



Anu Garg set to be state's 1st woman CS



1 MTH EXTENSION FOR PUCC RENEWAL

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: The state government has extended the deadline for renewing the pollution under control (PUC) certificate for motor vehicles by a month, an official said Wednesday. The State Transport Authority (STA) had December 20 asked oil marketing companies, such as Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum, not to provide fuel to vehicles whose PUC certificates have expired.



MERRY CHRISTMAS: Children and a man dressed as Santa Claus pose for photographs with a sprawling field of blooming mustard in the background amid Christmas festivities, in Nadia, West Bengal, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

PNN & AGENCIES

MINOR'S RAPE, MURDER

ANGER ON STREET

Angry locals demolish accused's house; BJD, Cong call bandh



punishment for the accused in accordance with the law.

The deceased minor girl's mortal remains were consigned to flames Wednesday evening amid a sombre atmosphere in the village.

Opposition parties BJD and Congress separately called a six-hour Chandbali block bandh from 6am Thursday in protest against the incident.

The incident came to the fore when some people found the body of the minor near a bush in Baligaon under Chandbali police station area Tuesday evening, another officer said.

The victim had gone to school Tuesday morning and did not return home in the afternoon, prompting her family to lodge a police complaint. Hours after a missing case was filed, locals found her body in a pool of blood.

BJD's Chandbali MLA Byomakesh Ray condemned the incident. Angry locals staged a

UNNAO RAPE SURVIVOR TO MOVE APEX COURT

Unnao/Ballia (UP): The 2017

Unnao rape survivor Wednesday termed the Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the jail term of the accused, expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar, "kaal" (death) for her family and said she would move the Supreme Court against it.

Women's rights activist Yogita Bhayana, who staged a protest with the rape survivor's mother at India Gate Tuesday night, shared a video on X, in which the rape survivor was purportedly heard saying that she had left home in the morning to meet her lawyer but Central Reserve Police force (CRPF) personnel tried to send her back home.

P9

protest in the Chandbali area, while BJD workers demonstrated outside the CM's official residence in Bhubaneswar.

The opposition party accused the BJP government of failing to contain incidents of sexual

assaults on women and girls across the state.

As soon as the news about the incident spread, locals hit the streets Tuesday night. The agitation intensified Wednesday morning, with protesters blocking roads in at least three places in Chandbali. They also gheraoed the local police station.

When the accused was identified, enraged locals stormed his house in Rampalli village and demolished it.

Police arrested the prime accused within 24 hours of the incident, the SP said, adding he has been personally monitoring the case. Heavy deployment of security forces has been made in the area, with the SP appealing to people not to take the law into their hands.

The CMO, in an X post, said, "Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has expressed profound grief over the unprecedented incident at Chandbali in Bhadrak district and offered prayers for the departed soul's eternal peace."

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who is also in charge of the Women and Child Development department, said that strict action will be taken. The government is working to prevent such heinous crimes. Social awareness must also be created, she said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Smart meter rent: Govt to bear ₹735 crore

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: The Cabinet of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday decided to bear around ₹735 crore towards one year's rent on installation of smart meters in the houses of domestic consumers of the state.

The Cabinet meeting approved 10 proposals of seven departments, including three irrigation projects worth ₹534

crore for 176 villages of Jharsuguda and Karlamunda, Narla and Kesinga blocks of Kalahandi district. The projects are targeted to be completed within three years.

The state government also approved 'Baraputra Aitiya Gram Yojana' to develop the birthplaces of the state's great sons and daughters, including freedom fighters, poets, social reformers and other eminent personalities, who are collec-

tively known as 'Baraputras', at a cost of ₹345 crore.

In the first phase of the scheme, 25 eminent sons of Odisha have been identified for development. Financial assistance of up to ₹15 crore per birthplace will be provided.

The Cabinet also approved the proposal of promulgation of an ordinance for uniform reservation for teachers' recruitment across public universities of the state.

The government decided to treat the university as a single unit for implementing reservation in the recruitment of professors, associate professors, and assistant professors.

The Cabinet further approved another scheme -- Uttarkashi ITI Yojana -- for upgradation of five government-run ITIs in Puri, Bolangir, Koraput, Kendrapara, Sundargarh districts with an outlay of ₹500 crore for three years.

ISRO scripts heavyweight feat with 'Bahubali' rocket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh), Dec 24: In a historic

Christmas eve mission, ISRO's heaviest rocket, LVM3-M6, successfully placed a heavy US communication satellite into orbit Wednesday, a feat described by the space agency chief as a season's gift to the country.

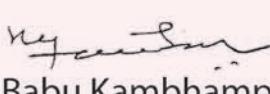
The 6,100 kg BlueBird Block-2 satellite is part of a constellation of global Low Earth Orbit (LEO) mission to provide direct-to-mobile connectivity through satellite that would enable 4G and 5G voice and video calls, texts, streaming and data for everyone, everywhere at all times. It was the heaviest satellite to be launched from Indian soil, ISRO said.

DADLS - 72



MESSAGE OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF ODISHA ON THE OCCASION OF 'HOLY CHRISTMAS'

Holy Christmas is a festival that embodies peace, harmony and humanity. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Odisha, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters and wish peace, progress and prosperity to all.


(Hari Babu Kambhampati)



ପବିତ୍ର ବଡ଼ଦିନ ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଶୁଭେତ୍ତା

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ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

of the
day quote

Artificial intelligence is clearly a double-edged sword. It opens up unprecedented opportunities - from more efficient healthcare systems to sustainable business models - while also accelerating misinformation and contributing to an erosion of public trust

ANDRE HOFFMANN | INTERIM CO-CHAIR, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

**RBI DELAYS FASTER CHEQUE CLEARANCE**

The Reserve Bank Wednesday postponed implementation of the second phase of the faster cheque clearance mechanism to provide more time to banks to streamline their operations. The second phase of the 'Continuous Clearing and Settlement on Realisation in Cheque Truncation System' was to be implemented by banks from January 3

₹ drops 8 paise to close at 89.71

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Post IndiGo chaos, Indian skies get 3 new airlines

Currently, there are nine scheduled domestic airlines in the country, which is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets

AGENCIES



The ministry is keen to have more airline operators in the country, which is one of the world's fastest growing domestic civil aviation markets.

Currently, there are nine operational scheduled domestic carriers in the country. Fly Big, a regional airline, suspended scheduled flights in October.

IndiGo and Air India Group - Air India and Air India Express - together have over 90 per cent of the domestic market share.

Concerns about apparent duopoly in the fast-growing domestic airlines' industry got amplified this month in the wake of the massive operational disruptions at IndiGo, which has a market share of more than 65 per cent.

"Over the last one week, pleased to have met teams from new airlines aspiring to take wings in Indian skies - Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress. While Shankh Air has already got the NOC from the Ministry, Al Hind Air and

FlyExpress have received their NOCs this week," Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said in a post on X Tuesday.

According to him, it has been the endeavour of the ministry to encourage more airlines

in Indian aviation which is amongst the fastest growing aviation markets.

Schemes like UDAN have enabled smaller carriers Star Air, India One Air and Fly91 to play an important role in the regional connectivity within the country and there is more scope for further growth, he added.

Apart from Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo and state-owned Alliance Air, other scheduled carriers are Aksa Air, SpiceJet, Star Air, Fly91 and IndiaOne Air, as per latest data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

In the past years, many airlines, including Go First and Jet Airways, stopped flying amid debt woes.

Mumbai, Dec 24: The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day lower by 8 paise at 89.71 against the US dollar Wednesday, fuelled by persistent capital withdrawals from foreign investors, alongside heightened greenback demand from bullion importers.

Forex traders said that despite the central bank's announcement of USDINR swaps and Open Market Operations (OMO), the measures failed to boost market sentiments, amid strong dollar demand and rising crude oil prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 89.56 against the US dollar, then touched an intra-day high of 89.51, registering a 12-paise gain from its previous close.

At the end of the trading session Wednesday, the rupee pared its initial gains and settled at 89.71, down 8 paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee settled at 89.63 against the US dollar.

The outlook for spot USDINR maintains an upward trajectory provided it holds above the 89.00 mark; however, the 90.30-level continues to act as a formidable resistance for further gains, he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.13 per cent lower at 97.81.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.22 per cent higher at \$62.52 per barrel in futures trade.

