, according to a report released by NITI Aayog Monday.

In 2024, Canada was the top international higher education destination with a total of 4,27,000 Indian students visiting the country. This was followed by the USA with 3,37,630 Indian students, the United Kingdom with 1,85,000, Australia (1,22,202), and Germany (42,997), the report said.

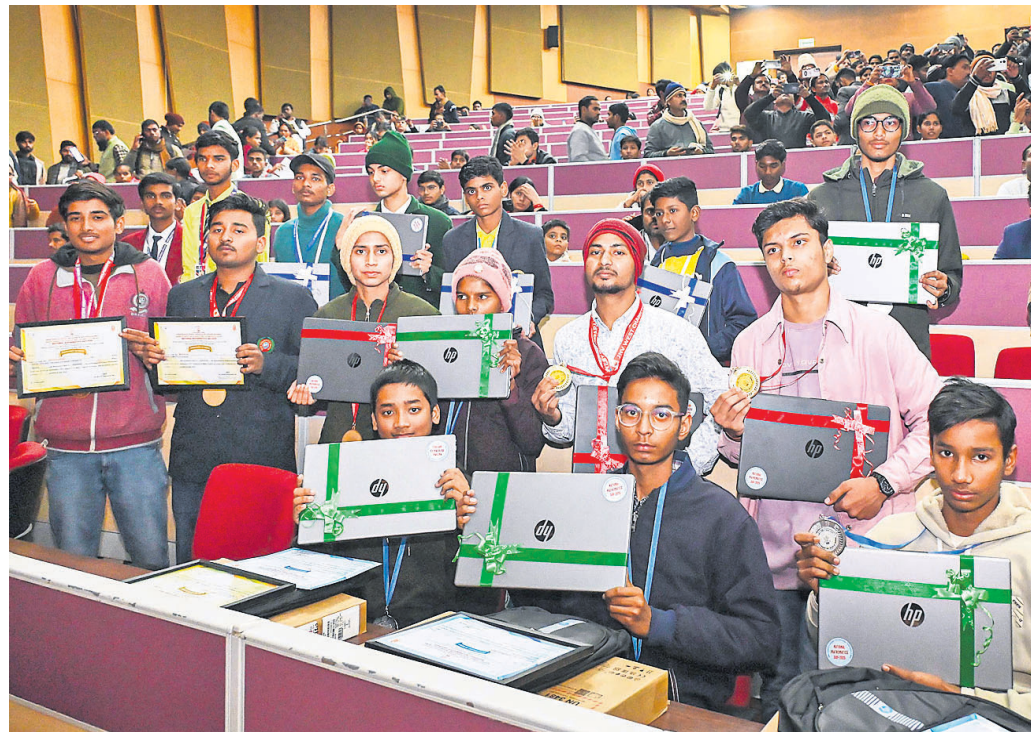
It further said that India is



the world's largest source country of international students with over 13.35 lakh students studying overseas in 2024. Also, the country has the largest higher education age cohort (18-23 years) in the world, 15.5 crore. "In 2024, for every 1 interna-

tional student coming to India, 28 Indian students went abroad, underscoring a significant brain drain for the country," it said.

About the inflow of foreign students in India, the report titled 'Internationalisation of Higher Education in India' pre-



Meritorious students display laptops distributed by the Bihar Education Department on the occasion of National Mathematics Day, at Gyan Bhawan, in Patna, Bihar

PTI PHOTO

In 2024, Canada was the top international higher education destination with a total of 4,27,000 Indian students visiting the country

This was followed by the USA with 3,37,630 Indian students, the United Kingdom with 1,85,000, Australia (1,22,202), and Germany (42,997)

sented the data of 2021-22.

Nepal, Afghanistan, the USA, Bangladesh and the UAE were the top source countries of international students in India in 2021-22, it said.

As per the report, Canada, the US, UK and Australia host 8.5

lakh Indian students who spent ₹2.9 lakh crore on higher education in 2023-2024. At the same time, Latvia has the highest 17.4 per cent of Indian students, followed by Ireland hosting 15.3 per cent, and Germany, 10.1 per cent.

The report, citing numbers recorded in 2020, said that among states, Andhra Pradesh was the top source with 35,614 students going overseas, followed by Punjab, which sent 33,412, and Maharashtra 29,079 students for higher education.

It noted a surge in outward remittances from ₹975 crore to ₹29,000 crore during 2014-24 under the RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme for Indian students studying abroad.

Police said they are probing the firing incident and the alleged fraud, examining the note, bank transactions, and digital evidence

The former police officer stated that despite making all payments through bank transfers, withdrawals were never processed.

He alleged that the scam was highly organised, involving multiple bank accounts and individuals, and urged authorities to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) or hand over the case to a specialised central agency to trace the money trail.

Expressing deep distress, financial ruin, and emotional trauma, Chahal wrote that he felt devastated and ashamed, apologising to his family and colleagues.

He maintained that, except for the alleged scammers, no one else was responsible for his decision. Police said they are probing the firing incident and the alleged fraud, examining the note, bank transactions, and digital evidence.

of the day

quote

HERE NOW

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev will report to President Vladimir Putin on US proposals for possible Ukrainian settlement as soon as he arrives in Moscow from Miami

DMITRY PESKOV | SPOKESPERSON, RUSSIA



HERE NOW

Preserving the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark, its sovereignty and the inviolability of its borders is essential for the European Union

ANOUAR EL ANOUNI | SPOKESPERSON, EU



HERE NOW

The Cambodians want a ceasefire, let's have a discussion on a ceasefire. We proposed that our two militaries should meet as soon as possible

SHASAK PHUANGKETKEOW | FOREIGN MINISTER, THAILAND



SHORT TAKES

China slaps tariffs on EU dairy

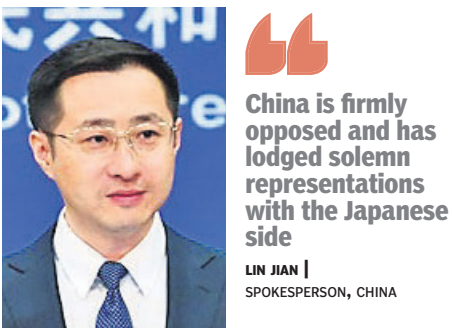
Hong Kong: China will impose up to 42.7 per cent of provisional tariffs on dairy products, including milk and cheese imported from the European Union, its Commerce Ministry said Monday. The elevated duties, which take effect Tuesday, were based on preliminary results from an investigation opened by China's Commerce Ministry in August 2024 as tensions between Beijing and Brussels flared. Beijing reviewed subsidies provided by EU countries for their dairy and other farm products. Beijing's probe was launched as part of tit-for-tat measures as the EU investigated Chinese subsidies on electric vehicles, and later imposed tariffs as high as 45.3 per cent on China-made EVs. China had initiated other probes into European brandy and pork imports as countermeasures for the EU's tariffs on Chinese EVs.

