



Tara's offensive

After AP Dhillon's Mumbai concert went viral, Tara Sutaria hits back at netizens with a sharp social media post

LEISURE | **P2**



Security guarantee

The US is offering Ukraine security guarantees for 15 years as part of a proposed peace plan, says President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

INTERNATIONAL | **P10**



IIP growth surges

India's Industrial Production (IIP) grew at 6.7% in November 2025, driven by strong performances in mining and manufacturing

BUSINESS | **P11**



Stubborn Naqvi

PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi reiterates that India will have to come to Dubai to collect the T20 Asia Cup 2025 trophy

SPORTS | **P12**



FLUTE SYMPHONY: Flautists, including students, led by young flute maestro Vivek Sonar rehearse at Marine Drive ahead of the 17th edition of the annual Bansuri Utsav in Mumbai, Monday **PTI PHOTO**

CBI chargesheets 16 in SI posting scam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: The Central Bureau of Investigation Monday filed chargesheet against 16 accused involved in Sub-inspector (SI) recruitment test scam. The chargesheet consisting around 1,000 pages include name of the alleged mastermind behind the scam Shankar Prusty and others such as Muna Mohanty, Suresh Nayak, Biranchi Nayak.

It may be noted that that nine accused involved in the case were earlier arrested by the Crime Branch. After CBI's taking over the case, seven persons were arrested in this connection. Besides, 114 candidates, apprehended in connection with this case, were later released on bail. The scam sparked state-wide outrage raising questions on the conduct of recruitment exams in the state.

IRREGULAR by **MANJUL**



My New Year resolution? Just to survive

UNNAO RAPE CASE

Sengar to stay in jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: The Supreme Court Monday stayed the Delhi High Court's order suspending the life sentence of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case.

A vacation bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, and Justices JK Maheshwari and Augustine George Masih also issued notice to Sengar seeking his response on the CBI's plea challenging the high court order.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, urged the bench to stay the high court order.

The bench said it would examine the matter as it required



consideration. It said Sengar shall not be released from custody following the high court's December 23 order.

Substantial questions of law arise for consideration in the matter, the bench said and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The high court suspended the jail term of Sengar, who was

serving life imprisonment in the Unnao rape case, saying he had already served seven years and five months in prison.

Sengar's sentence was suspended by the high court till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case. He has challenged a December 2019 trial court verdict in the case.

The expelled BJP leader will, however, remain in jail since he is also serving 10 years' imprisonment in the custodial death case of the victim's father and has not been granted bail in that case. The rape case and other connected cases were transferred to Delhi from a trial court in Uttar Pradesh on the directions of the Supreme Court on August 1, 2019.

Maiden flight test of Pinaka successful

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: The maiden flight test of Pinaka long-range guided rocket was conducted successfully Monday, and it impacted the target with "textbook precision", the Defence Ministry said.

The test was conducted at Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha. The rocket was tested for its maximum ranges of 120 km "demonstrating all in-flight manoeuvres" as planned.

"The maiden flight test of Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR 120) was conducted successfully at Integrated Test Range, Chandipur today," the Ministry said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO on the achievement.

SC stays its own ruling on Aravalli

The Supreme Court Monday stayed its own November 20 verdict on what counts as Aravalli hills or ranges and proposed to appoint a fresh high-powered committee to re-examine the issue. The move, which drew instant applause from activists and opposition parties, freezes—at least for now—the Union government's controversial "100-metre rule". Under that criterion any land-form inside the notified Aravalli districts that rises less than 100 metre above the surrounding ground is excluded from the hill category and can be opened to mining. Forest Survey of India data show that of the 12,000-odd mapped hill features scattered across the Aravalli landscape fewer than 1,100 meet the 100-metre cut-off, leaving more than 90% of the range outside formal legal protection



The top court said there are issues that will require clarification. It issued a notice to the Centre and others in the suo motu matter and posted it for further hearing on January 21.

The top court on November 20 accepted a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges and banned the grant of fresh mining leases inside its areas spanning Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat until experts' reports are out.

The apex court had accepted the recommendations of a committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on the definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges to protect the world's oldest mountain system.

The committee had recommended that "Aravalli Hill" be defined as any landform in designated Aravalli districts with an elevation of 100 metres or more above its local relief, and an "Aravalli Range" will be a collection of two or more such hills within 500 metres of each other.

The apex court on November 20 delivered a 29-page judgement in the suo motu matter arising out of the long-running environmental litigation in the T N Godavarman Thirumulpad case.

"We further accept the recommendations with regard to the prohibition of mining in core/inviolable areas with exception as carved out of the ... committee's report," the top court had said.

RUSSIA CLAIMS DRONE ATTACK ON PUTIN'S HOME; UKRAINE DENIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Dec 29: Russia Monday claimed that 91 long-range Ukrainian drones attempted to attack President Vladimir Putin's country residence in Novgorod region, north of Moscow.

In a televised statement, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the drone attack in the intervening night of Sunday and Monday failed to cause any damage as the drones were downed.

He, however, warned that Russia reserves the right to re-

spond at an appropriate time.

Lavrov described the Ukrainian attacks as an attempt to derail peace talks by Kyiv and its allies.

He added that Moscow will change its stance on peace talks with Ukraine, but peace negotiations will continue with the team of US President Donald Trump.

Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky, however, dismissed the claim as "typical Russian lies", intended to give the Kremlin an excuse to continue attacks on Ukraine.

State's tableau to roll in R-Day parade

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: Odisha's vibrant tableau will roll down Kartavya Path during the Republic Day Parade 2026, showcasing the state's remarkable contribution to building an Atmanirbhar Bharat — from agriculture to advanced semiconductor technology.

Based on the theme "Mantra of Prosperity: Atmanirbhar Bharat," the tableau will narrate state's journey of self-reliance through indigenous production, innovation, and inclusive development. It will highlight the state's progress across agriculture, sustainable



livelihoods, skill development, startups, modern industry, and cutting-edge technology, reflecting its growing role in India's economic transformation.

A major attraction will be the symbolic journey from Koraput coffee to silicon semiconductor chips, representing Odisha's transition from traditional

farming to high-tech manufacturing. Inspired by the sacred chariot of Lord Jagannath, the front portion will emphasize women empowerment and gender equality, while the central section will focus on agricultural excellence. The rear section will feature a replica of the Konark Sun Temple.

₹79K-CR BOOSTER FOR ARMED FORCES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: The Defence Ministry Monday approved procurement of long range rockets, missiles, radar systems and military platforms worth Rs 79,000 crore to bolster the military's combat prowess.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, green-lighted the proposals. The DAC approved procurement of loiter munition systems for the Army's artillery regiments.