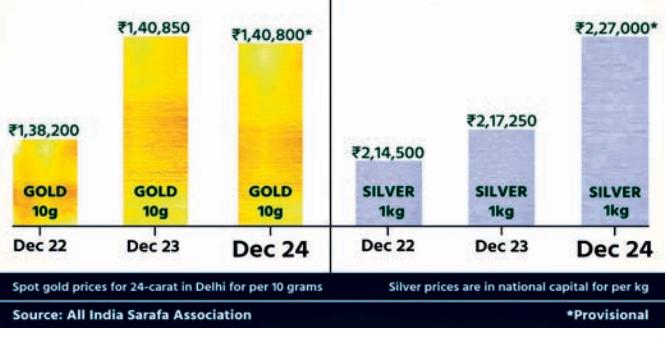
The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday said it will purchase government securities worth Rs 2 lakh crore and conduct a USD 10 billion buy/sell dollar-rupee swap auction to inject liquidity in the banking system.

The latest announcement comes days after the RBI conducted Rs 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.



PRECIOUS METALS CONTINUE TO SHINE

GOLD & SILVER



Spot silver rose to hit record \$72 per ounce, setting new records, fuelled by anticipation of further monetary policy easing by the US Federal Reserve and increased geopolitical tensions

RENISHA CHAINANI | HEAD - RESEARCH, AUGMONT

previous close of Rs 1,40,850 per 10 grams Tuesday.

In the international markets, spot gold crossed the \$4,500 per ounce-mark for the first time by rising \$41.18, or 0.92 per cent, to \$4,525.96 per ounce.

"Spot gold reached a fresh record high of USD 4,525 per ounce in the Asian session as the US dollar remains on defensive," Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities and Currencies, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

In the last four sessions, the precious metal has risen by \$186.46, or 4.3 per cent, from the closing price of \$4,339.50 December 19, 2025. So far this year, the metal has added \$1,920.19, or 73.7 per cent, from \$2,605.77 per ounce recorded December 31, 2024.

Extending the gains for the fourth consecutive day, spot silver went up by \$1.22, or 1.71 per cent, to hit a fresh high of \$72.70 per ounce in the overseas trade.

In the past four sessions, the white metal has risen by \$5.56, or 8.3 per cent, from \$67.14 per ounce recorded December 19, 2025. So far this year, silver prices have surged by \$43.73, or 151 per cent, recorded December 31, 2024.

"The backdrop for earnings

ongoing geopolitical tensions continue to act as tailwinds for the precious metal.

Meanwhile, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity retreated from a record high in the local bullion market by a tad and traded lower by Rs 50 at Rs 1,40,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) against the

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VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Suryavanshi's carnage

The young prodigy breaks multiple records en route his 190 off 84 balls as Bihar set a new team 'world record' for the highest total in a single List A match, with 574/6

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Dec 24: Bihar's batsmen went on a record-breaking spree with teen sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi and skipper Sakibul Gani leading the carnage with the quickest hundreds to power them to a world record team total of 574/6 in a Vijay Hazare Trophy match here Wednesday.

Bearing the brunt of the sustained onslaught in the plate group match was minnows Arunachal Pradesh, as Gani (128 off 40 balls) raced to his hundred in just 32 balls, the fastest by Indian in List A cricket.

This was after Suryavanshi went berserk en route to a blistering 84-ball 190, including hitting 15 sixes, while reaching the three-figure mark in just 36 balls.

Wicketkeeper Ayush Loharuka too joined the party with a 116 off 56 balls but, at a venue that has already witnessed 49 fours and 38 sixes, his whirlwind knock was somewhat put to shade by the unreal batting of Suryavanshi and Gani.

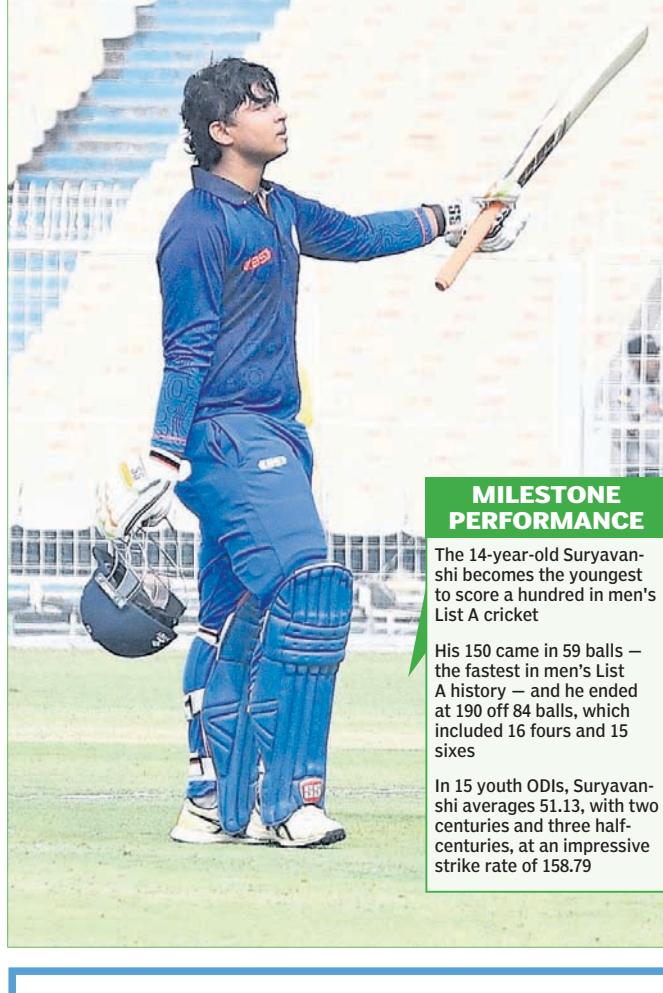
With his brutal onslaught against an attack that was pedestrian in terms of quality, 14-year-old opener Suryavanshi lit up the start of the 50-over domestic tournament before his senior colleagues took over to take their team to a world record total in this form of the game.

Thanks to the hundreds by the troika of Suryavanshi, Gani and Loharuka, Bihar comfortably shattered the previous record held by Tamil Nadu (506/2 also vs Arunachal Pradesh in 2022-23 season).

A dejected Arunachal just didn't stand a chance as they were bowled out for 177 to lose by a massive margin of 397 runs.

Suryavanshi departed the crease as the second-fastest hundred by an Indian in List A cricket, and then, Gani surpassed the record held by Punjab's Anmolpreet Singh, who struck a 35-ball hundred against the same opposition in 2024.

Besides his 15 maximums,



MILESTONE PERFORMANCE

The 14-year-old Suryavanshi becomes the youngest to score a hundred in men's List A cricket

His 150 came in 59 balls – the fastest in men's List A history – and he ended at 190 off 84 balls, which included 16 fours and 15 sixes

In 15 youth ODIs, Suryavanshi averages 51.13, with two centuries and three half-centuries, at an impressive strike rate of 158.79



Swastik first Odisha batter to score 200

Star Odisha opener Swastik Samal Wednesday became the first batter from his state to score a double hundred in List A cricket, as he and captain Biplob Samantray led their team to a whopping 345/6 batting first, during their Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Saurashtra. Samal's 212 now stands as the joint-fourth highest individual score in Vijay Hazare Trophy history, equaling Sanju Samson's unbeaten 212 for Kerala against Goa in 2019. Apart from him, captain Biplob Samantray also notched up a hundred during the course of the innings. However, their efforts went in vain as Saurashtra chased down the target by five wickets and more than one over to spare.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 24: Powered by a Pyari Xaxa hat-trick, Nita Football Academy got their first win of the Indian Women's League 2025-26 campaign, demolishing Sesa Football Academy 6-1 at the National Centre of Excellence here Wednesday.

Xaxa (1', 71', 74') was in hot form, as she completed her hat-trick to help her side to a big win on Christmas eve. Nita FA's Togolese forward Amiraou N'Djambara (25', 60') scored two, while midfielder Bhumika Devi (6') netted one.

Sesa's Ghanaian forward Diana Antwi (90'+3) pulled one back at the end.

Nita FA climbed to four points from their two matches, and are provisionally at the top of the IWL table, while Sesa are yet to open their account.

The Odisha side got hold of the proceedings right from the start, and took the lead in the first minute itself, without Sesa getting even a touch of the ball. Nita FA mounted a patient build-up right from kickoff that saw the ball passed 15 times before Pyari finished it off with a tap-in at the far post.

