



## New milestone

Actor Janhvi Kapoor adds another milestone by becoming New Balance's first Indian brand ambassador

LEISURE | P2



## Somalia goes to polls

Somalis vote in a controversial election that marks the country's first-ever one-person, one-vote poll since 1969

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Small stocks lag

Smaller stocks lag behind their bigger blue-chip peer Sensex this year as elevated valuations triggered profit-booking

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## Jeev lifts title

Jeev Milkha Singh ends a 13-year title drought after securing the IGPL Invitational Sri Lanka with a perfect finish

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12 PAGES | ₹5.00

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 265 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY | DECEMBER 26, 2025

## Another Hindu man lynched in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka/New Delhi, Dec 25:** A Hindu man was lynched in Bangladesh over an extortion allegation, media reports said Thursday, days after another man from the minority religion was lynched in the country.

The incident took place Wednesday in Rajbari town's Pangsha upazila, The Daily Star newspaper quoted police as saying.

The deceased, identified as Amrit Mondal, had allegedly formed a criminal gang and was involved in extortion and other criminal activities.

On the day of the incident, Mondal was beaten up by locals when he, along with his group members, tried to extort money from a resident's house, the report said. Upon receiving information about the incident, police rushed to the spot and rescued Mondal in a critical condition.

He was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead around 2:00am, Assistant Superintendent of Police (Pangsha Circle) Debrata Sarkar said, according to the report.

Mondal's body was sent to Rajbari Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, Sarkar said.

Most of his associates fled after the incident, but police arrested one man and recovered firearms from his possession.

According to the police, Mondal had at least two cases filed against him, including a murder case. The incident comes a week after another Hindu man, Dipu Das, was lynched and his body set on fire over blasphemy allegations in Mymensingh.

Police and other law enforcement agencies have made 12 arrests in the case so far. Das' killing sparked widespread protests by factory workers, students and rights groups in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh, and India expressed its concerns as well.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' interim government has said it would take care of Das' minor child, as well as his wife and parents.

## IRREGULAR by MANJU



But I wished for a pepper spray



## MERRY CHRISTMAS

Swimmers take a Christmas Day dip in Blackroot Pool at Sutton Park, in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, England, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chitradurga (Karnataka), Dec 25:** At least six persons, including a child, were killed when a speeding truck crashed against a luxury sleeper bus that caught fire under the impact in this district in the wee hours of Thursday, a senior police official said.

While the East Zone Inspector General of Police Ravikanth Gowda had earlier said nine people were killed, citing preliminary investigation, later he and the district police chief said that five persons lost their lives. It later emerged that a child was among those killed along with her mother in the accident. "With this, the number of people killed in this accident is six," SP Ranjith Kumar Bandaru told reporters in Chitradurga.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah condoled the

deaths. Both the PM and the CM announced ex-gratia to the next of kin of the deceased.

Siddaramaiah also said a proper probe would be conducted into the fatal accident.

The accident happened after the container truck jumped a road divider and collided with the oncoming bus, Gowda told reporters.

The bus with 32 occupants, including 30 passengers was on its way from Bangalore to Gokarna. The vehicle was engulfed in flames under the impact of the collision and most of the deceased were burnt alive inside the bus at Golarthi in Hiriyur Taluk, he added.

"As per the investigation so far, it (container lorry) directly hit the diesel tank (of the bus), leading to diesel tank leak and fire," Gowda said.

Another bus from T Dasrahalli to Dandeli with 42 school children that was behind the ill-fated bus just escaped the accident.

## Odisha's Maoist head Ganesh gunned down

**Uike, 69, who carried a bounty of ₹1.1 crore on his head, was among 4 Naxals killed by security personnel in Kandhamal Thursday morning**

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 25:** Security forces killed top Maoist leader Ganesh Uike, who had a bounty of ₹1.1 crore on his head, along with three others, in an encounter in Kandhamal Thursday morning, in what is described as one of Odisha's biggest anti-Naxal operations in recent years. Uike, a central committee member of the CPI (Maoist), headed the outfit's operations in Odisha, making him one of the state's most wanted Maoist leaders. The operation comes amid intensified anti-Naxal campaigns in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and other affected states, in line with the Centre's target of eliminating Left-Wing Extremism by March 2026. However, villagers, tribal leaders, and human rights activists in Maoist-affected regions have repeatedly criticised such actions, alleging that innocent people are often falsely branded as Maoists or Naxals and killed in what they describe as 'fake encounters'.

"CPI (Maoist) central committee member Uike, 69, was heading the banned outfit in Odisha since December 2024," said Sanjeeb Panda, an ADG-rank officer who is in charge of anti-Naxal



wing, involved 23 teams – 20 of SOG of Odisha Police, two of CRPF and one of BSF.

Taking to X, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said, "In a major operation in Kandhamal, Odisha, 6 Naxalites, including Central Committee Member Ganesh Uike, have been neutralised so far. With this major breakthrough, Odisha stands at the threshold of becoming completely free from Naxalism. We are resolved to eliminate Naxalism before the 31st of March 2026." Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said, "Today, Odisha has achieved a remarkable success in the campaign to build a Naxal-free India."

DGP YB Khurana said, "The killing of a central committee member is a big success for Odisha Police. It has broken the backbone of the Maoists in the state." "This is one of the biggest operations against Maoists in Odisha in recent times. We thank the security personnel involved in the operation. We are determined to meet the Union Home Minister's target of eliminating Naxalism by March 2026," he added.

This is for the first time in recent times that a Maoist commander of central committee member rank has been killed by security forces in Odisha, he said.

They contended that the HC passed the order without considering that the trial court observed that Sengar must remain in jail for the rest of his natural life.

## Official work to go paperless soon

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 25:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday said official work at district and block level offices will go paperless soon, as the government is expanding the OSWAS.

Majhi was addressing the state-level celebration of Good Governance Day observed on the occasion of the birthday of former PM AB Vajpayee. At the event, Majhi launched the CM Dashboard, an extension of the Odisha State Workflow Automation System (OSWAS) to the district and block levels, and dedicated the 'Aam Sathi Unified WhatsApp Chatbot' to public for better quality medical and water supply related services.



150 essential public services will be available through 'Aam Sathi Unified WhatsApp Chatbot'.

"Following the mantra of good governance of Vajpayee ji and the administrative reforms of Modi ji, our 18-month BJP government is working for the welfare of 4.5 crore people of Odisha," he said.

On the occasion, Majhi also inaugurated a photo exhibition organised by I&PR department here.

## SUSPENSION OF SENGAR'S SENTENCE CHALLENGED IN SC

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 25:** A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging a Delhi High Court (HC) order suspending the jail term of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case.

The petition filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar has sought a stay on the HC order.

They contended that the HC passed the order without considering that the trial court observed that Sengar must remain in jail for the rest of his natural life.

The HC has committed a grave error in law as well as on facts in granting bail/suspension of sentence to Sengar despite his serious criminal antecedents and his established involvement in the heinous offences of rape, they said.

On December 23, the HC suspended the jail term of Sengar, who is serving life imprisonment in the Unnao rape case, saying he has already served seven years and five months in prison.

He will, however, remain in jail since he is also serving 10 years' imprisonment in the custodial death case of the victim's father.

## Beijing: US trying to thwart China-India ties

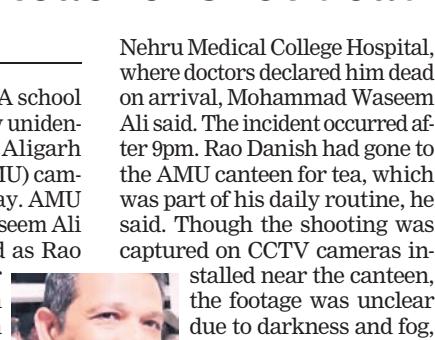
**Beijing:** China accused the US Thursday of distorting its defence policy in an effort to thwart an improvement in China-India ties. Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian was responding to a question at a press briefing on whether China might exploit a recent easing of tensions with India over disputed border areas to keep ties between the United States and India from deepening. China views its ties with India from a strategic and long-term perspective, Lin said, adding that the border issue was a matter between China and India and "we object to any country passing judgment about this issue".

P10

## UP school teacher shot dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Aligarh (UP), Dec 25:** A school teacher was shot dead by unidentified assailants on the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) campus, police said Thursday. AMU Proctor Mohammad Waseem Ali identified the deceased as Rao Danish Ali, a teacher at ABK Union High School, affiliated with the university.



On Wednesday night, Rao Danish Ali was walking near the Kennedy Auditorium with two of his colleagues when some masked men accosted him and fired at him from point-blank range after briefly talking to him, the proctor told PTI.

He collapsed on the spot and was rushed to the Jawaharlal

## Army personnel can now use Instagram with riders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 25:** The Indian Army has brought a change in its social media guidelines under which its personnel can now sign up on Instagram, but with a rider that they can use it only as passive observers. They can view posts, but cannot post content or comments on the platform, the source said.

Essentially, no "user-generated content" is allowed, so even "liking" a post would fall in that category, the source added.

Earlier, Army personnel could sign up and use X, but not Instagram.

"The restrictions already apply on X, so Army personnel using X can only view posts, but cannot post, repost or comment on them," another source said.

"The reason behind this

defence establishment said. "The revised guidelines essentially mean that Army personnel can now sign up on Instagram, but with the condition that they can use it only as passive observers. They can view posts, but cannot post content or comments on the platform," the source said.

change in guidelines is essentially that the information age is changing, and the Army cannot keep itself away from this information world," the source said.

Through social media, Army personnel can see, observe and gain information, and keep themselves abreast of the happenings in and out of the country, the sources said.

"But, one has to ensure that no sensitive information is leaked inadvertently on social media platforms, and hence they have to use them as passive observers," they said.

During an interactive session held here in November as part of the Chanakya Defence Dialogue, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi had emphasised the necessity of keeping a smartphone.

However, he also underlined the difference between "reacting impulsively" and "responding thoughtfully". A soldier can keep in touch with his family or read e-books online, so a smartphone is a necessity today. Gen Dwivedi had said when asked how the Army looks at Gen Z, given that they are set to play a major role in the making of a Viksit Bharat.

Today's generation is socially conscious, digitally fluent and globally connected, he had said.

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# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST



accuracy • reliability • trust

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

### ARIES

Today, you may be stumped from some mysterious and wonderful event. That, or you may encounter an unexpected yet advantageous incident. It may not exactly be path-breaking, but it is sure to make you take stock of things. Also, you may find it difficult to meet deadlines today.



### TAURUS

You are likely to become too ambitious today and strive to outdo others. So says Ganesha. You will be over eager to do some thing big, lay your hands on something precious and valuable. Though you are quite likely to succeed to some extent you over enthusiasm may land you in serious problems that may affect your persona; and private life.



### GEMINI

You will be busy organising some religious function today or in visiting a place of religious significance. You will encounter expenses in religious and charitable work. However, you should guard against ignoring your daily work in pursuit of all these matters, says Ganesha.



### CANCER

You will labour more to finish pending tasks. You will give priority to career compared to personal chores. So you will be caught up in your career and business riddles. By evening, however, you will have cheerful moments as Ganesha sees you having cherishing time with your beloved.



### LEO

You will be able to meet all challenges and obstacles successfully. Your ultimate goal is to come out victorious from any situations. There is a possibility that you will have to face severe competition in business or trade. Personal life will proceed without any hiccups though, says Ganesha.



### VIRGO

Your renewed enthusiasm for life will bring about a radical change in you. Ganesha says today is a good time to let others see how important and how brilliant you can be. Your intelligence will become very evident as you demonstrate how things should be done.



### LIBRA

Ganesha says you will try to gain knowledge in new topics today. You will feel enthusiasm and a feeling of positivity today. You will show more interest when talking with friends and this will make you come closer to them. There will be benefit to you from your life partner. You will be happy to be in the company of a close relative today.



### SCORPIO

The ground beneath you seems a bit shaky; watch your steps. A time would come when your confidence would be shattered, however, don't let set-backs and failures affect you. Adapt the attitude of 'this too shall pass' and the rest would fall in place, says Ganesha.