It also cleared acquisition of low level lightweight radars, long-range guided rocket ammunition for Pinaka rocket system and integrated drone detection and interdiction system (Mk-II) for the Indian Army, the defence ministry said.

Integrated drone detection and interdiction system (Mk-II) with enhanced range will protect the vital assets of the Indian Army in tactical battle area and hinterland.

For the Indian Navy, approval was accorded for procurement of high frequency software defined radios (HF SDR) Manpack and for leasing high altitude long range (HALE) remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS).

For the Indian Air Force, approval was given for procurement of automatic take-off landing recording system, Astra Mk-II missiles, full mission simulator and SPICE-1000 long range guidance kits, etc, it said.

Earth to have 25-hour-long days in distant future

The notion that Earth's 24-hour day might not be permanent sounds like science fiction, but scientists confirm it's happening. The planet's rotation is indeed slowing down, meaning days will get longer, but it's not exactly something to lose sleep over. On the internet, several viral posts are wording the long-term scientific concept as if it might happen soon, leading to confusion and curiosity. However, this is a super slow process, imperceptible to humans on a day-to-day basis. These shifts are so small that they never disrupt clocks, school schedules,

or calendars, but they do show up in precise measurements accumulated over decades. This change would take hundreds of millions of years and has no impact on our current clocks or calendars.

Earth's rotation is slowing down, meaning the 24-hour day will eventually be replaced by a 25-hour day, but not for roughly another 200 million years. The rotation is slowing down due to tidal friction from the Moon, lengthening the day by approximately 1.7 milliseconds per century.

While the long-term trend is slowing, shorter-term fluctua-

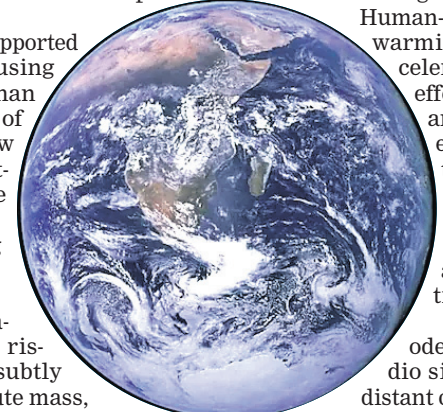
tions caused by atmospheric conditions or melting ice can slightly alter the spin speed.

Nasa-supported studies using more than 120 years of data show that melting ice sheets, shrinking glaciers, falling groundwater, and rising seas subtly redistribute mass,

nudging the spin axis and adding tiny fractions of a millisecond to the length of the day.

Human-driven warming has accelerated these effects since around 2000, especially through rapid ice loss in Greenland and Antarctica.

Modern geodesy uses radio signals from distant quasars and



laser ranging to satellites to pin down Earth's rotation and polar motion with exquisite precision.

Machine learning analyses of about 12 decades of records reveal repeating patterns tied mainly to water and ice, with a smaller contribution from deep Earth processes.

Impact on humans: If a day suddenly became 25 hours, we would need to rethink our entire timekeeping system. It would also mess with our internal clocks. Our bodies and pretty much every living thing run on a 24-hour circadian rhythm that dictates our sleep patterns,

hormones, and much more.

Circadian rhythms evolved to align with a 24-hour day, so any shift in day length can push biological systems out of sync.

Research shows that disruptions like night shifts, jet lag, or inconsistent sleep patterns can throw off these internal clocks, increasing the risk of metabolic disorders, mood issues, and heart-related problems. If Earth's day were to significantly lengthen, living organisms would likely adapt over time through evolutionary changes, but the adjustment would be gradual and challenging.

AGENCIES

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will find some decisions difficult to make, but be intent and resolute. Emotions may put you off rail, but once you have resolved, don't stray from it. Besides, Ganesha advises you to learn to endure setbacks in a mature manner.

TAURUS
You are likely to get into arguments today, predicts Ganesha. You should avoid any open confrontation. Legal disputes may bother you as well. Try your hand at meditation or resort to music of your preference to relax and unwind. It is best if you delay the start of any important activity today, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today, it's time to meet those who are close to you, and maybe even those who were close to you at some point of time. Also, it's time to revive old friendships, old memories and sink into nostalgia. You may want to buy a valuable historic artefact, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will take on new responsibilities, says Ganesha. So you will be busy in your task. You may feel exhausted due to hectic work. So it entails mental tension.

LEO
Some people have the world at their feet. And today, you are one of them, says Ganesha. With your gorgeous appearance and gregarious attitude, it is easy for you to open all doors with just a touch. So, you have the luxury to choose – either you entertain yourself through multiple avenues such as movies, theatre and music, or you be the entertainer with your superior performing skills. But irrespective of what you decide to do, you shall excel in both, confirms Ganesha.

VIRGO
Money matters will hit a major snag today, says Ganesha. Let your mind overrule your heart. Take extreme care of personal belongings, legal responsibilities and new ventures with long-term effects in mind.

LIBRA
Ganesha says today will be the start of a new love story for you and you will be able to spend time with someone very dear to you. You will be more conscious today about your appearance and may even go to the beauty parlor. Do remember the saying – beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. Ganesha says that you will be equally conscious of your dressing style and clothes and may go in for a new wardrobe today

SCORPIO
It's the same old rut today, says Ganesha. Nothing new, nothing exciting. People from the opposite sex, however, may bring you out of the routine and try to enliven your spirits, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
It's time for you to sit back, relax and let your actions do the talking. After all, actions speak louder than words, they say. You will also wrap up with all the pending tasks today, says Ganesha. You play an important role in resolving troubles, either for yourself or for others.

CAPRICORN
If at first you don't succeed, try again. Many people underestimate the power of perseverance and patience. But, these qualities will lead you success. Rather than exploding with anger and anxiety, keep your faith in your plans intact, especially when the results are not as per your plans, advises Ganesha. If you fail to do as per the advice, you may spoil your image in the society.

AQUARIUS
It's an uphill struggle today! But the heavens are on your side, and you will be saved from being swindled. Otherwise, it's an eventful day at work. You may initiate big business deals and new projects as well. It will take all your energy, and Ganesha suggests you hit the deck early.

PISCES
While you like cooperating with your colleagues, there is nothing like a little competition to spice things up. You will nonchalantly take on the challenges coming your way, and thrive on the sweet smell of success today. Luck is in your favour as well. Make the most of it, says Ganesha.