Five minutes later, Bhumika doubled the lead when Sesa goalkeeper Alika spilled the ball into the former's path. The Nita FA midfielder's initial shot was blocked, but she soon got on the rebound and slotted it in.

Bhumika turned provider in the 25th minute, when she shrugged off her marker at the edge of the box and threaded



it through to Amiraou, who calmly slid it past the keeper.

The change of ends did not bring about any change in fortunes for Sesa, though Nita FA did take some time to get going in the second half. However, Amiraou made it four in the second half, when Pyari played her through on the hour mark, before she blasted it into the top corner.

Pyari scored her second just 10 minutes later, when she burst into the box and finished it off at the near post. The India international completed her hat-trick with a scorching strike from the edge of the box, after being played through by Bhumika.

Diana Antwi scored Sesa's only goal of the match in injury time, but the damage had already been done by then.

Shuttlers start strong in Senior Nationals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada, Dec 24: Women's top seed Unnati Hooda, world junior championships silver medallists Tanvi Sharma, the experienced Aakarshi Kashyap, and upcoming junior Rounak Chauhan registered convincing wins to advance in the 87th Senior National Badminton Championships Wednesday.

Unnati, who had a bye in the first round, hammered wildcard entrant Akanksha Matte 21-8, 21-18, while Tanvi began her campaign with a 21-10, 21-14 victory over the Asian U-15 girls singles gold medallist Shaina Manimuthu.

Also advancing to the next round were the experienced Aakarshi, who defeated Asian U-17 championships silver medallist Lakshya Rajesh 21-7, 21-9, while Ashmita Chaliha got the better of Kavya Marvaniya 21-7, 21-11.

16th seed Purva Barve was the only seeded player to bite the dust as she went down 21-19, 17-21, 18-21 against M Meghana Reddy in the Round of 64. In the men's singles event, the 11th-seeded Chauhan defeated Ranveer Singh 21-9, 21-13, while 12th 12th-seeded D. S. Saneeth beat Ankit Mondal 21-7, 21-11 to book their spots in the next round.

The 16th seed and Guwahati Masters Super 100 champions, Sanskar Saraswat, also began his campaign in style with a 21-11, 21-13 win over Shikhar Rallan.

Fastest 16000 List A runs: Kohli goes past Tendulkar

India batting star Virat Kohli Wednesday went past the iconic Sachin Tendulkar as the fastest to reach 16,000 runs in List A cricket, achieving the milestone in his 330th innings in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy. Tendulkar had achieved the landmark in 391 innings. The 37-year-old Kohli touched the mark when he scored his 58th List A hundred during Delhi's opening game against Andhra Pradesh. Delhi chased down the target of 299 in 37.4 overs, with Kohli top-scoring on his return to domestic cricket. Kohli now holds the record for being the fastest to each block of 1000 List A runs from 10,000 runs onwards. He is playing the Vijay Hazare Trophy after a gap of 15 years, but the former India skipper has a stellar record in the tournament. In the premier domestic one-day competition, he has made 819 runs from 13 matches at an average of 68.25 and a strike-rate of 106 with four centuries and three fifties. Retired from the Test and T20 International formats, Kohli's next India assignment is expected to be the home ODI series against New Zealand beginning January 11.



'Hitman' smashes hundred to set up Mumbai's win

Rohit Sharma made a mockery of an inexperienced Sikkim bowing attack with a 94-ball-155 on his return to List A cricket, as Mumbai cruised to an eight-wicket victory in their opening Group C match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here Wednesday. A near capacity crowd of 20,000-odd fans celebrated the Christmas eve witnessing the 'HitMan' carnage, which included 18 fours and nine sixes with Mumbai chasing down a target of 237 in just 30.3 overs. It started with a trademark pull-shot over mid-wicket off Kranthi for a boundary, followed by a swivel pull shot off his hips.



Suryavanshi also smashed 16 fours during his stay in the middle, only three days after his failure in the final of the U19 Asia Cup against Pakistan

in the UAE. The list of the quickest hundred in this form of the game is topped by Jake Fraser-McGurk (29 balls) for South Aus-

tralia against Tasmania in the 2023-24 season and the great AB de Villiers (31 balls) for South Africa against West Indies in Johannesburg.

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CHRISTMAS: FESTIVAL OF LIGHT, MEMORY & QUIET MIRACLES

Christmas arrives each year like a familiar melody—soft at first, then steadily growing until it fills streets, homes, and hearts. It is more than a date on the calendar or a religious observance; Christmas is a season shaped by light, memory, and small acts of kindness that often go unnoticed but linger long after the decorations are taken down.

At its heart, Christmas celebrates hope. The story of the birth of Jesus in a humble manger is a reminder that the most transformative moments in history can begin quietly, far from power and grandeur. This message has resonated across centuries, inspiring people to look beyond status and wealth and find value in compassion, humility, and love. Even for those who do not follow the religious tradition, the symbolism of new beginnings and renewed faith in humanity remains powerful.

One of the most striking features of Christmas is light. From glowing stars atop trees to flickering candles in churches and



homes, light becomes a language of its own. In the darkest days of winter, it reassures people that warmth and joy can exist even in difficult times. Cities sparkle with decorations, marketplaces buzz with laughter, and ordinary streets seem transformed into places of wonder. These lights do more than decorate; they create a shared atmosphere, drawing

strangers into a moment of collective celebration.

Christmas is also deeply tied to memory. The aroma of baked cakes, the sound of old carols, or the ritual of decorating a tree can transport people instantly to childhood. For many, Christmas is a bridge between generations—grandparents retelling familiar stories, parents recre-

ating traditions, and children experiencing them for the first time. These rituals, repeated year after year, offer a sense of continuity in a fast-changing world.

Food plays its own quiet role in the season. Every culture adds its flavor to Christmas—roasted meats, spiced sweets, special breads, or

festive desserts prepared only once a year. Meals become occasions not just to eat, but to gather, forgive, and reconnect. Around the table, differences soften, conversations flow, and the simple act of sharing food becomes an expression of care.

Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of Christmas lies in generosity. Gifts are exchanged, but the true spirit of giving often extends beyond wrapping paper. Acts of charity, visits to those who are lonely, and moments of empathy reflect

the deeper message of the season. Christmas gently reminds people that kindness does not need an occasion—but it benefits from one.

As the season fades and everyday life resumes, Christmas leaves behind something intangible yet lasting: a reminder that light can be chosen, traditions can be cherished, and hope can be renewed. In that sense, Christmas is not just a day—it is an invitation to carry its spirit forward, one quiet miracle at a time.

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Prez greets citizens

President Droupadi Murmu Wednesday extended her Christmas Eve greetings to the people and urged them to follow the path shown by Jesus Christ and build a society that promotes kindness and mutual harmony. "Christmas, the festival of joy and enthusiasm, conveys the message of love and compassion. It reminds us of the sacrifice made by Lord Jesus Christ for the welfare of humanity," Murmu said. "This sacred occasion inspires us to further strengthen the values of peace, harmony, equality, and service in society. Let us resolve to follow the path shown by Jesus Christ and work towards building a society that promotes kindness and mutual harmony," she said.



Christmas is a magical feeling for us. It is a celebration of togetherness, the joy of giving, and being with family. Preparing plum cakes at home and sharing them with family, friends and

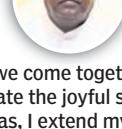
loved ones is a cherished tradition. Christmas is special because we go to church, pray, sing carols, meet and greet people, wear new clothes and celebrate with joyfulness. I am originally from Bangalore and came to Bhubaneswar for a workshop; I have now been living here for 15 years. I fell in love with the place, and today it feels like home.

SINDHU BROWN | TRAINER, HUMAN LIFE CENTRE



Christmas not only reminds us of the birth of Jesus but also of the values He taught us. It is a reminder to enrich our lives with humility, love, peace and harmony, irrespective of religion. As part of our traditions, we prepare plum cakes, rose cakes and sweets in bulk to share with friends and family. We decorate our home and set up the Christmas tree along with the crib, making the celebration complete.

AYUSH KULRAJ | ADVOCATE, ORISSA HIGH COURT



As we come together to celebrate the joyful season of Christmas, I extend my warmest wishes to each of you and your loved ones. As a Jesuit school, we are reminded of the enduring values of compassion, kindness and service exemplified by Jesus. Let us strive to share love, spread joy and reach out to others with generosity and care.

