



Words of wisdom

Actor Priyanka Chopra says instead of speaking about resolutions or ambitious goals people should choose kindness

LEISURE | P2



Epstein files

Justice Department releases more Epstein files, prosecutor email alleges Trump flew Epstein's jet more times reported

INTERNATIONAL | P10



China moves WTO

China files a complaint at the World Trade Organization (WTO) against India over latter's support measures for the solar and IT sectors

BUSINESS | P11



India slide

Men in Blue suffer sharp drop from fifth to the eighth position in FIH world rankings

SPORTS | P12

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 263 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 24, 2025

12 PAGES | ₹5.00

WITCH HUNTING

Parida to officers: Spend an hr every month in villages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida Tuesday asked officers to spend at least one hour every month in areas where social evils like witch-hunting still exist.

She was addressing a state-level workshop on the prevention of witch hunting and prohibition of child marriage, organised by the Women and Child Development (W&CD) Department.

Noting the pivotal role of women in the state's rural economy, she stressed that education and sustained awareness are the most powerful tools to eradicate regressive practices such as witch-hunting and child marriage.

She called upon the participating officers from different districts to proactively visit villages for at least one hour each month to create awareness against superstition and social evils.

Parida, who is in charge of the department, urged officers to act not merely out of administrative duty but with a strong sense of humanity and social responsibility.

She said the state government was committed to providing a healthy, progressive, and superstition-free society for future generations.

Addressing the gathering, W&CD principal secretary Shubha Sharma said it was important to combine legal enforcement with mass awareness to effectively combat social evils.

IRREGULAR by MANJU



Science can wait. Economics can wait. The environment can wait. Everything can wait. History must be fixed first

CHAOS AT B'DESH MISSIONS

After years of close ties, India-Bangladesh relations are witnessing a significant downturn with Dhaka adopting a confrontational stance toward New Delhi following the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The lynching of Dipu Chandra Das, a Hindu worker, in Bangladesh has sparked a fresh diplomatic row, pushing Delhi-Dhaka ties deeper into crisis. India expressed alarm over the killing and rising attacks on minorities, summoning the Bangladesh envoy after protests erupted outside its missions. Dhaka, in turn, accused of allowing Hindu nationalist groups to threaten its diplomats and shut visa centres in India. With both sides trading blame and suspending consular services, the incident has become a flashpoint in an already strained relationship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: Protests erupted Tuesday in



OUTRAGE: Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal members wave the national flag during a protest outside the Bangladesh High Commission over attacks on Hindus in the neighbouring country in New Delhi, Tuesday

several parts of the country, including near the Bangladesh high commission in Delhi and its missions in other cities, against the lynching of a Hindu worker in the strife-torn neighbouring country.

Holding saffron flags and shouting slogans, the pro-

testers belonging to right-wing outfits demanded strong diplomatic steps by India to ensure the safety of Hindus living in Bangladesh.

On December 18, Dipu Chandra Das, a 25-year-old garment factory worker, was lynched by a mob and

his body set on fire over blasphemy in Baluka in Mymensingh district of Bangladesh.

The demonstrations were held in multiple cities including Kolkata, Mumbai and Jammu. Protesters also burnt effigies and photos of Muhammad Yunus, the

Moscow asks Dhaka to de-escalate tension

DHAKA: Amid continued domestic unrest and strained geopolitical ties, Russia has called on Bangladesh to ease tensions with India at the earliest. Speaking in Dhaka, Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Grigoryevich Khozin said, "The sooner you reduce the tension...the better. Because...historically, since 1971, when Bangladesh gained independence, [it was] mostly because of Indian help. And Russia also supported this in this regard. And shoulder to shoulder, India, Bangladesh, and Russia, we work together."

chief advisor of the interim government in Bangladesh.

In the national capital, the epicentre of the protests, hundreds of supporters of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal broke through barricades and clashed with police near the fortified Bangladesh High Commission.

A sea of banners and placards bobbed in the air, reading denunciatory messages against the Bangladesh government.

A placard read: "Hindu rakt ki ek ek boond ka hisaab chahiye (Each drop of blood of a Hindu must be accounted for.)"

On the other hand, Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry Tuesday summoned Indian

High Commissioner Pranay Verma amid concerns over the security of Bangladeshi missions in India.

The Foreign Ministry, in a statement, said Dhaka's "grave concern over the regrettable incidents" outside the perimeter of the Bangladesh High Commission.

A sea of banners and placards bobbed in the air, reading denunciatory messages against the Bangladesh government.

"Bangladesh also expressed deep concern over violent protests staged outside the premises of the different Diplomatic Missions of Bangladesh in India," the statement said.

P9

CM flags off 150 ambulances



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sued by the CMO, of the 428 new 108 ambulances, 419 old ambulances and 2 ambulances that were completely damaged in accidents will be replaced by new ambulances. In addition, 5 ALS (advanced life support) ambulances will be used at airports/air strips under the Commerce and Transport Department and 2 ALS ambulances for Jharsuguda Cardiac Care Hospital.

The official said that as many as 5,000 patients are being taken to various

hospitals in the state daily through 108-ambulance service.

After dedicating the new ambulances to the state, Majhi said, "The government is phasing out old ambulances and introducing new ones to make healthcare delivery faster and more efficient. This will strengthen the 108 Emergency Medical Ambulance Service (EMAS) across the state.

The chief minister said that the remaining new ambulances will soon be inducted into the ambulance service, along with the old Emergency Medical Ambulance Service (EMAS) fleet.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling, Ekamra Bhupaneswar MLA Babu Singh,

Health secretary Ashwati S, Mission Director of National Health Mission, Odisha, Brunda D and other senior officers of the Health department were present on the occasion.

Chandbali, Dec 23: An 11-year old girl was allegedly raped and later murdered here in Bhadrak district, police said Tuesday. The matter came to the fore after the partially unclothed body of the girl was found Tuesday evening on the grounds of a panchayat office under this civic body limits.

The incident has spread shockwaves in the area. On being informed, Chandbali police reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem to Chandbali hospital. Allegations have surfaced that the girl was raped and killed before her body was dumped at the site.

Tension gripped the community, with angry residents demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible. Police personnel were deployed at the spot and kept a close watch on the unfolding situation.

According to police, the girl's father had filed a missing person report at Chandbali police station earlier Tuesday evening, shortly before the body was found by locals.



শ্রী মোহন মোদি

প্রধানমন্ত্রী



ବିଜନ୍ମିତ ଭାରତ ଯୁବ

ନେତୃତ୍ବ ସଂଲାପ-୨୦୨୬



ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ମୋଦି

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ରାଜ୍ୟସ୍ଵରୀୟ
ଯୁବବୋସବ ସମ୍ମାନ

ପ୍ରଗତିର ସାରଥି... ଆମ ଯୁବଶକ୍ତି

୨୪ - ୨୫ ଡିସେମ୍ବର ୨୦୨୬

କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଶ୍ରାବିଯୁମ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର



ନିଃଶ୍ଵର ପ୍ରବେଶ

କ୍ରୀଡ଼ା ଓ ଯୁବବୋସବ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

We're biggest fugitives: Lalit Modi mocks India

AGENCIES

London, Dec 23: Lalit Modi Monday appeared to take a swipe at India when he shared a video from Vijay Mallya's birthday party, where he referred to himself and Mallya as the two "biggest fugitives".

"We are the two fugitives, the biggest fugitives of India," Modi is heard saying on the video.

"Let me do something to break the internet down again. Something for you folks. Wat your heart out with envy (sic)," he captioned the video posted on his Instagram.

The video drew sharp reactions. "What a mockery they have made of Indian government," commented a user.

"You ain't breaking no internet son sit down," commented another.

Some found fault with the Indian authorities for the state of affairs. "Indian



A screengrab from the video shared by Lalit Modi on his Instagram account

to make such a video (sic)," said a user.

"They are laughing at Indian CBI/ED," said yet another.

Vijay Mallya was declared a Fugitive Economic Offender in January 2019 by a special court hearing cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The businessman, accused of defaulting on multiple loan repayments and facing money launder-

11-YR-OLD RAPED, KILLED IN BHADRAK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chandbali, Dec 23: An 11-year old girl was allegedly raped and later murdered here in Bhadrak district, police said Tuesday. The matter came to the fore after the partially unclothed body of the girl was found Tuesday evening on the grounds of a panchayat office under this civic body limits.

The incident has spread shockwaves in the area. On being informed, Chandbali police reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem to Chandbali hospital. Allegations have surfaced that the girl was raped and killed before her body was dumped at the site.

Tension gripped the community, with angry residents demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible. Police personnel were deployed at the spot and kept a close watch on the unfolding situation.

According to police, the girl's father had filed a missing person report at Chandbali police station earlier Tuesday evening, shortly before the body was found by locals.

OIPR-29001/13/0120/2526

leisure



KRAVITZ, STYLES SPARK ENGAGEMENT RUMOURS

Zoe Kravitz and Harry Styles have sent the internet into a frenzy with fresh engagement rumours. The speculation began after the actress was spotted wearing a chunky gold ring on her ring finger during a romantic outing with the singer in Rome

KEVIN COSTNER SUED FOR BREACH IN CONTRACT

Kevin Costner has been sued for failing to pay for costume rentals used to make his film *Horizon: An American Saga – Chapter 2. Western Costume*, a Hollywood costume rental company, filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles County Superior Court against Costner and his production banner Territory Pictures for breach of contract



FORTUNE FORECAST



accuracy • reliability • trust

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

At times it is a good thing to be under pressure, because it brings out your potential to the fullest. You will outsmart all your colleagues in the work you do. However, results may not match your expectations. Ganesha advises patience as results don't come overnight.

**TAURUS**

This is a great day for expressions your ideas and feelings. Ganesha urges you to open up and share hopes and concerns, dreams and aspirations with your others. Romance is in the air. You could be flying deliriously high on the wings of love, in the company of your sweetheart.

**GEMINI**

A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesha. You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do. Some of you, who want to go for further studies, may take a well-informed decision today.

**CANCER**

Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

**LEO**

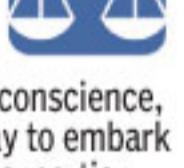
Some promises are like whispers in the wind – never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesha advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser. Remember, every day is not Sunday; also, you cannot win each time.

**VIRGO**

Don't dilly-dally when it comes to matters of health, says Ganesha. You look lean and mean to take on those old wounds today. But peace and prosperity are the flavours of the day. Ganesha advises you to invest time in fun and entertainment today – just to get those batteries charged.

**LIBRA**

If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal. The hard work of the morning and the pressure of the afternoon will give way to pleasure in the evening.

**SCORPIO**

Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesha. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them. Your day will get even better when perhaps, news from an overseas friend reaches you.

**CAPRICORN**

Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesha. This, of course, may also eat into your savings and force you to be thrifty by the end of the day, but you won't regret this once-in-a-while extravagant outing. It's all for a reason, after all.

**AQUARIUS**

A romantic liaison is headed towards you. Quite naturally, you don't want to be caught dead in a ratty old tee. Today, you want to keep everyone happy and amused, both at home and at work. And you manage wonderfully, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**

Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a generous winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesha.



Kiara joins work-life balance debate

Mumbai: Kiara Advani has weighed in on the ongoing eight-hour shift debate in Bollywood, which gained momentum following reports of Deepika Padukone's alleged exit from *Spirit* and *Kalki 2* over fixed working-hour demands. In a recent interview, Kiara shared her clear and balanced perspective, stating that "burnout helps no one in any industry," and added that excessive work only harms people and dulls creativity.

The actress emphasised the importance of balance and mutual respect in professional spaces. She revealed that she lives and works by three guiding principles: dignity, balance and respect; values she applies equally while dealing with her household staff and film crews. Kiara also underlined the importance of mental health, noting that well-being matters not just for individuals but for everyone around them.

Welcoming motherhood has further shaped her outlook.

Kiara and husband Sidharth Malhotra became parents to their daughter, Saraayah, in July. She shared that motherhood has brought her greater clarity, influencing how she chooses her projects. Rather than focusing on genre, she now looks for stories with emotional depth and soul. She also revealed she is currently reading several scripts, including an exciting biopic.

On the work front, Kiara will next star opposite Yash in *Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups*, slated for release in March 2026.

AGENCIES



Milind flags importance of women's fitness

Mumbai: Actor and fitness enthusiast Milind Soman recently spoke about the importance of women's fitness and awareness in building a healthier nation.

Speaking exclusively to this news agency during an event, Milind emphasised that women play a central role in shaping family habits. He highlighted how understanding and adopting a healthy lifestyle can help women guide their households toward better well-being. The

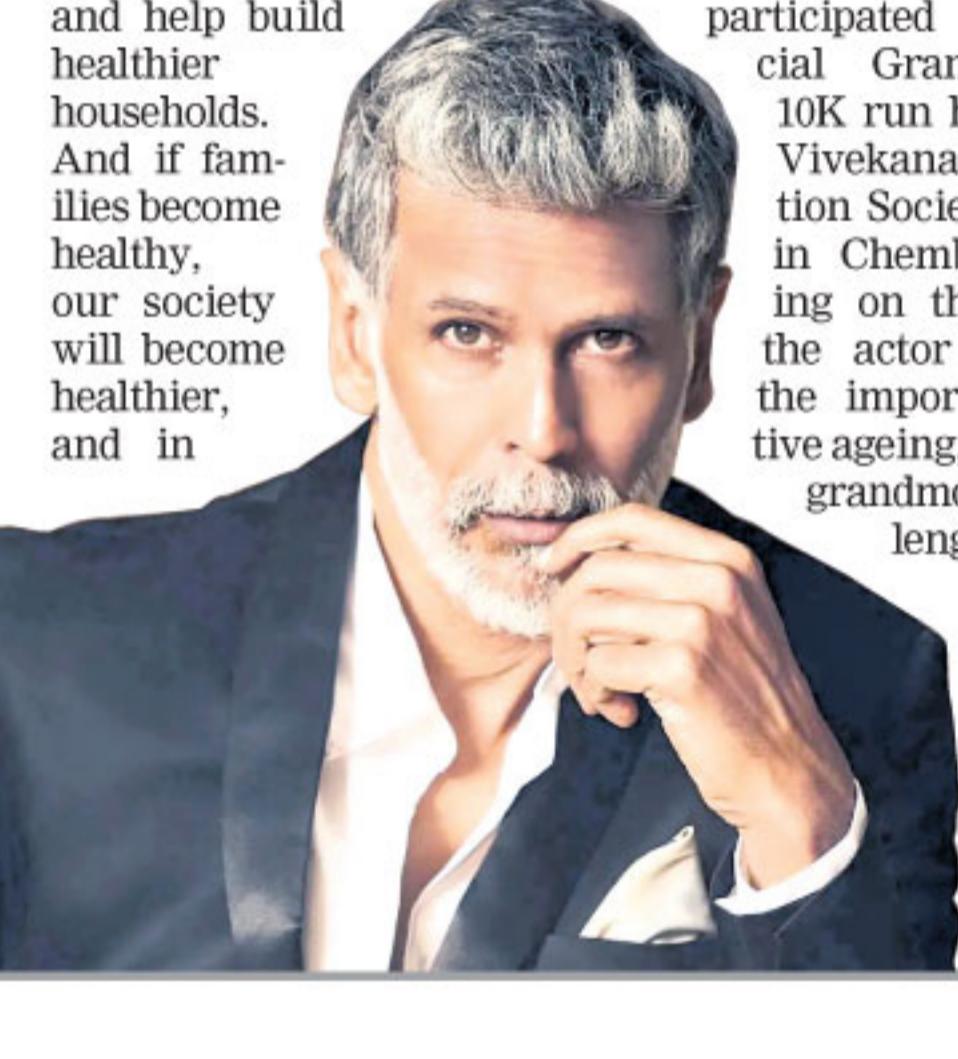
Paurashpur actor shared, "I feel that if women stay fit and understand what a healthy lifestyle truly means, they can also guide their families and help build healthier households.

And if families become healthy, our society will become healthier, and in

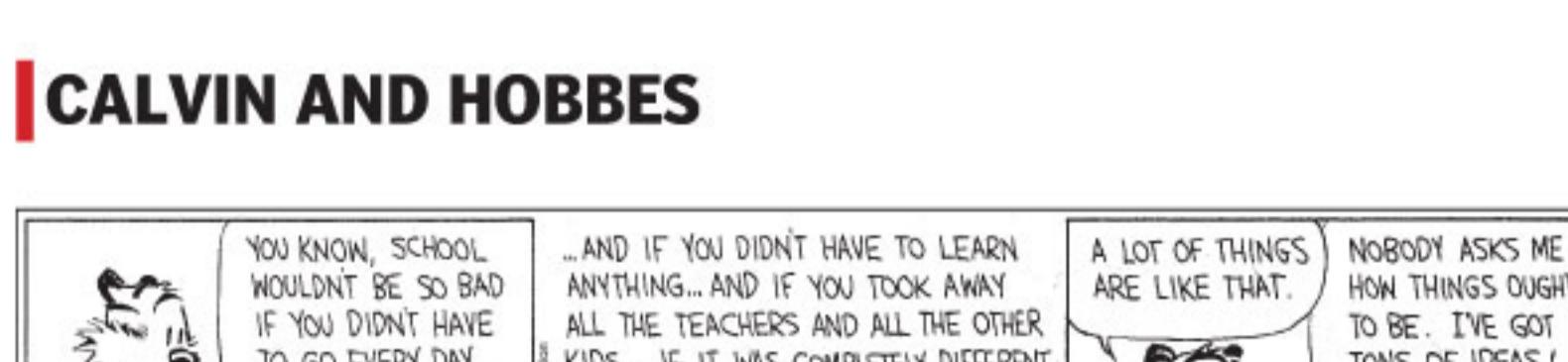
turn, our country will also remain healthy."

Recently, Milind attended an event where over 50 senior women participated in a special Grandmothers' 10K run held at the Vivekanand Education Society grounds in Chembur. Speaking on the occasion, the actor highlighted the importance of active ageing, encouraging grandmothers to challenge long-held stereotypes through fitness and active participation.

IANS



PEANUTS



...AND IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO LEARN ANYTHING... AND IF YOU TOOK AWAY ALL THE TEACHERS AND ALL THE OTHER KIDS... IF IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, SCHOOL WOULD BE GREAT.

A LOT OF THINGS ARE LIKE THAT. NOBODY ASKS ME HOW THINGS OUGHT TO BE. I'VE GOT TONS OF IDEAS!



YOU KNOW, SCHOOL WOULDN'T BE SO BAD IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO EVERY DAY.

...AND IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO LEARN ANYTHING... AND IF YOU TOOK AWAY ALL THE TEACHERS AND ALL THE OTHER KIDS... IF IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, SCHOOL WOULD BE GREAT.



A LOT OF THINGS ARE LIKE THAT. NOBODY ASKS ME HOW THINGS OUGHT TO BE. I'VE GOT TONS OF IDEAS!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



NEVERMIND.

OK, THANKS FOR STOPPING IN. HAVE A NICE DAY!



<p

downtown

12-storey parking facility to come up at SCBMCH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack will soon have a 12-storey parking facility, Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department sources said Tuesday.