### SAGITTARIUS

A cheerful you, your energy level is on an all time high. Ganesha foresees that you will enrol you name for a correspondence or a part-time course. This will boost your confidence and brush up your memory as well. People who are in legal profession will have a rocking day ahead.



### CAPRICORN

You are a die-hard romantic and with every plan to please your sweetheart, you are taking him/her closer to the cloud nine. But, don't live in fantasy world, warns Ganesha, as problems are going to follow you everywhere. If you are a businessman, your rivals may give you a hard time.



### AQUARIUS

You will remember this day for the rest of life as today you will make some important decisions and give a new direction to your life. You are in for a windfall and cherry on the cake will be all the recognition and rewards you get for your sincerity and hard work, predicts Ganesha.



### PISCES

You will finally realize the worth of your resources today. You will take a decision to increase your savings and clamp down on unnecessary expenses. Your expenses are likely to increase temporarily. It is a good idea to invest in debt schemes today, says Ganesha.



## Rashmika celebrates growth & gratitude

**Mumbai:** As 2025 draws to a close, the year stands out for delivering several memorable cinematic moments, with Rashmika Mandanna emerging as one of its most celebrated performers. Beginning the year with *Chhavaa* and concluding it with *The Girlfriend*, the actress showcased remarkable versatility across genres. Reflecting on her journey, Rashmika shared that she feels immensely proud of the year she has had, adding that seeing her friends, family and extended circle happy makes all her hard work worthwhile.

Describing the emotions she carries forward from 2025, the actress said she feels deeply content, joyful and loved, grateful for everything the year has given her. Her performance in *The Girlfriend* particularly resonated with audiences, touching many lives with its subtle yet powerful portrayal, especially among women. Rashmika noted that the role came naturally to her, as she simply stayed true to herself and her belief in standing by women.

She also expressed heartfelt gratitude to director Rahul Ravindran for writing such a sensitive female character and praised the producers for backing a story told from a woman's perspective. Concluding the conversation, Rashmika said she is happy to see more female-led narratives taking shape and promised to continue working hard to tell honest stories through a lens.

AGENCIES

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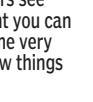
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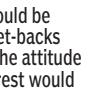
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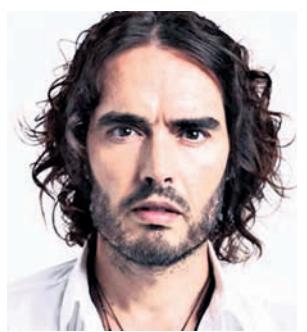
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## CULKIN REVEALS THE REASON BEHIND HIS ACTING HIATUS

Macaulay Culkin, the former child star of *Home Alone*, recently revealed that after early success, he stepped away from acting to experience real life and spend time with people his own age. He shared this while appearing on the comedy show *Mythical Kitchen*

## FRESH RAPE, SEXUAL ASSAULT CHARGES AGAINST BRAND

British comedian and actor Russell Brand faces new legal trouble in the UK after being charged with two offences. According to a *BBC* report, the charges include one count of rape and one of sexual assault, as authorised by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in a new police statement



**Mumbai:** TV actress Priyanka Chahar has opened up about stepping into the iconic role in *Naagin 7* and how she handles inevitable comparisons with her predecessors.

Speaking exclusively to this news agency, she shared that she stays focused on giving her 100% to the character, embracing the challenge while honouring the legacy of the show. When asked about being compared to her predecessors, Priyanka said she stays focused on her performance and remains unaffected by comparisons.

"Yes, definitely, comparisons will be there and that is very normal. I feel one should take them in a positive way because comparisons happen everywhere. If there is any comparison, I would just like to say that since the show has had six seasons, there have been many iconic Naagins and all successful seasons."

"Season 7 as well, we are giving our best and putting in our 100 per cent effort. I will try to carry forward the legacy the way it has been so far. I am simply playing my character with honesty, and I will continue to give my 100 per cent, added Chahar.

Priyanka has been promoting her show on social media. In an Instagram post, she expressed her delight at getting the opportunity to embark on this new professional journey. IANS

## Priyanka on dealing with comparisons

# Janhvi hits new milestone



**Mumbai:** Janhvi Kapoor has achieved a significant milestone in her career by becoming the first Indian brand ambassador for global sportswear giant New Balance.

The collaboration marks an important step in the brand's expansion strategy in India, while further cementing Janhvi's growing influence across cinema, fashion and youth culture.

New Balance officially announced the partnership, describing it as a union of performance, individuality and personality. The association aligns seamlessly with Janhvi's evolving public image, one that blends strong fashion sensibilities with a visible commitment to fitness and self-expression. In a market like India, where entertainment plays a major role in shaping consumer choices, the collaboration brings together a popular screen presence with a brand that has steadily built its credibility in the sportswear and lifestyle space.

Over the years, Janhvi has developed a distinct identity through her film selections, style statements and fitness-focused lifestyle. Her strong connect with younger audiences, along with her increasing presence on global fashion platforms, positions her as a strategic choice for New Balance as it aims to strengthen its cultural relevance in the country.

Expressing her excitement, Janhvi shared that she has long admired New Balance for its focus on innovation and individuality. She added that the brand's philosophy of owning one's story resonates deeply with her, making this partnership both meaningful and personal.

AGENCIES



## TMMTMTM: A heartwarming romantic comedy



**T**he story revolves around Rehaan (Kartik Aaryan) and Rumi (Ananya Panday), who meet during a trip journey. As the trip progresses, the bond between them grows stronger. Rehaan eventually proposes marriage to Rumi, but Rumi is worried about her father, played by Jackie Shroff. She fears that if she marries Rehaan and moves to the US, who will stay with her father in India,

**TITLE:** *Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera Tu Meri (TMMTMTM)*

**CAST:** Kartik Aaryan, Ananya Panday, Neena Gupta, Jackie Shroff,

**DIRECTOR:** Sameer Vidwans,

**DURATION:** 2:41 hrs

especially since her younger sister is also set to move to Canada after her marriage.

Directed by Sameer Vidwans, the film is handled with great finesse. His direction is impressive, and the screenplay is well-structured. The cinematography is visually appealing and adds freshness to the narrative. The first half of the film is stronger and more engaging compared to the second half.

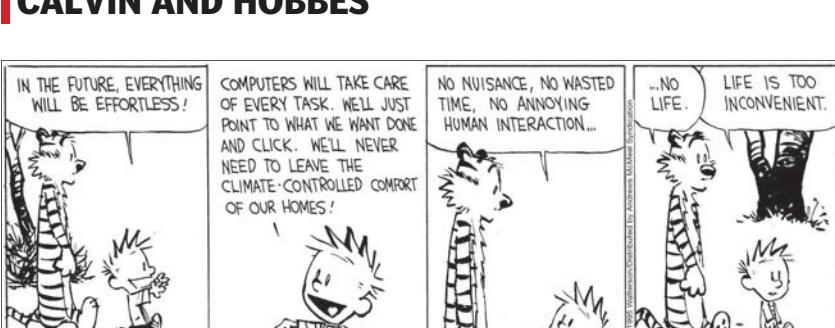
Talking about performances, Kartik delivers a solid act. He brings charm and depth to the character of Rehaan with his powerful performance. Ananya also does a commendable job, especially in several emotional scenes where she surprises with her expressive acting. Overall, *Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera Tu Meri* is a delightful romantic comedy. IANS



## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBES

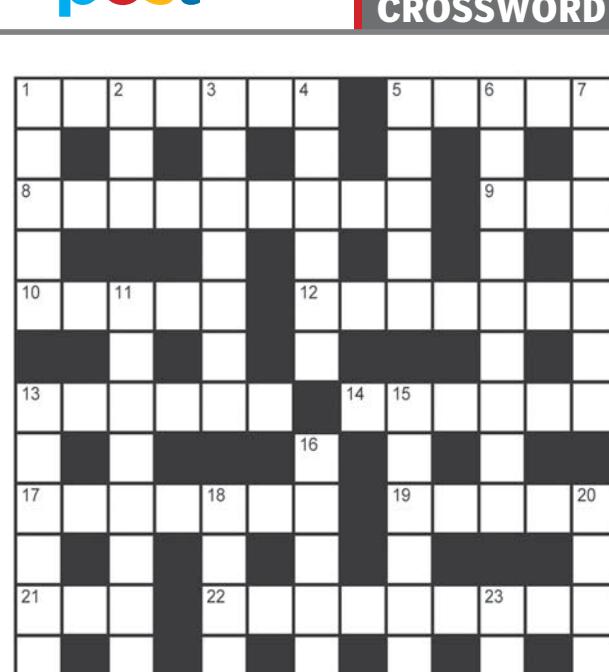


## BREVITY



## FUN POST

## CROSSWORD



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### Across

- 1 Transport, for some
- 5 Confronted
- 8 Words to a slowpoke (3,6)
- 9 Safety device
- 10 Relinquished
- 12 Oil source
- 13 Sound quality
- 14 Aquitania locale
- 17 Improvement
- 19 Sin city
- 21 Follow
- 22 Old printer type (3,6)
- 24 Flightless birds
- 25 File on a person
- 4 Sign up
- 5 Unclear
- 6 Troubled
- 7 Easement of tensions
- 11 Rabble-rouser
- 13 Storm warning?
- 15 Scamps
- 16 Not standing
- 18 Right hands
- 20 Kitchen utensil
- 23 King (Fr.)

### Down

- 1 No-frills
- 2 Chinese brew
- 3 Cheese type

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## SUDOKU

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



## CROSSWORD



## SUDOKU





He who chooses the infinite has been chosen by the infinite.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Rogue Hegemons

Although 2025 will probably be remembered as the year that US President Donald Trump upended the global trading system, the truth is that both of the world's hegemons, the United States and China, have gone rogue. Surging US protectionism and resurgent Chinese mercantilism are now twin scourges afflicting the rest of the world, especially developing countries.

While some apply the label "G-Zero" to today's leaderless world, it is more accurate to say that we are dealing with a "G-Negative-Two" world. Instead of providing global public goods, China and the US are inflicting global economic costs, and they are doing so in mutually reinforcing ways.

In some sense, Chinese mercantilism begat US protectionism. Trump's long-standing tariff obsession derives from his fury-fueled conviction that trade surpluses abroad have damaged the US economy, especially its manufacturing sector. In that world view, China, with its consistently large trade surpluses, was the provocateur-in-chief, even though in practice more countries have been targeted.

Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs in April, and the tumultuous iterations that followed, have made the US one of the world's most protectionist economies. On average, tariffs on exports of goods to the world's largest market have jumped from just over 2 per cent to 17 per cent, an eightfold increase. Not only has access to US markets been constrained, but it is also radically more uncertain, because tariffs have become an instrument for indulging the president's erratic whims and furthering private interests.

In lawsuits challenging Trump's justification for such sweeping tariffs, the Supreme Court has signaled that it will not second-guess the executive's authority to determine what qualifies as a threat to national security. Never mind that the same authority has been (implicitly) invoked to target Brazil for baldly political reasons, and to punish India for contradicting Trump's claim to have brokered the peace in its border skirmish with Pakistan in May. Restraining such an arbitrary and absurd exercise of presidential authority is surely the Court's core responsibility. But even if it does rule against Trump, he will have other ways to pursue the same protectionist agenda, and US trading partners will still be operating in a fog of uncertainty.

To be sure, the direct impact of Trump's tariffs on other countries has been obscured by other developments in the US economy, notably the AI boom, which has propped up demand and imports. But there have also been indirect effects, and chief among these is Chinese mercantilism.

Of course, mercantilism has been etched in China's economic DNA for centuries. The Financial Times recently reported that China is making trade impossible because "there is nothing it wants to import, nothing it does not believe it can make better and cheaper." It was an echo of 1793, when Imperial Britain's emissary, Lord Macartney, visited China to persuade Emperor Qianlong to open the Chinese market to British goods. In response, the emperor boasted:

"Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its own borders. There is therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce. But as the tea, silk and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces, are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we have permitted, as a signal mark of favour, that foreign hongs [merchant firms] should be established at Canton, so that your wants might be supplied and your country thus participate in our benefice."

Not only can we discern a similar attitude today, but Chinese mercantilism has been aggravated by Trump's tariffs. With access to US markets reduced and the Chinese growth model still so dependent on exports, the Chinese juggernaut has turned its focus to conquering markets elsewhere, especially in Southeast Asia. Proximate economic necessity has supercharged a deep-seated predilection.