FR. A. AMALADoss, SJ | PRINCIPAL, LOYOLA SCHOOL, BHUBANESWAR

Christmas is celebrated across continents, but the way it is observed varies greatly, shaped by culture, history, and local traditions. While some countries embrace grand festivities, others mark the day quietly, giving Christmas a uniquely global character.

In Europe, Christmas is deeply traditional. Germany is famous for its Weihnachtsmärkte (Christmas markets), where mulled wine and hand-crafted gifts fill town squares. In Spain, children eagerly await Los Reyes Magos (the Three Kings), who bring gifts on January 6 rather than Christmas

Day. Scandinavian countries celebrate St. Lucia's Day, symbolizing light during the long winter darkness.

Across Latin America, Christmas blends faith with festivity. In Mexico, Las Posadas reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for shelter through neighborhood processions. Midnight Mass, fireworks, and extended family feasts define the season.

In Asia, Christmas often takes on a cultural rather than religious tone. In Japan, it is a romantic holiday, with couples exchanging gifts and enjoy-

Around the world

BHUBANESWAR GLOWS WITH CHEER

Bhubaneswar embraced the magic of Christmas as the City turned into a vibrant tapestry of lights, prayers, celebrations and acts of kindness. From the quiet devotion inside churches to the lively buzz of markets, hotels, clubs and public spaces, the Capital celebrates the festival in a spirit of joy, unity and togetherness.

At the heart of the celebrations were the City's churches, where special prayers and midnight masses were held at prominent centres such as St. Vincent's Pro Cathedral Church and the Unit-IV Church. Hymns and carols filled the night air as worshippers gathered to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. Messages of peace, compassion and hope resonated deeply, drawing not only the Christian community but

also people from other faiths who joined in the festive spirit.

Outside the churches, Bhubaneswar glowed in festive colours. Streets, homes and commercial hubs were adorned with stars, fairy lights and Christmas trees, while markets buzzed with activity as shoppers thronged stalls for cakes, gifts, decorations and Santa caps. Bakeries across the City reported brisk sales of plum cakes and other festive delicacies.

Santa in a red suit was popularized much later, especially through 19th-century illustrations and 20th-century advertising.

The popular song "Jingle Bells" was not written for Christmas at all. It was originally composed for Thanksgiving in 1857 and only later became linked to Christmas because of its winter theme.

In many countries, Christmas used

adding a rich flavour to the celebrations.

The cheer spilled over into hotels, clubs and public venues, which hosted Christmas Eve dinners, brunches, carnivals and parties. Vivanta Bhubaneswar marked the occasion with a special sundowner winter edition, while To-Escalate hosted host-nights, dances and mances.

kept revellers dancing late into the night, and Raasta Bhubaneswar brought an international music touch, making the city's nightlife sparkle with Christmas cheer.

to be illegal. In 17th-century England and parts of colonial America, Puritans banned Christmas celebrations, viewing them as unbiblical and excessively indulgent. People were fined for decorating homes or feasting December 25.

Another lesser-known fact is that gift-giving was once discouraged by churches, which felt it distracted from the religious significance of the day. Over time, however, the practice became central to modern celebrations.

Finally, in several cultures, Christmas brings unexpected figures. In parts of Europe, children fear Krampus or Belsnickel—folklore characters who punish misbehaving children, reminding them that Christmas traditions are not always gentle or joyful.

These lesser-known facts reveal that Christmas is not just a festival of joy, but a rich blend of history, culture, and evolving traditions.

Lesser-known facts

Christmas is one of the world's most celebrated festivals, yet many fascinating facts about it remain surprisingly unknown. Beneath the familiar carols, trees, and gifts lies a history shaped by ancient traditions, unexpected origins, and curious customs.

One little-known fact is that December 25 was not originally believed to be Jesus Christ's actual birthday. Early Christians chose the date centuries later, possibly to coincide with existing Roman winter festivals like Saturnalia and Sol Invictus, making it easier to spread Christianity among pagan communities.

The Christmas tree tradition

has roots in pre-Christian Europe. Long before Christianity, evergreen trees symbolized life and renewal during winter. It wasn't until 16th-century Ger-

many that decorated trees became associated with Christmas celebrations as we know them today.

Another surprising detail is the origin of Santa Claus. He is loosely based on St. Nicholas, a 4th-century Greek bishop from present-day Turkey, known for secretly giving gifts to the poor. The modern image of

the poor. The modern image of



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We find in others what is in us.
If we always find mud around us, it proves that there is mud somewhere in us.

THE MOTHER

Beyond Multilateralism

The world is on the cusp of a profound geopolitical restructuring, as escalating great-power rivalries erode the multilateral structures that have supported the global order since the mid-20th century.

To prevent the international system from sliding into chaos and conflict, those unwilling to accept a world governed solely by raw power must find ways to reinforce today's debilitated multilateral institutions through informal arrangements and bilateral agreements.

From the end of World War II to the early 2010s, multilateralism provided the framework for international cooperation. Though imperfect and often inconsistent, it was the most effective model of global governance ever created. But after more than a decade of continuous erosion, it is clear that the multilateral system as we know it can no longer facilitate collective action.

Without a framework capable of coordinating relations among countries, the alternatives are stark: a world government – an unfeasible prospect – or a steady drift toward anarchy. Multilateralism emerged as the pragmatic middle ground: collective decision-making and binding rules, rather than a single global authority or none at all.

Born of unique historical circumstances, this model took shape as the United States – the dominant postwar global power – promoted a treaty-based system guided by enlightened self-interest. That vision was realised at the Bretton Woods and San Francisco conferences, which led to the establishment of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, as well as its successor, the World Trade Organization.

In principle, if not always in practice, these multilateral institutions were open to all countries, with bodies like the WTO and the International Civil Aviation Organization providing a shared framework of rules, standards, and responsibilities. But in recent years, they have been severely undermined by the rise of sovereigntism in developed economies like the US and in emerging powers like China.

The US, for its part, played a significant role in weakening the very institutions it helped create. The 2003 invasion of Iraq and its intervention in Libya's civil war in 2011 showed that the world's major powers did not see themselves as bound by the so-called rules-based international order. This trend was reinforced by US President Donald Trump's election in 2016, while his return to office in 2025 represented an explicit repudiation of the multilateral approach.

Meanwhile, Russia and China have been eager to undermine a system they view as detrimental to their interests. Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia and invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 openly defied international law, bringing large-scale war back to Europe. Likewise, China's "Made in China 2025" industrial strategy violates WTO rules, and its aggressive actions in the South China Sea show complete disregard for the 2016 arbitral ruling that rejected its expansive maritime claims.

The consequences are now widely evident: on the issues that matter most, multilateral institutions no longer drive global decision-making. Paralysed by cross-vetoes among its permanent members, the UN Security Council has been largely inactive, with the notable exception of its recent endorsement of Trump's Gaza peace plan. At the same time, the WTO – whose establishment in 1995 was multilateralism's last meaningful achievement – can no longer enforce its own rules since the US rendered its appellate inquorate in 2019.

This institutional paralysis is part of a broader trend. No major multilateral institution has been created in decades, while informal arrangements – lacking binding rules and often involving non-state actors – have proliferated, offering more agile and adaptable forms of coordination better suited to an increasingly fragmented world. Today, multilateral institutions account for only one-quarter of the global governance ecosystem.

In this environment, preventing the disintegration of the international order is a daunting task. What is needed are intermediate mechanisms that do not depend on universal participation or the adoption of comprehensive, binding rules. While achieving global consensus is virtually impossible, informal alliances, public-private platforms, and flexible coordination mechanisms can help mitigate geopolitical risks.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance – which has immunised over one billion children since 2000 – offers a useful model, as do the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, with its globally accepted technical standards (including Wi-Fi), and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Although lacking legal authority, these bodies have achieved technical legitimacy and broad voluntary compliance. Once secondary to multilateral institutions, they may now emerge as pillars of global coordination.

As private actors, subnational governments, academic institutions, and professional networks continue to gain influence, diplomacy is no longer the exclusive domain of foreign ministries. Global governance, in turn, is becoming increasingly decentralised, especially in critical areas like cybersecurity.

To avert a global catastrophe, today's institutional vacuum must be filled by flexible, workable arrangements: less formal, less universal, and less binding, yet still capable of facilitating cooperation among countries and key actors. These include public-private partnerships, interregional agreements such as the EU-Mercosur trade deal, and "coalitions of the willing" like the Just Energy Transition Partnerships.