Pak-China sign 24 digital MoUs

Islamabad: Pakistan and China have signed 24 MoUs aimed at strengthening digital collaboration between the two countries, state media reported Monday. The MoUs were signed in Beijing under the Joint Working Group on IT Cooperation and included one government-to-government, seven government-to-business, and 16 business-to-business agreements, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The initiative focuses on developing an innovative and pragmatic digital corridor to enhance cooperation in the IT industry. The digital corridor will create new avenues for Pakistani technology companies and expand cooperation in ICT infrastructure development. The Ministry of IT and Telecom has been pursuing multiple international collaborations to train up to 300,000 Pakistani youths in advanced digital skills, promote AI adoption

Iran conducts missile exercise

Dubai: Iran held missile drills in various cities Monday, state media reported, citing unnamed sources and witnesses, in what was the second such reported exercise in a month. NBC News reported Saturday that US President Donald Trump was to be briefed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that any expansion of Iran's ballistic missile programme poses a threat that could necessitate swift action. Western powers regard Iran's ballistic missile arsenal both as a conventional military threat to Middle East stability and a possible delivery mechanism for nuclear weapons should Tehran develop them. It denies any intent to build atomic bombs.



China is firmly opposed and has lodged solemn representations with the Japanese side

LIN JIAN | SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

ASIM MUNIR RECEIVES SAUDI CIVILIAN HONOUR

Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, has been awarded Saudi Arabia's highest civilian honour, the King Abdulaziz Medal of Excellence



Denmark, Greenland reject US takeover bid

Denmark, Greenland vow that US won't take over Greenland after Trump appoints envoy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Copenhagen, Dec 22: The leaders of Denmark and Greenland insisted Monday that the US won't take over Greenland and demanded respect for their territorial integrity after President Donald Trump announced the appointment of a special envoy to Greenland.

Trump's announcement Sunday that Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry would be the US special envoy prompted a new flare-up of tensions over Washington's interest in the vast, semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, a NATO ally. Denmark's foreign minister said in comments to Danish broadcasters that he plans to summon the US ambassador.

"We have said it before. Now, we say it again. National borders and the sovereignty of states are rooted in international law," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and her Greenlandic counterpart, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, said in a joint statement. "They are fundamental principles. You cannot annex another country. Not even with an argument about international security."

"Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders and the US shall not take over Greenland," they added in the statement, emailed by Frederiksen's office. "We expect respect for our joint territorial integrity."

Trump called repeatedly



during his presidential transition and the early months of his second term for US jurisdiction over Greenland, and has not ruled out military force to take control of the mineral-rich, strategically located Arctic island. In March, Vice President JD Vance visited a remote US military base in Greenland and accused Denmark of underinvesting there.

The issue gradually drifted out of the headlines, but in August, Danish officials summoned the top US diplomat in Copenhagen following a report that at least three people with connections to Trump had carried out covert influence operations in Greenland. Denmark is a NATO ally of the United States.

On Sunday, Trump announced Landry's appointment as special envoy, saying that "Jeff understands how essential Greenland is to our National Security, and will strongly advance our Country's Interests for the Safety, Security, and Survival of our Allies, and indeed, the World."

Landry wrote in a post on X that "it's an honour to serve you in this volunteer position to make Greenland a part of the US." Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said in a brief statement that "the appointment confirms the continued American interest in Greenland."

BANGLADESH UNREST

Minorities protest against persecution

Unidentified gunmen Monday shot in the head Motaleb Shikder, another leader of the violent student-led 2024 uprising, in southwestern Khulna city

AGENCIES

Dhaka, Dec 22: Minority groups in Bangladesh Monday held a protest in the national capital over the interim government's failure to prevent the persecution of minorities, as authorities announced the arrest of 21 suspects linked to the lynching of a Hindu man, attacks on media offices and violent demonstrations near an Indian diplomatic mission.

Leaders of Hindu and other minority organisations Monday formed a human chain in Dhaka against the lynching of Dipu Chandra Das, saying the interim government has failed to stop violence, killings and persecution of minority communities.

Das, a garment factory worker in central Mymensingh city, was dragged out of the factory by a mob and lynched to death Thursday. His body was then set on fire.

His killing sparked widespread protests by factory workers, students and rights groups while India expressed concerns as well.

"He (Muhammad Yunus) claims he will build a humane Bangladesh, but in reality, he is an inhumane chief adviser," Joint Coordinator of the Minority Unity Front Manindra Kumar Nath told the protesters in front of Jatiya Press Club.



The Hindu population in Bangladesh has been affected by a series of incidents against minority communities in the country after the ouster of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina in August last year.

Meanwhile, the anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) arrested 10 suspects over the lynching of Das. Later, police arrested two more suspects.

A police headquarters spokesman Monday said 12 people were now in jail or custody as investigations were underway about the killing of Das.

The office of the interim government chief, who earlier called Das' killing a "brutal crime", Monday said nine people were arrested over the violent attack on the mass circulation Prothom Alo and Daily Star newspapers and prestigious cultural groups Chhayanat and Udichi Shilpi Goshthi in the capital.

The government has called for restraint, responsibility, and unity as Bangladesh navigates a critical democratic phase ahead of its upcoming

- Editors warn of escalating threats against journalists
- Protests after youth leader's death lead to media office attacks
- Interim government blames fringe elements

general elections.

"Police and other law enforcement agencies informed the Chief Adviser that they primarily identified 31 suspected perpetrators of these incidents, analysing video footage," his press wing said in a statement.

Besides, it said, video footage analysis detected three people who "tried to create rowdiness" in front of the residence of India's assistant high commissioner in the southeastern port city of Chattogram.

Unidentified gunmen Monday shot in the head Motaleb Shikder, another leader of the violent student-led 2024 uprising, in southwestern Khulna city. Shikder's condition is critical. "The Khulna Division head of NCP (National Citizen

Car bomb kills Russian gen



REUTERS

Moscow, Dec 22: A Russian general was killed by a car bomb in southern Moscow Monday, Russian investigators said, adding that they suspected Ukrainian special services could have been behind the attack.

The bomb exploded under the Kia Sorento car driven by Lieutenant General Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Russian General Staff's army operational training directorate, as he left a parking space at 06:55 Moscow time (0355 GMT).

Russia's State Investigative Committee said Sarvarov had died from his injuries. It published video of the wrecked vehicle, with blood visible on the driver's seat and one of the doors blown off.

Svetlana Petrenko, a spokesperson for the committee, said investigators were gathering forensic evidence, questioning witnesses and reviewing secu-

rity camera footage.