As Shoumitro Chatterjee and I have documented, China's exports of low-value-added goods to developing countries have been rising sharply, undermining the competitiveness of these countries' own domestic industries. Despite rising wages, China still accounts for a large share of global exports, including in areas where it should have ceded space to poorer countries. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that China's exports are not the result of some natural advantage; rather, they are being sustained by its exchange-rate policy. As Brad Setser of the Council on Foreign Relations and others have argued, the renminbi is undervalued by about 20 per cent.

Thus, while the Trump tariffs exacerbate China's mercantilism, developing countries are opting for another round of protectionism to shield their domestic industries from the Chinese onslaught. Mexico, for example, has just imposed tariffs on goods from China and India. But while other countries are seeking to shield themselves from China, targeting only one country is difficult in today's world of complex supply chains. Inevitably, protectionism will become a broader phenomenon.

What does this tell us about the near-term future? In recent research, Dev Patel, Justin Sandefur, and I find that the heady convergence of developing countries toward Western standards of living stalled in the last decade. Slowing growth in the developing world has coincided with the reversal of globalization. Exports of low-value-added manufacturing products such as textiles, apparel, and furniture are the engine of development. If it stalls, the poorest people in the poorest parts of the world will be the first victims, and the blame will lie with the world's two hegemons.

The US and China have more in common than they would like to believe. Both are hijacking the global economy and limiting trading opportunities for everyone else

The writer is a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

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### WISDOM CORNER

To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

On the outskirts of every agony sits some observant fellow who points.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

No valid plans for the future can be made by those who have no capacity for living now.

ALAN WATTS

### FOCUS SCRAPPAGE POLICY

# JUNK CARS, FEED LOBBIES



The vehicle scrapping regime unfolding across Delhi and the NCR is not an environmental policy. It is a case study in administrative arrogance, policy laziness, and predatory governance masquerading as green virtue



Shivaji Sarkar

**NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD JUNKED ITS WAY TO PROSPERITY. INDIA, HOWEVER, APPEARS DETERMINED TO TRY**

**The US and China have more in common than they would like to believe. Both are hijacking the global economy and limiting trading opportunities for everyone else**

**I**ndia has perfected a rare form of innovation: the ability to repeatedly convert economic assets into liabilities, wealth into waste, and citizens into offenders—without ever fixing the original problem. The vehicle scrapping regime unfolding across Delhi and the NCR is not an environmental policy. It is a case study in administrative arrogance, policy laziness, and predatory governance masquerading as green virtue.

Delhi is a mere test case, preceding an all-India car scrap policy. The NCR has approximately 40 million vehicles. Of the 4 crore cars over 3 crore would be non-Euro 5, and the so called "end-of-life," stipulated to be banished. Strangely enough the Supreme Court does not find fault in the junking of almost Rs 18 trillion worth of people's wealth—the usable cars, in a region with terrible commuting system.

The metro hardly connects the NCR except suburbs in a linear way. Majority of the people having fine cars but "legally infirm" are having trouble in earning their livelihood as their movement is barred by Delhi government, which is less than one-fourth of the NCR. No country in the world junked its way to prosperity. India, however, appears determined to try.

The latest phase targets what the state euphemistically calls "end-of-life" 10-year-old vehicles. In Delhi alone, 62 lakh largely roadworthy, low-emission cars were slated for scrapping in July 2025 to feed a Rs 30-lakh-crore industry—a scale that should alarm any serious economy. Only a poor country with distorted priorities discards working capital so casually.

Delhi's winter pollution is not a discovery of the 21st century. Foggy, smog-laden winters have been recorded since 1951, again in 1971, and consis-

tently thereafter. The difference today is not pollution alone; it is how the state weaponises it. Every winter, AQI numbers are brandished like emergency sirens, followed by police action against citizens. Cars are seized on roads. Entry points into Delhi turn into choke points. In one recent episode, 4,000 vehicles were denied entry in a single day, paralysing traffic, delaying wage earners, disrupting offices, and crippling industrial movement.

Citizens who bought vehicles on loans—often their single biggest household investment—are treated as environmental criminals. This, in a region that spans 25 districts across Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan, none of which has a remotely adequate public transport network. You cannot criminalise private mobility when states have failed to provide public alternatives. What a shame!

Every day, new pollution records are flagged in Noida and East Delhi. But there is a conspicuous silence on the elephant in the room: the poorly located Jewar airport. The massive construction frenzy around Jewar has turned a 300-km belt—from East Delhi

to Bulandshahr, Aligarh, and Mathura—into a high-particulate zone. Continuous earthmoving, unregulated industrial activity, concrete batching plants, and truck movement have transformed the region's air quality. Yet no authority has the courage to acknowledge this. It is easier to stop a middle-class commuter than to question a mega-project blessed by powerful interests.

The vehicle scrapping policy is being sold as climate action. In reality, it is a mechanism to force consumption. People are being nudged—often shoved—into buying new vehicles regardless of financial capacity. This suits automobile manufacturers, scrappage operators, and a volatile EV lobby desperate for market capture. Today it is BS-IV. Tomorrow it is BS-VI. Already, there are whispers of pushing out Euro-3 vehicles barely five years old. This is a folly even the most developed nations refuse to commit. Germany, Japan, and the US regulate emissions through testing, not age-based extirmination of assets.

India, instead, chooses the crudest metric possible: age equals guilt. The message is clear—owning durable goods

is risky in India. The state may arbitrarily decide tomorrow that your refrigerator, house, or tractor is "obsolete." Such uncertainty kills capital formation, discourages savings, and entrenches poverty.

India loves boasting about trillion-dollar GDP milestones. Yet behind the propaganda lies a grim truth. Over 80 crore Indians depend on state food support. Per-capita income remains abysmally low—nearly twelve times lower than Japan's, despite similar GDP headlines.

A country cannot scrap its way to higher incomes. Destroying household assets does not create wealth; it transfers it upward. Every forced scrappage is a silent tax on the middle and lower-middle classes, imposed without parliamentary debate or public consent. This is why India remains trapped in a vortex of low productivity and low trust. The state sees citizens not as wealth creators, but as compliance units.

Environmental policy requires nuance—targeting gross polluters, industrial emissions, construction dust, crop burning, and urban planning failures. What India has chosen instead is spectacle: roadblocks, seizures, panic, and chaos. Pollution is real. But so is policy failure.

Until India learns that governance is about building systems, not breaking assets, the cycle will continue. Every winter will bring the same drama, every year a new excuse, every decade a fresh policy disaster dressed up as reform. India does not suffer from a lack of ideas. It suffers from an excess of bad ones—repeated endlessly, enforced brutally, and defended shamelessly. The Centre must step in and stop this inhuman, impractical exercise of forced scrappage, where cars are not regulated for emissions but segregated and junked to feed a predatory industry.

INFA

### SPECTRUM ARAVALLI RANGE

## One map changes everything

**T**he Supreme Court's order of 20 November, 2025 can still help save the Aravalli range. It asked for a "Management Plan for Sustainable Mining" for the whole Aravalli belt, from Gujarat to Delhi, and said no new mining leases should be given until this plan is ready.

At the same time, the SC accepted a new way to define an Aravalli hill for mining rules. Under this rule, only land that rises at least 100 metres above the nearby ground will be counted as an Aravalli hill. Groups of such hills within 500 metres will be treated as an Aravalli range. This may look clear, but it can reduce the area that is officially called "Aravalli", and that can reduce protection for many smaller hills.

On 17 December, the SC took up a fresh plea challenging the 100-metre rule and asked the Centre, the environment ministry, and the Haryana and Rajasthan governments to respond. The plea says many smaller hills are ecologically important and should not lose protection only because they are below 100 metres. This means the definition is still under challenge.

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) has warned about the same risk. In Rajasthan, FSI mapped 12,081 Aravalli hills that are at

least 20 metres high. Under the 100-metre rule, only 1,048 hills still qualify, about 8.7%. That means more than 90% of the mapped hills could fall outside the Aravalli label for mining control.

This matters because the Aravallis are not only tall peaks. They are a very old mountain system made of many small ridges, low hills, and rocky plateaus, running from Delhi through Haryana and Rajasthan to Gujarat. Many landforms may not reach 100 metres, but they are still part of the same connected natural system.

These hills protect people and farms in several ways. They help slow down dust and sand moving from the Thar Desert toward Haryana and Delhi. They also help recharge groundwater because rainwater can soak into cracks in the rocks and soil. When hills are mined or levelled, water runs off faster and recharge reduces.

If large parts of the Aravallis lose protection, the result can be ecological destruction. Mining and cutting roads can strip vegetation, break wildlife habitat into small patches, and push animals out. Blasting and heavy trucks can increase erosion, silt up streams, and make floods worse during heavy rain. Over time, less green cover and

less recharge can raise heat, worsen dust, and weaken local climate stability.

The definition matters because rules often follow the official map. If smaller hills are no longer treated as Aravallis, it may become easier to mine them, cut roads through them, or convert them for buildings.

In 2009, the SC restricted mining in parts of Haryana's Aravalli region, yet illegal mining continued in some places. Between April and June 2025, officials in Nuh registered 31 FIRs and seized 59 trucks linked to illegal mining. Reports said a hill near the Rajasthan border was almost completely removed.

Another recent update came on 22 December, when the Union environment minister repeated that no new mining leases will be allowed until the mining plan is finalised. He also said only a very small part of the wider Aravalli landscape is eligible for mining and that existing mines must follow strict safeguards. This supports the pause, but it does not settle the definition dispute.

There is also a policy mismatch. Rajasthan has started restoration work, including the Aravali Green Development Project across 3,700 hectares with about Rs 250 crore set aside. Such

projects aim to restore green cover and reduce erosion. But if the legal definition shrinks the Aravallis, many degraded ridges may not get the same level of protection or priority.

A single height rule may be easy to measure, but nature is not that simple. A 40-metre ridge can be important for groundwater and dust control. Small hills can also support native trees and grasses and help wildlife move between habitats. If these landforms are removed, the damage is often permanent because the rock and soil structure cannot be rebuilt easily.

The mining plan should use detailed mapping, strong safeguards, and public transparency. It should identify recharge zones and fragile slopes, set strict limits, monitor activity closely, and punish illegal mining quickly. It should also publish maps and compliance reports so local communities can flag violations. If India chooses wisely now, the Aravallis can remain a living shield for air and water in the region.

**Malayaranjan Sahoo is a Postdoctoral Fellow at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia. Mohini Gupta is Assistant Professor at Christ University, Bangalore.**

### Letters

#### TO THE EDITOR

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

**Letters**

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# Christmas celebrated with festive fervour



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 25:** The Capital city resonated with prayers, carols and festive cheer as Christmas was celebrated across Bhubaneswar Thursday, marking the birth of Jesus Christ with devotion, joy and communal harmony.

Major churches in the City, including St. Vincent Pro-Cathedral Church at Satya Nagar and the Church of Christ (Union Church), witnessed large congregations as devotees attended midnight Mass and special prayer services on Christmas Eve. Churches were beautifully illuminated with lights, stars, Christmas trees and nativity scenes, creating a spiritually uplifting atmosphere.

The prayer services featured

carol singing, Bible readings and sermons highlighting the message of peace, love and compassion. Members of the Christian community were joined by people from other faiths, reflecting the City's inclusive and harmonious spirit.

Extending his greetings on the occasion, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati conveyed warm Christmas wishes, describing the festival as a symbol of hope, peace and goodwill. He urged people to uphold mutual respect, compassion and cultural harmony, which have long been hallmarks of Odisha's social fabric.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi wished the people of Odisha a joyful and blessed Christmas, stating that the festival embodies the values of love, unity and service to

humanity. He expressed hope that the teachings of Jesus Christ would inspire citizens to strengthen social harmony and extend care to the needy.

Beyond the churches, the festive mood was visible across Bhubaneswar. Markets, malls and public spaces were decked up with Christmas decorations, while hotels and community centres hosted special Christmas programmes, brunches and cultural events. A Christmas carnival and charity initiatives further added to the celebrations.