This was revealed after Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi reviewed various programmes of the H&FW department at Lok Seva Bhawan here.

The meeting discussed in detail the ongoing redevelopment work at SCBMCH.

As the largest medical college and hospital in the state, thousands of patients and their relatives visit the healthcare facility every day. The state government has set a goal to develop SCBMCH into a world-class healthcare facility. Keeping this in mind, the meeting discussed the necessary parking facilities.

It was informed in the meeting that a 17-floor (G+16) building with ultramodern parking facilities will be developed on an area of 6.51 acres at SCBMCH.

"This building will have parking facilities up to 12 floors and the remaining floors will house administrative block, anatomy block, B. Pharma and D. Pharma colleges. The parking facility can be used by patients and attendants coming to both SCBMCH and Acharya Harihar Regional Cancer Centre," an official of the H&FW department said.

Along with this, indoor



games and swimming pool facilities will also be made available to keep medical students stress-free in accordance with the NEP-2020 provisions. The CM has directed the H&FW department to prepare a DP for this soon.

As many as 13 housing towers are under construction near SCBMCH. A total of 672 residential units and hostel facilities will be provided for 2,244 students in the towers. The CM discussed this project in detail and directed to complete its construction work as soon as possible.

Along with this, the redevelopment work of Berhampur and Burla medical colleges was discussed in the meeting.

The CM suggested that the Panikoili Trauma Care Centre be made operational at

the earliest, by setting it up in PPP mode. He said that the Central government PSUs with experience in hospital management should be given priority in this area, and if necessary, the private sector should also be involved.

The meeting also discussed the construction of rest rooms for attendants in the government medical college campuses in Cuttack, Berhampur, Burla, Sundargarh, Koraput, Baripada and Bolangir.

The meeting was attended by H&FW Minister Mukesh Mahaling, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Saswata Mishra, H&FW department Commissioner and Secretary Aswathy S, National Health Mission Director Brundha D and other senior officials.

Pradhan seeks Odisha SEBC inclusion in Central OBC list

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has written to Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar seeking his personal intervention for the inclusion of 108 communities listed under the state list of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) in the Central list of Other Backward Classes (OBC).

In his letter, Pradhan stated, "I would like to draw your kind attention to a matter of great significance concerning the parity between the State and Central lists of Other Backward Classes (OBC) in Odisha. Several communities that are already recognised in the State List of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) by the Government of Odisha are yet to be included in the Central OBC list."

The Union Education Minister also noted that this inconsistency has created 'administrative ambiguities' and 'interpretational challenges' for members of these communities, especially during migration across states or while trying to access central government services, educational institutions, or job opportunities.

Pradhan also shared a detailed list of 108 SEBC communities proposed for inclusion in his letter for consideration and necessary action.

EOW nabs accused in ₹20cr cheating case

Bhubaneswar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police has arrested an accused in a cheating case worth over ₹20 crore and seized multiple properties, including high-value vehicles, an official said Tuesday. The accused, identified as Rama Narayan Bal of Bhadrak district, was arrested October 29 this year on the basis of an FIR lodged by a victim of cheating. He is now under judicial custody. Impersonating himself as an officer of a bank, Bal cheated many people of crores of rupees to facilitate the purchase of the landed property to be auctioned by bank due to default of loans against them, the EOW officer said. He was found cheating more than 20 crore from nine people, including the complainant, he stated. December 20, the EOW officials conducted raids at the residential building and business premises of Bal at Bhadrak and Bhubaneswar, leading to the seizure of 10 vehicles, 144 mobile phones, and sound systems, he added.

Mahanadi dispute will be resolved amicably: Singh Deo

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo Tuesday said the long-pending Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh will be resolved amicably.

The committee set up to address the dispute held its first meeting, attended by the Chief Secretary, Development Commissioner, both Revenue Divisional Commissioners (RDCs), with senior leader Jayanarayan Mishra joining virtually.

The Deputy CM said the committee was briefed on both the Odisha government's stance and Chhattisgarh's position on the inter-state river water dispute.

"It was decided that the issue will be resolved through negotiations in an amicable



manner, and Odisha's interests will be fully safeguarded," Singh Deo said.

The high-level committee has been tasked with evolving a comprehensive and strategic approach to protect Odisha's rights over the Mahanadi waters while seeking a mutually acceptable resolution of the dispute.

He further claimed that, so far, all river disputes across India have been resolved only through courts.

Meanwhile, senior BJD leader Niranjan Pujari, who is al-

so a member of the high-level committee, demanded that the committee convene an all-party meeting, inviting all stakeholders related to the issue, and share details of the decisions the government intends to take for an amicable resolution of the dispute.

Pujari said the previous BJD government had fought the case strongly before the tribunal and, therefore, the party has demanded that Odisha's representation in the tribunal be further strengthened.

Congress leader Sofia Firoudi, member of the High-Level Committee on the Mahanadi Water Dispute, told IANS that when the interests of a state are involved, it is essential for

representatives across party lines to come together and work collectively. She added that the first meeting provided an opportunity to understand the stance of different stakeholders, including the scientific assessment of the issue, the reports involved, and the position taken before the tribunal where the dispute is currently under consideration.

According to her, the meeting helped develop a working understanding, based on which further steps will be taken in the coming days.

Firdous also emphasised that any decision on the dispute must be logical, evidence-based, and aimed at protecting public interest.

"The focus should always be on safeguarding the rights of the people of Odisha and ensuring a fair and sustainable resolution," she added.

Capital lights up with festive cheer ahead of Christmas

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: With Christmas celebrations set to begin tomorrow, the Capital city has come alive in festive splendour, as churches, streets, malls and restaurants are decked up with lights and decorations, filling the air with cheer. From illuminated marketplaces to specially curated menus, the city is embracing the season with enthusiasm.

Restaurants and hotels have rolled out Christmas-themed offerings to welcome guests. A staff member at an OTDC restaurant said, "As Christmas approaches, we have



added more dishes to our regular menu. Our restaurant is always open for celebrations, and people are welcome to

bring cakes and enjoy Christmas dinner here."

Markets across the city, particularly in areas like Vani Vi-

har are witnessing brisk sales of Christmas essentials, including trees, lights, candles, Santa Claus caps and gifts. Ashok Sahu, a seller, said, "Christmas trees are priced between ₹60 and ₹7,000. Various kinds of decorative lights are selling well. We began selling Christmas items two to three weeks ahead of the festival, and sales continue to remain strong. People from all communities, not just Christians, are coming to shop."

The festive atmosphere has also energised the youth. Priyadarshini Sahoo, a college student, said, "The Christmas vibe in Bhubaneswar is truly

different. The city lights up, Santa caps and decorations line the streets, and churches are beautifully adorned. Friends invite us to visit churches and share cupcakes, which make the season feel special."

However, for many, Christmas remains a deeply spiritual occasion. Anmol Lakra, a copywriter, said, "For me, Christmas is more about devotion than hype. Being with family matters most—we go to church, pray and celebrate together. While Bhubaneswar sees a lot of festivities, the essence feels deeper when the day is spent with family, remembering the birth of Jesus."

FESTIVE FLAIR

Students of LR DAV Public School, Gandarpur, perform during a cultural programme at the school's annual day celebration at JN Indoor Stadium in Cuttack, Tuesday



Atal Bus Stand in Baripada soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The state government will develop Atal Bus Stand at Baripada in Mayurbhanj district with airport-like ultramodern facilities to enhance passenger convenience, urban mobility and tourism potential. Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra said Tuesday.

Chairing a high-level meeting on the proposed project, the H&UD minister described Atal Bus Stand as a landmark public infrastructure initiative for northern Odisha.

He reaffirmed the state government's commitment to building modern, inclusive, and sustainable transport systems.

"Baripada will be developed as a major transport hub. There will be no shortage of funds for this project," Mahapatra said, emphasising that all departments concerned must work in close coordination to ensure timely execution of the project with the highest standards of quality. Atal Bus Stand will be constructed on approximately five acres of already allotted land. Designed with a strong focus on passenger comfort, safety, accessibility, and operational efficiency, the terminal will follow an 'A-Class' passenger-oriented

will come up on around five acres of land

Key features include spacious and well-ventilated waiting halls, food courts, retail outlets, facilities for persons with disabilities, digital passenger information systems, CCTV surveillance, Wi-Fi connectivity, mobile charging points and child-friendly areas

The ULB will undertake plantation of over 6,000 saplings in and around the project area. Additionally, Forest department has allocated funds for greening activities across 10 acres

The existing Baripada bus stand, located in the city centre, is old and congested, resulting in traffic congestion and commuter inconvenience. The new terminal is expected to decongest the city core, improve road safety, and strengthen connectivity to major destinations

design, as presented by the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC).

Key features of the proposed terminal include spacious and well-ventilated waiting halls, clean restrooms, food courts, retail outlets, facilities for persons with disabilities, digital passenger information systems, CCTV surveillance, Wi-Fi connectivity, mobile charging points and child-friendly areas

While reviewing associated

infrastructure planning, the H&UD minister asked the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to ensure that any proposed flyover near the site does not affect the visibility, accessibility, or architectural aesthetics of the 'Atal Bus Stand' or the city of Baripada.

Emphasising environmental sustainability, Mahapatra informed that the local Urban Local Body (ULB) will undertake plantation of over 6,000 saplings in and

around the project area. Additionally, the Forest department has allocated funds for greening activities across 10 acres, ensuring ecological balance alongside infrastructure development.

The existing Baripada bus stand, located in the city centre, is old and congested, resulting in traffic congestion and commuter inconvenience. The new terminal is expected to decongest the city core, improve road safety, and strengthen connectivity to major destinations.

The 'Atal Bus Stand' project aligns with Odisha's broader vision of developing world-class bus terminals, similar to the upgraded Baramunda Bus Terminal in Bhubaneswar, and reflects the state government's resolve to deliver citizen-centric, future-ready public transport infrastructure.

The review meeting, held at Unnati Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, was attended by OSRTC Additional Secretary-cum-General Manager Arun Biswal, senior officials of NHAI, and representatives of other departments concerned.

HC rejects plea against MLAs' pay, perk hike

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: A division bench of Orissa High Court comprising Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice MS Raman Tuesday dismissed a writ petition questioning the constitutional propriety of Odisha Legislative Assembly (OLA) passing the bill that will pave the way for almost two-fold hike in the monthly salary of the Chief Minister, Ministers, MLAs, and a three-fold hike in pension of former legislators.

The division bench refused to intervene in the legislative action, stating that the Odisha Legislative Assembly Members' Salary, Allowances and Pension (Amendment) Bill, 2025, is presently pending assent of the Governor under Article 200 of the Constitution.

The Amendment Bill proposes a substantial and composite enhancement of salaries, allowances, perks, and post-tenure/pensionary benefits of sitting members of the OLA, resulting in a multi-fold increase and creating a recurring charge on the consolidated fund of the state.

As per legislation awaiting the Governor's assent, an MLA will draw ₹3.45 lakh per month against the ₹1.10 lakh in 2007. Basic pay has been hiked from ₹35,000 to ₹90,000, constituency and secretarial allowance from ₹20,000 to ₹75,000, conveyance allowance from ₹15,000 to ₹50,000, fixed allowance from ₹10,000 to ₹50,000, books, journals, and periodicals allowance from ₹2,000 to ₹10,000, electricity allowance from ₹5,000 to ₹20,000, and telephone allowance from ₹8,000 to ₹15,000.

Former MLAs will receive a monthly pension of over ₹1.20 lakh.

The Amendment Bill proposes a substantial and composite enhancement of salaries, allowances, perks, and post-tenure/pensionary benefits of sitting members of the OLA, resulting in a multi-fold increase and creating a recurring charge on the consolidated fund of the state.

As per legislation awaiting the Governor's assent, an MLA will draw ₹3.45 lakh per month against the ₹1.10 lakh in 2007. Basic pay has been hiked from ₹35,000 to ₹90,000, constituency and secretarial allowance from ₹20,000 to ₹75,000, conveyance allowance from ₹15,000 to ₹50,000, fixed allowance from ₹10,000 to ₹50,000, books, journals, and periodicals allowance from ₹2,000 to ₹10,000, electricity allowance from ₹5,000 to ₹20,000, and telephone allowance from ₹8,000 to ₹15,000.

Former MLAs will receive a monthly pension of over ₹1.20 lakh.

Odisha attends NITI Aayog meet on affordable housing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Housing and Urban Development Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, along with Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM) Director Subhankar Mohapatra, participated in a national-level workshop on Affordable Housing organised by NITI Aayog in New Delhi Tuesday.

During the workshop, NITI Aayog released its report titled 'Comprehensive Framework to Promote and Enable Affordable Housing', followed by detailed deliberations and brainstorming sessions involving states

and industry stakeholders.

Speaking on the occasion, Padhee said, "Affordable housing is central to building inclusive, resilient, and future-ready cities. The framework released by NITI Aayog provides a comprehensive roadmap for states to address challenges related to land and financing. Odisha will proactively work towards translating these recommendations into actionable strategies, strengthening Affordable Housing in Partnership projects, and ensuring that urban housing remains accessible and affordable for all sections of society."



True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are; it is what you become

SRI AUROBINDO

Half A Loaf

European leaders did what they are known to be good at – a brand of diplomacy aimed at antagonizing neither of two contending parties. This is how the 15-hour-long talks at the recent EU summit in Brussels can be summed up as it ended up with a deal on a 90 billion loan to Ukraine to be raised through joint borrowing among 24 of the European Union's (EU) 27 countries. All the member countries agreed to the plan because it is guaranteed by the central EU long-term budget. The new deal is far from the tall talks that had been going on before the summit about using Russian assets, frozen as part of European sanctions against the country for its war against Ukraine, for financing Ukraine's war efforts.

As per the agreed deal all EU countries, barring the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, will band together and raise 90 billion in common debt. That money will be loaned to Ukraine over the next two years. Kyiv will then use future Russian war reparations to repay the EU. If Russia refuses to cough up the cash, "the Union reserves the right to make use" of its frozen state assets "to repay the loan," the EU leaders wrote in the final summit conclusions, the joint statement put out by countries at the end of the talks.

The reparations loan based on Russian immobilized assets is still not off the table, the European leaders insisted and boasted "the most important decision" on the matter had already been taken, when they froze the assets, effectively ensuring that they are not returned. So far so good.

The upshot of the meeting is that the EU would not provoke US President Donald Trump who does not seem to set much store by Europe in negotiating a deal with the Russian President Vladimir Putin. At the same time the EU needed to reassure Ukraine that it would not renege on its promise of standing by it in this hour of crisis.

In a sense, the EU has made the balancing act in a deft manner. For, using Russian assets for Ukraine's benefit would have led to serious complications that would surely have scuppered the negotiated settlement that Trump is trying. At the same time, Trump's position of excluding Ukraine from the negotiations and gifting away Ukrainian territories to Russia is unacceptable to the EU. The best course of action at the moment appears to be to continue to exert pressure on Russia by providing sizable funds to Ukraine and let Trump go ahead with his peace negotiations ensuring that no one-sided solution is arrived at for Russia's benefit at the cost of Ukraine.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen aptly said the EU has managed to secure an agreement that it can deliver on the financing needs for Ukraine for the next two years, while "reserving the right" to make use of the Russian cash balances to finance the loan. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz echoed her when he asserted Russia's frozen assets in Europe would be used to repay the loan to Ukraine if Russia does not voluntarily decide to do so when the war in Ukraine ends.

The make-or-break summit has witnessed a fine tightrope walk. The compromise means the reparations loan, an audacious proposal without precedent in modern history, will remain a theoretical concept for the time being. A chaos has been avoided, while Europe stays united and remains relevant at the geopolitical table.

WISDOM CORNER

Every man's life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness

ANNE FRANK

For everything you have missed, you have gained something else, and for everything you gain, you lose something else

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1814: The United States and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent in Belgium, ending the War of 1812. The treaty did not resolve the issues that led to war, but a newfound sense of patriotism in many Americans, who were convinced that they had won, pushed the U.S. to pursue its national goals.

1865: Ku Klux Klan created. The extremist white supremacist organization, also known as the Klan, was created in Pulaski, Tennessee by Confederate Army veterans.

1877: On this day in 1877, the U.S. Patent Office received an application for a "Phonograph or Speaking Machine" from inventor Thomas Edison. He had demonstrated the device for the first time a few weeks earlier, when he played his recorded (and sometimes unintelligible) voice to magazine staffers in New York City.

1914: Christmas Truce begins. A much-studied event in war and peace studies, the Christmas Truce was a brief unofficial ceasefire between British and German troops along the Western Front of World War I. During the truce, soldiers from both sides sang carols, shared food, exchanged gifts and played football (soccer). Subsequent attempts to hold similar ceasefires around Christmas time failed.

1951: Libya gains independence from Italy. The North African country had been ruled by Italy since 1912. After independence, it became a constitutional monarchy under King Idris. King Idris was overthrown in a military coup led by Muammar Gaddafi in 1969.

1979: The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to aid the Afghan communist government in its conflict with anti-communist Muslim guerrillas during the Afghan War.

LOL



here?"
he asked.
"I am." said the man.
"I have a black horse and a brown horse," the farmer said, "which one would you like?"
The man thought for a minute and said, "The black one."
"No, no, no, get the brown one." the man's wife said.
"Here's your chicken." said the farmer.

A retiring farmer in preparation for selling his land, needed to rid his farm of animals. So he went to every house in his town. To the houses where the man is the boss, he gave a horse. To the houses where the woman is the boss, a chicken was given. He got toward the end of the street and saw a couple outside gardening. "Who's the boss around

here?"
he asked.
"I am." said the man.
"I have a black horse and a brown horse," the farmer said, "which one would you like?"
The man thought for a minute and said, "The black one."
"No, no, no, get the brown one." the man's wife said.
"Here's your chicken." said the farmer.

A retiring farmer in preparation for selling his land, needed to rid his farm of animals. So he went to every house in his town. To the houses where the man is the boss, he gave a horse. To the houses where the woman is the boss, a chicken was given. He got toward the end of the street and saw a couple outside gardening. "Who's the boss around

power post

FOCUS ANTITRUST

TAMING BIG TECH

When a US federal judge ruled in late November that Meta does not maintain an illegal monopoly in social media, it was a reminder that even the strongest evidence can look weak when enforcers act too late.

Rejecting the US Federal Trade Commission's narrow market definition, the court instead concluded that Meta, formerly known as Facebook, competes against a broad array of rivals such as TikTok and YouTube. While legal scholars can and will dissect the opinion, the biggest takeaway is that timing matters in dynamic markets, implying that antitrust authorities must develop a preventive approach, rather than relying solely on reactive measures.

The case centered on Facebook's acquisitions of Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014, when both were unmistakably competitive threats. Facebook said so itself: internal emails and strategy documents spelled out its intention to copy, acquire, or neutralize rivals, while the firm's leaders explicitly acknowledged the existential threat posed by Instagram. FTC lawyers rarely uncover this type of smoking-gun evidence.

But the case collapsed under the weight of today's market reality. Instead of considering the world as it existed when the mergers occurred, the court (incorrectly) cited the rise of TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube Shorts as evidence that Facebook lacked monopoly power. But TikTok's success hardly disproves Facebook's earlier dominance, because ByteDance, its parent company, spent vast sums on user acquisition, at one point becoming one of the largest buyers of ads on Facebook, Instagram, and Snap in the United States. A Chinese company with almost unlimited capital breaking into the market is hardly proof of healthy competition.