"Various versions for the killing are being examined, one of which involves the possible role of Ukrainian intelligence services in organising the crime," she said.

There was no official comment from Ukraine.

Myrotvoret, an unofficial Ukrainian website that provides a database of people described as war criminals or traitors, updated its entry on Sarvarov to say the 56-year-old had been "liquidated".

A string of Russian military figures and high-profile supporters of Moscow's war in Ukraine have been assassinated during the nearly four-year-old conflict, and Ukrainian military intelligence has said it was responsible for a number of the attacks.

Among those killed in previous car bombings in or near Moscow were a senior member of the General Staff, the chief of Russia's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops and the daughter of a prominent Russian nationalist figure.

Interfax news agency quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying President Vladimir Putin had been instantly informed of the attack on Sarvarov.

JAPAN PLANS HISTORIC NUCLEAR RESTART

REUTERS

Niigata, Dec 22: Japan took the final step to allow the world's largest nuclear power plant to resume operations with a regional vote Monday, a watershed moment in the country's return to nuclear energy nearly 15 years after the Fukushima disaster.

Kashiwazaki-Kariwa, located about 220 km (136 miles) northwest of Tokyo, was among 54 reactors shut after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami crippled the Fukushima Daiichi plant in the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

Since then, Japan has restarted 14 of the 33 that remain operable, as it tries to wean itself off imported fossil fuels.

Kashiwazaki-Kariwa will be the first operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co (TEPCO).

Niigata prefecture's assembly passed a vote of confidence on Niigata Governor Hideyo Hanazumi, who backed the restart last month, effectively allowing for the plant to begin operations again, Monday.

"This is a milestone, but this is not the end," Hanazumi told reporters after the vote. "There is no end in terms of ensuring the safety of Niigata residents."

While lawmakers voted in support of Hanazumi, the assembly session, the last for the year, exposed the community's divisions over the restart, despite new jobs and potentially lower electricity bills.

"This is nothing other than



a political settlement that does not take into account the will of the Niigata residents," an assembly member opposed to the restart told fellow lawmakers as the vote was about to begin.

Outside, around 300 protest-

ers stood in the cold holding banners reading 'No Nukes', 'We oppose the restart of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa' and 'Support Fukushima'.

"I am truly angry from the bottom of my heart," Kenichi-

- Niigata assembly votes to restart Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant
- Watershed moment in Japan's pivot back to nuclear energy
- Japan idled all reactors after 2011 Fukushima disaster
- Many residents are wary of restart
- Around 300 people protested against the plan Monday in Niigata

ro Ishiyama, a 77-year-old protester from Niigata city, told Reuters after the vote. "If something was to happen at the plant, we would be the ones to suffer the consequences."

TEPCO is considering reactivating the first of seven

reactors at the plant January 20, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Kashiwazaki-Kariwa's total capacity is 8.2 GW, enough to power a few million homes. The pending restart would bring one 1.36 GW unit online next year and start another one with the same capacity around 2030.

"We remain firmly committed to never repeating such an accident and ensuring Niigata residents never experience anything similar," said TEPCO spokesperson Masakatsu Takata. Takata declined to comment on timing.

TEPCO shares closed up 2% in afternoon trade in Tokyo, higher than the wider Nikkei index (.N225), opens new tab, which was up 1.8%.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
You will be very enterprising and industrious today. You make your plans very carefully and execute them perfectly. Despite this, your progress will be very slow. However, Ganesha advises you not to despair and showers his blessings on you.

TAURUS
This one of those ordinary days that, somehow, do not turn out too well. Unexpected expenses, that could totally upset your budget, cannot be ruled out. Something or the other is likely to give you an uncomfortable stomach upset. Ganesha urges you to take your medicines on time, and exercise moderation and discretion while deciding what and how much you should eat.

GEMINI
You had better start sharing your feelings with your family today, says Ganesha. Also, it's time to tell your family about your current financial status. It will help you feel better. Your energy levels will soar and you will approach everything with renewed vigour. Your spouse will bring good luck to you. How about a dinner extraordinaire with your loved ones?

CANCER
You may discuss certain serious issues with your beloved today, predicts Ganesha. Your time till afternoon will be spent in discussions and deliberations about the issue. However, this issue may not be enough in letting you off the hook on the work front. Think twice before you act.

LEO
After a long time, it seems as if the stars are aligning to bring something special for you. Call it your field day, but today, everything will go your way, says Ganesha. Expect to get appreciated for your hard work in office. As for the home front, you will get all the support you need from your family members for refurbishing your home. From little tips to personal desires, fulfilling them may involve more expenses than you expect.

VIRGO
The extraordinary way in which you do things will earn you many admirers. Superiors at work will laud you for your commitment. Evenings will be fun-filled and entertaining. Look to relax with some meditation or music... or both.

LIBRA
Working for the government is always a key responsibility, says Ganesha. But today of all days proves to be fabulous and phenomenal for all those in government service. Your actions will translate into accomplishment and you may rest assured that you shall be duly recognized and rewarded for your meritorious service. Keep your ears and eyes open and your lips preferably sealed, your bosses may wish to confide and speak confidential matters to you.

SCORPIO
Your business associates will emerge as intangible assets for you today, says Ganesha. You will probably start off an innovative joint venture without any doubt or indecision. Hard work and enthusiasm are always a good combination for achieving success. Your skill and business sense will bring you positive feedback from your seniors, feels Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
The horizons of your thoughts are open and serene. Forgive and forget will be your mood today – even for the most serious mistakes. Generosity was never your Achilles' heel, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Plans for expanding business may require you to take risks, leaving you in a dilemma on more than one occasion. In such desperate circumstances, following your instincts can lead you to success, advises Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
It's a busy day at work, and you're probably involved in some pending project work. It's advisable that you don't get complacent. Keep an eye on your opponents to have an edge over them, suggests Ganesha. Colleagues will be supportive, and so will family.

PISCES
A day wherein you will be handling responsibilities on both the home front and at the workplace awaits you, says Ganesha. Expect to be involved in home refurbishing projects, where expenses are likely to soar. Appreciation and gratitude will come your way at the end of a hard day's work.



KATE REVEALS HOW SHE COPED WITH UNWANTED ATTENTION

Kate Winslet believes life is “better” with a “good meal and a good poo” and they were among the things that helped her cope with unwanted attention. The *Titanic* actress said this while recalling the “horrific” intrusion into her personal life when she was younger.

ALEC BALDWIN BATTLED SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AFTER *RUST* SHOOTING

Actor Alec Baldwin has revealed he battled suicidal thoughts in the aftermath of the *Rust* shooting as he faced charges in connection with the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the set of his film. The 67-year-old actor was holding a prop gun on the set in 2021 when it discharged, killing Hutchins.