People from different walks of life exchanged greetings, sweets and gifts and even plants, as Bhubaneswar once again celebrated Christmas not just as a religious festival, but as a celebration of shared joy, peace and unity.



**ENCHANTING MOVE:** Artiste perform Odissi during International Odissi Dance Festival organised by Jyoti Kala Mandir at Bhanjakala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 25:** After four days of continuous agitation, postgraduate and PhD students of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) Thursday called off their hunger strike following an assurance from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to address their long-pending demand for a monthly stipend.

Agriculture and allied science students had been on an indefinite hunger strike at the OUAT campus, braving the winter chill to demand financial assistance for research scholars.



More than 200 postgraduate and PhD students joined the protest, stating that despite pursuing higher education and research, they receive no stipend at the university level.

On the occasion of Good Governance Day, the protesting students submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister in the presence of Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh.

Chief Minister Majhi assured them that their demands would be addressed at the earliest, following which the students called off their strike.

It may be noted that around 268 students enroll each year in postgraduate and PhD programmes at OUAT, but the lack of financial support has fuelled growing discontent. Despite repeated representations to university authorities and the state government, and even after proposals were forwarded by the university, no concrete outcome emerged, prompting students to launch a peaceful, round-the-clock hunger strike.

## OUAT students end strike after CM assurance

POST NEWS NETWORK

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## Comedian Gulua alleges death threats, extortion

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 25:** Popular Odia comedian and YouTuber Gulua (Ashis Kumar Das) has alleged that he is facing death threats and extortion demands. Sharing a video on his social media, Das claimed that some individuals initially demanded ₹1 crore, threatening to defame and physically harm him if he failed to pay. Following negotiations, the alleged extortion amount was reportedly reduced to ₹50 lakh.

In the 2-minute-37-second video, Das said he is currently in hiding and that he and his staff have received threats on three separate occasions. "I don't know whether I will be dead or alive by tomorrow. I urge people not to take this lightly and help me," he appealed. Das added that he had approached Balia police station to lodge a complaint but was unable to pursue the case, alleging that the blackmailers have strong connections with the police and influential individuals.

Meanwhile, Das' wife, Barsha, has accused him of an ex-

tramarital affair and questioned the authenticity of his claims. She alleged that he engaged in the affair without divorcing her and forced her out of their home. Barsha stated that she plans to approach the court with evidence against him.

### EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 52-SBP-TRD-OT-2025-26, Date : 19.12.2025

**NAME OF WORK:** TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION TO THE WORK OF "PROVISION OF 100M S/NECK AT BOTH END OF R4/4 DUNGIRIPALI STATION FOR LOCO REVERSAL.

**Approximate Cost (₹) :** 34,83,240.98, **EMD (₹) :** 69,700.00, **Completion Period :** 09 Months.

**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1530 Hrs. of 12.01.2026

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : <http://www.reps.gov.in>

**Note :** The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.

**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Sambalpur**

## President Murmu releases Constitution in Santhali

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 25:** President Droupadi Murmu Thursday released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language during an event at Rashtrapati Bhavan, expressing the hope that this initiative will enable tribal communities to read and comprehend the statute in their native language.

Addressing the gathering, the President said that it is a matter of pride and joy for all the Santhali people that the Constitution of India is now available in the Santhali language, written in the Ol Chiki script.

The President said that this year, we are celebrating the centenary of the Ol Chiki script. She appreciated the Union Minister of Law and Justice and his team for bringing the Constitution of India in Ol Chiki script in its centenary year.

Among the dignitaries present on the occasion were Vice President CP Radhakrishnan and Union Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal.

The Santhali language, which was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution through the 92nd Amendment Act, 2003, is one of the most ancient living languages of India. It is spoken by a significant number of tribal people in Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar.



She said the Constitution's Santhali version will help tribal people read and understand the Constitution in their own language.

Speaking in the regional language, the President said, "I am delighted to release the Constitution of India in the Santali language written in the Ol Chiki script. The availability of the Constitution in the Santali language is a source of immense happiness for the entire Santali community."

"All Santali people living in Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam, and Bihar will now be able to fully understand the Constitution written in their mother tongue and script. They will be able to properly comprehend the

articles of the Constitution," she said.

The Vice President thanked President Murmu, under whose guidance the initiative was undertaken.

He said that this initiative will enable Santhali-speaking people to read and understand the Constitution in their own language and contribute to nation-building in a bigger way.

The Vice President also recalled that during President Murmu's tenure as the then Governor of Jharkhand, she had initiated several tribal welfare measures and promoted tribal culture and languages, and he continued to carry forward her legacy during his own tenure as Governor of the state.

### MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	89.84 <span style="color: green;">▲ 0.19</span>	SENSEX	85408.70 <span style="color: red;">▼ 116.14</span>	GOLD	₹138,179 <span style="color: green;">▲ 82</span>
EURO	105.84 <span style="color: red;">▼ 0.06</span>	NIFTY	26142.10 <span style="color: red;">▼ 35.05</span>	SILVER	₹223,730 <span style="color: red;">▼ 60</span>

## VIVITSA WORLD SCHOOL OPENS IN SAMBALPUR



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 25:** Vivitsa World School was inaugurated at Bhalukunda, Sambalpur Thursday marking the launch of a new institution aimed at nurturing academically strong, value-based learners. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan attended the event as chief guest and jointly inaugurated the campus with other dignitaries.

Speaking on the occasion, Pradhan said he hoped Vivitsa World School would open new avenues for students. He referred to the discovery of 10,000-year-old letters and pictures in the Rairakhol area as evidence of the region's ancient tradition of intellectual exchange, expressing confidence that the school would carry this legacy forward and eventually evolve into a university. He also praised the people of Sambalpur for their extraordinary imagination, which he said is rarely found elsewhere in the world.

Addressing the gathering,

the dignitaries underscored the importance of quality education, strong foundational learning and the role of schools in nurturing socially responsible, future-ready citizens. Parents, educators and local residents attended the event, reflecting widespread interest and optimism about the new institution.

School chairperson Debabani Debnani Pansari said the school believes education must extend beyond textbooks, with a vision to create a nurturing environment where children grow into confident, compassionate and responsible individuals guided by strong lifelong values.

Saransh Pansari (Co-founder), Rita Pansari and Ramesh Agrawal, directors of the Ramesh Education Foundation, along with co-founders Rahul Agarwal and Khusboo Agarwal, were present at the launch. The programme concluded with interactive sessions with parents and a guided tour of the campus. For the current academic year, admissions are open from Class I to Class VIII.

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## NOBEL PRIZES



## NOTABLE MOMENTS

## First American Pope

Robert Francis Prevost made history as the first American elected pope, becoming the 267th leader of the Roman Catholic Church. The 69-year-old cardinal chose the name Pope Francis, succeeding Pope Benedict XVI, who served from 2013 to 2025. Born in the United States and also holding Peruvian citizenship, Pope Francis has spent much of his life in Peru. He was elected by 133 cardinals sequestered in the Sistine Chapel, leading the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

## Louvre jewel heist

On 19 October 2025, thieves disguised as construction workers stole eight pieces of the French Crown Jewels, valued at approximately €88 million from the Galerie d'Apollon (lit. Apollo's Gallery) of the Louvre in Paris, France. The robbery took less than eight minutes, of which the thieves spent four in the museum itself, and occurred during regular opening hours. It was the first art theft from the Louvre since the painting 'Le Chemin de la Croix' was stolen in 1998.

## Coldplay concert scandal

During Coldplay's July 16, 2025, concert, executives Andy Burnham and Kristin Cabot appeared on the kiss-cam, sparking viral attention and speculation about an affair. Both were placed on leave by Astronomer and later resigned. Cabot filed for divorce, though she had been privately separated from her husband beforehand.

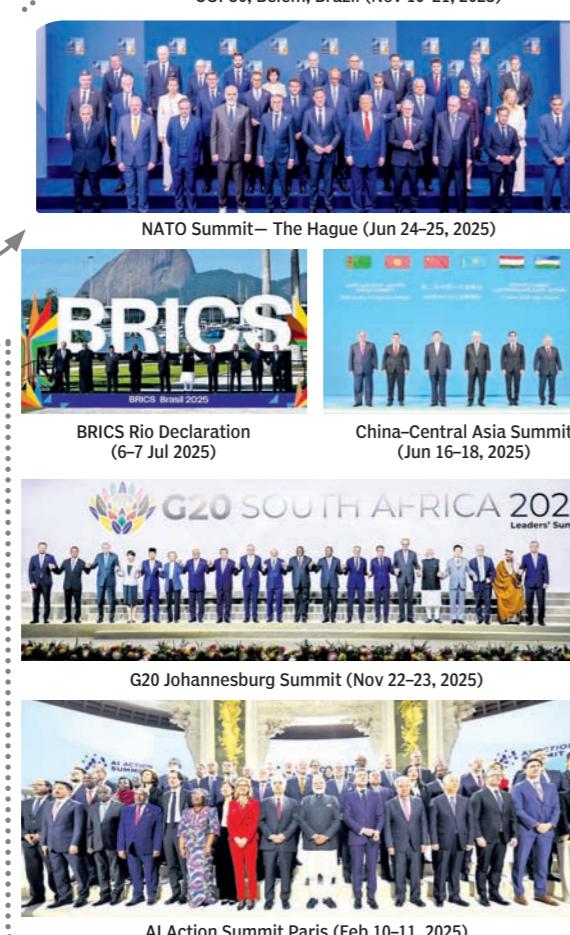
## Historic homecoming

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams returned to Earth on March 18, 2025, aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule with fellow astronauts. After an unplanned nine-month stay on the International Space Station (ISS) due to issues with the Boeing Starliner, they arrived in successfully splashing down near Florida after a 17-hour journey home from the ISS, ending a historic extended mission.

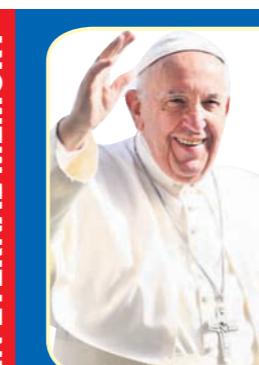
## GLOBAL CALAMITY

Disaster	Date / Period	Main Affected Areas	Deaths
Hurricane Melissa	21 Oct - 4 Nov	Jamaica, Cuba	102
Typhoon Kalmagti	October 31 - Nov 7	Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand	288
Myanmar earthquake	28 March	Myanmar, Thailand, Southwestern China, Vietnam	5,456+
Cyclone Dithaw	Nov 26 - Dec 4	Sri Lanka, India	647+
Cyclone Senyar	Nov 25 - Nov 30	Southern Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia	2,200+
Pakistan Monsoon Floods	Jun - Sept	Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan	1,142
European Floods	August	Germany, Belgium, Italy	159
West Africa Floods	Jun - Sept	Nigeria, Botswana, South Africa	278
Texas floods	July 4-5	Texas Hill Country, Central Texas	135+

## SUMMITS OF SIGNIFICANCE

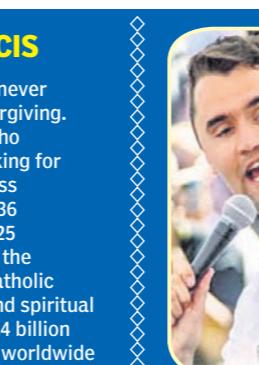


## IN ETERNAL MEMORY



## POPE FRANCIS

The Lord never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness  
Born : October 14, 1936  
Died : September 10, 2025  
Leader of the Roman Catholic Church and spiritual head to 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide



## CHARLIE KIRK

I want to be remembered for courage for my faith...  
Born : 17 Dec 1936  
Died : 21 Apr 2025  
Leader of the Roman Catholic Church and spiritual head to 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide



## DICK CHENEY

Freedom means the freedom to make mistakes  
Born : 30 Jan 1941  
Died : 3 Nov 2025  
46th US Vice President (2001-2009), one of the most powerful modern American leaders. Key architect of post-9/11 foreign policy, including wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, his death stirred global reflections on US influence in world security and diplomacy



## RAILA ODINGA

Democracy is not given; it is fought for  
Born : 7 Jan 1945  
Died : 15 Oct 2025  
Veteran Kenyan statesman and former Prime Minister whose long career shaped democratic reform across Africa



## NANCY LEFTENANT-COLON

The sky is the limit  
Born : 26 Nov 1939  
Died : 14 Apr 2025  
Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister (2003-2009), known as "Pak Lah," he championed moderate political freedoms, expanded political rights, and promoted anti-corruption and human-capital development

## WORLD IN TRANSITION

## ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, CONFLICTS, DIPLOMACY &amp; BREAKTHROUGHS THAT SHAPED 2025

In 2025, illegal immigration moved to the forefront of global politics, prompting governments to reassess border controls, asylum policies and refugee quotas. Several Western nations tightened entry rules, led by the United States, which rolled out tougher border enforcement and broader travel restrictions. Migration pressures driven by conflict, economic instability and climate stress intensified, while protests against immigration policies spread from London and Berlin to Toronto and Sydney, underscoring public concern over integration, housing shortages and national security



## GLOBAL ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN

The US government has implemented one of the toughest enforcement agendas in recent history, sharply reducing illegal crossings and increasing deportations.