Admittedly, this approach involves higher transaction costs and cannot guarantee certainty or uniformity. But the task facing international policymakers is not to design the perfect model – it is to identify the one that is most viable in a rapidly changing world teetering on the edge of systemic collapse.

Javier Solana is a former secretary-general of NATO. Angel Saz-Carranza is Professor of Strategy and Policy at Esade.

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WISDOM CORNER

Joy can only be real if people look upon their life as a service and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.

LEO TOLSTOY

Discontent, blaming, complaining, self-pity cannot serve as a foundation for a good future, no matter how much effort you make.

ECKHART TOLLE

So long as you have food in your mouth, you have solved all questions for the time being.

FRANZ KAFKA

WHAT POLLUTES INDIA?

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY



Acknowledging the true impact and sources of our pollution crisis is the first step towards meaningful action

Every winter, Delhi's air pollution debate follows a familiar script. We look for villains, argue over blame, ignore science and solutions. This year has been no different – except that it has bordered on the absurd.

Pollution season opened with the Supreme Court allowing "green crackers," followed by Delhi govt's failed cloud-seeding attempt. Soon after came official data claiming a 90% reduction in stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana. Overnight, stubble burning was declared "not a problem." Even though scientific evidence told a very different story.

A paper from ISRO and an independent analysis by my colleagues showed that stubble burning continued across Punjab, Haryana, UP, and MP, significantly contributing to pollution in Delhi-NCR. Real issue was not the absence of fires, but the failure of monitoring. Satellite passes over India in the early afternoon. As farmers simply shift the burning to late afternoon and evening, a large proportion of farm fires is no longer being detected.

Instead of fixing the monitoring system, we wasted weeks in the "tu quoque" debate – where stubble burning in Delhi's local sources were to blame. Incentives for farmers to not burn stubble were never implemented. Committees were formed, reports were written, and once again, we forgot to demand real solutions from all institutions accountable.

All this is particularly frustrating because the core causes of India's air pollution crisis have been known for at least 25 years. In 1999, more than 200 scientists from across the world participated in the Indian Ocean Experiment, led by the renowned atmospheric scientist V. Ramanathan. This study identified massive clouds of "Asian Brown Clouds" stretching over the Indian subcontinent and the

Indian Ocean from October to February.

Their findings were unequivocal. This haze was largely caused by the burning of biomass in homes and fields, and fossil fuels (especially coal) in industry and power plants. Pollution travelled thousands of kms, altered rainfall patterns, reduced agricultural productivity, and caused widespread respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

When UNEP published the findings in 2002, some prominent Indian scientists questioned the terminology and intent. The phenomenon was dismissed as "atmospheric brown clouds" – a semantic quibble. The warnings were largely ignored by governments.

A quarter century later, air pollution has become a national crisis. Cities such as Mumbai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad, which once had relatively clean air, now routinely fail to meet national air quality standards. This deterioration is not accidental. It is the direct result of our persistent failure to address the primary sources of pollution identified decades ago.

What pollutes India? Over the last five years, Indian scientific institutions have produced a growing body of research that policymakers have largely ignored. A 2024 study involving researchers from prominent institutions, including earth sciences, found that about 50% of PM10 and PM2.5 in Delhi during

the peak pollution season comes from biomass burning sources. Another study from IIT-Kanpur, published in 2023, showed that biomass burning (especially residential heating) is the main driver of intense and frequent night-time haze in Delhi during January and February.

Similar findings have emerged from other parts of the country. Together, they point to a clear conclusion: open burning of biomass (whether for cooking or heating in homes, in small industrial and commercial establishments, or in agricultural fields) is the single largest source of air pollution in India. Without sharply reducing biomass burning, we simply cannot clean the country's air.

The second major source of pollution is coal use in industries and power plants. A 2023 study by my colleagues estimated that around 37% of India's PM2.5 emissions come from industry and power generation. Vehicular pollution is the third largest source, especially in cities.

Basically, India's air pollution crisis is driven by what we burn the most. India burns around 200 crore tonnes of fuel and waste every year. About 85% of this is coal and biomass. Add dust from roads, construction sites, and barren land, and the picture becomes even clearer.

Solving India's air pollution crisis requires a clean energy transition and an "all-of-the-

above" approach.

Biggest gains will come from the residential sector. Transitioning households to LPG, biogas or electricity for cooking and heating would eliminate a large share of PM2.5 emissions and prevent nearly 800,000 premature deaths each year from indoor air pollution. This is difficult, but achievable through targeted policies such as strengthening the PM Ujjwala programme that provides adequate incentives for low-income households to abandon biomass completely.

Industry must be the next priority. Encouraging MSMEs to adopt cleaner fuels and technologies, such as electric boilers and furnaces, combined with strict monitoring, can substantially reduce emissions. For large industries and power plants, enforcement of strict emission standards must be non-negotiable.

Eliminating stubble burning remains essential to reducing severe pollution episodes in Oct and Nov. In just 45 days, stubble burning emits as much PM2.5 as all vehicles in India in an entire year. The solutions – technology, market access, incentives, penalties – are well-known and proven. Scaling up electric vehicles and public transport will steadily reduce urban pollution, but this requires sustained policy direction, robust financing, and ambitious targets, not slogans. Finally, local sources (dust, construction, garbage burning, congestion) must be tackled by empowered and accountable urban local bodies.

Real progress on the above action plan will only begin when we stop bickering over science. So, acknowledging the true impact and sources of our pollution crisis is the first step towards meaningful action.

The writer is an environmentalist and CEO, iFOREST.

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Inequality by design



BECAUSE INEQUALITY IS SHAPED BY POLICY, IT CAN ALSO BE RESHAPED BY POLICY

Economic inequality has long stood at the centre of debates on how societies are organised and how prosperity is shared. While disparities have always existed, by 2025 inequality has reached levels that demand urgent moral, political, and economic attention. The gains of globalisation and economic growth have accrued overwhelmingly to a narrow elite, while vast sections of humanity continue to struggle for secure livelihoods, social protection, and basic dignity. These divides are neither accidental nor inevitable; they are the direct outcomes of political choices, institutional arrangements, and entrenched asymmetries of power.

The World Inequality Report 2026 (WIR 2026), produced by the World Inequality Lab under the leadership of Lucas Chancel, Ricardo Gómez-Carrera, Rowaida Moshrif, and Thomas Piketty, provides one of the most comprehensive and rigorously documented analyses of inequality in the twenty-first century. The third in the series after the 2018 and 2022 editions, the report draws on contributions from over 200 scholars worldwide and is prefaced by Joseph Stiglitz and Jayati Ghosh. Its conclusion is explicit: global inequality remains at historically extreme levels and is deeply multidimensional, spanning income, wealth,

gender, climate vulnerability, and access to basic human capabilities.

A central insight of the report is that inequality does not emerge from the natural functioning of markets alone. Rather, it reflects deliberate policy choices, entrenched institutional structures, and unequal distributions of economic and political power. Markets are embedded within social and political systems, and when these systems systematically favour capital over labour, wealth over work, and elites over citizens, inequality becomes persistent and self-reinforcing. Crucially, because inequality is shaped by policy, it can also be reshaped by policy.

According to the World Inequality Report 2026, using 2025 purchasing power parity estimates, the world's richest 0.001% – around 60,000 individuals – own three times more wealth than the poorest 50% of humanity. Globally, the top 1% capture 23% of total income and own 38% of total wealth. The top 10% command 53% of income and a staggering 75% of wealth. In contrast, the middle 40% receive 38% of global income but own only 23% of wealth, while the bottom 50% – half the population – receive only 15% of income and own just 6.4% of the country's wealth.

As Stiglitz and Ghosh emphasise, inequality in India is not confined to income and wealth alone but is interwoven with gender, caste, region, and access to public services. Extreme inequality is economically inefficient, socially corrosive, and ecologically unsustainable.

It weakens democracies, fragments social cohesion, erodes political consensus, and intensifies climate vulnerability – burdens borne disproportionately by those least responsible.

Stiglitz and Ghosh advocate

the creation of an international panel on inequality – akin to the IPCC for climate change – to systematically monitor trends and guide evidence-based policy-making. The report also stresses the need to reform the global financial system, which remains structurally biased in favour of wealthy nations.

Advanced economies can borrow cheaply and invest abroad at higher returns, effectively functioning as financial rentiers. As a result, around 1% of global GDP flows annually from poorer to richer countries through unequal income transfers – nearly three times the volume of global development aid. Coordinated global taxation, corrective levies on excessive surpluses, and stronger international financial governance could substantially reduce these imbalances.