SALDANA AIMS TO MASTER GEN ALPHA SLANGS

Zoe Saldana is attempting to wrap her head around Generation Alpha slang and admits she is “hyper-focused” on figuring it out. The 47-year-old actor calls “6-7,” a viral TikTok trend inspired by rapper Skrilka’s song, her favourite pop culture moment of 2025 and says she’s determined to understand its meaning

SKARSGARD TALKS ABOUT PARENTING STRUGGLES

Stellan Skarsgard has shared a brutally honest view on parenthood, admitting he doesn't believe it's possible to be a “good parent.” The actor, father to eight children from two marriages, revealed that one of his kids even compared him to Gustav, the self-absorbed, absent father he portrays in his new film *Sentimental Value*



Kriti warns imposter

MUMBAI: Actor Kriti Kharbanda has issued a public warning after discovering that an unknown individual is impersonating her on WhatsApp. Taking to Instagram, the actor alerted her followers to the identity theft and urged them to stay cautious and verify any messages claiming to be from her.

Kriti shared a screenshot of the suspicious WhatsApp conversation on her Instagram Stories and clarified that the number being used does not belong to her. Calling the act unacceptable, she wrote, “Not ok. Not cool. Not my number. Pretending to be someone you're not is a clear case of identity theft. Be warned.” She emphasised that any communication from the said number should be treated as fraudulent.

Her warning comes at a time when cyber fraud and impersonation cases involving celebrities are on the rise, often aimed at misleading fans or extracting money and personal information. By flagging the issue publicly, Kriti aimed to prevent misuse of her identity and protect her followers from falling victim to scams.

Fans quickly



responded, thanking her for the clarification and expressing concern over the growing misuse of messaging platforms. Many also called for stricter action against online impersonation. AGENCIES

MUMBAI: At a time when hypermasculine portrayals of heroes in Indian cinema are frequently questioned, Ishaan Khatter stands out for choosing roles that reflect emotional depth and sensitivity. In a recent interaction, the actor opened up about how his upbringing and professional experiences have shaped his understanding of masculinity and empathy.

Speaking at an event, Ishaan shared that his masculine evolved usually, large-being a single He ex-traditional notions often define masculinity in opposition to femininity, rather than through emotional awareness and balance. “Men are not taught to be men; they're just taught not to be women,” he said, adding that his sense of manhood has been deeply influenced by his relationship with women, especially his mother.

The son of actors Rajesh Khattar and Neelima Azeem, who separated when he was six, Ishaan acknowledged that growing up in a single-parent household had a lasting impact on his values and worldview. He also highlighted how working extensively with female filmmakers such as Mira Nair, Nupur Asthana and Priyanka Ghose helped him understand the female gaze and its significance in storytelling. According to Ishaan, engaging with diverse perspectives is cinema's greatest strength, rooted in empathy. AGENCIES



Ishaan redefines masculinity

ideas of linity grad-shaped ly by raised by mother. He explained that notions often

TARA claps back at haters

MUMBAI: Actress Tara Sutaria, who is currently in the middle of a controversy after her onstage appearance with A P Dhillon, has issued a statement with regards to the same.

Monday, the actress took to her Instagram, and shared a picture from the recent show. In the video, the actress can be seen having a good time during the show, dancing next to the Punjabi star.

She also penned a long note in the caption.

tion, as she wrote, “Loud and proud and in it together. @apdhillon FAV!!! What a night! Thank you Mumbai for SO much love for our song and here's to more music and memories together. P.S: False narratives, “clever editing” and paid PR campaigns by folks won't and don't shake us up! In the end, love and the truth always wins. So the joke's on the bullies”.

Recently, a clip from the show went viral allegedly showing A P Dhillon kissing the actress. The next few shots in the clip show the actress' boyfriend Veer Pahariya feeling uncomfortable with the proximity between the actress and the Punjabi star.

The Internet flared up as the clip went viral with netizens criticising the actress for her conduct on stage, and expressing sympathy for Veer.



Unresolved fall out between Rajesh & Sanjeev

MUMBAI: December 29 holds special significance for Hindi cinema lovers as it marks the birth anniversary of Rajesh Khanna, Bollywood's first true superstar. Born in 1942, he redefined stardom with an unmatched record of 15 solo hit films in a row, a feat that remains unbroken. On this occasion, one of the most talked-about and controversial anecdotes associated with the legendary actor continues to resurface: the much-discussed “slap” incident involving Sanjeev Kumar.

Rajesh and Sanjeev were both towering figures of their time, yet vastly different in temperament and screen presence. While Rajesh embodied flamboyant stardom and romantic charm, Sanjeev was admired for his understated, deeply rooted performances. Known for portraying the common man with remarkable authenticity, Sanjeev earned immense respect through classics such as *Sholay*, *Aandhi*, *Angoor* and *Khilonja*. Despite their success, stories of tension between the two actors began circu-



lating over the years, with one particular incident gaining lasting notoriety.

Rajesh's personal life was frequently under public scrutiny, especially his long and turbulent relationship with actress Anju Mahendroo. The couple lived together for nearly seven years before parting ways in 1972. Following their separation, rumours emerged linking Sanjeev to Anju, who reportedly disturbed Rajesh. Anju later clarified that Sanjeev was like family to her, comparing him to her mother's brother. However, the gossip persisted and continued to fuel speculation.

The tension reportedly came to a head during the shooting of a film featuring both actors, where a slap was scripted as part of a scene. According to reports, the slap was delivered with unexpected force, leading many to believe it carried emotions beyond the script. The moment became a major talking point and cemented rumours of an unresolved fallout between the two stars.

Around the same time, Anju spoke about her troubled relationship with Rajesh, recalling how her choices were often criticised, highlighting the emotional strain she endured. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

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Across

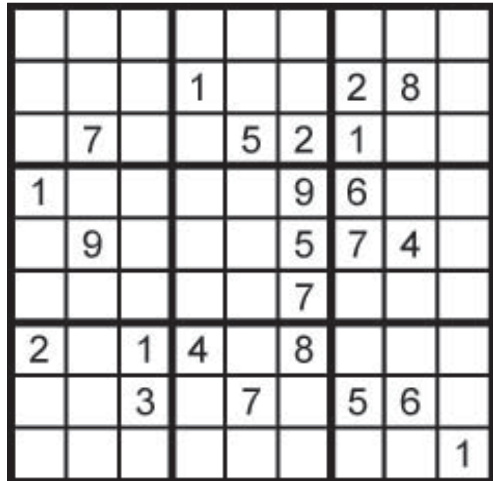
- Unexciting
- Songbird's call
- Origin of the universe theory (3,4)
- Emanation
- Trifling
- Without weapons
- Respectful greeting
- Sock pattern
- Ill will
- Cajole
- Mostel of Fiddler fame
- One in the dock
- Shade of green
- Buck the odds
- Balance sheet item
- Vantage point
- Hardship
- Wool producer