The US government expanded its travel ban to include 39 countries, affecting travel, visas, and asylum options—citing national security reasons.

Several EU countries strengthened asylum rules under new EU re-

forms. Nations such as Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands began faster deportations and classified countries like India, Bangladesh, and Morocco as "safe," reducing asylum approvals.

In its biggest immigration shake-up in nearly half a century, the UK

is planning to bring in new rules to clamp down on soaring immigration figures.

Australia similarly restricted im-

migration in 2024-2025 to address housing strains from rapid population growth via newcomers. Targets reduced low-wage temporary migrants and students, prioritising high-skilled permanent residents to curb migration.

The UAE launched a strict enforcement drive, flagging over 32,000 visa violations in early 2025. Authorities carried out inspections, workplace raids, and deportations, showing a zero-tolerance policy toward illegal residency. Canada sharply reduced approvals for student and

temporary visas, rejecting a large share of applications and tightening border entry checks.

Cuomo, as an independent, to become the youngest person in a century to lead the largest city in the US.

"My friends, we have toppled a political dynasty," the self-described democratic socialist told the crowd during a victory speech.

Mandani has become the first South Asian and Muslim to lead the city. In his victory speech, he spoke of a "new age".

He has cited agreements

involving Israel-Hamas, Israel-Iran, India-Pakistan, Rwanda-DR Congo, Thailand-Cambodia, Armenia-Azerbaijan, Egypt-Ethiopia, and Serbia-Kosovo. Earlier this month, Trump received FIFA's inaugural Peace Prize, a controversial award that reinforced his self-styled image as a peace-maker.

However, several countries have re-enforced border violence has resumed between Thailand and Cambodia, while Serbia-Kosovo tensions remain unresolved, Israeli military operations have continued in Gaza and Lebanon despite ceasefire announcements. Trump has also failed to deliver on his pledge to end the Ukraine war, with negotiations stalled over territorial disputes. As conflicts persist, critics argue that Trump's claim of being a "President of Peace" remains highly contested.

Sanae Takaichi made history by becoming Japan's first female prime minister in October. However, her surprisingly male-dominated cabinet and socially conservative track record have left some women ambivalent in a country that lags on gender equality.

On 29 January 2025, during the Syrian Revolution Victory Conference in Damascus, the Syrian General Command appointed Ahmed al-Sharaa as president for the transitional period after he had served as the de facto leader following the fall of the Assad regime.

Zohran Mamdani, 34, has won New York City's race for mayor in a contest that rallied young voters and sparked debate about the future direction of the US Democratic Party.

Ugandan-born Mamdani, a Democrat, beat former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, who repeatedly portrayed himself as a global peacemaker, claiming credit for easing tensions in

Zohran Mamdani wins New York City mayoral election

AL-SHARA'A HEADS POST-ASSAD SYRIA

Western military aid continued amid political fatigue in Europe and the US.

Russia intensified missile

attacks on Ukrainian energy and civilian infrastructure.

Russia expanded long-range drone strikes deep inside Russian territory.

People facing acute hunger globally

318-343 million

People in catastrophic hunger (near famine)

1.9 million

Children in hunger (global)

118 million

Children in hunger due to conflict

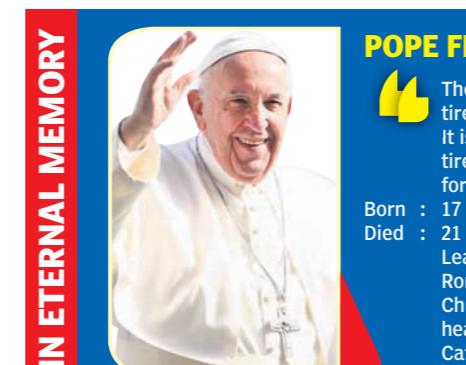
63 million

Displaced persons (conflict + violence)

120 million

Countries with acute hunger issues

68 countries

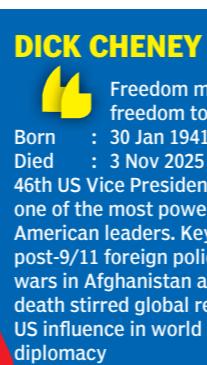


## TRUMP RETURNS TO THE WHITE HOUSE



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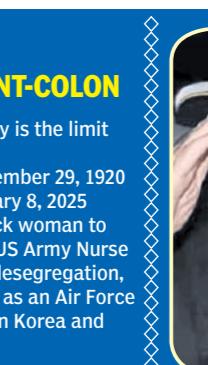
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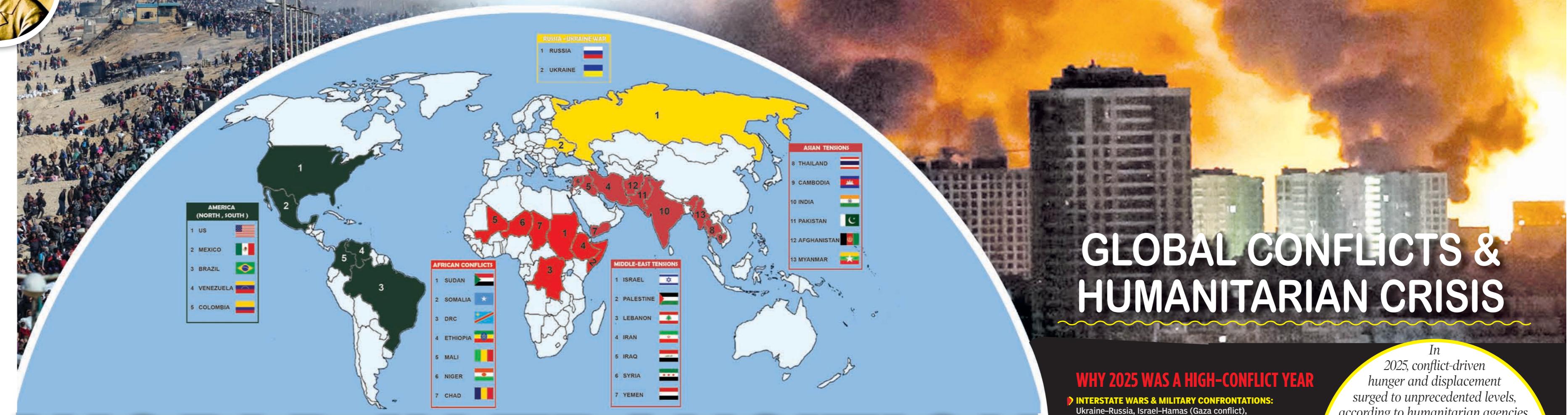
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## ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI

Leadership is service to the people  
Born : 26 Nov 1939  
Died : 14 Apr 2025  
Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister (2003-2009), known as "Pak Lah," he championed moderate political freedoms, expanded political rights, and promoted anti-corruption and human-capital development



## GLOBAL CONFLICTS &amp; HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

In 2025, conflict-driven hunger and displacement surged to unprecedented levels, according to humanitarian agencies, as wars and instability crippled food systems and basic services. Hundreds of millions are acutely food insecure, with children facing the highest risks of malnutrition and disease. The crises span multiple regions, underscoring the widening humanitarian fallout of prolonged global conflicts



## AFRICAN CONFLICTS &amp; HUNGER

Sudan | Chad | DR Congo | Somalia | Ethiopia | Sahel (Mali, Niger, Chad)

**SUDAN:** 1.4mn displaced; 30mn in need of aid; 24mn with acute hunger  
**DRC:** 7mn displaced; 26.6mn food insecure (thousands killed)  
**CHAD:** 1.8mn displaced (including 723K Sudanese refugees); 3.7mn food insecure



**ISRAEL-PALESTINE:** Gaza War, West Bank incursions, factional fighting  
**LEBANON/SYRIA:** Escalation between Israel and Hezbollah  
**IRAN-ISRAEL:** Ongoing regional proxy clashes  
**PALESTINIANS KILLED:** 65,000-70,000+ (majority civilians)  
**CHILDREN KILLED:** Thousands killed and many more injured – estimates report 15,000+ child deaths and 50,000+ children killed/injured collective  
**DISPLACED PERSONS:** 2 million+ internally displaced in Gaza  
**ISRAELIS KILLED:** 1,139 since October 2023



## RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

UKRAINE EXPANDED LONG-RANGE DRONE STRIKES DEEP INSIDE RUSSIAN TERRITORY

Russia intensified missile attacks on Ukrainian energy and civilian infrastructure

Western military aid continued amid political fatigue in Europe and the US

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118 million

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120 million

Countries with acute hunger issues

68 countries



## national



**Direct Action, No Compromise.** As per provisions of the Illegal Immigrants (Expulsion) Act (sic), we are identifying and issuing expulsion orders against suspected individuals

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

**AIR QUALITY IMPROVES AS AQI DROPS TO 234**

The capital breathed slightly easier for the second consecutive day, with the air quality improving to the 'poor' category and an AQI of 234 recorded Thursday. Transport emissions and pollution from neighbouring cities continued to contribute significantly to the capital's air pollution load, according to official data



of the day quote

Today is the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee. His political style, which combined dignity and humanity, is a rare quality that makes even his opponents respect him

R N RAVI | TN GOVERNOR

No FSI study has been conducted saying what you are claiming. But I know the reason you are spreading these lies despite FSI issuing a categorical denial. Maybe your 'environmentalist hat' would be credible if you questioned your party colleague Ashok Gehlot about who destroyed the Aravallis

BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

There is a resolve to form a Mahayuti government in the Mumbai Municipal Corporation and make the slogan 'Darkness will fade, the sun will rise, and the lotus will bloom' a reality. This election is being fought with the aim of establishing transparent and honest governance in the civic body

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

## Cong: No link between PM's 'global talk, local walk on environment'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

lis irrespective of height should be protected," Ramesh said.

"In terms of area, this means that well over 90 percent of the Aravallis will NOT be protected by the new redefinition and could well get opened up for mining, real estate, and other activities that will further damage an already ravaged ecosystem," the former environment minister said.

This plain and simple truth cannot be covered up, Ramesh said.

"This is yet another example of the Modi Sarkar's determined assault on ecological balance that includes loosening of pollution standards, weakening of environment and forest laws, emasculation of the National Green Tribunal and other institutions of environmental governance," he said.

"There is simple (simply) no connection between the PM's global talk and his local walk when it comes to environmental concerns," the Congress leader said. After a row over the redefinition of the Aravallis, the Centre Wednesday issued directions to states for a complete ban on granting new mining leases within the mountain range.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has also directed the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education 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.

New Delhi, Dec 25: The Congress Thursday claimed that the redefinition of the Aravallis would render over 90 per cent of the hills unprotected and open them up for mining and other activities.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said there is no connection between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "global talk and local walk" when it comes to environmental concerns.

He also accused the government of launching a determined assault on ecological balance by weakening environmental protection laws and loosening pollution norms.

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.

"The Modi Sarkar's redefinition of the Aravallis, that goes against all expert opinion, is dangerous and disastrous.

"According to the Forest Survey of India's data that is authoritative, only 8.7 percent of the Aravalli hills that are higher than 20 metres exceed 100 metres. If we take all Aravalli hills identified by FSI, not even 1 percent exceeds 100 meters.