The flaws in the court's reasoning reflect a deeper problem with litigating consummated mergers: it asks judges to travel back in time and forget what



In fast-moving markets, prevention is better than cure, which is why intervening early to block illegal mergers must be the norm, not the exception

they now know. Questions like "Would Instagram have become this significant without Facebook's investment?" or "What competition might have emerged if the acquisitions had not taken place?" are inherently counterfactual. It is very difficult to measure the impact of competition that never existed.

This suggests that the acquisitions should have been challenged when they were first proposed – a difficult task, but not as hard as challenging consummated deals. Predicting the future is less formidable than reconstructing the present on the basis of an imaginary past. The flaws of late enforcement were also on display in the Google antitrust trial. Even as a US federal judge ruled in 2024 that Google had illegally monopolized general-search services, the remedy was softened by the perception that AI chatbots were already reshaping the market. Even the boldest proposed remedies centered less on restoring competition in search and more on ensuring that the next tech frontier remains open.

The same dynamic was evident in the landmark antitrust case that the US federal government brought against Microsoft in the 1990s. Instead of reviving competition in operating systems, where Microsoft's dominance was entrenched, the litigation cleared space for the next generation of companies by preventing Microsoft from extending its monopoly into browsers and apps. Of course, this is a worthy goal. But ill-

It doesn't have to be this way. US antitrust regulators now have stronger merger guidelines and a clearer understanding of how digital markets work. What they need is the political will to act early and decisively.

The same applies to other governments. The most consequential tech mergers are reviewed simultaneously in multiple jurisdictions, and regulators in the European Union and the United Kingdom also have powerful preventive tools, including merger review and market studies. Even just initiating an investigation can create enough friction and uncertainty for parties to abandon a deal, as happened with Nvidia-Arm and Visa-Plaid. Until recently, the UK Competition and Markets Authority, like the FTC and DOJ in the US, was increasing its scrutiny of tech mergers and partnerships, particularly in the AI sector.

But the global scramble to attract AI investment has pushed competition enforcement into retreat. Amid increasing geopolitical turbulence, regulators are forgetting the hard-earned lessons of the platform era and pulling back precisely when they should be applying those lessons to block anti-competitive AI mergers and prevent the emergence of AI monopolies. The result is a classic collective-action problem, even though all it takes is one courageous competition authority to block a global deal and change the trajectory of an entire market.

To their credit, the FTC and the Department of Justice under former US President Joe Biden had begun to develop and use their preventive toolkit. They challenged several mergers (including Nvidia-Arm, Illumina-GRAIL, and Microsoft-Activision Blizzard), examined practices in nascent industries such as AI partnerships, and launched early probes into emerging monopolies in the cloud computing and semiconductor markets. But the pendulum has swung back under Donald Trump's second administration, which has pursued merger settlements, dialed back investigations into AI giants, and revived the myth that tech firms are the guardians of innovation and national security.

The writer is Deputy Director of the Thurman Arnold Project and a resident fellow at the Information Society Project at Yale Law School.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

IN JEST THIS

Don't let your child bloom too early



IF YOU HAVE A CHILD WHO ISN'T DOING WELL IN A PARTICULAR SUBJECT OR SPORT, DON'T LOSE HOPE

If you have a child who isn't doing well in a particular subject or sport, don't lose hope. Your child may not be a top performer as a youth, but may end up being a late bloomer, outshining all those child prodigies as an adult.

A new study published in the journal *Science* found that adults who reach the peak of their fields, perhaps winning a Nobel Prize or Olympic gold medal, often performed worse than their peers as youths. They were not child prodigies. Some of them couldn't even spell the word "prodigy."

What does this mean? Well, if you have a friend who is bragging that his 10-year-old daughter won a chess tournament, you may want to say, "Oh no! That means she'll never become a grandmaster!"

No, don't say that, but don't get envious either. Remind yourself that the vast majority of child prodigies fail to become top performers as adults. In fact, the European and American researchers who

conducted the study offered some interesting examples. Comparing world top-10 youth chess players and world top-10 adult chess players across time, they found very few people in both sets. Nearly 90 per cent were different individuals. The same was true among athletes. (For the purpose of the study, chess players were not considered athletes.)

The researchers also found that top secondary students and top university students are 90 per cent different individuals. I'm a little skeptical about this finding, but perhaps those who do well in high school get too confident and don't work hard in university. And what happens to those who don't perform well in university? They eventually become Nobel laureates!

Well, not exactly, but the researchers state that most top achievers, including Nobel laureates, world-class musicians, athletes, and chess players, didn't excel in their early years. "When comparing performers across the highest levels of

achievement," the researchers wrote, "the evidence suggests that eventual peak performance is negatively associated with early performance."

What this means, of course, is that you'd better tell your child to not be top of their class. If they bring home a report card with perfect grades, tell them that they need to spend more time playing video games.

Actually, it's okay to be proud of your child's achievements, even if your child is a true prodigy, such as Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha. The three-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh recently became the youngest chess player to be rated by FIDE, the sport's international governing body.

Sarwagya, who earned a rating of 1,572 in rapid chess by beating several rated players in chess tournaments, including three players aged 20 to 29, may indeed become a world chess champion one day. After all, when the researchers say that 90 per cent of high-achieving adults and children are dif-

ferent individuals, it means that 10 per cent are the same people.

Another important finding from the study is that child prodigies tend to focus on one discipline – and one discipline only. If they're good at chess, that's all they do: chess, chess and more chess. It helps them progress quickly, but this progress eventually slows.

In contrast, those who reach the pinnacle of their fields as adults spend a lot of their early years on multidisciplinary practice. They don't focus on just one thing. It means that their progress in their eventual field of choice is much slower, but they keep working at it until they reach the top.

I find this study both interesting and inspiring, partly because I consider myself a late bloomer. (I've yet to bloom.) My progress has been slow, but gradual. And eventually, like the tortoise, I hope to cross the finish line ahead of a hare. Perhaps not all hares, but at least one.

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

HERE NOW
OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Glorious centenary

Sir, The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) or Radio Ceylon, one of Asia's oldest radio stations, celebrated its centenary on 16 December. SLBC was Asia's first commercial short-wave station. Radio Ceylon was once the Indian subcontinent's most favourite as it aired audio entertainment in Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and English besides Sinhala. Spreading across boundaries, lands and seas it gave pure joy to listeners redefining radio listening. The Hindi slot with its old and new film songs, chat shows and the very popular Binaca Geetmala by Ameen Sayani remain evergreen in the memories of Indian radio lovers around the globe. The film song countdown show remains one of the most loved programmes in radio history. The SLBC showed how radio broadcasting can be blend with entertainment and information and commercially make it successful. Though time has changed and competition has risen from private and online channels, SLBC remains cherished among listeners. With its vast music archive, boasting over 70,000 recordings that span multiple decades, SLBC is definitely an encyclopaedia of radio broadcasting!

M Pradyu, KANNUR

AI & employment

Sir, Across economies, the debate over artificial intelligence (AI) and employment has been framed too narrowly as a question of job destruction. The more consequential shift lies elsewhere. AI is not simply displacing workers; it is hollowing out the base of the career pyramid. In many sectors, the entry-level roles that once absorbed young talent, transmitted institutional knowledge, and sustained social mobility are quietly vanishing. This structural change matters far more for the long-term health of labour markets than short-term employment fluctuations. What makes this moment unusual is the reversal of historical patterns. Previous technological revolutions unsettled older workers while younger ones adapted. Today, it is early-career professionals who feel most exposed. Surveys across advanced economies show younger workers expressing greater anxiety about AI-driven displacement than their senior counterparts. As firms automate routine tasks, they increasingly prioritise experienced employees who can exercise judgement, manage complexity, and integrate AI into decision-making. The result is a paradox: fewer openings for beginners, even as demand for seasoned talent remains resilient. This trend poses a global risk.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

LOL



here?"
he asked.
"I am." said the man.
"I have a black horse and a brown horse," the farmer said, "which one would you like?"
The man thought for a minute and said, "The black one."
"No, no, no, get the brown one." the man's wife said.
"Here's your chicken." said the farmer.

A retiring farmer in preparation for selling his land, needed to rid his farm of animals. So he went to every house in his town. To the houses where the man is the boss, he gave a horse. To the houses where the woman is the boss, a chicken was given. He got toward the end of the street and saw a couple outside gardening. "Who's the boss around

here?"
he asked.
"I am." said the man.
"I have a black horse and a brown horse," the farmer said, "which one would you like?"
The man thought for a minute and said, "The black one."
"No, no, no, get the brown one." the man's wife said.
"Here's your chicken." said the farmer.

A retiring farmer in preparation for selling his land, needed to rid his farm of animals. So he went to every house in his town. To the houses where the man is the boss, he gave a horse. To the houses where the woman is the boss, a chicken was given. He got toward the end of the street and saw a couple outside gardening. "Who's the boss around

Roads turn crimson red as Shulia Jatra witnesses animal sacrifices



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 23: The famous Shulia Jatra, a centuries-old festival symbolising tradition and faith, was held Tuesday at Khaigura Badakhala and Kumuria Sanakhalia under Kultapatna panchayat in Deogaon block of Bolangir district.

Despite intense cold and dense fog, lakhs of devotees from Bolangir, Kalahandi, Boudh, Sonepur and Phulbani districts congregated at the twin shrines from early morning, and as per the age-old tradition, offered large-scale animal and bird sacrifices, leaving both ritual sites soaked in blood.

Devotees from the Kandha tribal community reached the shrines in procession from

ficed at Badakhala, while Sanakhalia witnessed the sacrifice of over 30 buffaloes along with a large number of goats, sheep and birds. Many devotees also offered flowers, coconuts and incense sticks, praying for fulfilment of their vows.

Belief in the deity Shulia remains strong, with devotees citing legends associated with wish fulfilment, including childbearing. This faith continues to draw massive crowds every year.

Former minister Narasingha Mishra, senior leader Manmath Vijay Singhdeo, block chairperson Dayanidhi Khamari and former block chairperson Laxman Kumar Meher were among the prominent personalities who attended the festival and sought blessings.

Extensive security arrangements were made to maintain law and order. The Deogaon and Tushura tehsildars acted as executive magistrates, while an additional superintendent of police, three DSPs, five inspectors, 10 sub-inspectors, three platoons of force, ODRAF teams and traffic police were deployed. Traffic congestion was reported on Khaigura and Kumuria roads during the festival.

The three-day Shulia Mahotsav concluded peacefully with the cooperation of the festival committee and local volunteers.

Khajuripada/Baliguda, Dec 23: Ahead of Christmas celebrations, police conducted flag marches in various parts of Kandhamal district to ensure peace and maintain law and order.

Acting on the instructions of the SP, police personnel across all police station areas in the district have been placed on high alert including under the Khajuripada police station.

"Tuesday, police personnel conducted flag marches in several sensitive and important villages under the Khajuripada

Police hold flag march ahead of Christmas in Kandhamal

POST NEWS NETWORK



da police station area of Kandhamal district. The police are maintaining a strict vigil to ensure that Christmas is cele-

brated peacefully without any untoward incident," the officer-in-charge said.

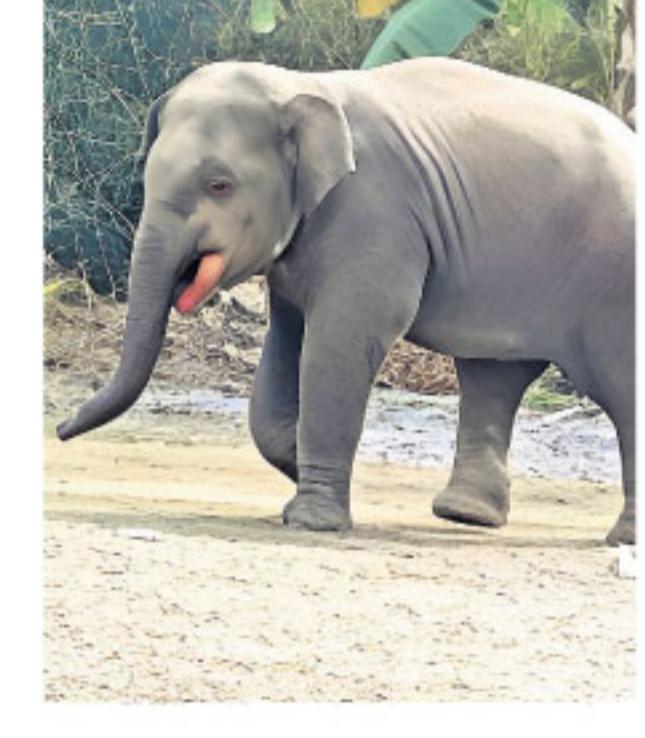
Similarly, in Baliguda town

and its adjoining areas of Kandhamal district, a flag march was carried out to maintain law and order during the Christmas and New Year celebrations. The march was conducted under the direction of sub-divisional police officer Shubham Bhosale and led by Baliguda police station officer-in-charge Sambit Swain.

Along with increased patrolling, the SDPO has instructed all sub-divisional officers to keep close watch on sensitive areas and respond promptly to any situation. Plans are also in place to set up checkpoints at strategic locations if required, the SDPO said.

Jumbo dies in suspected blast; probe launched

POST NEWS NETWORK



Baripada, Dec 23: A female elephant that was undergoing treatment after allegedly consuming explosive-laced food, succumbed to its injuries Saturday, raising serious questions about wildlife security and the Forest Department's response.

Animal activists alleged that the forest department attempted to suppress information about the death.

Wildlife activists expressed anger, alleging no concrete action was taken against those responsible for the tusker's condition. The incident occurred when a herd was moving through parts of Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts, during which the injured elephant was seen roaming in a critical state. Unable to eat or drink, the animal was reportedly running in distress.

Forest officials tranquilized and rescued the elephant De-

cember 11 and shifted it to the Kanachhinda veterinary facility under the Talabandha forest range of the Simlipal North Division tiger reserve. The elephant was treated by two veterinarians, officials said.

Reacting to the incident, animal rights activist Sanjukta Basa said the episode reflected a grim reality of human-animal conflict, where humans had "won at the cost of humanity." She demanded strict action against those involved in such inhuman acts.

However, Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) and Simlipal Tiger Reserve Field Director Prakash Chandra Gogineni said there was no confirmation yet that the case involved explosives or explosives-related material. He said an intelligence team has been deployed to investigate the cause of death.

"Action will be taken after the postmortem report is received," he said, adding that the investigation is continuing.

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S EVOS BUILDCON PRIVATE LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha has accorded Environmental Clearance to Residential Project named and styled as "EVOS AMANI" being developed over Plot No- 2161/7460 and 15 others and Khata No- 603/5485 and 13 others located in Mouza- Chandaka, Tahasil- Bhubaneswar, Dist- Khordha, Odisha by M/S EVOS BUILDCON PRIVATE LIMITED.

The copies of Environment Clearance vide EC Identification No. EC24B038OR161921 dated 09/02/2024 are available for the reference with the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha and Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) and may also be seen at website of the authority/board.

The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) has accorded the environmental clearance for the said project under the provision of EIA Notification, 2006.

For Evos Buildcon Private Limited
Kalinga Keshari Rath (Managing Director)
Authorized Signatory

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.M-51 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (C), DIRECTORATE OF FISHERIES, ODISHA, CUTTACK

E-MAIL : eefedcuttack@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. 2176/Dt.20.12.2025 //

1. No. of works	: 01 (ONE) Number of Civil works
2. Type of works	: Civil works
3. Approximate	20.91 Lakhs
Estimated Cost	
4. Class of Contractor	: 'C'
5. Period of Completion	: 02 (TWO) Calendar months
6. Date of Sale & Receipt	: Dt.26.12.2025 to 2.00 P.M. of Dt.03.01.2026 (Working days only)
7. Date of Opening	: Dt.05.01.2026 at 11:00 A.M.
8. Name of Office inviting Bid	: Executive Engineer (C), Directorate of Fisheries, Odisha, Cuttack

Further details can be seen in the bidding documents & can be down loaded from the Government of Odisha website (<http://www.odisha.gov.in>). Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Executive Engineer (C)
Directorate of Fisheries,
Odisha, Cuttack

OIPR-06030/11/0054/2526



भारतीय पटसन निगम लिमिटेड

The Jute Corporation of India Limited

(A Government of India Enterprise)

श्रीमतीकायाल : भ्राता (आर.एल.डी.) लैमिटेड, अन्नपाल, भ्राता - 756116
Regional Office : Bhadrak R.L.D. At/Po-Langudi, Via-Arnopal, Bhadrak-756116

सी.आई.एन./C.I.N. : U17232WB1971GOI027958

Tender Notice

Sealed tenders are invited from Bidders/parties for disposal of old jute (Bales)/damaged raw jute as is where basis from different centres i.e. Bhadrak DPC, Kendrapatna DPC & Danpur DPC under Bhadrak Regional Office, JCI. Interested parties may obtain the tender documents from our regional office on all working days from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. or may visit the website <https://www.jutecorp.in> for tender details and download the documents. Last date of bid submission is up to 02:00 P.M. on 13.01.2026. Submitted bid will be opened at 3:00 P.M. on 13.01.2026.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Regional Manager
Regional Office-Bhadrak

CBC 41122/12/0042/2526

17 hurt, 3 critical as picnic bus crashes into tractor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dunguripali, Dec 23: At least 20 passengers were injured including three of them critical after a picnic bus carrying schoolchildren, teachers and parents for picnic rammed into a stationary paddy laden tractor from rear near Salepali on the Dunguripali-Rampur road in Subarnapur district Tuesday morning, police said.

Fire services personnel and local police rescued the injured passengers and rushed them to the Dunguripali Community Health Center.

After primary treatment, three seriously injured persons Soumyaranjan Bhoi, CRCC Sushil Kumar Sika and teacher Laxman Gadatia were shifted to Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla in Sambalpur district. The condition of the others improved after primary treatment. Police said the bus was carrying 55 persons which include students of Classes V to VIII from an upper primary school at Gyana village near Budhasamar under Melchhamuda police limits in Bargarh district for picnic to Patali Srikhetra in Ulunda block of Subarnapur district. Teachers and parents also accompanied them.

90-yr-old dies in bee attack

Kamakhyanagar: A 90-year-old man died while undergoing treatment after a honeybee attack in Kada village under Kamakhyanagar police limits in Dhenkanal district, officials said Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Sarbeswar Sahu. He and another villager, Jatadhar Sahu, were critically injured when a swarm of honeybees attacked them Monday. Both were admitted to Kamakhyanagar sub-divisional hospital and later shifted to Cuttack for advanced treatment. Sarbeswar died at a private hospital Tuesday, while Jatadhar remains critical.



Regional Office: Sambalpur
1st Floor, Balaji Midtown,
Balsambari, Sambalpur - 768004,
Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha

VEHICLE AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Applications are invited from interested bidders for purchase of following vehicles, seized by the Bank on "As is where it is basis" as per terms and conditions listed below. This public notice will be treated as a notice to the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors of the loans. They are hereby advised to be present at the auction venue on the auction date and are free to liquidate their entire dues before the auction date, failing which the vehicles will be auctioned and balance dues, if any will be recovered from them with interest and cost.