Down

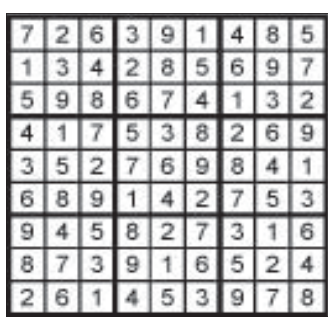
- Up-to-the-minute
- Cross
- Venomous snake
- Loan shark's interest rate
- Cavalry member
- Like Chippendale furniture
- Compact
- Kind of layer
- Seating request
- Jittery

SUDOKU

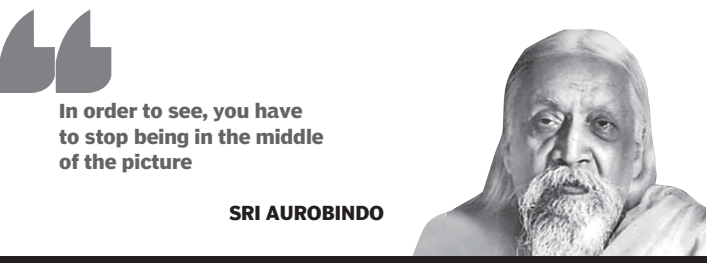
To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Return of the Native

When Tarique Rahman, the 60-year-old son of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and chief of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), ended his 17-year exile and stepped back onto Bangladeshi soil 25 December, new possibilities seemed to open up for the country which has been in great turmoil for the past few months since the collapse of Sheikh Hasina’s very long and authoritarian rule. There is no gainsaying the fact that he is a product of polarization politics that has made the country lurch from one extreme to another. Yet, his statements before and after setting foot on the country’s soil assume significance both for Bangladesh and India. The current anti-India rhetoric whipped up by the fundamentalist forces ruling the roost at the moment, with the interim government conniving with it, may be toned down and there may also be a halt to the mad rush towards chaos and violence prevailing in the country.

Rahman’s return comes after the Bangladesh Election Commission announced polls will be held in February 2026. Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser of the interim government, has announced that he will step down after the polls. The two men had met in London earlier this year. Zia, Bangladesh’s first woman Prime Minister, is an arch-rival of Sheikh Hasina. The 80-year-old has been in poor health of late and was even put on ventilator support.

Addressing cheering crowds on his arrival, Rahman made a sensible and maybe impractical noise about pledging to unite people of all faiths and ensuring their safety. He urged Moslems, Hindoos, Buddhists and Christians living in his country to join him in creating an inclusive nation. He even echoed civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr and quoted from his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. He asserted that he has a plan for the people of his country and stressed the importance of cooperation for building a democratic and economically strong Bangladesh. The first and foremost thing needed for the country at the moment is peace and he said he will strive to achieve this goal.

Rahman, who held a roadshow to his residence, was greeted by thousands of supporters along the route which reflects how important he is in the country’s current political landscape. Since he is billed to be the frontrunner in the race for Prime Minister, his calls for peace and safety for individuals of all faiths set the right tone. Significantly, he wished Hindoos well. This seems to go down well for that minority, somewhat calming the highly charged communal atmosphere in which Hindoos have been targeted by fundamentalist forces with vicious attacks for the past few months. Rahman reassured the Hindoos by iterating that religion is for the individual, but the right to security is for everyone.

This gives an elbow room to India to rework its Bangladesh strategy which has gone completely awry and been de-railed since some time.

Surveys, including one by the US-based International Republican Institute, show that the BNP could possibly win the most seats in Bangladesh’s Parliament. Here it is to be noted that India has had a rather contentious relationship with the BNP and closer ties with Hasina. With Hasina’s Awami League having been barred from contesting the polls, India desperately needs to seek an ally in Rahman. Of course, the BNP chief has announced he will maintain equidistance from India and Pakistan coining the slogan “Not Dilli (Delhi), not Pindi (Rawalpindi)” and expressed his resolve to make “Bangladesh before everything.” This slogan clearly means New Delhi will be the bigger loser since it was Pakistan which was always the primary enemy for the erstwhile East Pakistan now Bangladesh.

Foreign affairs experts claim it will be suicidal for Rahman to publicly declare any willingness to work with India, given the anti-India mood prevailing in the country. All the same his words that he would not curry favour with Pakistan will squeeze India’s window which it is frantically seeking. India is concerned about the rise of the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami party, which has made a comeback under Yunus. There were reports that the Jamaat was key to Yunus getting the position of chief adviser. The Jamaat also reportedly has the backing of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). So India, busy making box office hit movies, is lost in the maze of intricacies being woven along the length and breadth of its borders.

Under these circumstances, the BNP could be the only bet for India. Much now depends on how Rahman plays his cards to win the February elections and if he is successful to come out as a dominant player then how kindly he decides to treat India.

WISDOM CORNER

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect

MARK TWAIN

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom

VIKTOR E. FRANKL

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts

BERTRAND RUSSELL

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1816: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Percy Bysshe Shelley married, two years after they had eloped to France while Shelley was still married. She would publish Frankenstein about a year later, and her poet husband would drown six years later.

1902: British naval officer and explorer Robert Falcon Scott, in company with Ernest Henry Shackleton and E.A. Wilson, set a new record for reaching the farthest point south, on the Ross Ice Shelf at the head of the Ross Sea in Antarctica.

1916: Grigori Rasputin was murdered by Russian conservatives—who reportedly poisoned, shot, and then drowned the Siberian mystic—in an effort to halt his influence over Empress Alexandra and the royal family.

1922: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established, with its capital in Moscow.

1947: Last king of Romania steps down. Michael I was forced to abdicate by the Communist Party of Romania. His first reign over the country was in 1927 as a 6-year old, and it lasted only 3 years until 1930. He was then reinstalled in 1940.

1975: Tiger Woods—the first player to win consecutively golf’s four major tournaments (the Masters, the U.S. Open, the British Open, and the PGA Championship)—was born in Cypress, California.

power post

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

GOD, GAIA & ARAVALLIS

The debate on the ever-alive topic ‘Does God exist?’ between the well-known poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar, an atheist, and the graduate of Islamic studies Mufti Shaimail Nadwi, a believer, has drawn much interest and comment. Akhtar is the darling of those who stand with reason, logic and secularism, values that are under attack in India today. He is the first Indian to win a little-known Richard Dawkins Award, which is presented annually to a “distinguished individual ... who publicly proclaims the values of secularism and rationalism, upholding scientific truth wherever it may lead.” But we may ask: Where exactly has modernity and value-free science led us? The sting lies in this counter question that found no place in the Akhtar-Nadwi television-style debate. The march of science and technology, fused into a compact called technoscience, has delivered remarkable progress on the one hand but on the other hand has brought exploitation at a scale so stunning that it has also delivered the unfolding climate crisis, brought humanity on the edge of an ecological disaster and landed us in the age of the Anthropocene.