MENTAL HEALTH

Ananya defends Gen Z

Mumbai: A lively generational debate unfolded on the talk show *Two Much With Kajol and Twinkle* when guest Ananya Panday along with host Twinkle Khanna, and co-guest Farah Khan shared contrasting perspectives on Gen Z, emotional awareness, and the evolving language around mental health. The candid conversation, marked by humour and differing viewpoints, has since caught the attention of viewers online.

During the discussion, Ananya Panday spoke passionately about how Gen Z is often misunderstood. “Gen Z knows a lot more than people give them credit for and they’re very...” she began, before being interrupted by Farah Khan, who jokingly quipped, “What do they know? Everything! They know about sourdough and...” drawing laughter from the panel.

Ananya continued, stressing emotional awareness as a defining trait of her generation.

“No, no, they’re very in touch with their emotions,” she said, prompting an instantly sharp response from Twinkle Khanna. “What emotions? They’re traumatized by everything!” Twinkle remarked, staying true to her trademark wit. Refusing to let the point slide, Ananya defended her generation, saying, “No, they’re not traumatized. They’re the first generation that’s talking about feelings. It has nothing to do with the question, but it’s the first generation that’s really embracing mental health and freedom of expression.”

AGENCIES

Mumbai: Global icon Priyanka Chopra Jonas has spoken about her daughter Malti Marie Jonas' love for India and Indian culture.

The actress who was seen as a guest in the opening episode of *The Great Indian Kapil Show season 4* revealed how Malti is in love with the idea of ‘Indian Princess’.

“Malti travels with me to India and has seen a lot of places; from Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Ayodhya, she has travelled to a lot of places. I am trying to help her know more about the Indian culture, traditions and values,” the *Aitraaz* actress shared.

She further said, “Whenever she wears Ghagra Choli, she calls herself an Indian princess. She loves her bindi, bangles, and accessories.”

To this Navjyot Singh Sidhu added, “A queen’s daughter will obviously call herself a princess,” referring to Priyanka as

queen.

In the same episode, the actress revealed how her American popstar husband, Nick Jonas, once took her in his plane over the clouds to see the moon and break the fast on the eve of Karva Chauth.

The actress had flown to India specifically to shoot for the first episode of Kapil Sharma’s talk show, marking the start of its fourth season.

IAN S



Mahima on women’s remarriage in India

Mumbai: *Durlabh Prasad Ki Dusri Shaadi* seems like a fun family film, yet the filmmakers highlight its focus on women’s remarriage and the attached stigma. Recently, Mahima Chaudhry, who plays a key role in the movie, talked about changing mindsets, society pressure.

Mahima, who plays Babita, said, “Marriage is a very important thing in our culture... In India, it’s such a big part. We’ve seen so many grand weddings this year alone, and in everyone’s life, especially in our culture, marriage is a huge deal.”

She highlighted the changing attitudes toward remarriage, pointing out its growing acceptability for women in modern times. “Aaj kal, especially women ke liye toh acceptable ho gaya hai. *Pehle aadmi toh do-do shadiyan kar lete the*. You know unki

karwa dete the kisi bhi age me,” she noted.

The actress referenced historical cases to highlight how men remarried without facing any opposition. “For example, if they became widowers, like Shrikant Verma ji’s (co-actor) grandfather had four marriages arranged because whenever his grandmother passed away, he’d remarry right away,” she shared, while stressing that women deserve the same acceptance today.

AGENCIES



Reason Tamannaah was rejected for *Dhurandhar* song

Mumbai: The soundtrack of Aditya Dhar’s *Dhurandhar* is getting as much attention as the film itself. While the title track and *Fa9la* have become viral hits, other songs are topping the charts, too. Among these is the dance number *Shararat*, picturised on Ayesha Khan and Krystle D’Souza. Now, the song’s choreographer has revealed that the original choice for the dance number was Tamannaah Bhatia, only for director Aditya Dhar to veto her.

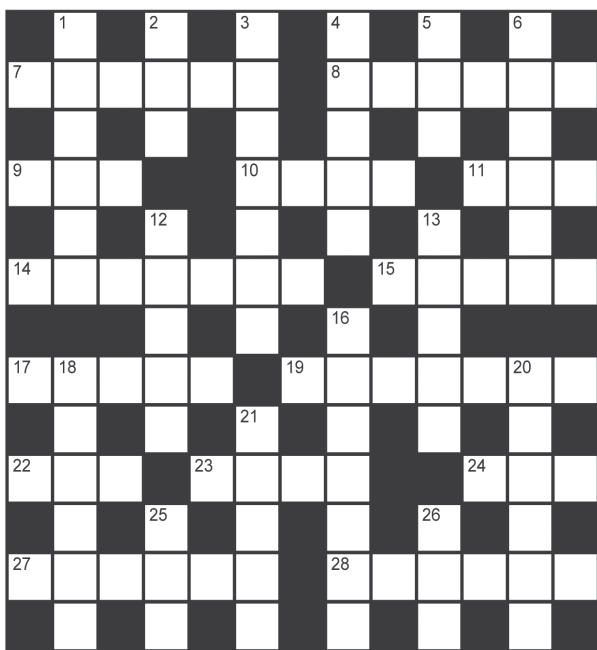
In an interview with Filmgyan, the song’s choreographer Vijay Ganguly revealed that his choice was Tamannaah. “In my head, she was (the one). I had suggested her, but Aditya was very clear that he did not want what people call an item song, something that went out of the story. If it were just about one girl, it would have taken attention away from the story,” he explained.

Eventually, Aditya convinced Vijay to have two dancers, instead of one in the song, which is how Ayesha and Krystle came into the picture. “He (Aditya) didn’t want the attention to be about this one person. If it were Tamannaah, it would’ve been about her and not the story.” He also added, “*Jo ho raha tha film mein*, there was a lot going on, and if you go away from the story, then the song is just a cut-to song,” Vijay explained.