At the national level, regressive tax structures further exacerbate inequality. The absence of inheritance and net wealth taxes, combined with cuts in corporate tax rates, has sharply reduced tax progressivity even as the fortunes of the ultra-rich have expanded rapidly. In many countries including India, elites pay proportionally less tax than lower- and middle-income households, depriving states of resources needed for education, healthcare, social protection, and climate action.

Progressive taxation is essential to ensure that those with the greatest means contribute their fair share. Greater transparency, stronger redistribution, and coordinated global action on taxation and capital regulation are therefore indispensable.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

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

Letters to the editor

11 investment proposals worth ₹1,333cr get nod

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: The state government Wednesday approved 11 investment proposals worth ₹1,332.80 crore, paving way for creation of 7,474 jobs across the state. The approvals were granted at 143rd meeting of the State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja.

Guided by the vision of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the latest clearances highlight the state's steady transition from

policy intent to on-ground action, strengthening its position as an emerging investment hub in eastern India, the meeting said. The projects span a broad spectrum of sectors, including metal ancillary and downstream industries, food and seafood processing, textiles and apparel, chemicals, green hydrogen and green ammonia, tourism, logistics, coal beneficiation, and IT & Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM).

The projects will come up in seven districts—Angul, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda and Ma-

yurbhanj—ensuring balanced regional development and wider employment opportunities.

In the metal and downstream segment, Kalinga Copper Private Limited will establish a copper foil manufacturing unit in Dhenkanal with an investment of ₹150 crore, creating 200 jobs. MM Castings Private Limited will invest ₹65 crore in Ganjam to manufacture high manganese steel crusher parts, generating employment for 330 people.

In a major boost to food processing and textile sectors, Pasupati Agrovet Pvt Ltd will set

up a ₹200-crore shrimp processing unit in Khurda which is expected to generate 700 jobs. Sree Lakshmi Apparels Pvt Ltd will invest ₹60 crore in a readymade garments manufacturing unit in Cuttack, creating 1,250 jobs.

Universal Industries will establish an agrochemical unit in Jagatsinghpur with an investment of ₹220 crore and 215 jobs. Sara Green Energy Pvt Ltd will invest ₹250 crore in a 20,000 tonne green ammonia project in Ganjam, generating 47 jobs. Tourism and logistics projects include a ₹50.85 crore four-star luxury resort

by Khimji Retail Venture Pvt Ltd in Mayurbhanj, creating 177 jobs. In coal, IT and ESDM sectors, Sappient Coal Beneficiation Private Limited will set up a coal beneficiation plant in Angul with an investment of ₹58.20 crore, creating 300 jobs. Quarks Technosoft Pvt Ltd will invest ₹68 crore in a software development facility in Khurda, generating 2,500 jobs, while Sourcing Brains Lab Pvt Ltd will establish an ESDM unit for telematics devices and smart meters in Khurda with an investment of ₹51 crore, creating 1,500 jobs.

3 ring roads as part of economic region

Bhubaneswar: The state government is planning three ring roads, cumulatively 645 km long, as part of the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack-Puri-Paradip Economic Region. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced Wednesday at a high-level meeting. A 432-km ring road will be constructed from Paradip to Puri via Tangi, Saptasajay and Rameswar. It will be built in coordination with the Centre's proposed 111-km Capital Region Ring Road, a statement said. Another 148-km ring road will be built from Cuttack to Khorda via Balipatna, Pipili and Jatni. Also, a 65-km inner ring road will be constructed in Tamanda in Khurda district via Chandaka, Pahal and Dhauli, it said. Apart from this, there is also a proposal for a 32-km railway line from Puri to Konark and a 70-km line from Konark to Bhubaneswar via Nimapada, it added. According to the statement issued by the CMO, the roads will ensure huge industrial growth in the region. The CM suggested that officers prepare special plans to develop the cities in this region as 'growth hubs'. He also directed them to remain in regular contact with NITI Aayog and expedite work on this project. He asked officers to pay special attention to the development of tourism in this region. The meeting was attended by Housing and Urban Development Minister KC Mohapatra, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and Development Commissioner Anu Garg.

Fake ivory racket: 6 more arrested



Nilagiri: Forest officials have arrested six more people in a racket involved in manufacturing of fake ivory from the bones of dead elephants, taking the total number of arrests to 22 in Balasore district. Acting on intelligence inputs, a team from Kuldigha Forest Division carried out a series of raids in and around Kuldigha Wildlife Sanctuary area under Nilagiri subdivision for violations of the Wildlife (Protection) Act. Officials said the accused would exhume the buried remains of elephants after death, grind the bones and use them to make imitation tusks, which were then sold at high prices. The operation was conducted under the direction of DFO Prafulla Kumar Mallik. ACF Shobhan Diganta Chandra of Balasore and Subrat Kumar Behera, ACF (in-charge) of Kuldigha led coordinated raids at multiple locations. Forest officials said 16 other accused were arrested earlier in cases related to wildlife poaching and illegal trafficking of animal body parts. The latest arrests were made during a pre-dawn raid Wednesday in Nilagiri subdivision. The team seized 146 pangolin scales, porcupine sticks, axes, rods, explosive materials and a country-made gun from the accused persons. All six accused were produced before a court and remanded to judicial custody. Further investigation is underway to identify other persons linked to the racket, forest department sources said. The case came to light December 14, when forest personnel intercepted three poachers in the Panchalingeshwar section while they were carrying carcasses of a barking deer and a porcupine.

Minor critical as bomb explodes

Chhendipada: A 15-year-old girl sustained severe injuries after a crude bomb allegedly planted by poachers to kill

wild animals exploded in a forest area near Gohirapashi under Chhendipada forest range in Angul district Wednesday, police said. The injured has been identified as Manasi Behera of nearby Bahalsahi

village. She was initially admitted to Chhendipada community health centre (CHC) but was later shifted to the Angul district headquarters hospital (DHH) as her condition deteriorated. According to sources, Manasi, along with her friends, had gone to a nearby forest close to Gohirapashi village for a picnic. While collecting firewood for cooking, a bomb reportedly planted by poachers detonated when her hand accidentally hit it. The explosion caused severe injuries to her right hand. Forest and police officials are probing the use of crude bombs for illegal animal hunting in the area.

Royal family robbed by fake Vig officials

Daringbadi: Miscreants in the garb of Vigilance sleuths allegedly looted cash and gold ornaments from the royal family of Simadri Deo at Gadapur Bazaar under Brahmanigaon police limits in Kandhamal district, police said Wednesday. According to the complaint, the accused arrived at the house Monday claiming to be Vigilance officers and told the family that their son was involved in corruption and that the house would be searched. They allegedly handcuffed the head of the family and kept other members under close watch before fleeing with cash and gold ornaments. The miscreants allegedly took away the hard disk of the CCTV camera installed at the house, apparently to destroy evidence, police said. The incident has triggered panic and widespread discussion in the area. Sanjeeb Kumar Deo of the family lodged a complaint at the Brahmanigaon police station. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation Wednesday. The family includes Simadri Deo, his son Sanjeeb, daughter-in-law Mamata and their two children. The incident occurred when Sanjeeb had gone out on work around noon when five men arrived at the house on three motorcycles, police said.

Bargarh Dhanu Jatra kicks off

Mathura Nagar: The world-famous open-air theatre, Bargarh Dhanu Jatra, went off to a colourful start at Raj Darbar stage in Hatpada here Wednesday evening. Bargarh MP Pradeep Kumar Purohit and MLA Ashwini Kumar Sarangi inaugurated the festival around 7:30 pm. Among others, Padampur MLA Barsha Singh Baria, Attabira MLA Nihar Ranjan Mahanand, Bhatli MLA Irasish Acharya, Bargarh Municipality chairperson Kalpana Majhi, District Collector Aditya Goyal, Superintendent of Police PS Meena and members of Dhanu Jatra Mahotsav Committee also attended the mega event. The inaugural programme was coordinated by Dhanu Jatra Mahotsav Committee convener Sureshwar Satpathy. With the inauguration, Bargarh town has transformed into Mathura Nagar and Ambapali into Gopapura for the next 11 days, while the Jira River flowing between the two has symbolically become the Yamuna River. Scenes from the epic were enacted, beginning with the marriage of Devaki and Vasudeva at the local Ramji Temple in the presence of Maharaja Ugrasena. The prophecy foretelling the death of Kansa at the hands of Devaki's eighth child left Kansa disturbed. Subsequently, Kansa dethroned Ugrasena and seized control of Mathura.