There is progress at an immediate and material level for a few but regress at a long-term planetary scale, an essentially Western-style plunder and conquest of “mother nature” that is often traced right back to the 17th century and the dawn of the Age of Reason and the subsequent Enlightenment movement of the 18th century. This science also became a religion of sorts that prayed at the altar of objectivity, maximised extraction and so-called efficiency and somewhere in the process dehumanised the project of humanity living in peace on a fragile planet.

When Francis Bacon (1561-1626) said that mankind “should endeavour to establish and extend the power and dominion of the human race itself over the universe” and Rene Descartes (1596-1650)



It is ironic that a government and a system that seeks to reclaim the Indian ethos and the ancient Indian way of life is today working with models that are precisely the opposite

“described the Earth and the whole visible universe in the manner of a machine,” they unleashed the path to the plunder of nature pictured as a dead rock, not as the sensitive ecosystem of a living planet that it is now recognised to be. Earth as the “pale blue dot,” the image of our planet as a flicker in the cosmic vastness, brings humility and inspires awe. But that perspective is lost when science becomes a cold and calculated excavation by equipment and equations that dice and slice nature to study its innards but miss the wonder of its systemic connectedness and wholeness.

This diminished understanding of nature is at the root of the crisis across the world but particularly in India, where rising air and water pollution, biodiversity loss and concrete or plastic poured into sensitive ecosystems are the visible hot spots in a blind race to growth toward a mythical national greatness. The attempted takeover of the Aravalli mountain range by one business group under the label of progress and growth is only the latest chapter in this long-running game of a nation that has forsaken nature in its quest for mindless extraction. These policies continue to be built on approaches that the advanced economies of Europe have long given up as they moved towards some form of sustainability.

With the sense of the sacred

gone, the Aravalli range that forms the oldest fold mountains (so-called because they ‘fold up’ when earth’s tectonic plates collide) on the planet is seen as 800 km of dead rock to be exploited for resources and material assets for consumption here and now at a cost that will be paid much later and will never be fully comprehended. Yet when what is dismissed as profane is given the status of the sacred, the Aravalli mountain range becomes the God that guides and protects. In the words of an official document of the government, it “gently guides the monsoon clouds eastwards towards Shimla and Nainital, thus helping nurture the sub-Himalayan rivers and feeding the north Indian plains” while “in the winter months, it protects the fertile alluvial river valleys (the para Indus & Gangetic) from the assault of cold westerly winds from Central Asia.”

India today sits at the bottom of the rank of countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), which combines a range of indicators like climate change mitigation, air pollution, waste management, sustainability of fisheries and agriculture, deforestation, and biodiversity protection. The EPI is produced by centres working under Yale and Columbia Universities. The 2024 listing showed India at rank 176 out of 180, ahead of Pakistan (rank 179) but behind

Bangladesh (175), China (156), and Sri Lanka (134). The government has dismissed earlier versions of the ranking as unscientific.

It is ironic that a government and a system that seeks to reclaim the Indian ethos and the ancient Indian way of life is today working with models that are precisely the opposite. For example, the very first verse of the Isha Upanishad tells us that the entire universe, animate and inanimate, is enveloped by God or Isha (Ishavasyam idam sarvam), a verse that Gandhi said captured the essence of the entire Hindu philosophy. But instead of nature being worshipped as a form of the Lord as seen in the Upanishadic understanding, this government has embraced development models that turn the scriptures and all that is held scared on its head as it rushes in to plunder the land, the mountains and the seas. Coupled with this violence is the attendant violence of crony capitalism, the violence embedded in growing inequality, and the violence in showcasing a growth militarism that counts numbers but forgets people.

None of this is to suggest that India must reject science or progress, but to ask for an ecological intelligence that sees that the tools of science may not always bring progress, particularly when we disregard the subjective experience or forget that small can also be beautiful as the economist EF Schumacher put it. This is often explained by ecologists as the Gaia hypothesis, named for the primordial Greek goddess of the Earth, which tells us how our planet is a delicately balanced self-regulating system, alive and conscious, the one planet we call home that gives and protects, and deserves to be protected. This is the simple yet profound truth, and if truth is God, then this is the God we need in our troubled times.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR.

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SPECTRUM SCIENCE

The sorrow of the twin sisters

There are two planets in the solar system, which are named twin planets (or twin sisters). Behind this consideration lies the several similarities between them. These two planets are Venus and Earth. For example, the mass of Venus and Earth is 4.87×1024 and 5.97×1024 kilograms, respectively. Radius is 6052 and 6378 kilometers, density is 5250 and 5520 (in kilograms per cubic meter). Their surface is mainly composed of granite and altered material in both cases, although granite is also seen on the surface of the Earth. But in some other matters, a significant difference is observed. While the atmosphere of Venus has carbon dioxide at 96%, on Earth, this amount is only 0.04%. The percentage of nitrogen for Venus and Earth is 3 and 78 respectively. Most important is the percentage of oxygen required for survival. This is completely absent on Venus, while it

is 21% on Earth. In addition, the surface temperature for Venus is 465 degrees Celsius. But for Earth, it is 15 degrees. The pressure on the surface of Venus is much higher than on Earth. If the pressure at the sea level of our planet is taken as one, it is ninety times for Venus. Therefore, the pressure is more. Hence, if a person stands on the surface of Venus, the air pressure on him will be so great that his lifeless body will merge with the surface.

From this, it is clear that the environment of Venus is completely unsuitable for the living world due to unbearably high temperature and pressure, and the absence of oxygen. Even though Venus and Earth are considered twins, the differences between them make all the similarities meaningless.

Earth, as a habitable planet, remains favorable and welcome for us. But by natural factors, Venus is a trap for living beings. While one

is a life-saver, the other is a life-taker. But the question arises, was Venus in such a miserable state from the beginning of its creation? Some scientists are of the opinion that oceans existed there in the past, just like on Earth. But its location in the solar system created a problem. For example, the average distance of Earth from the Sun is 150 million kilometers. But Venus is only 108 million kilometers away. As a result, the intense rays of the Sun were falling on the oceans of Venus. Due to the intense and strong radiation, Venus, which had been a shelter of water like Earth, became completely dry. Accordingly, it turned into an infertile useless celestial body. But astronomers are of the opinion that a study of Venus is essential for a proper understanding of the origin of Earth.

It is worth noting that in the recent past, a gas named phosphine has been found in

the atmosphere of Venus. This gas is associated with biological processes. Therefore, it is being considered that life once existed there. But possibly, life became extinct from it due to the greenhouse effect. This gives us a cautionary note: the same fate can one day come to Earth. The greenhouse effect on Venus was caused by abundant carbon dioxide generated from volcanic eruptions. But on Earth, we will have to suffer the consequences of greenhouse effect due to human-made activities.