The FSI believes, and rightly so, that height limits are dubious and ALL of the Araval-

## Yogi pays tribute to Atal Bihari Vajpayee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 25: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paid floral tributes to former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary, offering flowers to his statue at Lok Bhawan.

The Chief Minister also paid homage to Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Raja Bijli Pasi on their birth anniversaries and extended Christmas greetings to the Christian community. CM Yogi said, "The birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee is an auspicious occasion for the nation. Representing the state capital, Lucknow, Atal, as Prime Minister, gave the country a new vision of development and firmly placed India on the path of progress." He noted that this year holds special significance as the birth centenary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee is being celebrated nationwide with great enthusiasm.

He added, "To mark the occasion, educational and training institutions across the country have organised a range of programs, including recitations of Atal's poems, discussions on his writings, and deliberations on his impactful speeches delivered through journalism, Parliament,

and international forums."

The Chief Minister highlighted that Vajpayee's ancestral home is in Bateshwar, Agra, while his higher education took place in Kanpur and his public life began in Balrampur. He represented Uttar Pradesh in Parliament for the longest duration.

His towering personality, statesmanship, and achieve-



ments continue to inspire generations across the country.

CM Yogi said, "To preserve Atal's legacy and ensure the continuity of his ideology, the double-engine government has constructed the Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow. The site features statues of three great national leaders along with a digital museum. The statue of Syama Prasad

Mukherjee conveys the message of national unity and integrity, while Pandit Deendayal

Upadhyaya's philosophy of Antyodaya and Atal Bihari Vajpayee's ideals together provide direction for strengthening the vision of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' with harmony and inclusiveness. Remembering Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Chief Minister said, "Today also marks the birth anniversary of the great nationalist leader, freedom fighter, and founder of Banaras Hindu University. Malaviya Ji made invaluable contributions to the freedom struggle and gave the nation a lasting vision through the establishment of BHU in 1916. He was honored with the Bharat Ratna for his exceptional service to the country."

The Chief Minister also paid tribute to Raja Bijli Pasi, describing him as a valiant warrior of Lucknow who challenged foreign rule to protect India's eternal traditions.

On the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi, Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, Mayor Sushma Kharkwal, MLC Govind Narayan Shukla, and other dignitaries were present.

## New Kolaghat bridge to enhance safety

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Dec 25: South Eastern Railway is constructing a new rail bridge over the Rupnarayan River in the Howrah-Kharagpur section of Kharagpur Division to enhance capacity in the suburban area. This modern bridge will replace the 125-year-old Kolaghat Bridge No. 57, which has been a vital link for connecting Howrah & Kolkata to the rest of the country. The old bridge, opened in 1900, is an 804-meter-long steel girder structure, but it has completed its lifespan and requires replacement.

The new bridge, costing Rs. 481.11 crore, will feature composite and open web girder designs, along with a viaduct. It will also include the development of Kolaghat station, with elevated platforms on a diverted alignment. The bridge is ex-



A devotee displays Gatka martial art skills amid a ring of fire during a 'Nagar Kirtan' procession taken out as part of 'Prakash Utsav' on the occasion of the 358th birth anniversary of the 10th and last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, in Prayagraj

PTI PHOTO

## Family of four found dead in suspected mass suicide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nanded, Dec 25: A farmer, his wife and their two sons were found dead in two different locations in Maharashtra's Nanded district Thursday morning, in what police suspect to be a mass suicide, an official said.

Around 8 am, the bodies of Ramesh Sonaji Lakhe (51) and his wife Radhabai Lakhe (45) were discovered on a cot in their home at Jawala Murar village in Mudkhed tehsil, he said. The bodies of their sons, Umesh (25) and Bajrang (23), were subsequently found on nearby railway lines. It appears they jumped in front of a speeding train, the official said.

Police inspector Dattatray Manthale told reporters, "The parents were found dead inside their home, while the sons

took their lives on the railway tracks. We have asked a Forensic Science Laboratory team to collect evidence. The truth will come out only after a thorough technical investigation and autopsy."

While the nature of their death appears to be part of a suicide pact, police said the exact circumstances remain unclear.

The family belonged to the small-scale farming community, but it is not yet confirmed if financial distress or a domestic crisis triggered the extreme step, the official said.

Neighbours described the Lakhes as a hardworking family who struggled against the odds of small-land farming to sustain themselves.



pected to be commissioned by the end of 2027 and will serve for the next 100 years.

The construction has affected train operations, as freight and most Mail/Express trains are currently prohibited from running on the Down Main line over the old bridge. This forces all Down trains, including goods, mail/express, and suburban locals, to run on the Main line, causing congestion.

Only a few passenger trains are allowed on the Down Main line with a speed restriction of 30 km/h. The use of two lines in this three-line section creates bottlenecks, especially during peak hours, and the complex train operations required for diversions result in delays.

## BMC polls: Deadlock persists between Sena-UBT, MNS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

(BMC) polls, but refused to divulge details concerning the seat-sharing agreement.

The MNS leader said his party has staked claim over ward 114 for its local leader. From Uddhav Thackeray's party, a former MLA's wife and Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Dina Patil's daughter Rajool Patil are keen to contest from this ward, he said. This ward has a significant Marathi population and both parties are anticipating an easy win.

In the last BMC polls in 2017, the then undivided Shiv Sena had won in 84 of the city's 227 wards, followed by the BJP (82). The MNS had bagged seven seats. "We have been asking this ward for our local leader. Giving it to the relatives of a

former MLA or the MP's daughter will send out a wrong signal," the MNS leader said.

The decision on this ward is expected to be taken in a day or two, he said.

However, while talking to reporters, Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut insisted that the seat-sharing talks between the two parties were over. He also defended party leaders, MLAs and MPs seeking tickets for their kin.

Raut said Rajool Patil is a member of the core committee of Yuva Sena, the students' wing of the Sena (UBT). So is Aniket Prabhu, son of Dindoshi MLA Sunil Prabhu, and another core committee member of the Yuva Sena, Raut added.

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They will not be permitted to carry mobile phones to

## Ban on women using smartphones in Rajasthan withdrawn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A meeting of the panchas (village elders) was convened Thursday in Gazipur village, where they unanimously decided to withdraw the ban

They said the decision kept children in mind, but it was "misunderstood"

"misunderstood".

In a meeting of the Chaudhary community of Sundhama Patti December 21 in Gazipur village, the daughters and daughters-in-law of 15 villages were banned from using smartphones, starting January 26. The village elders and community members also decided

that they can keep keypad (feature) phones for making calls.

According to the order pronounced by a member, Himataram, on December 21, if school-going girls use a mobile phone for studies, they may use it only inside their homes.

They will not be permitted to carry mobile phones to



wedding ceremonies, social functions, or to a neighbour's

house, it said. Another member, Natharam Chaudhary, said that December 21, the community had a program at Sundha Mata. The women there had informed us that their children, after returning from school, immediately start using smartphones, he said.

They neither eat nor study and spend the entire day watching videos, which has adverse effects on their brain and eyesight, Choudhary said.

The ban was imposed fol-

lowing the suggestions that women should not use smartphones, he said, adding that no one was bound to follow the decision.

"Cases of cyber fraud are occurring daily, and women and girls are facing exploitation. That is why one month was given to observe the situation. If everyone had found it acceptable, it would have been implemented from January 26, but people misunderstood the decision," he said.

## international



How then can we not think of the tents in Gaza, exposed for weeks to rain, wind and cold; and of those so many other refugees and displaced persons on every continent, or of the makeshift shelters of thousands of homeless people in our own cities

POPE LEO XIV | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

**ANDREW'S DAUGHTERS JOIN ROYALS**

Britain's Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie attended the royal family's traditional Christmas Day church service Thursday, while their father Andrew, recently stripped of his titles over ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, was absent



of the day quote

I know many across Britain are still struggling with the cost of living. Helping with that is my priority



KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

Russia has made an offer to the French regarding Laurent Vautrin, arrested in Moscow last year and convicted of collecting military information, and that the ball is now in France's court



DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN

This Christmas is a different one because of the anti-terror and the terrorist attack motivated by ISIS and antisemitism. But at the same time as we have seen the worst of humanity, we have seen the bravery and kindness and compassion from those who rushed to danger



ANTHONY ALBANESE | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

**SHORT TAKES****Russian spirits exports to India surge**

**Moscow:** The exports of Russian spirits to India have nearly quadrupled in the first 10 months of the year compared to the same period last year, making India an attractive emerging market for Russian exporters, according to a media report. Citing data from the Federal Centre for Agricultural Export Development of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture (Agroexport), leading financial and trade daily "Vedomosti" said India is emerging as an attractive market for Russian exporters of Vodka and other hard alcoholic beverages. "In the first 10 months of 2025, Russian spirits producers shipped approximately 520 tonnes of spirits, including vodka, gin, whiskey, and liqueurs, worth \$900,000 to India, this is three times higher in weight and four times higher in monetary terms than the same period last year," it said.

**Louvre museum installs security bars on balcony**

**Paris:** France's Louvre museum Tuesday installed security bars on the balcony that burglars used to break in and steal some of the crown jewels. Four people broke into the world's most visited museum October 19 and escaped with jewels worth an estimated \$102 million, exposing glaring security gaps and revealing its deteriorating state. They parked a mowers lift outside the museum, jumped on the balcony of the Apollo gallery, smashed a window, cracked open display cases with angle grinders and fled on the back of scooters driven by accomplices in a heist lasting less than 7 minutes.

**Kim oversees missile launch, submarine work**

**Seoul:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed construction of a submarine with his daughter, a potential heir, and oversaw the test-firing of long-range surface-to-air missiles, state media reported Thursday. Wednesday's missile test near the east coast, aimed at assessing the nuclear-armed country's strategic technology for developing a new type of high-altitude missile, destroyed targets in the air from 200 km (120 miles) away, KCNA said. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed the missile test occurred at 5 pm, Yonhap News Agency reported. The South Korean military had been aware of launch preparations and was ready for it, Yonhap said, citing a Joint Chiefs official. Kim observed construction at another site on an 8,700-ton nuclear-powered submarine capable of launching surface-to-air missiles, KCNA said.

**INDIA TIES REPORT****CHINA HITS OUT AT PENTAGON**

On the references to the Line of Actual Control in the US report, the boundary question is a matter between China and India, and the current border situation between the two countries is generally stable with smooth communication channels, says Lin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, Dec 25:** China Thursday denounced a Pentagon report, which accused Beijing of leveraging reduced border tensions with India to undermine US-India ties while deepening defence ties with Pakistan as an attempt to sow discord with false narratives.

"The Pentagon's report distorts China's defence policy, sows discord between China and other countries, and aims at finding a pretext for the US to maintain its military supremacy," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here when asked about the US Department of War report submitted to the American Congress.

China firmly opposes the report, Lin said.

Separately, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Zhang Xiaogang denounced the Pentagon report, which also highlighted the cooperation between China and Pakistan in sectors such as defence and space, with plans to set up a military base.

The US releases such reports year after year, grossly interfering in China's internal affairs, Zhang told a separate media briefing.

The US report maliciously misinterpreted China's national defence policy, made



The Pentagon's report distorts China's defence policy, sows discord between China and other countries, and aims at finding a pretext for the US to maintain its military supremacy

LIN JIAN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

unfounded speculations about China's military development, slandering and smearing the normal actions of the Chinese military, he said, declining to directly respond to a question on the report alleging China's expanding defence and cooperation with Pakistan.

The report is full of erroneous understandings of China and geopolitical biases, exaggerating the so-called "Chinese military threat" to mislead the international community, Zhang said.

"We express our strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to this," he said and urged the US to stop fabricating false narratives and provoking confrontation and antagonism.

In his response to the Pentagon report on India-China ties, Lin stated that Beijing views and handles its relations with New Delhi from a strategic height and a long-term perspective.

"We stand ready to strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust, promote cooperation, and properly handle differences with India, and advance a sound and stable bilateral relationship," he said.

On the references to the Line of Actual Control in the US report, Lin said, "the boundary

question is a matter between China and India, and the current border situation between the two countries is generally stable with smooth communication channels".

"China opposes relevant country's groundless and irresponsible comments," he said.

In its annual report to Congress Tuesday on 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2025', the US Department of War said China probably seeks to capitalise from the deescalating tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India to stabilise bilateral relations and to prevent the deepening of US-India ties.