SI No.	Branch/ Contact Number	Name of Borrower	Vehicle No.	Make & Model	Month / Year of Manufacturing	Reserve Price
1.	ROURKELA MAIN/ 943033021	Mr. Vikas Agrawal	OD 14 AD 9099	KIA CARENES D 1.5 IMT LUXURY PLUS 7	08/2023	₹9,36,000/-

Auction Date & Time : 31.12.2025, 11.30 A.M. to 12.30 P.M., Auction Venue: At the Concerned Branch as stated above, EMD is 10% of the Reserve Price mentioned above.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: 1) Applications accompanied by ID/address proof copy (originals to be verified) and EMD as applicable for each vehicle in shape of Banker's cheque/Draft drawn in favour of **Union Bank of India**, payable at Concerned Branch should reach on or before 30.12.2025 upto 11.00 A.M. 2) However the bank reserves the right to accept/reject/cancel the auction process of any/all vehicles at its own discretion at any point of time without assigning any reason whatsoever. 3) Bid amounts do not include any statutory tax pending and applicable RTA fees. All these cost are additional and must be borne by the successful bidder. 4) Dispute pertaining to year of manufacture, documents, condition of vehicle/assets, etc. will not be consider after successful bid. 5) Entry to the event is strictly restricted to the registered bidder only. 6) The refund of EMD will be made immediately after the closure of the bidding process to the unsuccessful bidders. 7) Successful bidder has to deposit a minimum amount of 25% of the bid amount inclusive EMD on the same day, failing which the bid taken will not be considered as EMD amount will be forfeited without further intimation. 8) The balance should be paid by the successful bidder within next 15 days from the date of auction. 9) Delayed interest @ 18% p.a. will be charged against any amount due and payable by the successful bidder beyond 15 days from the date of the event, subject to a maximum waiting period of 22 days from the date of auction. 10) Default in payment beyond the stipulated 22 days, will lead to deal cancellation and forfeiture of EMD paid and the vehicle/equipment/machinery will be resold without further information. Acceptance of payment on later date will be sole discretion of Bank. 11) Successful Bidders are fully responsible for taking delivery of all vehicles or equipment from Stockyard after full payment is made. 12) Successful bidders must remove the vehicles/equipments within 7 days from the date of release order along with RC Transfer in their name.

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 23.12.2025

Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India



Bank of India
Zonal Office : Sambalpur, Near Sarlakani Chowk, Sambalpur - 768006 (Odisha)

POSSESSION NOTICE

[Rule-8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Bank of India**, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Mortgagor in the loan account given below to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Mortgagor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Sub- section (4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 of the said rules. The Borrower/Mortgagor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **Bank of India, Aska Branch** for an amount mentioned below with interest & other expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset.

ASKA BRANCH/ Name & Address of Borrower/Mortgagor

Liabilities due as per Notice

Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession

Description of the Immovable Property

Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Kishore Chandra Swain, S/o: Abhimanyu Swain, At: Khamara, PO: Mahupada, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha - 751106

₹3,58,616/- as on

04.09.2025

+ interest & expenses thereon

23.12.2025

All the part & parcel of the Land & Building situated at Khamara, Khata No.: 235/176, Plot No.: 1020/1593, Area: 0.027 Dec.

Kissam: Gharabari, Mouza: Khamara, Tahasil: Seragada, Dist.: Ganjam, standing in the name of **Mr. Kishore Chandra Swain**, Bounded by East: Road, West: Land of Kasinath Gouda, North: Land of Saita Gouda, South: Remaining Land of Abhimanyu Swain

<p

SNAPSHOTS



Foreign capital exodus

In 2025, Indian equity markets witnessed a sustained exodus of Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and foreign institutional investors (FIIs), reversing the strong inflows seen in previous years. As of mid-December 2025, FPIs and FIIs have been net sellers in Indian equities, with total net outflows exceeding ₹1.60 lakh crore (approximately ₹18.4 billion). This marks 2025 as the year with the highest-ever foreign selling in the Indian equity markets. Persistent selling by foreign investors emerged as a major drag on market sentiment, despite relative resilience in domestic inflows through mutual funds and insurance companies. Multiple global and domestic factors drove the FPI withdrawal. Tighter global financial conditions, delayed and uneven interest rate cuts in advanced economies, and a stronger US dollar made emerging market assets less attractive. Higher bond yields in the US encouraged a shift towards safer assets, reducing the appeal of Indian equities. At the same time, geopolitical uncertainties and trade tensions added to global risk aversion. Domestic concerns also weighed heavily. Slower earnings growth, elevated equity valuations, and questions over the reliability of macroeconomic data reduced foreign investor confidence.

Boosting bilateral trade

The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) represents a significant milestone in the evolving economic relationship between the two countries, especially in the post-Brexit context. Aimed at boosting bilateral trade, investments, and service flows, the agreement seeks to reduce tariffs, ease regulatory barriers, and create a more predictable business environment for firms on both sides. For India, the FTA promises improved market access for labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, garments, leather, gems and jewellery, and engineering goods. Indian service providers, particularly in information technology, financial services, and professional services, are expected to benefit from easier mobility norms and recognition of qualifications.

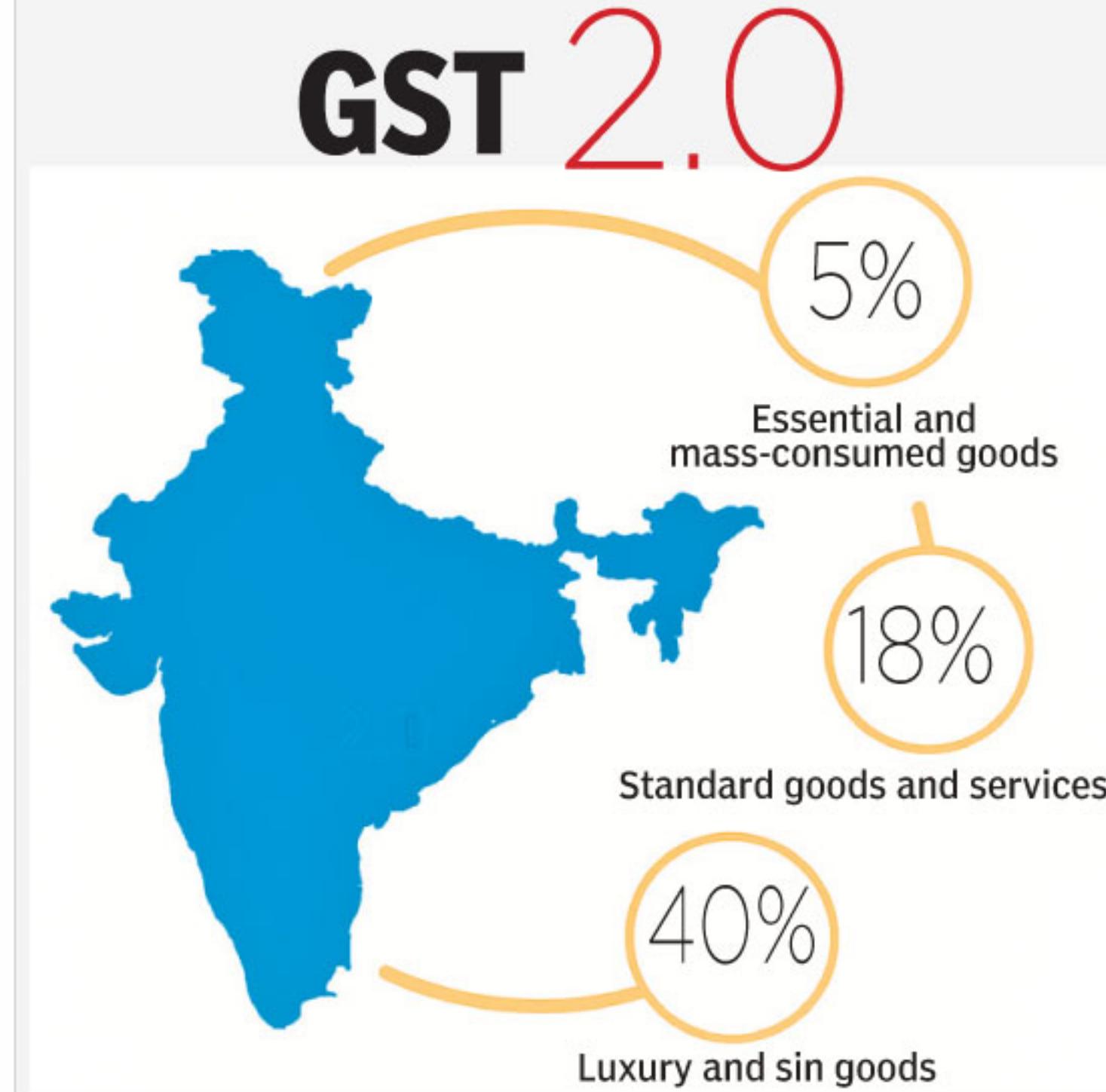


RBI's monetary easing

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut the repo rate four times in 2025, marking a decisive shift toward monetary easing. The RBI cut the repo rate by a cumulative 125 basis points (bps) across four separate occasions in 2025. The rate was lowered from 6.50 per cent at the beginning of the year to 5.25 per cent by the December policy review. Faced with weak private investment, slowing consumer demand, and sustained high-interest rates and trade disruptions, the central bank prioritised growth support over inflation concerns. Each repo rate cut was aimed at reducing borrowing costs and improving liquidity in the financial system. Lower policy rates encouraged banks to pass on cheaper loans to businesses and households, supporting credit growth in sectors such as housing, MSMEs, and infrastructure. The RBI's actions also sought to counter the negative impact of foreign capital outflows and tighter global financial conditions.

GLOBAL EXPANSION OF UPI

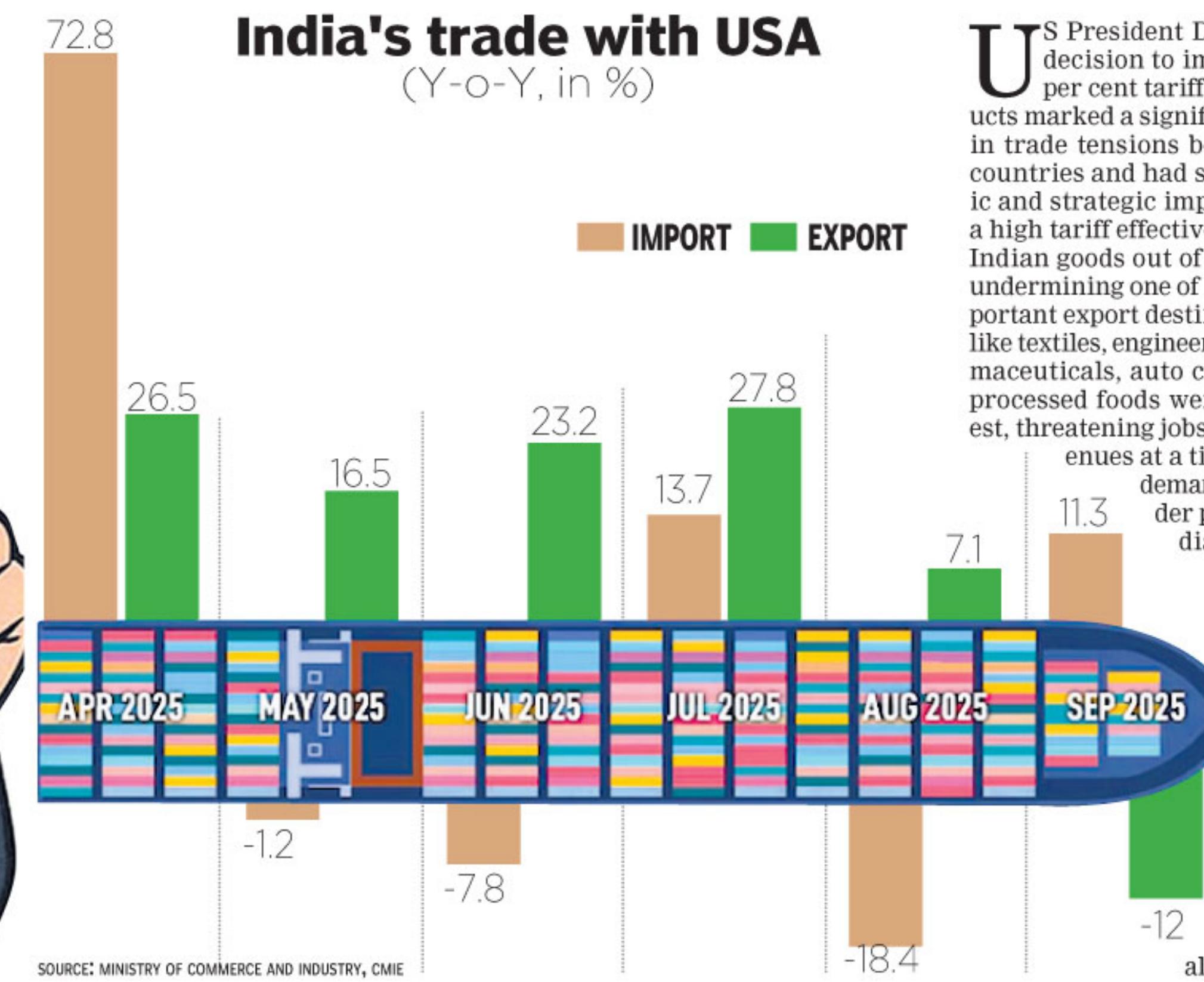
In 2025, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) significantly widened its global footprint, marking a major step in India's effort to internationalise its digital public infrastructure. By the end of the year, UPI was operational and enabled for merchant payments and remittances in over 10 countries, primarily across Asia, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean region. UPI acceptance was strengthened in Singapore, the UAE, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, where Indian travellers could make QR-based merchant payments directly from their Indian bank accounts. In France, UPI usage expanded beyond pilot projects to cover more tourist locations, making it one of the first European countries to adopt the system. New agreements were also finalised with Mauritius and select Gulf countries, driven by strong diaspora demand. A key development in 2025 was the linking of UPI with foreign fast payment systems, enabling real-time cross-border remittances. Transfers between India and Singapore, as well as India and the UAE, became faster and cheaper, cutting settlement time from days to minutes and significantly lowering transaction costs.



In 2025, India undertook one of the most significant overhauls of its Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime since its inception, aiming to simplify the tax structure, boost consumption, and reduce compliance burdens for businesses and consumers alike. The GST Council, led by the Ministry of Finance, introduced a rationalised slab system effective from September 2025, cutting the previous four main GST rates down to primarily two broad slabs of 5% and 18%, while essentials received nil or low tax treatment and luxury or sin goods were placed in a higher bracket to balance revenue needs. This reform, popularly termed "GST 2.0", lowered rates on a wide range of everyday items including personal care products, food staples, healthcare goods, and consumer durables, making them more affordable for the middle class. These strategic cuts not only eased retail inflation by an estimated 25 to 35 basis points during the 2025 festive season but also stimulated a notable rise in overall consumer sentiment and market demand. Procedural improvements were also introduced to streamline filings and enhance digital compliance, benefiting MSMEs and exporters. These changes have been projected to reduce retail inflation modestly and increase disposable incomes, although full consumption boosts are still unfolding.

TARIFF TURMOIL

India's trade with USA (Y-o-Y, in %)



US President Donald Trump's decision to impose a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian products marked a significant escalation in trade tensions between the two countries and had serious economic and strategic implications. Such a high tariff effectively prices many Indian goods out of the US market, undermining one of India's most important export destinations. Sectors like textiles, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, auto components and processed foods were hit the hardest, threatening jobs and export revenues at a time when global demand is already under pressure. For India, the move represents more than a trade setback. It challenges the country's long-term strategy of integrating with global supply chains and positioning itself as an alternative manu-

facturing hub to China. Higher tariffs reduce the competitiveness of Indian products just as New Delhi has been pushing initiatives such as "Make in India" and production-linked incentives to boost exports. Small and medium enterprises, which lack the financial buffers of large corporations, are especially vulnerable to sudden market closures in the face of high tariffs. From the American perspective, the tariff reflects a growing protectionist impulse aimed at shielding domestic industries and reducing trade deficits. However, such measures also raise costs for US consumers and manufacturers who rely on Indian inputs, potentially fuelling inflation and supply disruptions. Historically, high tariffs have often triggered retaliation, increasing the risk of a broader trade war that harms both sides. Strategically, the move complicates the otherwise deepening India-US partnership, which spans defence, technology and geopolitics, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. With a trade deal between the two countries remaining in limbo despite several rounds of negotiations between both parties at various levels, the harsh US tariffs on India appear to remain intact for some more time.



pressure. Even among its Asian peers, the rupee was the worst-performing currency. Capital outflows from Indian equity and debt markets further weakened the currency. Domestically, concerns over slowing growth, uneven recovery in manu-

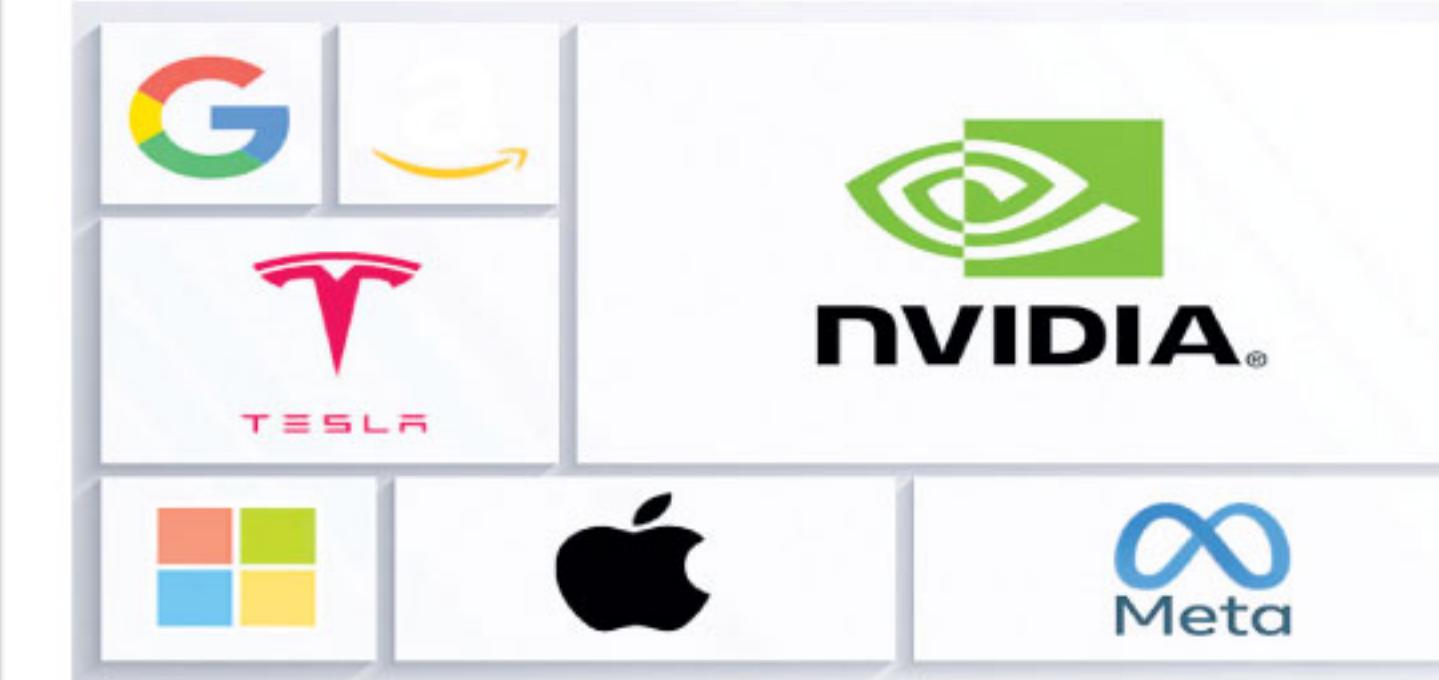
Oil is king again



After years of forecasts predicting an imminent peak in oil demand amid a shift to renewables, oil and gas made a quiet but unmistakable comeback, with India emerging as a central driver of global consumption. Major energy outlooks - from BP and McKinsey - predicted that oil would peak in the 2030s and revised 2050 demand upward. And every forecaster said India will emerge as the epicentre of global demand growth, with its rise in appetite for energy outpacing that of China and South-east Asia combined. The revival of the 'Oil is King' narrative in 2025 was fuelled by policy delays, infrastructure bottlenecks, and geopolitical tensions. European nations, long champions of the clean energy transition, leaned more heavily on fossil fuels as supply shortfalls and high prices persisted amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. In the US, President Donald Trump's fossil-forward policies reinforced this trend. The result: oil was back on the centre board. India's oil and gas sector in 2025 was marked by shifting import patterns, policy reforms, rising demand and a push to strengthen energy security, underscoring the country's evolving role in the global energy landscape. It also saw India diversifying crude supply, with US crude imports rising, particularly after Trump's tariff, alongside expansion in LNG and LPG trade, reflecting broader efforts to reduce dependence on any single source. The US es-



THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN



In 2025, the US stock market rally was significantly driven by the resurgence of the "Magnificent Seven," a group of megacap technology and growth companies - Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Nvidia, and Tesla - whose strong earnings and sector leadership helped propel major indices to record levels. As of December, the group accounted for over 40 per cent of the S&P 500's total return for the year, with specific companies like Alphabet, Nvidia, and Microsoft leading the charge. The group's year-to-date (YTD) return was approximately 20.6 per cent, outpacing the broader S&P 500's return of around 15.9 per cent. After trailing the broader market earlier in the year, these tech giants regained momentum in the latter half of 2025, with robust Q3 earnings reports and sustained investor

confidence amid one of the busiest holiday travel periods of the year. The crisis also raised concerns about excessive market concentration in Indian aviation, as IndiGo's dominant position meant operational failures had system-wide ripple effects. The IndiGo crisis exposed structural vulnerabilities in India's aviation ecosystem, highlighting the need for stronger regulatory oversight, better capacity planning, and greater competition to safeguard economic stability.

confidence amid one of the busiest holiday travel periods of the year. The crisis also raised concerns about excessive market concentration in Indian aviation, as IndiGo's dominant position meant operational failures had system-wide ripple effects. The IndiGo crisis exposed structural vulnerabilities in India's aviation ecosystem, highlighting the need for stronger regulatory oversight, better capacity planning, and greater competition to safeguard economic stability.



IT sector layoffs

The year 2025 turned out to be a turbulent phase for India's information technology sector, marked by widespread layoffs, job uncertainty and shifting business priorities. Thousands of employees lost their jobs as technology companies increasingly pivoted towards newer technologies and evolving market demands. According to a report by Intellize, Tata Consultancy Services announced a workforce reduction of about 2 per cent in mid-2025, translating to nearly 12,000 job cuts, largely impacting mid- and senior-level professionals. This was among the biggest layoff exercises in India during the year. Global tech giants were not immune to the trend. Microsoft reportedly laid off around 9,000 employees, while PwC reduced its workforce by approximately

1,500. Meta also trimmed nearly 600 roles, and Google carried out multiple rounds of job cuts in 2025, though it did not disclose exact numbers. Beyond official announcements, several companies resorted to "silent layoffs" by removing employees from projects or encouraging resignations. The primary reasons cited included skill mismatches, cost-cutting pressures, efficiency drives and, most notably, job displacement due to artificial intelligence and automation. Nearly 64 per cent of Indian IT firms adopted generative AI tools in 2025, accelerating workforce rationalisation.

GOLD, & SILVER GLITTER In 2025, gold and silver played a crucial role in India's financial landscape, witnessing sharp price movements amid global uncertainty and domestic economic pressures. Gold prices remained elevated throughout the year, with 24-carat gold trading at ₹1,40,850 per 10 grams as on December 23. As on December 23, gold prices in the domestic market have jumped by ₹61,900, or 78.40 per cent, from ₹78,950 per 10 grams recorded December 31, 2024. Persistent geopolitical tensions, a weakening rupee, central bank buying, and strong safe-haven demand supported gold's strength despite intermittent corrections. Silver outperformed gold in percentage terms, emerging as one of the best-performing commodities of 2025. The price of silver was ₹21,750 per kilogram as on December 23. Silver prices have risen by ₹1,27,550, or 142.2 per cent, from ₹89,700 per kilogram recorded December 31, 2024. The surge in silver price throughout the year was driven by robust industrial demand from renewable energy, electronics, and electric vehicle segments, alongside investment demand.

MAJOR DEALS India witnessed a slew of big financial sector deals during 2025, leading to a huge inflow of foreign capital. Some of the major deals announced during the year are listed below:

MUFG-Shriram Finance (December)	Rs 39,618 crore
Emirates NBD-RBL Bank (October)	Rs 26,853 crore
SMBC-YES Bank (May)	Rs 13,483 crore
IHC-Sammaan Capital (October)	Rs 9,000 crore
Warburg Pincus & ADIA-IDFC First Bank (April)	Rs 7,500 crore
Blackstone-Federal Bank (October)	Rs 6,196 crore
Zurich-Kotak Mahindra General Insurance (February)	Rs 5,560 crore
Bain Capital-Manappuram Finance (March)	Rs 4,390 crore
BAIN CAPITAL-MANAPPURAM FINANCE: Bain Capital in March announced and investment of ₹ 4,390 crore to acquire an 18 per cent stake in gold loan provider Manappuram Finance.	
ZURICH-KOTAK MAHINDRA GENERAL INSURANCE: Kotak Mahindra General Insurance promoter Kotak Mahindra Bank in February decided to sell its 70 per cent stake in the insurance firm for a total consideration of approximately ₹5,560 crore.	
WARBURG PINCUS & ADIA-IDFC FIRST BANK: IDFC First Bank raised ₹7,500 crore	

national



“
The 'No PUC, No Fuel' policy will remain in force in the national capital even after the relaxation of GRAP-IV restrictions

MANJINDER SINGH SIRSA |
DELHI ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

WANTED NARCO SMUGGLER HELD

An alleged narcotics smuggler facing an Interpol Red Notice was repatriated from the UAE Tuesday in an operation coordinated in collaboration with the ministries of home affairs and external affairs, officials said. confers Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar on 24 scientists



Eminent Hindi writer Vinod Kumar Shukla dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Congress is worried and criticising the scheme, claiming that it will snatch jobs. This is a far better scheme that will completely transform villages



SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUDHARI | UNION AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE MINISTER

Raipur, Dec 23: Eminent Hindi writer and Jnanpith Award recipient Vinod Kumar Shukla died Tuesday evening due to age-related ailments at a government hospital here, his family members said. He was 88.

Shukla was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Raipur, December 2 after experiencing breathing difficulties. He breathed his last at 4.48 pm Tuesday, his son, Shashwat Shukla told PTI. According to the family, his mortal remains will first be taken to his residence here, and details regarding the last rites will be announced shortly.

Shashwat Shukla said that after his father experienced breathing problems in October, he was admitted to a private hospital in Raipur. After his condition improved, he was discharged and continued treatment at home.

However, his health deteriorated suddenly December 2, after which he was taken to AIIMS Raipur for further treatment, he added. Shukla is survived by his wife, son Shashwat and a daughter.

Born January 1, 1937, in Rajnandaon (now in Chhattisgarh), Shukla, widely regarded as one of the most distinctive voices in Hindi literature, was the author of acclaimed novels such as "Naukar Ki Kameez", "Khilega To Dekhenge", "Deewar Mein Ek Kharkee Rahati Thi" and "Ek Chuppi Jagah".

His work is admired for capturing the emotions of ordinary people, portraying everyday life, and exploring the intricate realities of society in his writings.



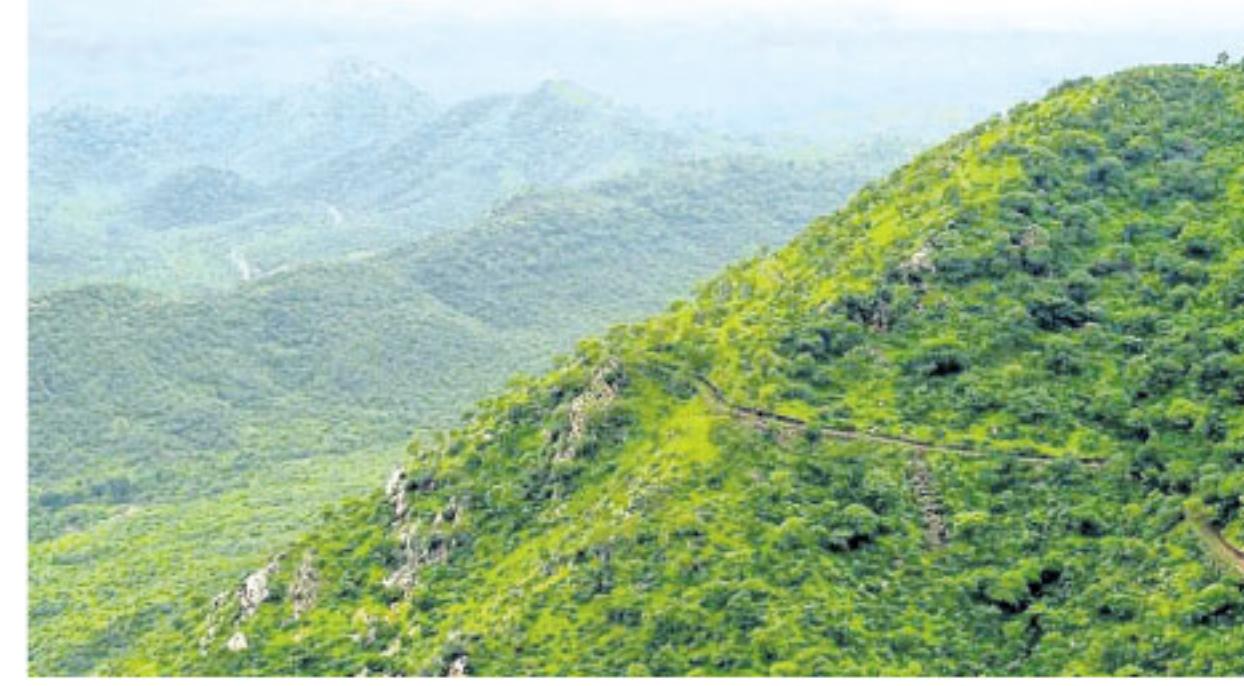
Rajasthan Cong announces 'Aravalli Bachao' agitation

Addressing a joint press conference here amid an intensified war of words with the BJP, Rajasthan

Congress president Govind Singh Dotsara and Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jolly alleged a conspiracy by the ruling party to facilitate large-scale mining in the Aravallis and said their

"Aravalli Bachao" agitation will continue till the decision is withdrawn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



The government is looting the country's mineral wealth like an organised gang. The Aravalli issue is part of the same conspiracy," he claimed.

The Congress leader said, "It is a matter of great concern that in Rajasthan, the chief minister also holds the portfolios of Mining Minister and Home Minister, and the Union Minister for Environment and Forests is also from Rajasthan; they have conspired together, and BJP leaders are moving

forward with a plan to destroy the entire Aravalli mountain range, which is not only a centre of faith for the people of Rajasthan but also its lifeline."

The BJP hit back, alleging that Dotsara and Jolly were spreading falsehoods and confusion regarding the Aravalli mining issue like their party did on the CAA and the SIR.

"Congress has a history of spreading lies and confusion, whether it was on the CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) law, the SIR (Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls) issue, or now on the Aravalli mining issue. These leaders are once again misleading the public," BJP spokesperson Ramlal Sharma said at a press conference.

The Congress' attack came a day after Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav ac-

cused 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.

"The government is saying that mining will happen only in 0.19 per cent of the forest area, but the reality is that around 68,000 acres are being prepared to be handed over to the mining department," Dotsara alleged.

Under the new definition, an "Aravalli Hill" is a landform with an elevation of at least 100 metres above its local surrounding terrain and an "Aravalli Range" is a cluster of two or more such hills within 500 metres of each other.

Critics argue that many ecologically important parts of the Aravalli system do not meet the 100-metre threshold (e.g., low ridges, slopes, foothills and recharge areas), yet are important for groundwater recharge, biodiversity support, climate moderation and soil stability.

The Centre has rejected the charge that the new definition weakens environmental safeguards. It has said that most of the Aravalli region, over 90 per cent, remains protected and the new definition does not relax mining controls.

13 get life for killing father-son during Waqf act violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 23: A court in West Bengal's Murshidabad district Tuesday sentenced 13 people to life imprisonment for the lynching of a man and his son during the protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act.

Special public prosecutor Biswas Chatterjee said this is the country's second conviction in a mob lynching case and first in West Bengal. The fast-track court in Jangipur directed the state to give Rs 15 lakh compensation to the family of the victims.

Haragobinda Das (72) and his son Chandan Das (42) were killed by a mob at their house in Jafrabad in the Samsangan police station area on April 12.

Chatterjee said the prosecution had prayed for capital punishment for the convicts, maintaining that the crime falls in the rarest of rare category.

He said the state government will decide whether it will appeal against the verdict before the Calcutta High Court.

The court had convicted these 13 accused on Monday.

Each of the 13 convicts was also sentenced to 10 years in prison for dacoity, 10 years of imprisonment for house trespass and a five-year term for rioting.

All the sentences will run concurrently, the court said.

Violent protests rocked Murshidabad district from April 8 to 12, after the Waqf (Amendment) Act was passed in Parliament. Central forces had to be deployed to control the situation.

The Das family said they were not happy with the court verdict.

Speaking to reporters at the



state BJP office in Kolkata with leader of the opposition Suvendu Adhikari by her side, Haragobinda's wife, Parul Das, said,

"We want the death penalty for three of the convicts, whom we have already identified. We are not happy with the court order."

Adhikari said the family would move the high court, seeking the death penalty for three of the 13 convicts, and the BJP would assist them.

"We are not happy with this judgment. Three of the 13 had slaughtered the father and the son, who were idol makers, with sharp knives meant for chopping meat. Their action is no less than that of jihadis. The other 10 were conspirators and helped the three," he claimed.

Adhikari alleged that the charges against the three main accused were watered down by the SIT formed to probe the case.

"The SIT could not live up to the expectation of ensuring exemplary punishment to the main culprits," he said.

CHINESE VISA CASE

Delhi court orders charges against Karti

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: A Delhi court Tuesday ordered the framing of charges for criminal conspiracy and corruption against Congress MP Karti P Chidambaram and six others in connection with the Chinese visa scam case, saying there was a prima facie case against them.

The court, however, discharged one accused, Chetan Shrivastava, saying there was no evidence against him. In October 2024, the CBI had filed a charge sheet against Karti Chidambaram and others in connection with alleged bribery in facilitating visas of Chinese nationals for a power company, Talwandi Sabo Power Limited (TSPL), in 2011, when his father, P Chidambaram, was the Union home minister. Besides Karti Chidambaram, the Lok Sabha MP from Sivaganga, the CBI had named his alleged close associate and chartered accountant, S Bhaskararaman, Talawandi Sabo Power Ltd (TSPL), a subsidiary of Vedanta, and Mumbai-based Bell Tools, through which bribes were allegedly routed. In a 98-page order, Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh

underlined that at the stage of framing charges, a mini-trial was not required, and the court had to only consider whether the material collected by the investigating agency reflected a strong suspicion or a prima facie case against the accused persons. "At this stage of framing the charge, the approver's statement must be accepted without questioning its authenticity, as that will be examined during trial. The material presented by the prosecution must be accepted at face value at this stage," the court said.

It said that no doubt the evidence of an accomplice was of tainted character and very weak, but the court could accept it as substantive evidence and enquire, provided it was materially corroborated.

SNIPPETS

Court orders to attach land of US-based Kashmiri lobbyist

Srinagar: A special NIA court in Jammu and Kashmir Tuesday ordered immediate attachment of land belonging to Ghulam Nabi Fai, a US-based Kashmiri lobbyist and convicted agent of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). National Investigation Agency (NIA) Special Judge Yahaya Firdous of Budgam district authorised the seizure of over 1.5 kanals (approximately 8,100 sq. ft.) of land across two villages -- Wadwan and Chattabugh. The court directed the Budgam district collector to take possession of the property "forthwith" with the assistance of revenue and police authorities. Later in the day, Budgam police attached Fai's property.

Jharkhand cabinet approves PESA rules

Ranchi: The Jharkhand cabinet Tuesday approved the rules under the Panchayat Extension of Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, an official said. The rules were framed by incorporating all the provisions of the PESA Act, the official said. The approval was given during the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Hemant Soren. "The cabinet has given its nod to the rules under the PESA Act," Cabinet Secretary Vandana Dadel told reporters. The Act, recognising the rights of tribal communities in Scheduled Areas, was enacted in 1996; but despite the creation of a separate state in 2000, Jharkhand is yet to implement PESA. Chief Minister Hemant Soren said, "The PESA was the most important agenda in today's cabinet meeting. To frame the rules, we earlier held discussion with various stakeholders and took the opinion of different departments. We finally approved the rules today.

Lokayukta raids four govt officers in K'taka

Bangalore: The sleuths of Karnataka Lokayukta Tuesday carried out coordinated raids against four government officers accused of amassing wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income, an official said. The raids started early in the morning at 17 places linked to these officers, a Lokayukta officer said. During the search, the Lokayukta sleuths unearthed Rs 19.2 crore worth assets of the accused officers. A zilla parishad assistant secretary in Bagalkote and an Assistant Executive Engineer, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Raichur were among the officials raided by Lokayukta. One of them was found possessing wealth worth Rs 9.89 crore. The Lokayukta sleuths searched his four locations and found that he owned seven plots (sites), four houses, a commercial complex, which are worth Rs 9.17 crore.



A man holds the national flag amid dense fog at the banks of Sangam on a winter morning, in Prayagraj

CHINESE VISA CASE

ENTRANCE EXAMS

NTA to roll out facial recognition, live photo checks

Facial biometric verification confirms a person's identity by analysing unique facial features, such as the distance between the eyes or the shape of the nose, to create a digital template for comparison with stored data, often using AI for analysis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: The National Testing Agency (NTA) is planning to introduce the facial recognition system for verification in major entrance exams including NEET and JEE from 2026, according to sources.