The fatal tendency of one of the two twin sisters occurred naturally. But the other sister will lose life and transform into a dead planet due to man’s conscience-less oppression of nature. This is an irony and a challenge to entire human society.

The writer is a retired director of the Odisha Text Book Bureau.

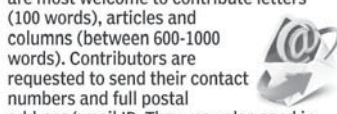


Nikhilanand Panigrahy

WE WILL HAVE TO SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF GREENHOUSE EFFECT DUE TO HUMAN-MADE ACTIVITIES

Letters

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



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

Ecological vandalism

Sir, The Great Nicobar project is being sold as strategic foresight. In reality, it is state-sanctioned ecological vandalism. To build a transshipment port, airport and township, the government plans to clear close to a million trees on one of India’s most biodiverse islands. These forests are not surplus land. They are living systems that sustain endemic species, protect coastlines, and support fragile coral and turtle nesting sites like Galathea Bay. Once destroyed, they cannot be “mitigated.” The project moves ahead despite Great Nicobar’s location in a high seismic zone, scarred by the 2004 tsunami. Risk is acknowledged only to be ignored. Environmental clearances have been fast-tracked, impact assessments diluted, and scientific warnings sidelined. Most damning is the treatment of the island’s people. The Shompen and Nicobarese tribes, among the most vulnerable in the country, face displacement through procedural consent and hollow consultations. Laws meant to protect forests and Indigenous rights are bent to suit timelines, not justice. A state that silences forests, erases communities and gags voices to build infrastructure is not securing the future — it is burning it.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)

A window

Sir, The return of Tarique Rahman to Bangladesh’s political centre-stage after 17 years in exile marks a significant moment, not merely for domestic politics but for regional diplomacy as well. His stated emphasis on inclusivity, respect across faiths, and a Bangladesh-first approach deserves careful but open-minded attention. At a time when Bangladesh has witnessed political turbulence and shrinking space for dissent, any articulation of pluralism is noteworthy. Equally important is the BNP’s recalibrated foreign posture—seeking equidistance from India, China and Pakistan—suggesting a departure from ideological rigidity. For India, long accustomed to viewing the Awami League as its natural partner, this moment calls for strategic realism rather than preference-driven diplomacy. Scepticism is natural; electoral promises often fade in office. Yet diplomacy is built on engagement, not presumption. If Rahman follows through on his stated vision, it could offer Bangladesh a path out of polarisation and India an opportunity to reshape a more balanced and durable bilateral relationship.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

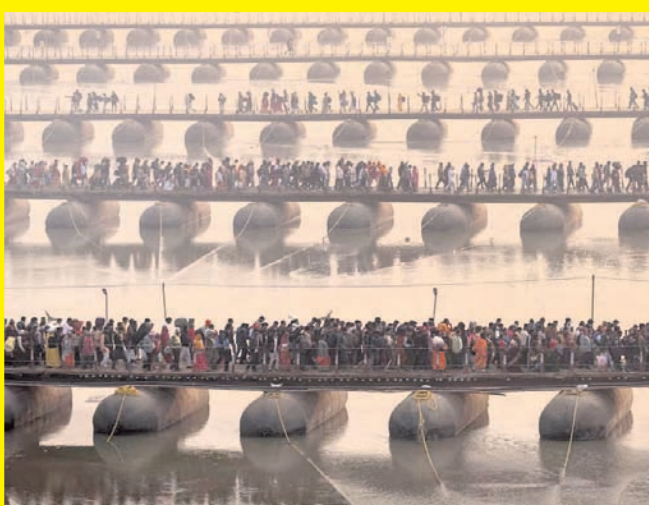
POST NEWS NETWORK

GLIMPSES 2025

2025 unfolded like a living mosaic—brilliant in places, shattered in others—each moment captured against a world learning how to endure its own contradictions. The year opened its eyes to Trump's takeover, then lifted its gaze to awe at Maha Kumbh Mela—the world's largest spiritual gathering, and teared up to the echoes of a widow's wail in the debris of an Air India flight crash. It saw tomorrow break into the present as humanoid runners took their first historic strides in China, while buried truths from yesterday resurfaced with the release of the Epstein files. In Rome, white smoke marked the selection of a new Pope, and elsewhere, hope struggled to breathe amid scourge of war. Across continents, floods, fires, and quakes rewrote landscapes, but humanity moved forward carrying both light and shadow, side by side. Together, these frames don't just document history; they ask us to feel it



A robot competes in the 1500m race during the World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing, China



Devotees cross pontoon bridges on the day they take a holy dip at Sangam during the Maha Kumbh Mela, or the Great Pitcher Festival, in Prayagraj



The Palisades Fire ravages a neighbourhood amid high winds in Los Angeles, US



A protester shouts outside the Singha Durbar in Nepal's Kathmandu, during the Gen-Z protests



US President Donald Trump speaks with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington



Family members and relatives of Akash Patni, a victim of the Air India plane crash, grieve during his funeral procession in Ahmedabad



A grieving woman sits next to the body of her husband who was shot dead during the terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir



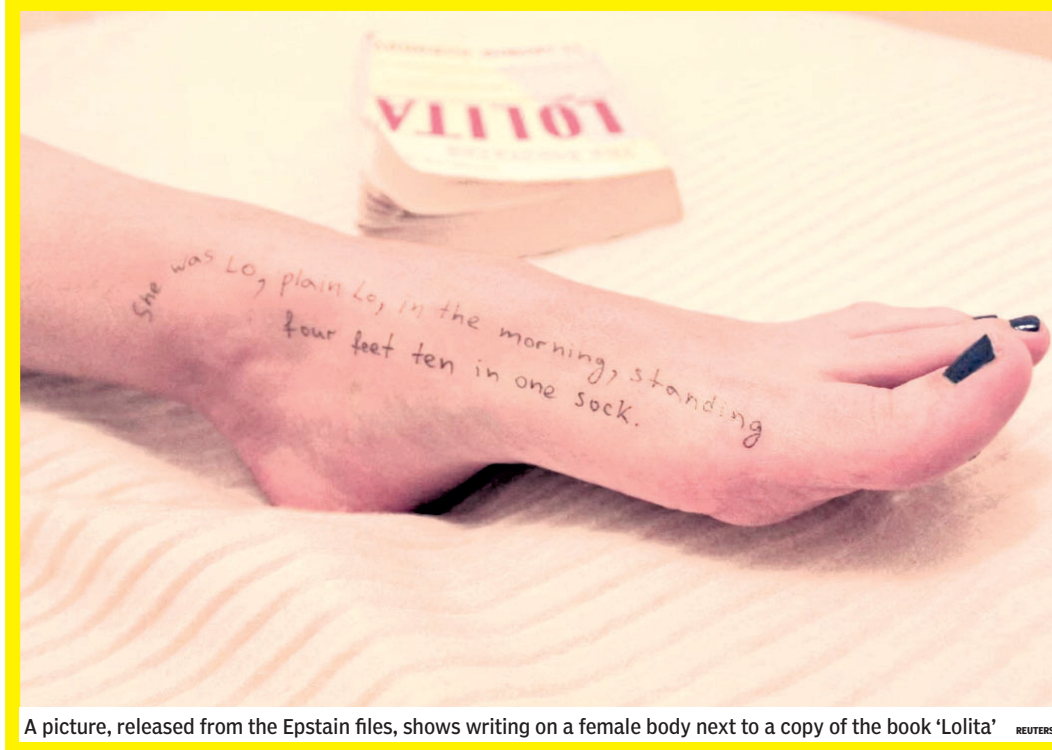
A damaged lying Buddhist statue is pictured inside a pagoda following a strong earthquake in Mandalay, Myanmar