The report referred to a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in October 2024.

Two days before their meeting, the agreement was to disengage from the remaining stand-off sites along the LAC.

The Xi-Modi meeting marked the onset of monthly high-level engagements between the two countries, where parties discussed border management and next steps for the bilateral relationship, including direct flights, visa facilitation, and the exchange of academics and journalists, it said.



A few thousand people wearing traditional costumes celebrate Christmas near St. Michael Monastery in the city center of Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

**BANGLADESH UNREST****Rahman returns home after 17 yrs in exile**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Dec 25:** Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) acting chairman Tarique Rahman returned to Dhaka to a rousing welcome by thousands of his supporters Thursday after over 17 years in self-exile -- a homecoming that is expected to energise the party ahead of the February 12 parliamentary elections.

Shortly after landing at the Hazrat Shahjalal International airport, Rahman, the leading contender to be the country's next prime minister, stood barefoot on Bangladeshi soil in a symbolic gesture to mark his return to the country's politics.

Hours later, the 60-year-old son of ailing former prime minister Khaleda Zia, addressing his supporters, gave a clarion call to maintain peace and stability in the country and presented a broad plan to build an "inclusive Bangladesh".

"It is time for us all to build the country together. We want to build a safe Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, no matter who a woman, man, or child is, they should be able to leave their homes safely and return safely," he said.

The homecoming of the BNP heir apparent comes amid a fresh wave of unrest and political instability gripping Bangladesh following the killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi, who was a prominent face in last year's

mass protests that forced the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina government.

"I have a plan for the people of my country and for my country

TARIQUE RAHMAN | BNP CHAIRMAN

of the  
day quote

The outlook for 2026 for the retail sector is highly optimistic with expectations of continued double-digit growth and further transformation

ANAND RAMANATHAN | PARTNER &amp; CONSUMER INDUSTRY LEADER, DELOIETTE INDIA



India has achieved a rare convergence of high growth, low inflation, and improving fiscal indicators. The next Union Budget must continue this momentum through disciplined fiscal management and deeper institutional reforms

CHANDRAKANT BANERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CII



Now, there is a new wave that is coming. AI, (which is now) at the heart and front and centre of anything that we do. Specific to an automotive or industrial setting, we always looked at it in terms of a siloed approach of engineering, which looked different. It is looked at differently

SRIRAM LAKSHMINARAYANAN | CEO, TATA TECHNOLOGIES

**SHORT TAKES****Petrol pump count doubles in a decade**

**New Delhi:** India's petrol pump network has crossed the 1,00,000-mark, doubling since 2015 as state-owned fuel retailers aggressively expanded outlets to defend market share and push fuel access deeper into rural and highway corridors amid a sustained boom in vehicle ownership. At the end of November, the country had 1,00,266 petrol pumps - the third largest after the US and China with a much bigger geographical area, according to data available from the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell of the Oil Ministry. Over 90 per cent of the pumps are owned by state-owned firms such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL). Russia's Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy Ltd is the largest private fuel retailer with 6,921 outlets, followed by 2,114 stations owned by a joint venture of Reliance Industries Ltd and BP. Shell has 346 outlets. The petrol pump network has almost doubled from 50,451 stations in 2015, PPAC data showed. India has the world's third-largest petrol pump network.

**Samsung rules out India listing**

**New Delhi:** Samsung Electronics has ruled out listing of its India business for now, saying it will instead focus on accelerating artificial intelligence adoption across its products and expanding its consumer finance arm to drive sales in one of the most important growth markets. In an interview with PTI, JB Park, President and CEO of Samsung Southwest Asia, said the South Korean giant is looking to deepen its manufacturing footprint in India and has applied under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for components to manufacture mobile phone displays in India.

**CCPA slaps ₹11L fine on Vision IAS**

**New Delhi:** The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has fined coaching institute Vision IAS ₹11 lakh for publishing misleading advertisements about its students' performance in the UPSC Civil Services Examination, a first case of penalty for repeat offence under consumer protection laws.



Looking ahead to 2026, the focus will be on deepening the reforms through technology-driven service delivery and effective on-ground implementation. Equally important will be the operationalisation of the rules under the Labour Codes

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION LABOUR &amp; EMPLOYMENT MINISTER

**INDIA TO ASSUME CHAIR OF KP**

For the third time, India will chair the Kimberley Process (KP), a global initiative to remove conflict diamonds from the global supply chain, from January 1 next year, the Commerce Ministry said in a statement Thursday. KP is a joint initiative of different countries, industry and civil societies to control the flow of conflict diamonds, which are used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments in the world

**FSSAI cracks down on 'herbal tea'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 25:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a stern warning to food business operators against using the word 'tea' for herbal infusions and plant-based blends not derived from Camellia sinensis, terming it a case of misbranding and misleading practices under the law.

The directive, issued December 24, comes after the regulator found several food business operators (FBOs) marketing products, such as 'Rooibos tea', 'herbal tea' and 'flower tea', none of which are obtained from the Camellia sinensis plant.

According to FSSAI regulations, the term 'tea' can only be used on packaging and labeling if the beverage is derived from Camellia sinensis.

This includes variants such as Kangra tea, green tea and instant tea. Such plant-based or herbal infusions or blends, which are not derived from Camellia sinensis, do not qualify to be named as tea, the FSSAI clarified. The violation, it said, amounts to misleading and misbranding under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The regulator has directed all FBOs, including those engaged in e-commerce, manufacturing, packing, marketing, import or sale of such products, to comply with food safety regulations.

**NSE strengthens mkt leadership, investor participation in 2025**

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Dec 25:** As we head into a new calendar year, the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) is poised to close 2025 on a positive and encouraging note, supported by steady market growth, more investors joining the markets, and new products being introduced.

Stock markets in India remained stable during the year. The Nifty 50 index rose by nearly 10%, and the total value of companies listed on NSE increased to around ₹469 lakh crore.

Companies continued to raise money through the markets in 2025. Total funds raised through NSE grew by about 7%, reaching over ₹19 lakh crore.

The IPO market also stayed active. More than 200 companies raised funds through IPOs on NSE's Mainboard and SME platforms, together mobilising close to ₹1.77 lakh crore. This highlights investor interest in new and growing companies.

NSE continued to hold its position as the world's largest derivatives exchange by trading volume. At the global level, NSE International Exchange (NSE IX) crossed an important milestone of over US\$1 trillion in notional turnover during the year.

The number of unique registered investors crossed 12.4 crore, with about 1.5 crore new investors added in 2025.

**Small stocks trail Sensex rally**

Smallcap, midcap stocks struggle behind blue-chip peer Sensex this yr; outlook cautiously optimistic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**New Delhi, Dec 25:** Smaller stocks lagged behind their bigger blue-chip peer Sensex this year as elevated valuations triggered profit-booking after a strong rally in the last two years.

Analysts attributed the underperformance of smallcap and midcap indices in 2025 due to market normalisation after their exceptional outperformance in 2023 and 2024.

Depreciation of the rupee, concerns over the US-India trade negotiations and persistent foreign fund outflows also led to a sharp risk-off reaction in the broader market, experts noted.

On the road ahead, market experts are of the view that the outlook for smallcap and midcap indices remains cautiously optimistic. They said that as valuations cool and earnings visibility improves, selective opportunities should emerge, supported by India's steady GDP growth and strong domestic liquidity.

Till December 24 this year, the BSE midcap gauge went up marginally by 360.25 points or 0.77 per cent. The BSE smallcap index, however, declined by 3,686.98 points or 6.68 per cent.

In contrast, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 7,269.69 points

or 9.30 per cent during the period under review.

The underperformance of smallcap and midcap indices in 2025 is primarily a result of market normalisation after two years of exceptional outperformance. In 2024, the BSE smallcap index delivered returns of over 29 per cent, while the midcap index gained 26 per cent, far outperforming the Sensex. Such sharp rallies pushed valuations to elevated levels, especially in smaller companies where earnings growth did not keep pace with price appreciation," Ponmudi R, CEO - Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

In 2025, this imbalance began to correct, he said.

"Investors shifted focus toward largecap stocks with stronger balance sheets and

**Persistent foreign institutional investor selling further pressured the segment, as FII preferred the relative safety of largecap stocks. Slower earnings momentum and tighter global liquidity also led to a clear rotation away from smaller companies**

RAVI SINGH | CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER, MASTER CAPITAL SERVICES

stable earnings visibility amid global uncertainty. Smallcap and midcap companies, which are more sensitive to funding costs, margin pressures, and economic slowdowns, faced higher volatility. As a result, capital rotated toward blue-chip stocks, leading to relative underperformance in the broader market segments,"

Till Dec 24 this year, the BSE midcap gauge went up marginally by 360.25 points or 0.77%. The BSE smallcap index, however, declined by 3,686.98 points or 6.68%

In contrast, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 7,269.69 points or 9.30% during the period under review

Ponmudi said.

According to market analysts, smaller stocks are generally bought by local investors, while overseas investors focus on blue-chips or large firms.

N Aruna Giri, CEO of TrustLine Holdings, a Equity Research and Asset Management firm, said, when markets undergo a time correction, as they have since September 2024, it is well understood that small and midcap stocks tend to underperform.

"This is a natural outcome given their higher beta and greater sensitivity to liquidity and risk appetite. In that sense, the relative underperformance of small and midcaps versus the Sensex and Nifty this year is not surprising," he said.

The abrupt depreciation of the rupee, triggered by anxiety around US-India trade negotiations and persistent FII (Foreign Institutional Investors) outflows, led to a sharp risk-off

reaction in the broader market, Aruna Giri said.

The BSE midcap gauge hit its 52-week high of 47,549.4 November 18, this year. The index had scaled its record high of 49,701.15 September 24, last year. The BSE smallcap index hit its one-year high of 56,497.39 January 3, 2025 while it tumbled to its 52-week low of 41,013.68 April 7.

The midcap index tracks companies with a market value that is on average one-fifth of blue-chips, while smallcap firms are almost a tenth of that universe. Last year, the BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 5,898.75 points or 8.16 per cent, and the Nifty surged 1,913.4 points or 8.80 per cent.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 12,506.84 points or 29.30 per cent and the midcap index jumped 9,605.44 points or 26.07 per cent last year.

In 2023, the BSE benchmark had jumped 11,399.52 points or 18.73 per cent. The BSE smallcap gauge had rallied 13,746.97 points or 47.52 per cent in 2023, while the midcap index climbed 11,524.72 points or 45.52 per cent.

In 2022, the BSE midcap index climbed 344.42 points or 1.37 per cent, while the smallcap gauge declined 530.97 points or 1.80 per cent. The BSE barometer ended 2022 with an annual gain of 4.44 per cent or 2,586.92 points.

**Tata Motors unveils all-new Sierra**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 25:** Tata Motors Private Limited and Tata Motor Passenger Vehicles Ltd, in association with Dion Automotives Private Limited, Thursday launched the all-new Tata Sierra here, marking the return of one of India's most iconic nameplates.

Positioned as a premium mid-SUV, the new Sierra aims to create a distinct space in the SUV segment with introductory prices starting at ₹11.49 lakh (ex-showroom).

The petrol variant is priced from ₹11.49 lakh, while the diesel variant starts at ₹12.99 lakh (ex-showroom), with on-road

prices in Bhubaneswar going up to ₹14.90 lakh.

The launch event was graced by Babu Singh, MLA, Ekamra Bhubaneswar as chief guest, along with MD Shaob, Regional Manager, Tata Motors limited; Gyana Ranjan Mohapatra, Retd SP, Puri and other dignitaries.

The Sierra has been re-imagined to blend its legendary heritage with contemporary design, advanced technology, and enhanced comfort, targeting customers seeking individuality and premium mobility.

Speaking at the launch, Manoj Kumar Sahoo, Director, Dion Automotives Private Limited, said, "With the new Sierra, we are setting a new

benchmark for Indian mobility. Customers deserve more than the ordinary—innovation that inspires, emotionally resonant design, and a premium experience.

The Sierra returns as an icon that reflects pride, individuality, and progress."

The latest avatar builds on that legacy, offering elevated space, luxury, safety, and everyday usability. With its globally acclaimed design, including recognition from the Red Dot Design Award, the Sierra is positioned to resonate across generations.