AGENCIES

FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 7 Mexican wrap
- 8 Wealth
- 9 Keep out
- 10 Collagist’s need
- 11 Kimono tie
- 14 Bland
- 15 Spiral-horned antelope
- 17 Lover
- 19 One of the ABC islands
- 22 Consume

Down

- 23 Hoodwink
- 24 Frigid
- 27 Banquets
- 28 North Sea archipelago
- 5 Air hero
- 6 Mouselike jumping rodent
- 12 Deadly snake
- 13 Think tank output
- 16 Pug-nosed pooch
- 18 Bluepoint
- 20 Bowed
- 21 Crow
- 25 Recipe amt.
- 26 Cousin of calypso

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

G	C	R	O	A	C
C	H	O	O	S	E
E	N	P	O	T	C
L	E	N	S	T	A
E	I	E	O		
S	H	O	R	T	L
E	V	E	T	O	E
S	L	E	E	P	
I	S	B	K		
O	P	E	R	E	T
O	A	A	C	I	O
C	R	A	Y	O	N
T	S	D	O	H	F

SUDOKU

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

business

of the day quote

Today, Indian pharma stands at a defining moment and the next 25 years will be shaped by innovation, quality, and access

SUDARSHAN JAIN | SECRETARY GENERAL, INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL ALLIANCE

It's been lower than what it should be. FMCG volume growth has been 4-5 per cent, while GDP has been 7-8 per cent. So that's been a puzzle

SUDHIR SITAPATI | MD & CEO, GODREJ CONSUMER PRODUCTS

The report shows an improvement in India's IT hiring activity in 2025, with job demand reaching 1.8 million roles and a larger share of hiring coming from GGCs and product-led organizations

KAPIL JOSHI | CEO (IT STAFFING), QUESS CORP

SHORT TAKES

LIC Housing Finance reduces lending rates

New Delhi: LIC Housing Finance Ltd Monday said it has reduced its rate of interest on new home loans to 7.15 per cent. The revised interest rates on new home loan sanctions will now start from 7.15 per cent onwards, effective December 22, 2025, the mortgage firm said in a statement Monday. At a time when buyers are cautiously reassessing their decisions, this move is expected to lift homebuyer sentiment, reinforcing LIC Housing Finance's commitment to making home ownership more affordable, it said. The reduction follows the recent 25 bps repo rate cut by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

Ather scooters to get dearer by ₹3K

New Delhi: Electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy Monday said it will hike prices of its scooter lineup up to Rs 3,000 across models from January 1 citing rise in input costs and adverse forex impact. The increase comes as raw material, forex and key electronics components prices rise globally, Ather Energy said in a statement. The company's current product portfolio consists of the 450 series of performance scooters and family scooter Rizta with starting prices ranging from Rs 1,14,546 to Rs 1,82,946 (ex-New Delhi). Ather said it is currently offering its 'Electric December' scheme with benefits of up to Rs 20,000 across select cities.



India is facing a significant obesity crisis, having nearly 254 million people living with generalised obesity and an additional 351 million living with abdominal obesity

SATISH MEHTA | CEO AND MD, EMCURE PHARMACEUTICALS

INHALABLE INSULIN BY CIPLA

Drug firm Cipla Monday said it has launched orally inhaled insulin powder for diabetes patients in the country. The company had obtained regulatory approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) late last year for the exclusive distribution and marketing of Afrezza, a rapid-acting orally inhaled insulin, which offers a needle-free, convenient alternative to injectable insulin therapy



INDIA, NZ AIM DOUBLE TRADE

The third free-trade agreement this year, following a similar pact with the UK in July and another with Oman earlier this month, will give India more temporary employment visas, easier access for pharmaceuticals and medical devices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: India and New Zealand Monday announced the conclusion of talks for a free trade agreement that will give duty-free access to a range of domestic goods, particularly from labour-intensive sectors, and includes an FDI commitment of \$20 billion over 15 years.

The agreement is expected to help double bilateral trade in goods and services to \$5 billion in five years.

On the other hand, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over 95 per cent of forestry and wood articles. Under the pact, Wellington will get duty concessions on a number of other items such as kiwi fruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey and milk albumins.

To protect the interests of domestic farmers and MSMEs, India will not give any duty concessions in the politically sensitive dairy sector, like milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese.

The other products which will not be covered under the pact include vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper and its products, and aluminium and articles.

As regards the services sector, New Zealand will give a temporary employment entry visa pathway for Indian profes-



INDIA, NEW ZEALAND PACT TARGETS \$5 BILLION TRADE

TEXTILES, ENGINEERING GOODS TO GET DUTY-FREE ACCESS

PACT TO OFFER DUTY-FREE ACCESS, \$20BN FDI OVER 15 YRS

NO DUTY CONCESSIONS BY INDIA ON DAIRY SECTOR

TWO-WAY TRADE TOTALLED ABOUT \$1.81 BILLION IN 2024

sionals in skilled occupations with a quota of 5,000 visas annually and a stay of up to three years.

This pathway covers Indian professions such as AYUSH practitioners, yoga instructors, Indian chefs, and music teachers, as well as high-demand sectors including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction, strengthening workforce mobility and services trade.

The agreement is likely to be signed and implemented in about 7-8 months. The pact would help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods, to diversify shipments in the Oceania region. India has already implemented a trade pact with Australia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Lux-

on Monday announced the firming up of the pact. The two prime ministers held a phone conversation, following which the announcement on the FTA was made.

With negotiations having been initiated during Luxon's visit to India in March 2025, the two leaders agreed that the conclusion of the FTA in a record time of nine months reflects the shared ambition and political will to further deepen ties between the countries.

Bilateral merchandise trade stood at \$1.3 billion in 2024-25, while total trade in goods and services reached about \$2.4 billion in 2024, with services trade alone reaching \$1.24 billion, led by travel, IT, and business services.

The FTA would significantly deepen bilateral economic engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation between the two

countries, and also open up new opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youth of both countries across various sectors.

Further under the pact, New Zealand will set up a dedicated Agri-Technology Action Plan on kiwifruit, apples and honey with a view to helping Indian farmers enhance productivity and quality.

The cooperation includes the establishment of Centres of Excellence, improved planting material, capacity building for growers and technical support for orchard management, post-harvest practices, supply chain performance, and food safety.

Commitment has been extended by New Zealand on Geographical Indications (GIs), including amendment of its law to facilitate the registration of India's wines and spirits.

Gold, silver prices at new peaks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Gold prices rose to a fresh lifetime high of Rs 1,38,200 per 10 grams, gaining Rs 1,685, in the national capital Monday following the precious metal scaling record highs in the global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Silver prices also raced to hit an all-time high of Rs 2,14,500 per kilogramme (inclusive of all taxes) in the capital, up by Rs 10,400 per kg.

"Bullish momentum extended in bullion, with gold and silver surging to another fresh record high on Monday," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold increased by \$80.85, or 1.86 per cent, to hit a record of \$4,420.35 per ounce.

"Investor interest in silver and gold has grown considerably as interest rates are going down in the US, fiscal concerns

GOLD & SILVER



are growing, and the American economy is becoming more uncertain," Gandhi said.

He added that this has led to a shift towards the safe-haven asset. In addition, the demand for safe haven also

YELLOW METAL JUMPS TO RECORD HIGH OF ₹1.38 LAKH/10G

WHITE METAL SURGES TO NEW PEAK OF ₹2,14,500 PER KG

GOLD, SILVER FUTURES HIT FRESH RECORDS ON FED CUT BETS

increased, due to the escalating geopolitical tensions.

Spot silver appreciated by \$2.31, or 3.44 per cent, to hit a lifetime high of \$69.45 per ounce in the overseas markets.