An Indigenous demonstrator is held by a staff member as protesters forced their way into the venue hosting the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30), in Belem, Brazil



Palestinians Ali Marouf and his mother, Aisha, cook on the roof of their house, which was destroyed by an Israeli offensive, in Jabaliya, Gaza Strip



A picture, released from the Epstein files, shows writing on a female body next to a copy of the book 'Lolita'



The tail of an Air India airplane sticks out of a hostel building where it crashed in Ahmedabad



US President Donald Trump gestures while holding a sword, near first lady Melania Trump, as they attend the Commander in Chief Ball in honour of his inauguration in Washington



Saja Hamad, a Palestinian woman, lies trapped under the rubble of a house hit in an Israeli strike, in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip



Wong, 71, reacts after claiming his wife is trapped inside Wang Fuk Court during a major fire, in Tai Po, Hong Kong, China



A portrait of the late Pope Francis is projected onto a water fountain at Magic Water Circuit, in Lima, Peru



The iconic image of white smoke rising from the Sistine Chapel chimney symbolising selection of a new Pope



Naima Abu Ful with her 2-year-old malnourished child, Yazan, at their home in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza City



The northern lights fill the sky behind the Saint Joseph the Woodworker Shrine near Valley Falls, Kansas, US



An old woman confronts a riot policeman during a weekly protest demanding better pensions for retirees in Buenos Aires, Argentina



Adrien Brody throws his chewing gum to Georgina Chapman after winning the Oscar for 'The Brutalist' at the 97th Academy Awards in Hollywood

of the day

quote

Scrapping of MGNREGA anti-rural; statewide protests to be launched against it

SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKHU | CHIEF MINISTER, HIMACHAL PRADESH

They see terrorists in nationalists and shantidoot (messengers of peace) in real terrorists such as Afzal Guru and Yakub Memon. The Congress insults nationalists, and calls terrorists such as the naxals and members of the PFI and SIMI their 'bhaijaan' (brothers). This is the only thing they do

SMHAZAD POONAWALLA | BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

Much progress has been achieved in the last 10 years in Assam under the BJP governments. Bless the BJP with another 5 years and every infiltrator will be identified and sent back

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

POST OF THE DAY

Aravali : Online Outrage, People on the streets
Result : DECISION REVERSED
KuldeepSengar : Online outrage, people on the streets
Result : DECISION REVERSED
this is what happens when people realise the value of their voice
Keep speaking up, Keep outraging.
@RoshanKrRaii

SHORT TAKES

ED questions Malayali actor Jayasurya, wife

Kochi: Malayali actor Jayasurya and his wife Monday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate here for questioning in a “cheating-linked” money laundering case, official sources said. The federal probe agency recorded the statement of the couple under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, they said. There was no immediate comment from the couple on the development. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe, as per the sources, stems from at least four FIRs registered by the Thrissur police on charges of cheating of some persons through an online bidding application called the ‘Save Box’.

NCP (SP) Mumbai chief Rakhi joins BJP

Mumbai: In a setback to the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (SP), its Mumbai unit president Rakhi Jadhav on Monday joined the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the January 15 Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections. Jadhav formally entered the BJP in the presence of MLA Parag Shah, and is likely to contest on the ruling party’s ticket from Ghatkopar.

Security guard hangs self after killing wife

Noida: A 35-year-old security guard allegedly killed his wife after a dispute and then committed suicide by hanging here, police said Monday. The incident occurred Sunday evening at a rented house in Saraswati Kunj, located within the jurisdiction of the Bsirakh Kotwali police station. The deceased have been identified as Anil, a native of Etah district, and his wife Anita (32).



Education is not only about getting good package or placement, but how many people are positively affected by your work for betterment of society

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

DELHI SEES WORST DECEMBER AQI

Delhi recorded its worst air quality for December this year since 2018 with an average AQI of 349, even as farm fires accounted for just 3.5 per cent of the PM2.5 pollution, according to official data. In December 2018, the capital logged an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 360, an official told PTI



Leaders condemn killing of Tripura student

‘National disgrace’, say leaders calling for zero tolerance against 'hate crimes' targeting NE people after killing of Tripura student

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Dec 29: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami spoke to the father of the student from Tripura, who was killed in an alleged racial attack here, on phone Monday and assured strict punishment to the accused, as leaders cutting across political lines called for comprehensive efforts to end “hate crimes” against the people from the northeastern states.

On Dhami’s instruction, the Uttarakhand government also sent a cheque of Rs 4.12 lakh to the Chakma family as first instalment of financial assistance, officials said.

Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders targeted the BJP, alleging that the murder of MBA student Anjel Chakma, 24, was a fallout of the ruling dispensation “normalizing” hate and encouraging a “divisive mindset”. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav demanded that the Supreme Court step in and ensure justice.

Former Union minister Shashi Tharoor said the brutal killing “is a national disgrace”, and political and religious leaders must speak out against the abuse of the people from the Northeast as “silence is complicity”.

Union minister Kiren Rijiju expressed “dismay and anger” over the killing and called upon the people to fight against such “mindset” together, saying any such incident is “very shameful” and harms the country. He said the issue should not be politicised.

Asked about Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders holding the BJP responsible



for the incident, Rijiju said, “Be it a youngster coming from the north east, Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal... a student from any of the states in the country, we are all Indians. Everyone should be sad with any such incident happening with anyone from any part of the country. This is not a matter on which politics should be done.”

“Be it the northeast or in any other part of the country, why should anyone from other region be subjected to such discrimination on the lines of race, religion, caste and looks.”