Under the brand philosophy 'Escape Mediocre,' Tata Motors positions the Sierra as more than just an SUV—a statement of aspiration and distinction.

**Punjab & Sind Bank celebrates Kisan Diwas**

**Punjab & Sind Bank** celebrating Kisan Diwas in Bhubaneswar with the visit of Ravi Mehra, Executive Director, Punjab & Sind Bank. The event witnessed active participation from farmers, Self Help Groups (SHGs), and entrepreneurs engaged in the food and agro-processing sector.

Addressing the gathering, Mehra elaborated on the bank's wide range of financial products and credit facilities tailored to support agriculture, food processing, and allied activities. He highlighted significant role played by Central Bank of India in strengthening the nation's banking ecosystem and supporting inclusive economic growth.

He further said that the bank has truly been part of the growth story of India.

Earlier, while welcoming the Chief Guest in the presence of an august gathering comprising elite customers and Senior Executives from various banks, Kalyan Kumar, Managing Director & CEO, Central Bank of India, spoke about Nagaraju's distinguished career spanning over three decades, marked by rich administrative experience at the State, National, and International levels. On this occasion, the bank launched several customer-friendly products. A Handbook on Customer Service & Grievance Handling was also formally launched by M Nagaraju.

**Punjab & Sind Bank celebrates Kisan Diwas**

Although the US remains the largest market for obesity drugs, early sales figures in India show rapid uptake, even though most patients in the world's most populous nation pay for the medication out-of-pocket

REUTERS

es price cuts and accelerated launches, while Lilly's products benefitted from hitting the market early. Both companies focused on aggressive outreach to doctors, heavier advertising about obesity, tie-ups with clinics, patient incentives and distribution deals with local drugmakers, according to doctors, analysts, medical representatives, patients and distributors who spoke to Reuters.

Lilly has even teamed up in India with well-known Bollywood actors in a social media ad campaign about obesity.

India, projected to have the world's second-largest overweight or obese population by 2050 in absolute numbers, is becoming a key battleground for obesity drugs. Analysts expect the global market for such

drugs to hit \$150 billion a year by the end of this decade. "We believe that this market can be more than \$1 billion within two years," said Shrikant Akolkar, vice president at research firm Nuvama Institutional Equities. Data analytics firm Pharmarack said in July

that the market was estimated to be worth ₹6.28 billion (\$70.23 million) at present, growing fivefold since 2021. US drugmaker Lilly's Mounjaro, approved for diabetes and weight loss in India, became the top-selling therapy by value in October, with sales doubling

month while launching Novo Nordisk's blockbuster diabetes drug, Ozempic, in the country.

Ozempic, a once-weekly injection approved by the US drug regulator in 2017 for Type 2 diabetes, became a global bestseller and is widely used off-label for weight loss due to its appetite-suppressing effects.

More than 20 Indian drugmakers, including Dr Reddy's, Cipla, Sun Pharma, Zydus and Lupin, plan to launch cheaper versions of Novo's weight-loss drug in India once its patent on semaglutide in Wegovy and Ozempic, expires in March 2026.

Analysts expect generic drugs to cost about 60% less, intensifying the fight—particularly for Novo—for dominance in India's price-sensitive market.



India's obesity drug market expected to exceed \$1bn in two years

Lilly's Mounjaro leads in sales, Novo cuts prices to compete

Lilly and Novo partner with local firms to expand market reach

within months of its March launch, outpacing Danish drugmaker Novo's Wegovy, which entered the Indian market in June.

"We realized just after a couple of months that for accessibility, we had to take a price cut," said Vikrant Shrotriya, Novo Nordisk's managing director in India, referring to Wegovy's price cut in November. Shrotriya spoke earlier this

3RD WOMEN'S T20I

# Eves look to seal series

Women in Blue eye another dominant show against struggling Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 25:** A dominant India will look to seal the five-match series with another ruthless display when they take on a low-on-confidence Sri Lanka in the third women's T20 International here Friday.

India have been outstanding with both the bat and the ball in the first and second T20Is, registering comprehensive eight-wicket and seven-wicket wins respectively in Visakhapatnam to underline their overall dominance over Sri Lanka.

It was India's ninth win in their last 11 T20Is against the island nation, who last tasted victory against the hosts in July 2024 at Dambulla.

India boast of an enviable batting line-up, with different players stepping up in the two games. While newly-appointed Delhi Capitals captain Jemimah Rodrigues starred in the opening T20I, opener Shafali Verma finished the job in the second.

The bowling unit has been equally sharp, with the spinners calling the shots by restricting Sri Lanka to 121 for 6 and 128 for 9 in the two matches. Youngsters N Shree Charani, Vaishnavi Sharma and Kranti Gaud have shared the workload effectively, bowling with discipline and control.

India's bowling depth was on display when experienced all-rounder Deepti Sharma missed the second T20I with a mild fever and Sneh Rana stepped up with a frugal 1 for 11 in four overs.



Fielding was the lone area of concern in the opening game, where India dropped five catches, but they showed marked improvement in the second match with three sharp run-outs.

Led by Harmanpreet Kaur, India will aim to continue raising their standards as the series moves to Thiruvananthapuram, which will host the next three matches.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, will hope that the change of venue brings a change in their fortune for a side battered by back-to-

back heavy defeats. While the gulf in quality has been evident, Sri Lanka will be particularly disappointed by the manner of their batting collapses.

Asked to bat first in both matches, Sri Lanka failed to post competitive totals. They showed some promise early on but lost momentum as wickets tumbled in clusters during the latter half of their innings.

In the opening game, Vishmi Gunaratne laboured to 39 off 43 balls, while Hasini Perera and Harshitha Samarawickrama

also struck under a run-a-ball, denying the innings any late acceleration.

The second T20I followed a similar script. Sri Lanka appeared on track before losing captain Chamari Athapaththu, after which they collapsed spectacularly, losing six wickets for 26 runs, including three run-outs, to finish with another sub-par total.

Their bowling too has lacked the penetration required to trouble India's deep batting line-up.

**IGPL TOUR**  
The 54-year-old stalwart's Colombo triumph delivers a storybook finish to IGPL's inaugural season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo, Dec 25:** India's golf legend Jeev Milkha Singh ended a 13-year title drought after securing the IGPL Invitational Sri Lanka with a perfect finish to the inaugural season of the IGPL here Thursday.

The 54-year-old, who has not won a pro event since 2012, gave his young rivals a perfect lesson, producing a closing six-under 65 to total 15-under to outwit Aryan Roopa Anand (68) by one shot.

"I had never played in Sri Lanka before. It is an emotional moment for me. Because this is where my parents fell in love and began their relationship," said an emotional Jeev, wiping his tears away.

"My mother played volleyball and my father was here for athletics. So, this is where their journey together began. We lost them in 2021 and I lost my will to play but a little later in 2022 I decided I would play for them and win. I hope today's win will put a smile on their faces."

Aryan needing an eagle on the Par-4 18th to force a play-off managed only a birdie and was second at 14-under.

As Jeev won his maiden IGPL title, Pukhraj Singh Gill, despite finishing T-12th, won the IGPL Order of Merit by a razor thin margin over Aman Raj and Gaganjeet Bhullar.

After 11 events carrying ₹1.5 crore prize purse with ₹22.50

# Legend Jeev ends 13-yr title drought



lakh for the winner, Pukhraj was less than ₹9,000 ahead of Aman Raj.

Starting two shots behind

Aryan, Jeev, who had a modest second day, putted superbly to add to his splendid iron play that saw him hit his approaches to inside 5-10 feet.

At one stage he had five birdies in a row and seven in a span of nine holes between the sixth and the 14th on the Royal Colombo Golf Course greens.

Jeev's son, Harjai was one of the amateur players in the field. Watching the two in action was Jeev's wife, Kudrat, who of late has been accompanying her son for junior and amateur events. Harjai was T-22nd.

Jeev's last pro win was at the 2012 Scottish Open. In his career, Jeev's successes include four on the European Tour,

four on the Japan Tour and six on the Asian Tour. One of the Asian Tour wins was co-sanctioned with the European Tour.

Pranavi, winner of the IGPL Mumbai, was the top woman finisher at Tied-8th at 8-under.

Pukhraj (67), the Order of Merit champion at the inaugural IGPL, registered his maiden professional win at IGPL Jamshedpur. He missed a 4-foot birdie at his final hole and finished Tied-12th with Chiragh Kumar (72).

Gill's benefits include a spot on \$2 million International Series in India early next year, and he will also get a spot in an event with Open Qualifying berths on the Asian Tour.

Bhullar, who won in his first three starts, earned ₹81,30,000 to be third. Pranavi, with ₹34,84,687, was the top woman pro earner of the season.

## Clubs do not have voting rights in EFI governance: Delhi HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 25:** The Delhi High Court has ruled that clubs affiliated with the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) do not have voting rights in the federation's governance, reinforcing the primacy of state associations and dealing a setback to club-based voting structures that had operated under ministerial exemptions.

Dismissing a set of appeals filed by a Chandigarh-based riding club and connected parties, a division bench of Justices Anil Kshetarpal and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar upheld that the participation of clubs and institutional members in EFI elections was contrary to the Sports Code, which prescribes a pyramidal governance structure for national sports federations.

The court, in its order December 23, noted that Clauses 3.9 and 3.10 of the Sports Code, a club does not possess any statutory or legal entitlement to participate in or influence the governance of a National Sports Federation," the bench observed, adding that allowing clubs to vote would dilute the representative structure envisaged under the Code.

The ruling comes against the backdrop of a long-running dispute over the governance of EFI, which has been under judicial scrutiny for several years over its electoral processes, membership composition and compliance with the Sports Code.

EFI, recognised as the national federation for equestrian sport since 1967, has allowed clubs, individuals and institutional units—including several affiliated with the Indian Army—to become members with voting rights.

This structure has been questioned by state associations, which argued that it enabled a handful of clubs and institutions to exercise disproportionate control over the federation.

## BOXING DAY TEST

### Smith returns as Australia prepare an all-pace attack

The Australians have already retained the urn with a 3-0 lead in the five-test series

REUTERS



to offer a fair bit of assistance for the seam bowlers and the weather throughout the week looks conducive for that too."

The 29-year-old left-arm pacer Richardson's last appearance in the red-ball format was against England in December 2021 in which he picked five wickets to guide his side to a 275-run win.

Meanwhile veteran Usman Khawaja, who scored 82 and 40 in the previous test after coming in as a last minute replacement for Smith, has been included at the expense of Josh Inglis.

Australia have already retained the urn with a 3-0 lead in the five-test series.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Melbourne, Dec 25:** The experienced Shruti Mundada, Parul Choudhary, and rising star Tanvi Patri upset higher-ranked opponents to reach the women's singles pre-quarterfinals of the 87th Senior National Badminton Championships in Vijayawada Thursday.

Shruti packed off seventh seed Jiya Rawat 21-14, 21-9 while Parul got the better of 9th seed 18-21, 21-18, 21-12 to advance to the next round. Tanvi Patri also ended the campaign of eighth seed Isharani Baruah 22-20, 21-19. Also advancing to the next round were top seed Unnati Hooda, second seed Anupama Upadhyaya, third seed Anmol Kharb, and world junior silver medalist Tanvi Sharma.

In men's singles, Aryaman Tandon upset third seed M Raghu 17-21, 21-11, 21-14 in the round of 32. Abhinav Garg and Rithvik Sanjeevi S also created upsets to reach the pre-quarters.

Garg got the better of 10th seed Abhinav Thakur 21-19, 21-16, while Rithvik defeated 13th seed Orijit Chaila 21-15, 21-19. In the mixed doubles event, Nitin Kumar and Kanika Kanwal upset the 6th seeds Kevin Wong

and Pranavi N 23-21, 21-15.

Earlier Wednesday, Women's top seed Unnati, world junior

champions silver medalists Tanvi Sharma, the experienced Aakarshi Kashyap, and upcoming junior Rounak Chauhan registered convincing wins to reach the next round.

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 win over Asian U-19 girls singles gold

medalist Shaina Manimuthu.

Also advancing to the next round

CC and Pranavi N 23-21, 21-15.

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