On the Occasion of the Birth Centenary Celebration of
Former Prime Minister, Bharat Ratna

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji

Inauguration

of

Rashtra Prerna Sthal

- Cost-₹230 crore • Area-65 acres
- 65-feet-tall bronze statues of great national icons
- Capacity-2 lakh visitors • Museum area-6300 sq. metres
- A grand amphitheatre with seating for 3000 people

by

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



In the august presence of

Anandiben Patel
Governor, Uttar Pradesh

Yogi Adityanath
Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Rajnath Singh
Raksha Mantri, Government of India

Keshav Prasad Maurya
Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Brajesh Pathak
Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Pankaj Chaudhary
Minister of State, Finance,
Government of India

Suresh Kumar Khanna
Minister, Finance and
Parliamentary Affairs, Uttar Pradesh

Jaiveer Singh
Minister, Tourism and Culture,
Uttar Pradesh

Dr. Dinesh Sharma
Member,
Rajya Sabha

Dr. Sudhanshu Trivedi
Member,
Rajya Sabha

Brij Lal
Member,
Rajya Sabha

Sanjay Seth
Member,
Rajya Sabha

Sushma Kharkwal
Mayor,
Lucknow

Dr. Neeraj Bora
MLA,
Lucknow North

Jai Devi
MLA,
Malihabad

Dr. Rajeshwar Singh
MLA,
Sarojini Nagar

Yogesh Shukla
MLA,
Bakshi Ka Talab

O.P. Srivastava
MLA,
Lucknow East

Amresh Kumar
MLA,
Mohanlalganj

Dr. Mahendra Kumar Singh
MLC

Er. Awanish Kumar Singh
MLC

Mukesh Sharma
MLC

Umesh Dwivedi
MLC

Ram Chandra Singh Pradhan
MLC

Dr. Lalji Prasad Nirmal
MLC

Date: 25th December, 2025 | Time: 11:30 AM | Venue: Rashtra Prerna Sthal, Basant Kunj Yojna, Sector-J, Lucknow

Kaam Damdaar - Double Engine Sarkar

Information & Public Relations Department, Uttar Pradesh

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AQI IMPROVES TO 'POOR' ON BACK OF STRONG WINDS

Delhi breathes easier after 13 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: After nearly a fortnight of hazardous smog, Delhi's air quality improved to 'poor' at 271 Wednesday on the back of stronger winds, though the conditions are forecast to worsen again.

Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) stood at 271, in the 'poor' category, Wednesday, a sharp improvement from the 'severe' AQI of 412 recorded at 4 pm Tuesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

The last time the city's air quality was recorded in the poor category was December 10, after which it remained in the 'very poor' and 'severe' zones for several days before improving again Wednesday.

Favourable meteorological conditions, particularly surface wind speeds of 15-25 kmph during the day, helped improve air quality.

The predominant surface wind was from the northwest, with speeds reaching up to 20 kmph during afternoon hours.

However, the wind speeds are expected to decrease to below 10 kmph from the west direction during the evening and night, according to the Air Quality Early Warning System.

Out of the 40 functional air quality monitoring stations in the city, four recorded 'moderate' AQI levels below 200 -- Lodhi Road, IIT Delhi, IGI Airport and Aya Nagar -- while 33 were in the poor category.

Only two stations -- Nehru Nagar and Dwarka -- recorded 'very poor' AQI above 300, according to the CPCB's SAMER app.

The CPCB classifies an AQI between 0 and 50 as 'good', 51



and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor' and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Data from the Decision Support System (DSS) for Air Quality Management showed that vehicular emissions were the largest contributor to Delhi's pollution load on Wednesday, accounting for 17.5 per cent.

This was followed by industries in Delhi and adjoining areas (8.6 per cent), construction activities (2.4 per cent) and waste burning (1.3 per cent).

Among the NCR districts, Jhajjar in Haryana contributed the highest share to pollution at 12 per cent, followed by Soni-

pat (6.5 per cent) and Rohtak (5.4 per cent) in Haryana and Ghaziabad (2.7 per cent) in Ut- tara Pradesha, the data showed.

However, the Air Quality Early Warning System said that Delhi's air quality is likely to slip back into the 'very poor' zone over the next six days.

On the weather front, Delhi Wednesday recorded a maximum temperature of 22.7 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal, and a minimum of 10.2 degrees Celsius, 2.7 degrees above normal, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The relative humidity stood at 100 per cent at 8.30 am and 78 per cent at 5.30 pm.

The IMD has forecast a minimum temperature of 6 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 22 degrees Celsius for Christmas Day Thursday, with mainly clear sky after shallow to moderate fog at many places during morning hours.

The predominant surface winds are likely to be from the west at up to 10 kmph in the morning, increasing to around 12 kmph from the northwest in the afternoon before weakening to below 5 kmph from the north during the evening and night, according to the Air Quality Early Warning System.

HOMEGROWN SATELLITE INTERNET

Chennai students win NASA award

The project, 'Photonics Odyssey' or AakashNet, aims to bridge the digital divide in India by delivering high-speed, low-cost internet to the country's most remote villages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 24: A team of Chennai-based engineering students has beaten over 18,000 projects worldwide to win the "Most Inspirational" award at the NASA International Space Apps Challenge 2025.

Their project, "Photonics Odyssey" or AakashNet, aims to bridge the digital divide in India by delivering high-speed, low-cost internet to the country's most remote villages.

"AakashNet conceptually adopts the working philosophy long demonstrated by ISRO," Prasanth Gopalakrishnan, a second year electronics and communication engineering student of SRM Easwari Engineering College, told PTI.

At the NASA International Space Apps Challenge, one of the world's largest annual global hackathons, the team's submission made it to the top 10 projects, winning the 'Most Inspirational' award.

Launched in 2012, the challenge hopes to foster innovation using NASA's free and open data from satellites, telescopes and missions and create solutions for Earth and space.

Now that the team's proposal has the "NASA stamp", Gopalakrishnan is confident of "institutional support" to develop this as a public digital utility.

"Most global satellite internet systems follow a strong-



The team of six was selected based on individual strengths. While electronics engineering students focused on the hardware and communication design system, computer science engineering students handled software and simulation aspects, he added.

"Over a period of two to three months, we worked continuously on refining the concept. We explored different problem statements from NASA and zeroed in on 'commercialising LEO'. We realised that this directly matched both our technical direction and social-impact goals," said Gopalakrishnan.

Gopalakrishnan said this is where ISRO's working philosophy -- which has consistently delivered highly reliable space technology at globally unmatched cost efficiency without compromising performance or safety -- served as an inspiration to the team. "Using publicly available information and real-world system constraints, our project explores how a similar India-first, efficiency-driven approach could be applied to satelite broadband infrastructure," he said.

His winning team comprised Rajalingam N, Rashi Menon and Sakthi Sanjeev Kumar from electronics and communication engineering department as well as Deeraj Kumar and Manish Varma D from computer science engineering department, specialising in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

Gopalakrishnan said they learned about the NASA Space Apps Challenge in June through their college Space Club, Odsssey Space Club.

"AakashNet is not just a student idea -- it is a reflection of the academic ecosystem that nurtured it," he said.

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national



Atal Ji elevated Indian politics for six decades, blending it with values and ideals

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

PROTESTS ERUPT AT BENGAL

Members of a pro-Hindu organisation held demonstrations at several land ports along the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal Wednesday over the killing of a man belonging to the minority community in the neighbouring country



Unnao rape survivor to move SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Activist Yogita Bhayana stages a dharna with the family of the Unnao gang rape victim
PTI PHOTO

Unnao/Ballia (UP), Dec 24: The 2017 Unnao rape survivor Wednesday termed the Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the jail term of the accused, expelled.

BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar, "kaal" (death) for her family and said she would move the Supreme Court against it.

Women's rights activist Yogita Bhayana, who staged a protest with the rape survivor's mother at India Gate Tuesday night, shared a video on X, in which the rape survivor was purportedly heard saying that she had left home in the morning to meet her lawyer but Central Reserve Police force (CRPF) personnel tried to send

her back home.