"Silver prices have reached a record high, re-

Investor interest in silver and gold has grown considerably as interest rates are going down in the US, fiscal concerns are growing, and the American economy is becoming more uncertain

SAUMIL GANDHI | SENIOR ANALYST - COMMODITIES, HDFC SECURITIES

flecting strong industrial demand along with rising investment demand," Satish Dondapati, Fund Manager at Kotak Mutual Fund, said.

Expressing similar views, Renisha Chainani, Head - Research at Augmont, said, "Mining disruptions and limited current silver inventories are causing severe supply shortfalls, driving prices higher."

"A weak dollar is expected to continue to boost speculator demand for silver, not to mention any geopolitical tensions that would generate keener safe-haven demand for silver," she added.

OGB, SELCO Foundation hold workshop on climate-resilient livelihoods

PURI: Odisha Grameen Bank (OGB), in collaboration with SELCO Foundation and Spandan Organisation, organised a workshop on 'Catalyzing Finance for Climate-Resilient Livelihoods' in Puri. The workshop brought together key stakeholders to promote renewable energy-based entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihood solutions. Among those present were Prabhu Prasad Mishra, Senior Financial Inclusion Advisor, SELCO Foundation; Manas Ranjan Mishra, Senior Manager (Head Office), OGB; Soumya Darshan Kar, Regional Manager, Pipili Regional Office (OGB); and Barsharani Mishra, Chairperson, Spandan Organisation. Over 25 branch managers of OGB, representatives from partner organisations, DRE-based entrepreneurs, and service providers also participated. Addressing the gathering, Sanjay Tripathy of SELCO Foundation said the workshop aimed to accelerate economic development of rural and urban entrepreneurs, SHGs, and FPOs by facilitating access to finance for renewable energy-based livelihood solutions through OGB. OGB highlighted its continued support to entrepreneurs and SHGs by extending loans for solar energy-based livelihood activities under various government schemes, including PMFME, PMEGP, PM Mudra, and SUY. Under a Memorandum of Understanding between SELCO Foundation and Odisha Grameen Bank, both institutions agreed to facilitate the creation of over 500 green entrepreneurs by FY2027. Bank officials also expressed their commitment to providing financial support at the grassroots level.



Equities rise as IT, metals lead rally

Sensex rallies 638 pts, Nifty settles above 26,100

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 22: Indian equity benchmarks rose with broad-based gains Monday as prospects of foreign investors turning buyers after an aggressive selloff earlier this month propelled a rebound in stocks.

The Nifty 50 rose 0.79% to 26,172.4 and the BSE Sensex added 0.75% to 85,567.48.

Fifteen of the 16 major sectors rose, with information technology and commodity-linked stocks leading the pack with 2.1% and 1.4% gains, respectively. Consumer durables stocks fell 0.2%.

The broader mid-caps and small-caps advanced 0.8% and 1.2%. The Nifty 50 index suffered three consecutive weeks of losses amid concerns over foreign outflows and the rupee's depreciation as a delay in an India-US trade deal weighed on sentiment.

However, foreign portfolio investors have net bought shares worth Rs 37.76 billion



in the last three sessions, trimming this month's outflows to Rs 120.2 billion.

Analysts, however, do not expect a bullish turn without a trade deal in place or other triggers. On Monday, investors were also buoyed by prospects of a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India and Federal Reserve next year.

IT stocks rose for the fourth session. Infosys and Wipro added 3.1% each, following an unexplained surge in their Amer-

ican Depository Receipts after Indian market hours Friday.

A depreciation in rupee and sector rotation have been aiding IT stocks for last few sessions, as per analysts.

Metal stocks were supported by a rise in prices of base metals like aluminium, copper, and silver. Shriram Finance jumped 3.7%, extending Friday's gains after MUGF deal. Tata Motors added 4.4% after Nomura initiated with "buy" rating.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 22: India's eight core infrastructure sectors recorded a growth of 1.8 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) in November 2025, which marked a rebound after a contraction in the previous month, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Monday.

The recovery comes after the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) had declined by 0.1 per cent in October 2025. Notably, the core sectors had recorded a growth of 5.8 per cent in November 2024.

The ministry added that cement, steel, fertilisers and coal registered positive growth during the month, while crude oil, natural gas, refinery products and electricity recorded declines.

The eight core industries, coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity, together account for 40.27 per cent of the weight of the Index



of Industrial Production (IIP).

For the period April to November 2025-26, cumulative growth of the core sectors stood at 2.4 per cent, compared with 4.4 per cent in the corresponding period of 2024-25.

Coal production increased 2.1 per cent in November 2025, compared to 7.5 per cent growth Y-o-Y. Cumulative coal output during April-November declined 1.4 per cent, compared with 6.4 per cent growth a year earlier.

Crude oil output declined 3.2

per cent as against a 2.1 per cent fall a year ago. Cumulative production remained down 1.3 per cent, similar to the contraction recorded in the same period last year.

Natural gas production fell 2.5 per cent, versus a 1.9 per cent decline Y-o-Y. Cumulative output contracted 3.0 per cent, compared with 1.1 per cent growth during April-November 2024-25.

Petroleum refinery products declined 0.9 per cent, compared to 2.9 per cent growth in No-

RBI net sold \$11.88bn in Oct to arrest ₹ fall

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 22: The Reserve Bank of India sold a net \$11.88 billion in the foreign exchange market in October, data released Monday showed, reflecting the central bank's efforts to support the rupee.

The RBI said in its monthly bulletin that it purchased \$17.69 billion dollars and sold \$29.56 billion during the month. In September, the central bank had net sold \$7.91 billion in the spot market.

The rupee closed at 88.7650 against the US dollar in October, having hit 88.80 in late September, which was a record low at the time.

The RBI's net outstanding forward sales stood at \$63.61 billion as of end-October, up from \$59.41 billion at the end of the prior month, the data showed.

The central bank intervenes in the spot and forward markets to curb exchange rate volatility.

The rupee hit a record low of 91.075 last week before recovering on the back of the RBI's intervention.

The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day in the negative territory, slightly down by 1 paise at 89.68 against the US dollar on Monday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by a recovery in crude oil prices.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on a weak US dollar and strength in the domestic markets. We may not see a lot of fresh FII outflows ahead of new year holidays. However, delay in trade deal between India and US may continue to weigh on the rupee at higher levels," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Neeraj shines amid athletics turmoil

Olympian finally breaks 90m barrier but no end to country's doping woes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Despite a rare blip in form, Neeraj Chopra was the biggest saving grace for India's doping-marred athletics landscape after getting the 90m "monkey off his back" even as the sport's administrators worked towards making the country a hub of big-ticket events in a bitter-sweet 2025.