The agency is also in the process of introducing an option for candidates to capture live photographs while applying

for the exams.

"During the 2025 NEET exam, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) successfully conducted a Proof of Concept (PoC) on the use of face authentication. The PoC was aimed at evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of Aadhaar-based face authentication as a means of verifying the identity of candidates," a source said.

"During the PoC, Aadhaar face authentication technology was deployed at select NEET centres in Delhi, and was integrated with NIC's digital infrastructure and NTA's examination

introduction in the application system to ensure that unfair means are not being used," the source added.

Facial biometric verification confirms a person's identity by analysing unique facial features, such as the distance between the eyes or the shape of the nose, to create a digital template for comparison with stored data, often using AI for analysis.

Meanwhile, a real-time photo capture via webcam or phone is used during online application or exam processes to prevent impersonation.

The recommendations were made by the Radhakrishnan Committee which was set up by the Centre following incidents of alleged paper leaks.



introduced in the application system to ensure that unfair means are not being used," the source added.

Facial biometric verification confirms a person's identity by analysing unique facial features, such as the distance between the eyes or the shape of the nose, to create a digital template for comparison with stored data, often using AI for analysis.

Meanwhile, a real-time photo capture via webcam or phone is used during online application or exam processes to prevent impersonation.

The recommendations were made by the Radhakrishnan Committee which was set up by the Centre following incidents of alleged paper leaks.

national



No necessity for me to convey to the people the kind of fear minorities are enduring

M K STALIN | TN CM

COUNTDOWN FOR LAUNCH OF BLUEBIRD BLOCK-2 MISSION

The 24-hour countdown for the launch of LVM3-M6 rocket, which will carry a new generation US communication satellite, commenced Tuesday, ISRO said. In a dedicated commercial mission, ISRO is scheduled to launch the Bluebird Block-2 spacecraft on board its heavy lift launch vehicle LVM3-M6 at 8.54 am from the second launch pad at this spaceport Wednesday



of the day quote



Andhra Pradesh Vision: Quantum Valley in Amaravati. Andhra Pradesh will not follow, we will lead... everybody is prepared to produce quantum computers in Amaravati. Almost all 80 per cent or 85 per cent component partners are ready

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | ANDHRA PRADESH CM



The Aravalli region spans about 1.44 lakh square Kilometres. Even 0.19 per cent of this works out to around 273.6 square kilometres, or nearly 68,000 acres. If mining leases of one hectare each are granted, over 27,200 legal mines can be opened

ASHOK GEHLOT | FORMER RAJASTHAN CM



I have seen for the first time that not a single adjournment motion, calling attention motion or short-duration discussion motion moved by the Congress was accepted

BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA | FORMER HARYANA CM



People Should Demand Accountability
• Air/Water: Polluted
• Healthcare: Private
• Education: Private
• Road Quality: Potholes
• Food Safety: Adulteration
• Real Estate: Lacks Transparency
• Public Parks/Toilets: Badly Maintained
These are Absolute Basic Necessities
@Ravisutanjani

SHORT TAKES

AP: Tiger found dead on highway

Palanadu: A tiger was found dead on the national highway here in Palanadu district. Tuesday after being hit by a vehicle, a Forest Department official said. "Between 7 am and 7.30 am today, (on) NH - 565 from Markapur to Macherla towards Hyderabad, a road accident occurred. In that accident, one vehicle hit a tiger, and it died. It is a very unfortunate incident," the official told reporters at the accident site. He said a postmortem will be done, while the department will initiate an investigation on the vehicle involved in the big cat's death.

Delhi air quality slips into 'severe' category

New Delhi: The air quality forecast failed as Delhi's AQI slipped into the 'severe' category above 400, with the national capital and neighbouring Noida recording the worst air quality in the country. A grey haze enveloped the capital Tuesday as the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 412 in the severe category at 4 pm, deteriorating sharply from 373 in the very poor category at the same time a day earlier, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

CBI arrests CGST official

New Delhi: The CBI has arrested a Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) superintendent in Mumbai for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 5 lakh from a private company after threatening the firm with a tax demand of Rs 98 lakh, officials said Tuesday.

Fresh violence erupts in Karbi Anglong

Despite prohibitory orders in force, a large number of people, including women and children whose shops were burnt by a mob Monday, came out to protest against the violence, while the agitators demanding eviction of encroachers from the tribal belt also gathered in the Kheroni market area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Diphu/Guahati, Dec 23: Fresh violence erupted in Assam's trouble-torn Karbi Anglong district Tuesday with at least eight people injured as two groups of protesters clashed and the police resorted to lathicharge and firing of tear-gas shells to disperse them, officials said.

Despite prohibitory orders in force, a large number of people, including women and children whose shops were burnt by a mob Monday, came out to protest against the violence, while the agitators demanding eviction of encroachers from the tribal belt also gathered in the Kheroni market area.

Both the groups were agitated, and the security forces deployed in the area tried to pacify them, but suddenly stone pelting began from both sides, injuring several protesters, police personnel and media persons covering the incident, a senior police officer said. As the situation spiralled out



PTI PHOTO

Security personnel keep vigil following a wave of violence

INTERNET SERVICES SUSPENDED

GUWAHATI: The Assam government Tuesday temporarily suspended internet services in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts, following fresh violence during clashes between two groups over the issue of eviction, officials said. In an official order, the Home and Political Department said in the interest of maintaining greater public peace and tranquility, and to prevent any deterioration of the present situation, internet services have been temporarily suspended. The suspension will remain in force until further orders. "It is, however, clarified that voice calls and broadband connectivity based on fixed telephone lines shall remain functional during this period," the order stated.

of control, the police resorted to lathi charge and then fired tear gas shells to disperse both groups of protesters, he said. The situation is "tense" in the area, and additional forces have

been rushed to the spot.

The protesters had earlier torched two motorcycles in the Kheroni area. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the "situation in Karbi Anglong was

very sensitive". Senior minister Ranjib Pegu is present in the district. I believe that the matter will be resolved soon," Sarma said on the sidelines of a programme. Earlier "Tuesday, protesters called off their hunger strike demanding eviction of encroachers from tribal belt areas following talks with Pegu." The agitators, belonging to several political and social organisations, have been on a hunger strike for the last 15 days, demanding the eviction of illegal settlers.

Pegu held talks with protesters, and they called off their hunger strike following assurances from the government that tripartite talks will be held on the issue soon.

The chief minister will be present in the meeting, Pegu said. On Monday, 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 executive member Tuliram Ronghang and around 15 shops in Kheroni Bazaar.

India calls in B'desh envoy, seeks thorough probe into killing of Hadi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: India Tuesday called in Bangladesh envoy Riaz Hamidullah and sought a thorough probe into killing of Bangladeshi student leader Sharif Osman Hadi amid sharp downturn in ties between the two countries.

New Delhi's move came hours after Indian envoy to Dhaka, Pranay Verma, was summoned to the foreign ministry to lodge a protest against "regrettable incidents" outside the Bangladesh high commission in New Delhi.

There have been protests outside the Bangladesh high commission against recent

lynching of a Hindu worker in the strife-torn neighbouring country. At the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Hamidullah was told that Bangladesh should carry out a proper investigation into the killing of Hadi, people familiar with the matter said. India's call for a detailed probe into Hadi's killing came as unsubstantiated allegations about an Indian hand in his death triggered anti-India sentiment in that country. There have been protests outside Indian missions in Bangladesh following Hadi's death.

Last week, a group of angry protesters tried to storm India's assistant high commis-

sion in Chittagong. India subsequently suspended its visa services in the mission. Following summoning of the Indian envoy, the Bangladesh foreign ministry said it conveyed its "grave concern" to the envoy over "regrettable incidents outside the perimeter of the Bangladesh high commission and residence in New Delhi" on December 20, and acts of vandalism at the Bangladesh visa centre in Siliguri on December 22. Bangladesh also expressed deep concern over violent protests staged outside the premises of the different diplomatic missions of Bangladesh in India," it said.

A bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad made it clear to the embattled businessman's counsel Amit Desai that it would not hear Mallya's plea against the Act unless he first submits himself to the court's jurisdiction.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Enforcement Directorate (ED), opposed the pleas arguing fugitives should not be permitted to challenge the validity of an Act without being subjected to courts of the country. He submitted to the court that the FEO Act was brought to ensure such persons do not abuse the law by staying away from the country and filing petitions through their lawyers.

Mehta told the court that extradition proceedings initiated

against Mallya were at an advanced stage. The bench insisted it cannot allow both petitions filed by Mallya to run together and asked the promoter of the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines to clarify which plea he wants to press and which one to withdraw. Desai told the court that financial liability had been effectively neutralised with Mallya's assets worth Rs 14,000 crore attached and liabilities worth Rs 6,000 crore recovered by lending banks.

The Solicitor General maintained the fugitive businessman was entitled to legal representation even while staying abroad.

The bench, however, questioned as to how does one wipe out criminal liability without submitting to the jurisdiction of the court.

When will you return? HC asks Mallya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 23: The Bombay High Court Tuesday asked fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya when he intends to return to India and told his counsel it would not hear his plea against the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act unless he first submits himself to the court's jurisdiction.

Mallya, based in the UK since 2016, has filed two petitions in the HC -- one challenging an order declaring him as a fugitive economic offender and the other questioning the constitutional validity of the 2018 Act.

The HC posed the question to the 70-year-old liquor baron, wanted in India to face trial on fraud and money laundering charges, on his return home while hearing his twin pleas.

A bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad made it clear to the embattled businessman's counsel Amit Desai that it would not hear Mallya's plea against the Act unless he first submits himself to the court's jurisdiction.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Enforcement Directorate (ED), opposed the pleas arguing fugitives should not be permitted to challenge the validity of an Act without being subjected to courts of the country. He submitted to the court that the FEO Act was brought to ensure such persons do not abuse the law by staying away from the country and filing petitions through their lawyers.

Mehta told the court that extradition proceedings initiated

against Mallya were at an advanced stage. The bench insisted it cannot allow both petitions filed by Mallya to run together and asked the promoter of the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines to clarify which plea he wants to press and which one to withdraw. Desai told the court that financial liability had been effectively neutralised with Mallya's assets worth Rs 14,000 crore attached and liabilities worth Rs 6,000 crore recovered by lending banks.

The Solicitor General maintained the fugitive businessman was entitled to legal representation even while staying abroad.

The bench, however, questioned as to how does one wipe out criminal liability without submitting to the jurisdiction of the court.

2026 polls: AIADMK, BJP initiate preliminary talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Modi and our leader Palaniswami," he said.

The AIADMK general secretary said that during the "initial talks", both AIADMK and the BJP resolved to ensure an overwhelming victory at the hustings.

"People of the state are agitated over the DMK regime... our alliance parties will work together and throw out the DMK," Palaniswami, TN Leader of Opposition, said.

Goyal was accompanied by the BJP co-in-charge for the state and Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal. The party's state chief Nagenthran, TN in-charge Dr P Sudhakar Reddy, and Union Minister L Murugan were among those who participated in the meeting.

Apart from Palaniswami, the AIADMK was represented by its senior leaders K P Munusamy, S P Velumani, and P Thangamani.

Modi and our leader Palaniswami," he said.

The AIADMK general secretary said that during the "initial talks", both AIADMK and the BJP resolved to ensure an overwhelming victory at the hustings.

"People of the state are agitated over the DMK regime... our alliance parties will work together and throw out the DMK," Palaniswami, TN Leader of Opposition, said.

Goyal was accompanied by the BJP co-in-charge for the state and Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal. The party's state chief Nagenthran, TN in-charge Dr P Sudhakar Reddy, and Union Minister L Murugan were among those who participated in the meeting.

Apart from Palaniswami, the AIADMK was represented by its senior leaders K P Munusamy, S P Velumani, and P Thangamani.

Unnao rape case: Sengar gets bail



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the high court to deposit his passport with the trial court and to report to the local police station every Monday at 10 am.

The high court listed his appeal before the roster bench on January 16, 2026, subject to orders of the chief justice.

Sengar kidnapped the minor and raped her in 2017. The rape case and other connected cases were transferred to Delhi from a trial court in Uttar Pradesh on the directions of the Supreme Court on August 1, 2019.

Sengar's appeal against his conviction in the case of the custodial death of the survivor's father is also pending, where he has sought suspension of sentence on the ground that he has already spent a substantial time in jail. He was sentenced to 10 years in jail in the custodial death case. Talking to PTI, the Unnao rape case survivor said she was not satisfied with the verdict. "I have small children. There is an elderly, differently-abled mother-in-law and my husband at home. The safety of my children is of the biggest concern," she said.

The survivor claimed that during the course of the trial, her family was repeatedly "forced" to make rounds of the court. "My uncle's bail plea was rejected," she said, while questioning why security cover provided to her family members, legal aides and witnesses was withdrawn.

"Usually, verdict is pronounced within two or three days after the conclusion of arguments. But in this case, the decision came after three months. Even before the verdict, security for the family and witnesses was withdrawn," she alleged.

REGULATED MARKET COMMITTEE, KHARIAR ROAD

EOI No.871, Date 18.12.2025

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

No.H-47: Expression of interest are invited in two bid system from eligible reputed Firms/ Architecture/ Technical Organisations/ for preparation of plan, site map, detailed drawing and Structural design for establishment of plastic pallet industry in Nuapada district under RMC, Khariar Road.

For more details, please log in to <https://nuapada.odisha.gov.in>.

OIPR-01511/11/0021/2526 Sd./- Chairman, RMC Khariar Road

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER

JHARSUGUDA (K.L) DIVISION

AT/PO-BADMAL, JHARSUGUDA, PIN-768202

Mob: 8280342658, Email: dfokljsd@gmail.com

Office Order No.139 1F/Dated 18.12.2025

Cancellation of Tender Call Notice

No.MM-415: The following tenders under Tender Bid Notification No.01 Dated 28.11.2025 are hereby cancelled due to the following reason.

Sl.No.	Name of the Works	Remarks
1	Construction of Forest Guard quarter at Kanika K.L.Range Campus under Kanika K.L. Range of Jharsuguda K.L. Division	Cancelled due to non-response of any one
2	Construction of Forest Guard quarter at Duduka K.L.Range Campus under Duduka K.L. Range of Jharsuguda K.L. Division	Cancelled due to non-response of any one

OIPR-08054/11/0032/2526 Sd./-Divisional Forest Officer Jharsuguda K.L. Division

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

RURAL WORKS ELECTRICAL DIVISION, SAMBALPUR

No.O-184

E-mail- eerwelectricaldivn.sambalpur@gmail.com Bid Identification No.EE/RWELECT/SBP/28/2025-26

1. Name of the Work : 8 Nos. of E.I. Works

2. Estimated Cost : From Rs.6,39,854/- to Rs.16,62,694/-

3. Availability of bid document in the website : 11.30 Hours of 24.12.2025 to 17.00 hours of 08.01.2026

4. Date of Opening of Tenders : 1

international



We need a budget as fast as possible so that we can move on. The longer (the temporary budget) lasts, the more it costs

ROLAND LESCURE | FINANCE MINISTER, FRANCE

ITALY REMOVES EMPHATIC 'YES!' FROM NATIONAL ANTHEM

Italy has introduced a slight change to its national anthem, removing an emphatic "Si!" (Yes!) that followed a call to arms for the country. The Defence Staff issued official instructions about the tweak in recent weeks, in compliance with a presidential decree published on the official gazette in May that referred to the anthem's original version



of the day quote

They worked productively with envoys of President (Donald) Trump and several draft documents have now been prepared. In particular, these include documents on security guarantees for Ukraine, on recovery, and on a basic framework for ending this war

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

We need Greenland for national security, not for minerals... If you take a look at Greenland, you look up and down the coast, you have Russian and Chinese ships all over the place. We need it for national security. We have to have it

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, USA

Lessons of history and present realities make it clear that unilateral efforts by either of the warring parties are not sustainable and will only prolong the war

MOHAMED ABUSHANAB | UAE AMBASSADOR

SHORT TAKES

Italy fines Apple

Rome: Italy's antitrust authority fined Apple 98.6 million euros (\$116 million) Monday after determining that operating one of its privacy features restricted App Store competition. Apple said it would appeal the sanction. Apple abused its dominant position with its App Tracking Transparency (ATT) policy, which forces apps to obtain permission before collecting data to target users with personalised ads, the antitrust authority said in a statement. The company rolled out ATT starting in April 2021 as part of an update to the operating system powering the iPhone and iPad. While the feature was designed to tighten up privacy, it faced criticism from Big Tech rivals that it would make it harder for smaller apps to survive without charging consumers.

Japan nuclear restart after locals protest

Tokyo: The governor of Niigata Tuesday formally gave local consent to put two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in the north-central prefecture back online, clearing a last hurdle toward restarting the plant idled for more than a decade following the 2011 meltdowns at another plant managed by the same utility. Gov. Hideyo Hanazumi, in his meeting with Economy and Industry Minister Ryosuke Akazawa, conveyed the utility's "endorsement" to restart the No. 6 and No. 7 reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, accepting the government's pledge to ensure safety, emergency response and understanding of the residents. Restart preparations for No. 6 reactor have moved ahead, and utility company TEPCO is expected to apply for a final safety inspection by the Nuclear Safety Authority later this week, ahead of a possible resumption in January.

5 killed after Mexican Navy plane crashes

Galveston (US): A small Mexican Navy plane transporting a young medical patient and seven others crashed Monday near Galveston, killing at least five people and setting off a search in waters along the Texas coast, officials said. Four of the people aboard were Navy officers, and four were civilians, including a child. Mexico's Navy said in a statement to The Associated Press. Two of the passengers were from a nonprofit that provides aid to Mexican children with severe burns, including transports to a Galveston hospital.

New tranche of Epstein files released

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 23: The US Justice Department released a new trove of documents Tuesday from its investigation into the late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, including an email from a prosecutor indicating President Trump had traveled aboard his private jet "many more times than previously has been reported".

The latest release includes around 30,000 pages of documents, with many redactions, and dozens of video clips, including several purporting to be shot inside a federal detention center. Epstein was found dead in 2019 in a New York jail. His death was ruled a suicide.

PRIVATE JET

In one of those emails, dated January 7, 2020, an unidentified prosecutor in New York wrote that flight records showed Trump had flown on Epstein's private jet eight times during the 1990s, which was more than investigators then were aware of. Among those were "at least four flights" on which Ghislaine Maxwell was also aboard. Maxwell is serving a 20-year prison sentence for helping Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse underage girls.

On one flight, the only three passengers were Epstein, Trump and a 20-year-old woman whose name was redacted. "On two other flights, two of the passengers, respectively, were



Epstein files reveal Trump flew on private jet eight times in 1990s

Justice Department says some documents contain unfounded allegations against Trump

Government releases nearly 30,000 pages of additional records

Some lawmakers seek possible contempt of Congress charges against Bondi

Ex-President Clinton urges full release of files he appears in

Epstein victims attack DOJ performance on releasing files

Trump says 'I don't like pictures of Bill Clinton being shown'

women who would be possible witnesses in a Maxwell case," the document stated.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the email regarding Trump's alleged flights with Epstein in the 1990s.