"I was shouting that I need to visit my lawyer. I was shouting in the vehicle as well and then an order came from the top to take me (to meet my lawyer),"

We are turning into dead society: Rahul

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met the Unnao rape survivor here Wednesday after she allegedly faced ill-treatment for raising her voice against the bail granted to convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar, and said India is not just becoming a dead economy, but also a dead society. Accompanied by her mother, the rape survivor met both Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. The rape survivor and her mother urged Rahul Gandhi to help them get a top lawyer to fight the case against Sengar in the Supreme Court and the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha promised to do that.

she said. "All I want is justice," she added. Bhayana also claimed that the rape survivor was injured in the melee.

Reacting to the Unnao rape survivor's ordeal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said India is not just becoming a dead economy but also a dead society.

"Is such treatment of a gang rape survivor appropriate?"

Is it her 'fault' that she has the courage to raise her voice for justice? "The fact that her perpetrator (former BJP MLA Sengar) has been granted bail is extremely disappointing and shameful -- especially when the survivor is being repeatedly harassed and is living under the shadow of fear," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said in a post in Hindi on X.

MUMBAI CIVIC POLLS

Sena (UBT), MNS announce alliance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

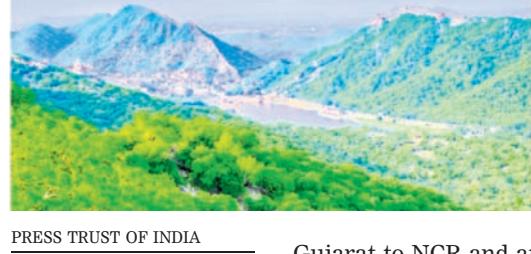
Mumbai, Dec 24: Ending a 20-year political feud, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and MNS president Raj Thackeray forged an alliance Wednesday for the elections to the cash-rich Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to be held January 15.

The cousins addressed a 16-minute joint press conference at a hotel in Worli, a symbolic venue located within the constituency of Uddhav's son Aaditya Thackeray. The reunion, which the two described

as a "duty toward Maharashtra," laid special emphasis on consolidating the 'Marathi manoos' (sons of the soil) vote bank to counter the ruling Mahayuti coalition. "Mumbai's mayor will be Marathi, and he will be ours," announced Raj Thackeray. This is seen as a signal of a joint push by both the factions to reclaim the civic body which has been ruled by the undivided Sena for 25 years. Uddhav said the parties have finalised their seat sharing for the Nashik Municipal Corporation where elections are due January 15, along with the 227-member BMC and 27 other municipal corporations in Maharashtra.

Centre cracks down on Aravalli mining

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Gujarat to NCR and at stopping all unregulated mining activities," a senior official said.

"The ministry has also directed the ICFRE to identify additional areas and zones in the entire Aravallis, where mining should be prohibited, over and above the areas already prohibited for

and ecological carrying capacity, identify ecologically sensitive and conservation-critical areas, and lay down measures for restoration and rehabilitation.

Ongoing mining activities are to be regulated stringently, with additional restrictions, to ensure environmental protection and adherence to sustainable mining practices.

"The government stands fully committed towards long-term protection of the Aravalli ecosystem, recognising its critical role in preventing desertification, conserving biodiversity, recharging aquifers and providing environmental services for the region," the official said.

In November 2025, the Supreme Court accepted a uniform legal definition of what constitutes the Aravalli Hills and Aravalli Range on the recommendation of a committee led by the Environment Ministry.

"The government stands fully committed towards long-term protection of the Aravalli ecosystem, recognising its critical role in preventing desertification, conserving biodiversity, recharging aquifers and providing environmental services for the region," the official said.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has also directed the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) to identify additional areas and zones in the entire Aravallis where mining should be prohibited, over and above the areas already prohibited for

mining by the Centre, based on ecological, geological and landscape-level considerations," the official added. The ICFRE has been directed to undertake this exercise while preparing a comprehensive, science-based Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) for the entire Aravalli region. The plan, which will be placed in the public domain for wide stakeholder consultation, will assess the cumulative environmental impact

"This prohibition applies uniformly across the entire Aravalli landscape and is intended to preserve the integrity of the range. The directions are aimed at safeguarding the Aravallis as a continuous geological ridge extending from

Gujarat to NCR and at stopping all unregulated mining activities," a senior official said.

"The ministry has also directed the ICFRE to identify additional areas and zones in the entire Aravallis, where mining should be prohibited, over and above the areas already prohibited for

mining by the Centre.

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E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002

Date : 25.12.2025

Place : Cuttack (Odisha)

Authorised Officer

Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

IN TERMS OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT -2002

Whereas the Authorized Officer of Punjab & Sind Bank under the SARFAESI Act 2002 in exercise of powers conferred u/s 13(2) read with the relevant rules of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued demand notice u/s 13(2) on the dates stated against the account, calling upon the borrower/s to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of notice. As the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) have failed to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice. Notice is hereby given to the following borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the Authorized Officer has taken possession of the property in exercise of powers conferred on Authorized Officer u/s 13(4) of the said Act read with relevant rules. Pursuant to the possession taken by the Authorized Officer under SARFAESI Act 2002 for recovery of the secured debts of Punjab & Sind Bank mentioned against borrower(s) detailed hereunder and interest thereon from date mentioned therein and with cost and charges. Offers are invited by the Authorized Officer in sealed cover for purchase of under noted property on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS", "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" AND "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" AND "WITHOUT ANY REOURSE BASIS" as per brief particulars given hereunder:

Date of E-auction : 29.01.2026, Time of E-auction : 02.00 PM - 4.00 PM

Last date of EMD : 28.01.2026, Time upto 04.00 PM

Place of Sale: <https://www.baanknet.com>

TERMS & CONDITIONS : 1. The e-Auction is being held on "AS IS WHERE IS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS".

2. To the best of knowledge and information of the Authorized Officer, there is no encumbrance on any property except as mentioned above. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of property/ies put on auction and claims/right/dues/effecting the property prior to submitting their bid. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment or any representation of the bank. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the bank. The Authorized Officer/Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/right/dues.

3. It shall be the responsibility of the bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the asset and specification before submitting the bid.

4. Only Buyers holding user id/password and confirmed payment of EMD through NEFT/RTGS shall be eligible for participating in the e-auction process.

5. The Interested Bidders, who have submitted their EMD not below the 10% p/r reserve price through online mode before 28.01.2026 for the auction held upto 04.00 pm shall be eligible for participating in the bidding process. The e-auction of the above properties would be conducted exactly on the scheduled date and time as mentioned against each property by way of inter-se bidding amongst the bidders. The bidder who submits the highest bid amount (Not below the reserve price) on closure of e-auction shall be declared as successful bidder and a communication to that effect will be issued through electronic mode which shall be subject to approval by the Authorized Officer/Secured Creditor.

6. The Prospective qualified bidders may avail online training on e-Auction from <https://www.baanknet.com> prior to the date of e-Auction. Neither the Authorized Officer/Bank nor <https://www.baanknet.com> shall be liable for any internet Network Problem and the interested bidders to ensure that they are technically well equipped for participating in the e-Auction event.

7. The purchaser shall bear the applicable stamp duties/additional stamp duty /transfer charges, fee etc. and also all the Statutory/non-statutory dues, taxes rates assessment charge, fees etc. owing to anybody prior and future.

8. The Authorized Officer is not bound to accept the highest offer and the Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any or all offer(s) or adjourn/cancel the e-Auction without assigning any reason thereof.

9. The bidders are advised to go through the detailed Terms & Conditions of e-Auction available on the Website: <https://www.baanknet.com> before submitting their bids and taking part in the e-Auction.

10. 25% of sale price is to be paid immediately i.e. on the same day or not later than next working day including earnest money already deposited from the acceptance of bid price by the Authorized Officer.

11. Balance 75% of the said price is to be paid on or before 30 Day of the confirmation of sale of the movable/immovable property. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the deposited shall be forfeited and property shall be resold and defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claim to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may be subsequently sold.

Date & Time of Inspection : 21.01.2026 to 22.01.2026 (between 10.00 A.M. to 04.00 P.M.)

TERMS & CONDITIONS : 1. The e-Auction is being held on "AS IS WHERE IS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS".

2. To the best of knowledge and information of the Authorized Officer, there is no encumbrance on any property except as mentioned above. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of property/ies put on auction and claims/right/dues/effecting the property prior to submitting their bid. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment or any representation of the bank. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the bank. The Authorized Officer/Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/right/dues.

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