The 27-year-old Chopra went past the coveted mark, considered the gold standard in javelin throw, in the Doha Diamond League but suffered a heartbreak when he failed to win a medal in the World Championships final in Tokyo later in the year.

Young Sachin Yadav outperformed Chopra to emerge as a potential world-class javelin thrower with a fourth-place finish.

But the doping menace showed no signs of decline with several top Indians caught in the net, including Olympian javelin thrower Shivpal Singh and former Asian Games medalist discus thrower Seema Punia.

An athlete-coach duo was also suspended for doping in a first of its kind instance, while two minor athletes too joined the Hall of Shame.

There was a silver lining though, as India staged two World Athletics Continental



Tour events, with Chopra hosting and winning one of them.

The country also mounted bids on some high-profile continental and global events, including the 2031 World Athletics Championships with Ahmedabad as the proposed venue.

90m high for Chopra

One of the most eligible bach-

elors in the country, Chopra tied the knot with tennis player Himani Mor in an intimate ceremony in a private resort in Himachal Pradesh with just a few close relatives and family members present.

The outside world got to know of the event only after Chopra himself posted the marriage photos in his social media handles.

A few months later, Chopra sent his spear to 90.23m to become the third Asian and 25th overall to achieve the feat.

Chopra clinched three more major titles -- the Paris Diamond League, the Golden Spike meet and the inaugural NC Classic. He realised his dream of hosting a world-class event in front of the home crowd and family members.

He, however, came up short in the Diamond League Finals, finishing second to German Julian Weber. He was bidding to regain the trophy he had won in 2022, but was barely able to touch the 85m mark.

But the most unexpected happened during the World Championships in Tokyo in September at the very venue where he achieved fame and Olympic gold in 2021.

Never-ending doping menace

India continued to occupy the second spot in the global list of athletes ineligible to compete due to doping offences, with 128 athletes in the list released by Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU).

Some of the country's top athletes caught for doping included Shivpal, Pune Half Marathon winner Pradhan Vilas Kirulakar, sprinter Sekar Dhanalakshmi and 2014 Asian Games medalist hammer thrower Manju Bala.

Two minors were also handed three-year bans by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA).

Former Indian junior team head coach Ramesh Nagpuri was suspended for "complicity" in doping.

Two more coaches -- Karamveer Singh and Rakesh -- were also suspended for "complicity" and "administration of prohibited substances" respectively.

Asian Games silver medal-winning long distance runner Kartik Kumar accepted a three-year ban from the US Anti-Doping Agency after testing positive for a range

of banned anabolic agents during out-of-competition tests there.

Alarmed by the rising doping cases, the AFI set up an anti-doping cell to track down coaches and training centres suspected to be involved in substance abuse.

It also made it mandatory for all coaches -- qualified and unqualified -- to register on its portal from this season onwards if they wanted to continue training athletes. It will also not recommend anyone who trains with unregistered coaches for national honours like the Arjuna and Khel Ratna award.

City takes centre stage

India successfully hosted a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze level meet on August 10 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. The event will be upgraded to silver level next year, to be held at the same venue August 22, 2026.

India also made bids for 2028 Asian Indoor Athletics Championships -- with Bhubaneswar as venue -- and the 2026 Asian Relays.

The AFI decided to introduce the National Indoor Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar in March next year, to prepare for the 2028 Asian Indoor Championships for which it has made a bid.

Meanwhile, Adile Sumariwalla's reign as AFI chief came to an end with 2002 Asian Games gold-winning shot putter Bahadur Sagoo replacing him.

HUGE PAY HIKE FOR WOMEN CRICKETERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The BCCI has more than doubled the match fees of women cricketers and officials in domestic cricket, a move triggered by India's maiden ODI World Cup triumph and aimed at creating a more equitable pay structure across the circuit.

The substantial hike was approved by the Board's Apex Council.

As per the revised structure, senior women cricketers playing their trade in domestic tournaments will now earn between Rs 50,000 and Rs 60,000 per day, a significant jump from the existing Rs 20,000 (Rs 10,000 for reserves) per match day.

For senior women's domestic one-day tournaments and multi-day competitions, players in the first XI will receive Rs 50,000 per day, while those in reserves will be paid half the amount at Rs 25,000 per day.

In national T20 tournaments, first XI players will earn Rs 25,000 per match day, with reserves receiving Rs 12,500.

If a top domestic women cricketer now features across all formats during a full season, she can earn anywhere between Rs 12 lakh and Rs 14 lakh, according to BCCI officials.

The Apex Council has also increased the remuneration for junior women cricketers. Players in the Under-23 and Under-19 categories will be paid Rs 25,000 per day, while reserves will get Rs 12,500.

2ND WT20I

Women in Blue look to consolidate lead vs SL

PRESS TRUST OPF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, Dec 22: The Indian women's cricket team will look to raise its fielding standards by a few notches and build on a comprehensive opening win when it squares off against Sri Lanka in the second WT20I here Tuesday.

Playing its first international game after a historic World Cup triumph last month, Harmanpreet Kaur's side didn't need to break much sweat in the batting and bowling departments during an eight-wicket win over the island nation.

However, the team's fielding, especially catching, left a lot to be desired despite the bowlers managing to restrict the Lankans to a paltry 121 for 6.

"We are working on our fielding. Don't know why we keep dropping catches. It is wet out here, but it is not an excuse. That is something we really need to think about. In the next match, we will come about with better approach," skipper Harmanpreet Kaur had said after the match.

The Indian team had a well-deserved six-week break following the World Cup high. The players converged for a week-long camp at the Centre Of Excellence in Bangalore after that.

Some rustiness in fielding was pretty much expected and the seasoned skipper feels that the team would be getting into



the groove very soon.

"We are playing after a month. We don't want to unnecessarily challenge ourselves. We just want to do well for the team.

"We just wanted to bowl first and see how it goes. We wanted to show the better approach," Harmanpreet had said.

On paper, India are overwhelming favourites to win the series against Chamari Athapaththu-led visitors.

In the form of her life, Jemimah Rodrigues commenced her post World Cup journey from where she left during the title victory.

She looked in rhythm and was especially severe on Shashini Gimhani, a left-arm wrist spinner, which is a rare breed in women's cricket.

Gimhani bowled a lot of over-pitched deliveries and failed to get her length right and Ro-

drigues alone creamed her for half a dozen boundaries.

The biggest gain for India was 20-year-old left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma, who was recently ignored at the WPL auctions.

Although Vaishnavi went wicket-less, she gave away only 16 runs and didn't concede a single boundary.

For Shafali Verma, the series is an important one and she would like to be more consistent while batting in the format that suits her game.

In the opening game, Sri Lanka's inept performance didn't test India's batting much.

But the likes of Rodrigues, Harmanpreet, Deepti Sharma would like to be challenged during the course of this series before embarking on a tough tour of Australia after the conclusion of the Women's Premier League.