UNFOUNDED AND FALSE

In another email, an unidentified person wrote in 2021 that they had recently been looking through data the government obtained from Steve Bannon's cellphone and found an "image of Trump and Ghislaine Maxwell". The government redacted the photo.

The Department of Justice posted a statement on X saying: Some of these documents contain untrue and sensationalist claims made against President Trump that were submitted to the FBI right before the 2020 election. To be clear: the claims

are unfounded and false, and if they had a shred of credibility, they certainly would have been weaponized against President Trump already.

"Nevertheless, out of our commitment to the law and transparency, the DOJ is releasing these documents with the legally required protections for Epstein's victims."

DOJ FACES FIRE

Bipartisan anger over the US Department of Justice's slow release of Jeffrey Epstein documents grew Monday as lawmakers threatened to launch an effort to hold Attorney General Pam Bondi in contempt of Congress and former President Bill Clinton sought the immediate release of any documents involving him.

The Justice Department released thousands of documents Friday related to Epstein, a convicted sex offender who committed suicide in 2019. The saga over the Epstein files, which has been dragging on for years, has caused a rift within the Republican Party, with MAGA supporters, who make up President Donald Trump's core voters, clamoring for full disclosure of Epstein documents.

Trump has at times called the episode a Democratic "hoax," but has also signed into law a bill requiring the full disclosure. At a press conference Monday that was mainly devoted to administration announcements on the building of new US Navy ships, Trump was asked about the Epstein files and pictures that possibly portray former President Bill Clinton in the files being released.

India unveils \$450mn aid for cyclone-hit SL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Dec 23: India announced a reconstruction package of \$ 450 million to Cyclone Ditrwa-hit Sri Lanka, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met with the island nation's top leaders and assured Delhi's steadfast commitment to Colombo's rebuilding post-cyclone.

Jaishankar, who arrived here as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Special Envoy, said that it was natural for India to step forward at a time when Sri Lanka faced a crisis. The minister called President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and conveyed PM Modi's warm wishes and message of solidarity in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditrwa.

"The Letter from Prime Minister Modi that I handed over builds on our First Responder role and commits a reconstruction package of \$ 450 million to Sri Lanka," Jaishankar said while addressing the press alongside Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath.

Jaishankar said he had a detailed discussion with the President on the damage caused by Cyclone Ditrwa and their talks centred around how expeditiously India's assistance package can be delivered.

"The assistance package that we have proposed is worth \$ 450 million. It will include \$ 350 million in concessional Lines of Credit and \$ 100 million of grants," he said.



He said that the assistance will cover sectors worst affected by the cyclone, including rehabilitation and restoration of road, railway and bridge connectivity; support for the construction of damaged houses, support for health and education systems, agriculture, and working towards better disaster response and preparedness.

"We are conscious that work towards mitigating the impact of Cyclone Ditrwa on the people of Sri Lanka must be done in the quickest time possible. We are discussing an effective coordination mechanism for the earliest possible delivery," he said.

Jaishankar and his counterpart Herath jointly inaugurated a 120-foot dual carriageway Bailey Bridge in the Kiliyochchi District of Northern Province, one of the areas severely affected by the cyclone, in the presence of President Dissanayake.

The 110-tonne bridge was air-lifted from India and installed as part of Operation Sagar Bandhu.

PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTEST

Greta Thunberg held in London



paint at a building.

The spokesperson said a 22-year-old woman later attended the scene and was arrested for displaying a placard in support of a proscribed organisation.

Prisoners for Palestine, which supports some detained activists who have gone on hunger strike, said the building had been targeted because it was used by an insurance firm which they said provided services to the British arm of Israeli defence firm Elbit Systems.

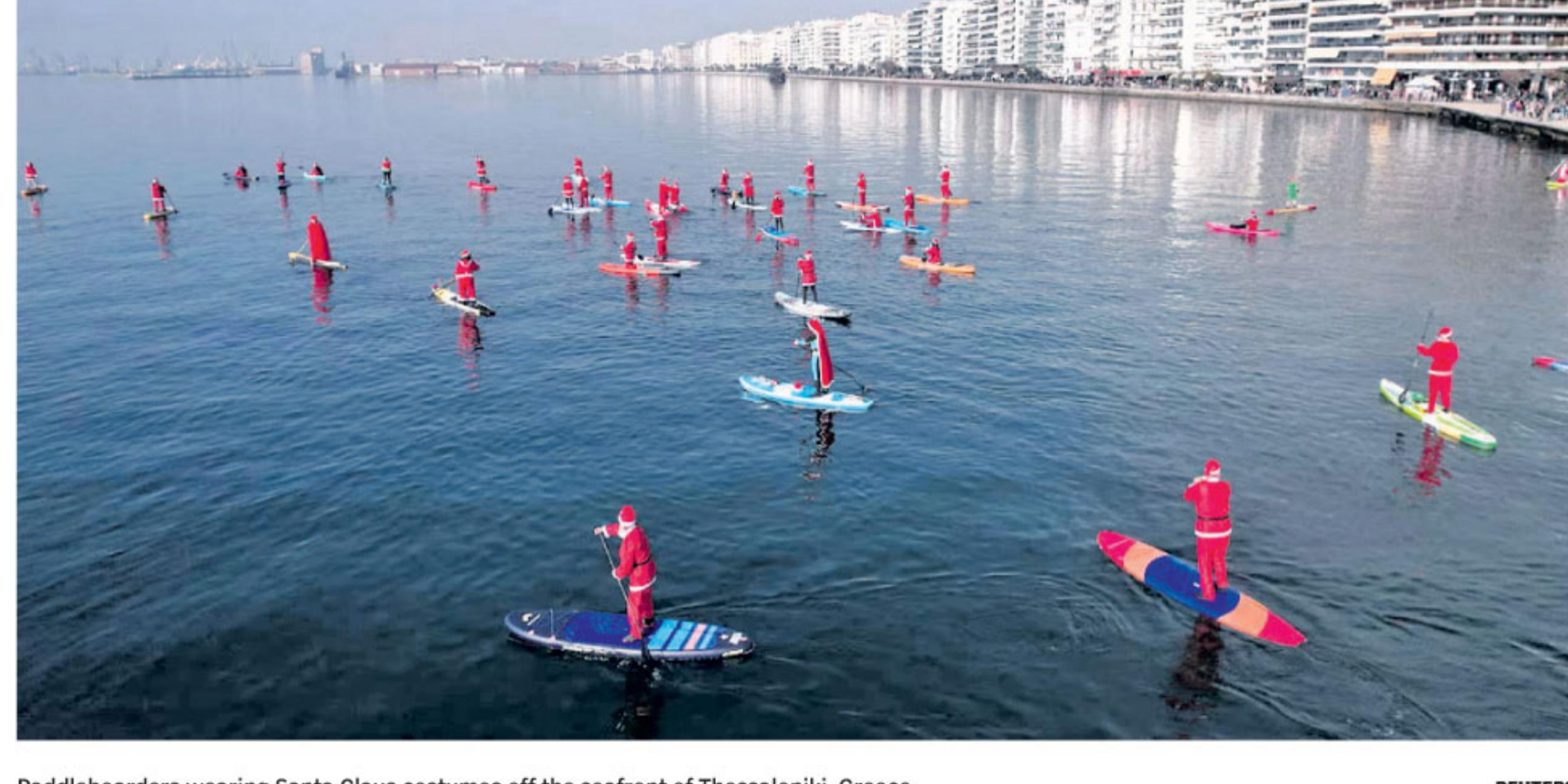
The insurance company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Thunberg, 22, became prominent after staging weekly climate protests in front of the Swedish parliament in 2018.

Last year, she was cleared of a public order offence in Britain as a judge ruled police had no power to arrest her and others at a protest in London the year before.

She was detained along with 478 people and expelled by Israel in October after joining an activist convoy of vessels, the Global Sumud Flotilla, that attempted to reach Gaza with aid supplies. Israel has consistently denied genocide allegations.

A City of London spokesperson said two other people had been arrested for throwing red



Paddleboarders wearing Santa Claus costumes off the seafront of Thessaloniki, Greece

YEMEN AGREES TO RELEASE 2,900 DETAINEES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, Dec 23: Yemen's internationally recognised government and the Iran-backed Houthi rebels have reached an agreement to free 2,900 detainees held during the 11-year civil war, according to Saudi and Houthi officials.

Saudi Ambassador Mohamed AlJabir said in a statement on X that the agreement was signed under the supervision of the Office of the UN Special

Envoy for Yemen and the International Committee of the Red Cross, "which will enable all detainees to return to their families."

WAR'S LARGEST EXCHANGE

"I commend the efforts of the negotiation teams from both sides who succeeded in reaching an understanding and concluding this agreement, which addresses a humanitarian issue

and strengthens efforts to bring calm and build confidence in Yemen," said AlJabir.

The detainees would include Saudi and Sudanese nation-

als, according to Abdelkader al-Murtada, the Houthi head of the National Committee for Prisoners' Affairs and Mohamed Abdulsalam, a Houthi spokesperson.

Oil loading in Venezuela slows, more ships make U-turns

REUTERS

Caracas, Dec 23: Tanker loading in Venezuela dwindled Monday, with most ships moving oil cargoes only between domestic ports following US action against two more ships and as state-run energy company PDVSA struggles to recover from a cyberattack, according to tracking data and sources.

The US Coast Guard this month seized a supertanker under sanctions carrying Venezuelan oil and tried to intercept two more Venezuela-related ships over the weekend, US authorities said. One of them is an empty ship under US sanctions, and the other is an unsanctioned, fully loaded tanker bound for China. Washington has not provided updated information on the ships. However, US President

US SANCTIONS IMPACT



registration if an investigation determines it did not follow maritime rules.

Trump's pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nico-

las Maduro has included a ramped-up military presence in the region and more than two dozen military strikes on vessels the US alleges are trans-

PDVSA since the US Treasury Department in 2020 imposed sanctions on the company's former oil trading firms, two units of Russia's Rosneft, which forced output and export cuts.

Nvidia plans to build a giant new supercomputer for the US Department of Energy.

Brent crude futures rose 2.4% to \$61.94 a barrel Monday afternoon, while US WTI crude also climbed 2.4% to \$57.89 following the US actions and amid Russia's war against Ukraine, with both developments raising fears of supply disruptions.

As of Monday, PDVSA had delivered a 1.9 million-barrel cargo of heavy crude to the Aruba-flagged sanctioned vessel Azure Voyager at the Jose port, but no other supertanker bound for Asia was scheduled to load soon, internal company documents showed.

of the day quote

We are considering price hike every quarter next year, and that is because of rupee devaluation to euro

SANTOSH IYER | MERCEDES-BENZ

INDIA MD AND CEO

As EV adoption accelerates, our commitment remains clear: to mainstream electric mobility by making it accessible across segments, strengthening the ecosystem, and investing in India-first technology and localization. This is how we will continue to lead India's growing EV market

SHAILESH CHANDRA | TATA MOTORS PASSENGER VEHICLES MD & CEO

The next 30 years will be an investment in AI transformation. We will heavily shift our engineering capacity focus towards AI development. And I think India is rich and has a very talented resource pool that will contribute to that segment on investment

JB PARK | SAMSUNG PRESIDENT & CEO OF SOUTHWEST ASIA

SHORT TAKES

Blackstone, Federal Bank deal gets nod

New Delhi: Fair trade regulator CCI on Tuesday cleared US-based Blackstone's proposal to acquire 9.99 per cent stake through warrants in private sector lender Federal Bank. Private equity firm Blackstone is acquiring stake through its arm Asia II Topco XIII Pte Ltd. "The proposed combination envisages acquisition of certain warrants by Asia II Topco XIII Pte Ltd (acquirer), each carrying a right to subscribe to one fully paid-up equity share of Federal Bank Ltd (target)," the regulator said in a release. Upon full exercise of the warrants, the acquirer will hold a 9.99 per cent of the paid-up share capital of Federal Bank, on a fully diluted basis.

Blackstone will have the right to nominate a director on the target's board, as long as it holds at least 5 per cent stake in the bank, according to the release. Federal Bank Ltd is a private sector commercial bank in the country and offers a wide range of products and services, such as deposits, loans, payment services, etc.

In a separate release, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved Tata Steel Ltd's proposed acquisition of sole control in Tata BlueScope Steel by purchasing the remaining 50 per cent equity shareholding currently held by BlueScope Steel Asia Holdings Pty Ltd.

OYO-parent PRISM to raise ₹6,650cr via IPO

New Delhi: OYO's parent firm PRISM has received shareholders' approval to raise up to ₹6,650 crore through a fresh issue of equity shares as part of its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO). The travel tech platform's shareholders greenlighted the proposal at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held on December 20, 2025. At the EGM, shareholders approved the proposal to undertake the IPO, providing the company with the flexibility to access public markets at an appropriate time, subject to regulatory approvals and market conditions. The EGM approval marks a significant step in PRISM's ongoing preparations for a public listing. Moody's recently reaffirmed PRISM's corporate family rating with a stable outlook and expects the company's EBITDA to more than double to around USD 280 million (nearly ₹2,496 crore) in FY26, supported through expansion of premium storefronts and continued cost efficiencies.

China launches trade dispute against India



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 23: China has filed a complaint at the World Trade Organization (WTO) against India over New Delhi's support measures for the solar and information technology sectors.

It has alleged that India's tariff or import duty treatment for certain technology products, and measures that are contingent on the use of domestic over imported goods, discriminate against Chinese goods.

Beijing is a major exporter of goods under these sectors.

According to a WTO communication, China has sought consultations with India under WTO's dispute settlement rules.

China had claimed that these

support measures and incentives infringe rules pertaining to WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, and Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures.

"My authorities have instructed me to request consultations with the Government of India... with respect to the tariff treatment that India accords to certain technology products, and to certain measures adopted by India that are contingent upon the use of domestic over imported goods, or that otherwise discriminate against goods of Chinese origin," it said.

China has alleged that India's measures affect trade in goods in the solar cell, solar module, and information technology (IT) sectors.

Seeking consultation is the first step of the dispute settlement process as per WTO rules.

If the consultations requested with India do not result in a satisfactory solution, China can request the WTO to set up a panel in the case to rule on the issue raised.

China is the second-largest trading partner of India.

In the last fiscal, India's exports to China contracted 14.5 per cent to USD 14.25 billion against USD 16.66 billion in 2023-24. The imports, however, rose by 11.52 per cent to USD 113.45 billion from USD 101.73 billion.

China's trade deficit with China widened to USD 99.2 billion during 2024-25.

and information technology (IT) sectors.

It has raised issues over the conditions that govern the eligibility for, and disbursement of incentives under, the Production Linked Incentive Scheme: National Programme on High Efficiency Solar PV Modules.

It said that the incentives provided under the Solar Module Programme are conditioned on several criteria, including a prescribed minimum local value addition requirement.

India has taken these measures to boost domestic manufacturing and reduce dependence on imported goods.

Seeking consultation is the first step of the dispute settlement process as per WTO rules.

If the consultations requested with India do not result in a satisfactory solution, China can request the WTO to set up a panel in the case to rule on the issue raised.

China is the second-largest trading partner of India.

In the last fiscal, India's exports to China contracted 14.5 per cent to USD 14.25 billion against USD 16.66 billion in 2023-24. The imports, however, rose by 11.52 per cent to USD 113.45 billion from USD 101.73 billion.

China's trade deficit with China widened to USD 99.2 billion during 2024-25.

Announcing the decision, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it will continue to monitor evolving liquidity and market conditions and take measures as appropriate to ensure orderly liquidity conditions.

The latest announcement comes days after the RBI conducted ₹1 lakh crore OMO purchase auctions of Government of India securities and USD/INR Buy/Sell Swap auction of USD 5 billion for a tenor of

RBI's ₹2 lakh crore OMO, \$10bn USD/INR swap to inject liquidity



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 23: The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday said it will purchase government securities worth ₹2 lakh crore and conduct a USD 10 billion buy/sell dollar-rupee swap auction to inject liquidity into the banking system.

OMO (Open Market Operations) purchase and swap auctions will be conducted between December 29, 2025 and January 22, 2026.

Announcing the decision, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it will continue to monitor evolving liquidity and market conditions and take measures as appropriate to ensure orderly liquidity conditions.

The latest announcement comes days after the RBI conducted ₹1 lakh crore OMO purchase auctions of Government of India securities and USD/INR Buy/Sell Swap auction of USD 5 billion for a tenor of

three years.

On a review of current liquidity and financial conditions, the central bank Tuesday said it has decided to conduct the OMO and swap operations to inject liquidity into the banking system.

The new series of CPI (consumer price index-based inflation) with base year (2024=100) data is scheduled to be released February 12, 2026.

The data on National Accounts with financial year 2022-23 as base year is scheduled to be released February 27, 2026, while the new series of IIP data with base year 2022-23 will be released May 28.

MoSPI Tuesday organised a pre-release consultative workshop on base revision of CPI, GDP and IIP.

On inclusion of new data sources in CPI, the ministry said in addition to the data collected from physical outlets as being done in the current series, prices would also be obtained from e-commerce platforms in 12 selected cities having a population of more than 25 lakh.

Efforts will also be made to procure administrative data in coordination with railways for rail fares, petroleum ministry for fuel prices, and postal department for postal tariffs.

For airfares, telecom services, and OTT platforms, price data is proposed to be compiled from online sources using web-based methods, MoSPI said.

"The adoption of these alternative and digital data sources is expected to substantially improve the representativeness, reliability, accuracy and overall quality of the CPI," it added.

The ministry is also expanding coverage across urban and rural markets, while also incorporating e-commerce price data and other digital sources to better capture changing consumption patterns.

GDP base revision will also facilitate inclusion of new data sources and alignment of compilation process with methodological improvements, standards and classifications.

Addressing the participants at the workshop, MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg said the ministry is not expecting GDP expectations to change significantly even after the release of the new data series in February.

"Too early to say, on its impact on GDP numbers. In general, we don't expect much changes from what our previous expectations are," he said.

IDE BOOTCAMP FOR PM SHRI SCHOOL EDUCATORS



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: A three-day Innovation, Design and Entrepreneurship (IDE) Bootcamp for principals and teachers of PM SHRI Schools is being organised from December 22 to 24, 2025, at Trident Academy of Technology, Bhubaneswar. The programme was jointly conducted by the Department of School Education and Literacy, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell (MIC), in collaboration with the Wadhwani Foundation.

The bootcamp was part of Phase-2 of the national IDE initiative being implemented phase-wise across 25 states and two Union Territories. Earlier, the national inauguration of the IDE Bootcamp was jointly held December 17, 2025, by SitharamTG, Chairman, AICTE; Dheeraj Sahu, Additional Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy; and Abhay Jere, Vice Chairman, AICTE.

The state-level inauguration at Trident Academy of Technology was graced by Kamaljit Das, Joint Secretary, MSME, Government of Odisha; Vikas Verma, Managing Editor, Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell; Dripta De Joradar, Associate Professor, VIT-AP University; and Wadhwani Foundation trainer Saptaparna Ghosh, Assistant HOD, MBA Department, Institute of Engineering and Management (IEM), Kolkata.