68TH NAT'L SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Navy's Jadhav bags 10m air rifle gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Dec 22: Navy's Kiran Ankush Jadhav held off the challenge of Olympian Arjun Babuta to clinch the gold medal in the men's 10m air rifle event at the 68th National Shooting Championship here Monday.

Jadhav finished with 252.1 to claim top-of-the-podium place ahead of Babuta, who secured silver with 251.4, while reigning 50m rifle 3 positions national champion Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar bagged bronze with 229.8.

Arjun's Railways teammate Shahu Tushar Mane finished fourth with 209.3, followed by Himanshu (181.1), Ramayana Tomer (166.7), Onkar Vikas Waghmare (145.4) and Pradeep Singh (123.3) to round out the



final lineup.

In the men's 10m air rifle junior final, Gujarat's Mohammed Murtaza Vania delivered an authoritative display to secure the gold medal with 254.3.

Abhinav Shaw of West Bengal claimed the silver with 251.6, while Onkar Vikas Waghmare finished third with 230.1 to earn the bronze medal.

Odisha's dominant opener against MP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Narainpur (Chhattisgarh), Dec 22: Team Odisha started their campaign in the 79th National Football Championship for Santosh Trophy 2025-26 against Madhya Pradesh and registered a convincing 4-0 victory in the opening group-stage match held here Monday.

Kartik Hantal, captain of the Odisha team, broke the deadlock early in a 15 minute penalty kick. The score stayed stable at 1-0 until the second half was nearing the end where forward Jitu Muduli added the second in the 75 minute.

With Madhya Pradesh taking another hit, it became



easy for Odisha to add more. Forward Srikant Gadaba landed a brace (77' and 90+4') to take the lead to 4-0. With the fourth goal in added time it

SHORT TAKES

Pakistan colts get hefty cash reward

Karachi: Prime Minister Shahbaz on Monday announced a special cash award of 10 million rupees for Pakistan's U19 Asia Cup-winning squad members. The Pakistan colts thumped India by 191 runs Sunday to claim the title. Sharif made the announcement at a reception for the team and officials in Islamabad where he lauded the team's performance. Sarfaraz Ahmed, the mentor and manager of the team, told the media after the reception that the Prime Minister has announced cash award of 10 million (Approx \$36,000) to each of the players. Sarfaraz said he was enjoying working with a bunch of talented players who had a great future in the sport.

NZ rise to second in WTC rankings

New Delhi: New Zealand climbed to second on the ICC World Test Championship table after completing a dominant 323-run win over the West Indies in the third and final Test at Mount Maunganui. The comprehensive victory lifted New Zealand above South Africa, with only Australia ahead of them in the WTC standings. New Zealand's next assignment is a three-match World Test Championship series against England, scheduled for the middle of next year. The West Indies, meanwhile, remain ninth on the table and will return to action at home next year in a series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The Black Caps sealed the result midway through the final session at Bay Oval, with left-arm seamer Jacob Duffy claiming the final wicket to bring the match to a close.

England's Kane lands kicker honour

Berlin: England star Harry Kane's rise from the most expensive debut signing in Bundesliga history to a record-setting scorer and commanding team figure has turned his Bayern Munich spell into a full-blown success story, capped by prominent football magazine Kicker naming him its 2025 Personality of the Year. Praise poured in from every corner, and the 32-year-old England captain could not hide his grin when told about the award during an on-pitch TV interview. He had just scored his 81st league goal in only his 78th appearance in Bayern's 4-0 win over last-placed Heidenheim. "Really? Oh, that's great," he said. Kicker ran the headline "King and servant," calling Kane the ideal ambassador who has won over German fans. His impact has gone far beyond the 100-million-euro fee and the goals that followed, reports Xinhua. Kane was the Bundesliga's top scorer in each of his first two seasons, and finally won a league title in May 2025 after 14 years at Spurs and several brief loans earlier in his career.

FIFA MEN'S WORLD RANKINGS

Spain ends year as top team

AGENCIES

Zurich, Dec 22: In the final FIFA men's world rankings of 2025, published Monday, Spain maintained its position at the top of the global standings. Despite clinching the 2025 Arab Cup title, Morocco remains 11th—just 0.54 points shy of breaking into the top 10 for the first time since April 1998.

Jordan rose two spots to 64th, making it one of the few teams on the entire leaderboard to climb more than a single position, alongside Vietnam (107th) and Singapore (148th).

India's position remained unchanged since its fall in Novem-



ber rankings despite the All India Football Federation (AIFF) struggling to get the top-flight football league, Indian Super League, running in the country.

While the top of the table showed little movement, the true success stories of 2025 emerged through the ranks.

Kosovo, 80th, finished the year as the standout performer,

accumulating a massive 89.02 points—the highest by any nation—following a stellar run of seven wins and two draws. This consistency fuelled a year-high surge of 19 places for the European side. Other notable climbers include Norway (29th position) and Suriname, the latter jumping 15 places over the last 12 months and ending in the 123rd spot.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 22: The Pro Wrestling League (PWL), sanctioned by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), unveiled its new official logo ahead of the fifth season, signalling the league's revival after a seven-year hiatus.

The Pro Wrestling League is scheduled to return in January 2026, featuring top Indian and international wrestlers, promising high-intensity competition and a commercially viable framework designed to support the sport's growth.

The newly launched logo is a modern, dynamic emblem inspired by the traditional red-and-blue wrestling mat, symbolising strength, balance and competitive spirit. The lo-



go represents a complete reset for the Pro Wrestling League, which has undergone a significant structural and operational overhaul under its new ownership and management.

PWL's renewed mission is to create a world-class professional platform for wrestlers by bridging the gap between grassroots akhadas and the global competitive stage. The league

aims to provide structured opportunities, international exposure and a professionally managed environment for athletes, while contributing to the long-term growth and credibility of wrestling in India.

The revitalised vision is being implemented in close collaboration with the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), ensuring the league operates in line with national regulations and governance standards. The collaboration is expected to strengthen the pathway for emerging wrestlers to progress from traditional training systems to the national and international spotlight.

The league is now being operated under the ownership and management of ONO Media, led by partners Akhil Gupta

and Dayaan Farooqui. The new management has moved away from previous frameworks to build a transparent, athlete-first ecosystem focused on professionalism, integrity and long-term sustainability within Indian wrestling.

Speaking on the occasion, Akhil Gupta, CEO, Pro Wrestling League, said, "The new logo reflects our vision for the future of the Pro Wrestling League—modern, aggressive and world-class. More importantly, it represents a clean slate. We are building a league that honours the sport and its athletes through transparency, professionalism and long-term commitment. The past is behind us, and the focus is firmly on creating a sustainable ecosystem for Indian wrestling."