DN Pattanayak, Principal, Trident Academy of Technology, and AK Samal, Dean (School of Computing) and Nodal Centre SPOC, were also present. Over 190 principals and teachers participated in the programme.

2025, by SitharamTG, Chairman, AICTE; Dheeraj Sahu, Additional Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy; and Abhay Jere, Vice Chairman, AICTE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty closed marginally up by 4.75 points or 0.02 per cent to 26,177.15.

Metals, FMCG and energy shares witnessed buying interest, while IT and pharma saw selective pressure.

Among Sensex firms, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Adani Ports, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra, Eterna, Axis Bank and Maruti were the major laggards.

However, ITC, UltraTech Cement, Tata Steel and HDFC Bank were among the gainers.

"The domestic market traded in a narrow range and ended flat amid mixed global cues. Selling pressure persist-

ed across most sectors, though financials and FMCG offered marginal support. Going forward, investors are positioning for the next earnings season and monitoring evolving Fed policy expectations, as rate cut probabilities are slowly inching up for the January meeting," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap index climbed 0.38 per cent and mid-cap gauge went up marginally by 0.07 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, IT declined by 0.71 per cent, followed by BSE Focused IT (0.70 per cent), realty (0.21 per cent), consumer durables (0.10 per cent).

However, BSE commodities climbed 0.68 per cent, followed by utilities (0.59 per cent), metal (0.52 per cent), power (0.40 per cent), financial services (0.36 per cent) and energy (0.36 per cent).

Markets traded in a subdued manner on the weekly expiry day and ended almost unchanged, taking a pause after the recent rebound, Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"Equity markets ended the session on a flat note, weighed down by broad-based profit-taking at higher levels in the absence of fresh positive triggers," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

However, BSE commodities climbed 0.68 per cent, followed by utilities (0.59 per cent), metal (0.52 per cent), power (0.40 per cent), financial services (0.36 per cent) and energy (0.36 per cent).

Markets traded in a subdued manner on the weekly expiry day and ended almost unchanged, taking a pause after the recent rebound, Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"Equity markets ended the session on a flat note, weighed down by broad-based profit-taking at higher levels in the absence of fresh positive triggers," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Global investors turn to Chinese AI as Wall Street fears bubble

REUTERS

Hong Kong / New York, Dec 23: Global investors are increasing their wagers on Chinese artificial intelligence companies, betting on the next DeepSeek and seeking to diversify, with concerns growing about a speculative bubble in the sector on Wall Street.

Demand for China's AI companies is also being stimulated by Beijing's push for tech independence. China has fast-tracked blockbuster listings of chipmakers, notably Moore Threads, dubbed 'China's Nvidia' and MetaX, which both debuted this month.

Foreigners see China closing the tech gap with the U.S. as Beijing steps up support for AI chipmakers, spurring bets on Chinese companies just as worries grow over lofty valuations on U.S.-listed AI stocks.

U.K.-based asset manager Ruffer, for example, said it has deliberately limited exposure to the Magnificent Seven - the U.S. tech giants - and is looking to add positions in Alibaba for a bigger exposure to China's AI

theme.

While the U.S. remains the leader in frontier AI, China is rapidly narrowing the gap, said Gemma Cairns-Smith, Investment Specialist at Ruffer. The moat may not be as wide, or as deep, as many think... The competitive landscape is shifting.

Ruffer is gaining exposure to the AI theme through Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba, which operates an AI chip unit,

owns large language model Qwen, and is ploughing money into cloud infrastructure.

Global asset managers are increasingly eyeing Chinese AI firms as a wave of startups lists on the mainland and in Hong Kong, seeking to tap into surging investor appetite following the meteoric rise of DeepSeek, China's answer to ChatGPT.

UBS Global Wealth Management in a report this month rated China tech as most attractive, citing investors' search for geographical diversification and China's strong policy backing.

Moore Threads, dubbed 'China's Nvidia' and MetaX, which both debuted this month.

Another KraneShares ETF that invests in China's onshore tech stocks, including chipmakers Cambrian, Montage

ings, compared with a multiple of 24 for Hong Kong's Hang Seng Tech which enables AI bets via stocks including Alibaba, Baidu, Tencent and chip foundry SMIC.

Riding the momentum, U.S. investment adviser Rayliant helped launch a Nasdaq-listed fund in September that gives investors access to China's versions of stocks like Google, Meta, Tesla, Apple, and OpenAI.

KraneShares' exchange-traded fund dubbed KWEB, which invests in offshore-listed Chinese stocks including Tencent, Alibaba and Baidu, has jumped by two-thirds this year to nearly \$9 billion.

Another KraneShares ETF that invests in China's onshore tech stocks, including chipmakers Cambrian, Montage

Technology and Advanced Micro-Fabrication Equipment has also grown this year.

In the AI race, the U.S. has an edge in innovation while China has advantages in engineering,

manufacturing and power supply, said Jason Hsu, founder of U.S.-based Rayliant Global Advisors.

Rayliant has partnered with China Asset Management Co in launching a Nasdaq-listed ETF that bets on Chinese stocks with transformative technologies, including Cambrian.

U.S. tech curbs have now forced China to pump money into hard technology and invent from scratch, said Hsu. For investors, the prudent and wise strategy is to capture AI opportunities and manage uncertainty through diversification.

Chinese AI chipmaker MetaX Integrated Circuits, founded by former AMD executives, jumped 700% in its Shanghai market debut last week, days after larger rival Moore Threads debuted with a 400% pop.

However, some global fund managers say China's tech potential and foreign inflows re-

main limited.

None of the chip companies

that are currently listed have

2ND WT20I

Shafali, spinners crush SL



Verma's unbeaten 69, spinning masterclass by trio Rana, Sharma and Charani help India beat Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, Dec 23: Shafali Verma hit a blistering unbeaten 69 as India made short work of a paltry target to outclass Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the second Women's T20 International here Tuesday.

The hosts have now completed back-to-back successful chases within 15 overs which speaks volumes about the unit's sky-high confidence. Shafali's innings had 11 punchy boundaries apart from a maximum.

The floodgates opened when left-arm spinner Inoka Ranaweera bowled few flighted deliveries and Shafali would step out everytime to hit her over extra cover. Her footwork against slow bowlers was immaculate whether stepping out to loft the ball or rocking back to punch or pull.

Seeing her confidence, the newly appointed Delhi Capitals skipper Jemimah Rodrigues (26 off 15 balls) also attacked as the duo added 58 runs in just 4.3 overs.

By the time Rodrigues was out

new found confidence after a stellar show in the World Cup final, sent the bowlers on a leather-hunt during her 34-ball knock, winning it for her team in just 11.5 overs.

Earlier, off-spinner Rana, who got a look-in after Deepthi Sharma was ruled out due to fever, showed her utility keeping the Lankan batters under tight leash with figures of 1 for 11 in 4 overs, including a maiden which certainly is a rarity in

Cricket always teaches you things, it's important to accept weaknesses. That's the only way you can improve. My endeavour is to improve everyday and you will certainly see that in my game

SHAFALI VERMA

trying to hit one six too many, the match as a contest was over. Shafali completed her half-century off just 27 balls and completed the formalities in a jiffy.

Earlier, off-spinner Rana, who got a look-in after Deepthi Sharma was ruled out due to fever, showed her utility keeping the Lankan batters under tight leash with figures of 1 for 11 in 4 overs, including a maiden which certainly is a rarity in

T20 cricket.

Charani, who made an impression during India's ODI World Cup triumph, took 2 for 23 in her quota of overs, while Vaishnavi after an impressive debut in the opening encounter, finished with 2 for 32, not letting the Islanders get easy runs in her second spell.

The last six wickets fell for just 24 runs, but what stood out during India's bowling effort

was their superb ground fielding. After a patchy show in the previous game, the improved sharpness in the field resulted in three run-outs.

Sri Lankan skipper Chamari Athapaththu (31 off 24 balls) looked in good nick as she deposited length deliveries from seamers Kranti Gaud and Arundhati Reddy over the ropes but it was Rana, who kept her quiet by repeatedly pitching on good length.

Unable to manoeuvre the strike and with the big hits suddenly drying up, Athapaththu chanced her arm at another delivery in which Rana had shortened the length slightly. Not having transferred the weight into the lofted shot, Athapaththu's hoik was pouched cleanly by Amanjot Kaur at long-off.

This was after Athapaththu's opening partner Vishmi Gunaratne (1) had offered a simple return catch to Gaud.

Hasini Perera (22 off 28 balls) and Harshitha Samarawickrama (33 off 32 balls) did stitch a stand of 44 but they could never set the tempo against the Indian spin troika. Once Hasini offered a tame return catch off a Charani full-toss, Sri Lankans never recovered and lost wickets in a heap towards the end.

Brief Score:

Sri Lanka 128 for 9 in 20 overs (Harshitha Samarawickrama 33, Chamari Athapaththu 31; Vaishnavi Sharma 2/31, Shree Charani 2/23).

India 129 for 3 in 11.5 overs (Shafali Verma 69 not out; Kavya Kavindi 1/32).



FIH WORLD RANKINGS

Dutch retain top spots, Blues suffer sharp drop

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lausanne (Switzerland), Dec 23: The Netherlands men and women teams maintained their top positions, winning trophies and titles to keep chasers at bay as the FIH World Rankings experienced many upheavals in a crucial year before the 2026 World Cups.

International hockey in 2025 delivered a relentless calendar of top-flight action — from the FIH Hockey Pro League battles to Nations Cup and Nations Cup 2 drama, along with Continental Championships across all continents — sparking notable shifts in the World Rankings, the sport's global governing body reported on its official website Tuesday.

As the year wound to a close, across both the men's and women's games, familiar powers consolidated their positions while emerging teams made meaningful gains.

In the women's rankings, the Netherlands (3376) and Belgium (3225) continue to hold the top two spots, but there are plenty of shake-ups below compared to the start of the year. Germany (3116) are up one spot to third following a successful Euro-Hockey campaign, followed by Argentina (3022), who are up to fourth after starting the year in eighth spot.

Australia (3007) and Spain (2995) are up one spot each in fifth and sixth, followed by England (2864) and India (2845) in seventh and eighth, who suffered the biggest drops, having started the year in third and fifth spots respectively, as per the report.



SHORT TAKES

Ramita, Himanshu win 10m mixed team gold

Bhopal: Ramita Jindal and Himanshu Dhillon from Haryana clinched the 10m air rifle mixed team gold with a 16-12 victory over the Maharashtra pair of Arya Borse and Parth Mane, at the National Shooting Championship here Tuesday. The triumph extended a dominating run for Dhillon, who had set the national as well as junior record of 634.5 in men's 10m air rifle event Monday. Delhi's Rajshree Sancheti and Paarth Makhija settled for the bronze medal, holding on their nerves to win 17-15 against the Madhya Pradesh pairing of Shreya Agarwal and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar.

Jackie Chan carries Winter Olympic torch

Pompeii: Actor Jackie Chan carried the Olympic torch through the ruins of Pompeii during the relay for the Milan Cortina Winter Games. The day's route also passed along the picturesque Amalfi Coast. Tuesday, Italian soccer standouts Fabio Cannavaro and Ciro Ferrara will carry the torch through their native Naples, where the relay will pause for Christmas. In all, the relay will cover 12,000 kilometers (nearly 7,500 miles) and wind its way through all 110 Italian provinces before reaching Milan's San Siro Stadium for the opening ceremony February 6. An ancient Roman city, Pompeii was buried by ash and lava when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79.

Neymar gets operated, hopes to reach the WC

Sao Paulo: Neymar underwent minor surgery on his left knee, his club Santos said. The 33-year-old Neymar previously said he wanted to fix the pains that have sidelined him from several matches this year. The arthroscopy was performed by Rodrigo Lasmar, who also works with the Brazil squad.

The procedure was minimally invasive and treated problems inside joints. Last weekend, the striker said during a music event in Sao Paulo he still hoped to play in the World Cup and score in the final. Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti, appointed in May, has yet to pick Neymar. "We did the impossible to bring this cup to Brazil," Neymar said. "In July, you can remind us of it. Hi, Ancelotti, helps us out!" he added.

Indonesia's Gede sets T20I record, gets five wickets in an over

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bali (Indonesia), Dec 23: Indonesia's right-arm pacer Gede Priandana Tuesday created the record of claiming five wickets inside one over of a T20 International contest, a feat registered during his team's 60-run win over Cambodia here.

In a solitary over bowled during the first T20I of the eight-match series, Priandana returned an astonishing 1-0-1-5 while coming onto bowl as the seventh bowler for his side.

Priandana had earlier scored six while opening for Indonesia, who put on 167 for five in the first of the two T20Is.

In reply, Cambodia were bowled out for 107 in 16 overs here at the Udayana Cricket Ground.

Cambodia were afloat at 105 for six after 15 overs but the contest came to a swift end when the 28-year-old Priandana registered a hat-trick, dismissing Shah Abrar Hussain (37), Nirmaljit Singh (0) and Chantheun Rathana (0) on the first three balls.

According to reports from the

Beckham family feud goes online



AGENCIES

London, Dec 23: The family feud in the Beckhams is out in the open after Brooklyn — the eldest son of England football great David Beckham and Victoria — decided to block his parents and siblings on Instagram.

Brooklyn and his wife, Nicola Peltz, have refrained from attending family gatherings this year, including the 50th birthday of David Beckham.

The former Spice Girl's interaction reportedly triggered thousands of followers to flood Brooklyn's comments section, urging him to end the long-standing tensions and reconcile with his parents. Brooklyn saw this as an invasion of his space. Hence, he reacted by immediately blocking his mother.

The fallout quickly escalated, with Brooklyn also blocking his father, David, and his younger siblings within hours. The report claims that David and Victoria are "logically heartbroken" by Brooklyn's actions, particularly as it comes just days before the family was due to gather for Christmas.

According to reports from the

US Sun this weekend, a simple "like" from Victoria Beckham on a post by her 26-year-old son, Brooklyn, was the catalyst for a fresh family row.

The former Spice Girl's interaction reportedly triggered thousands of followers to flood Brooklyn's comments section, urging him to end the long-standing tensions and reconcile with his parents. Brooklyn saw this as an invasion of his space. Hence, he reacted by immediately blocking his mother.

The fallout quickly escalated, with Brooklyn also blocking his father, David, and his younger siblings within hours. The report claims that David and Victoria are "logically heartbroken" by Brooklyn's actions, particularly as it comes just days before the family was due to gather for Christmas.

According to reports from the

Chinnaswamy matches shifted to BCCI CoE

The Vijay Hazare matches in Bangalore to be held behind closed doors, without spectators

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 23: All Vijay Hazare Trophy matches that were set to take place at Bangalore's M Chinnaswamy Stadium have been relocated to the BCCI Centre of Excellence, due to a directive from the Karnataka government citing security issues.

"All Vijay Hazare Trophy matches scheduled to be held at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium will now happen at the BCCI CoE. It's a decision which was taken earlier in the day due to security reasons, as said by the state government," a DDCA official told IANS Tuesday.

The official further said that both participating teams for the opening game had been notified, and their pre-match training session is now set to take place at the BCCI CoE. "The Delhi team has been told about it and their pre-match practice against Andhra will now happen at CoE," the official added.

Meanwhile, all the Vijay Hazare matches in Bangalore will be held without spectators. The Bangalore police have assured a strong security presence

around the Aerospace Park, where CoE is located.

Karnataka Police have refused permission for the Vijay Hazare Trophy match between Delhi and Andhra Pradesh at Chinnaswamy Stadium, citing serious safety and crowd-control concerns.

The decision was taken after a thorough inspection by Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar, officials from the Greater Bengaluru Authority, and the Fire Department, who identified critical gaps in venue infrastructure and emergency preparedness.

Monday, a committee constituted by the Karnataka government, comprising officials from

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY



the police, public works and fire safety departments, inspected the Chinnaswamy Stadium and submitted a report.

The Bangalore City Police Commissioner had already issued a 17-point advisory outlining mandatory safety measures. The committee verified whether these points had been complied with and submitted its findings to the government.

As per the report from the officers, permission has not been granted for the match on Wednesday at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. The committee has also given a detailed report," Commissioner Singh stated.

In all, the relay will cover 12,000 kilometers (nearly 7,500 miles) and wind its way through all 110 Italian provinces before reaching Milan's San Siro Stadium for the opening ceremony February 6. An ancient Roman city, Pompeii was buried by ash and lava when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79.

Neres brace leads Napoli to Super Cup glory



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Riyadh, Dec 23: David Neres scored twice as Napoli beat Bologna 2-0 to win the Italian Super Cup.

It is the third Super Cup title in the club's history, with Antonio Conte restoring the Scudetto-Super Cup double, following in the footsteps of the 1990 side Napoli under Alberto Bigon featuring Diego Maradona. Napoli broke the deadlock in the 39th minute when Neres controlled a throw-in outside the area and curled a shot into the top corner. The Partenopei doubled their

lead around the hour mark as Neres won the ball inside Bologna's box and finished from a tight angle past the onrushing goalkeeper. After the 2-0 win over Milan in the semi-final, the Azzurri repeated the same scoreline in the showpiece event in Riyadh. The star of the night was David Neres, who broke the deadlock just after the half-hour mark with a curling left-footed strike into the top corner.

After the break, the Brazilian wrapped up the match, first stealing the ball from the Bologna defence and then finishing with a delightful chip as the goalkeeper rushed out.

According to reports from the

where resilience was vital for many, and McLaren's return to the summit ended a historic drought. The sport's popularity keeps rising, with a record 6.7 million fans attending races globally.

The Indian market's link to F1 is more robust than ever.

Record-breaking viewership

confirms India's vital role in the sport's worldwide strate-

gy. This growth is supported by extending FanCode's exclusive broadcast deal through 2028, allowing Indian fans to stay connected to the action as local drivers gear up for the 2026 world stage.

The 2025 season has not only

provided exciting on-track moments but also set the stage for a renewed presence of Indian talent on the global grid in 2026. Despite facing mechani-



Kush Maini played a key role in helping Invicta Racing win the Constructors' title in Formula 2, highlighted by a notable Sprint race victory at the renowned Monaco GP.



Arvid Lindblad, a prodigy of the Red Bull Junior Team who proudly claims Indian roots, has been promoted to the Racing Bulls team

cal issues throughout the season, Kush Maini played a key role in helping Invicta Racing win the Constructors' title in Formula 2, highlighted by a notable Sprint race victory at the renowned Monaco GP. Following a strong showing during post-season testing for Alpine, Kush Maini is now eager to make a mark with his new team, ART Grand Prix, as he aims to reach the top of the sport.

Meanwhile, Arvid Lindblad, a prodigy of the Red Bull Junior Team who proudly claims Indian roots, has been promoted to the Racing Bulls team. The procedure was minimally invasive and treated problems inside joints. Last weekend, the striker said during a music event in Sao Paulo he still hoped to play in the World Cup and score in the final. Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti, appointed in May, has yet to pick Neymar. "We did the impossible to bring this cup to Brazil," Neymar said. "In July, you can remind us of it. Hi, Ancelotti, helps us out!" he added.

The 2025 campaign is set to be remembered as a modern classic; Lando Norris's first championship victory marked a year