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal said the country needs strict action and a national law against racism and hate crimes. “Justice must be swift and exemplary,” he said on X. Speaking in the same vein, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi demanded that the case be investigated in a time-bound manner and the guilty be given the harshest punishment to convey a message across the country that there is zero tolerance for such crimes.

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal said Union Home Minister Amit Shah must speak up against

the hate crimes. In a post on X, he said the murder is “a shocking display of a hate crime, of bigotry, of the silence of our leaders in government who by their inaction are complicit.”

Gandhi said on X, “What happened to Anjel Chakma and his brother Michael in Dehradun is a horrific hate crime. Hate doesn’t appear overnight. For years now, it has been fed daily -- especially to our youth -- through toxic content and irresponsible narratives. And it’s being normalised by the hate-spewing leadership of the ruling BJP.”

Dhami, in his phone conversation with Anjel Chakma’s father, Tarun Prasad Chakma, said he is saddened by the incident and that the state government stands with the victim’s family.

He told Tarun Prasad Chakma that five accused have been arrested in connection with the incident, while another accused is suspected to have fled to Nepal, and efforts are being made to arrest him by declaring a reward.

Anjel Chakma, a final-year MBA student at a private university here, was seriously in-

jured when he was allegedly attacked by some youngsters with a knife and a bracelet December 9. He died December 26, after being hospitalised for 17 days.

His father, a BSF jawan currently posted in Tangjeng in Manipur, had alleged that his son was “brutally attacked” when he tried to defend his brother who faced racial slurs and was called “Chinese” by the attackers.

The assailants called his sons “Chinese momo” and abused him, the father of the victim told PTI over the phone. Anjel told them that he “was also Indian, not Chinese” but they attacked him with knives and blunt objects, he said.

“It is shameful that such incidents are taking place in our country. Who are these people to question anyone’s nationality? Even if there is doubt, one should go and complain to the local police,” AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said.

In a statement issued from the Samajwadi Party headquarters, Akhilesh Yadav said, “A divisive mindset is taking lives every day and such elements, enjoying political patronage, are flourishing like poisonous weeds.”

He claimed that such negative forces posed a serious threat to the country, its unity and integrity.

Yadav said it was imperative for peace-loving and harmony-driven citizens to unite, identify such anti-social elements within the society and socially boycott them, warning that otherwise anyone could become a victim of such violence in future.

Meanwhile, Tipra Motha Party (TMP)-run Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) announced a compensation of Rs 3 lakh to the family members of the student.

Candle light marches were held by students’ organisations and locals in Dehradun and in Agartala demanding justice for Anjel Chakma.

I am secular in true sense: CM Mamata



Banerjee flagged concerns over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list, alleging harassment of people and loss of lives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 29: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday rejected allegations of indulging in appeasement, asserting that she is “secular in the true sense” and participates in programmes across faiths without discrimination.

She was speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony of ‘Durga Angan’, a cultural complex dedicated to Goddess Durga, at New Town in Kolkata. “People accuse me of indulging in appeasement, but it is not correct. I am secular in the true sense,” she said, adding that she attends programmes of all religions.

The Trinamool Congress supremo did not identify the accuser, but the opposition BJP often charges her with appeasing the Muslims. “You do not say anything when I visit

a Gurdwara, but start criticising me when I attend an Eid programme,” Banerjee said, adding that one must love all religions.

“When I visit a Gurdwara, I cover my head with a scarf. If I go (to an event) during Ramadan, why should I not (do the same)?” Today, I am here, so I have covered myself with a scarf,” she added. Banerjee also flagged concerns over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list, alleging harassment of people and loss of lives.

“People are being harassed unnecessarily. More than 50 people have either committed suicide or died within a month (since the rollout of SIR in Bengal on November 4). We cannot stand this,” she said.

What is the relationship between citizenship and the right to vote, Banerjee asked. “If someone speaks Bengali, the individual does not get rooms in hotels. If someone speaks Bengali, the individual is labelled as Bangladeshi. Before partition, we were all together,” she said. The TMC chief was alluding to alleged intimidation of Bengali-speaking Muslims in various BJP-ruled states on suspicion of being Bangladeshis.

Tatanagar-Ernakulam Express train catches fire in AP, 1 killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, Dec 29: One person was killed after two coaches of the Tatanagar-Ernakulam Express caught fire at Yalamanchili, about 66 km from here, police said Monday.

The police received information about the fire at 12:45 am. A police official told reporters that there were 82 passengers in one of the affected coaches and 76 in another when the train caught fire.

“Unfortunately, a dead body was found in the B1 coach,” the official added.

Initial investigations indicated that the fire did not originate from the electrical panel side of the coach, which is usually the case, but from the linen storage area, officials said, adding that further investigation is underway, said a press release from the Vijayawada Division of the South Central Railway (SCR).

While all passengers de-



boarded, one passenger, Chandrasekhar Sundar, aged 70 years, could not deboard and died due to fire, said the press release.

The SCR said that ex gratia would be paid to the family of the deceased. Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) of the South Central Circle will hold a detailed inquiry into the fire incident, it said.

The two damaged coaches were detached from the train, which proceeded towards Ernakulam. The passengers in the damaged coaches will be sent to their destinations. Two forensic teams are working to ascertain the cause of the fire, the police official said.

Indigo cancels 118 flights due to bad weather

Flight services were cancelled at Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Cochin, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Dehradun, Indore, Patna and Bhopal, among others, as per the IndiGo website

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 29: IndiGo Monday cancelled 118 flights across its network due to bad weather and operational reasons, according to its website.

Of these, six flight services were axed due to operational reasons, while the rest were cancelled due to bad weather conditions at various airports.

Flight services were cancelled at Delhi, Mumbai, Bana-



lore, Cochin, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Dehradun, Indore, Patna and Bhopal, among others, as per the IndiGo website.

The airline, in a travel advisory at 11.20 am, said, “Foggy conditions remain in place across Delhi and several airports in northern India, with visibility yet to improve fully. As a result, the earlier impact on flight movements is likely to extend into the noon hours, and some delays may continue.”

In the advisory posted on X, however, IndiGo did not say it had cancelled 80 flights

REVIVING INDIA'S ANCIENT MARITIME GLORY

INSV Kaundinya sets sail for maiden voyage to Oman

Named after the legendary mariner Kaundinya, who is believed to have sailed from India to Southeast Asia in ancient times, the ship embodies India’s historic role as a maritime nation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Porbandar, Dec 29: INSV Kaundinya, the Navy’s engineless vessel built using the ancient stitched-ship technique, embarked on her maiden overseas voyage from Gujarat’s Porbandar to Muscat Monday to retrace old maritime routes that once connected the west-

ern coast of India with Oman.

This historic expedition marks a major milestone in India’s efforts to revive, understand, and celebrate its ancient maritime heritage through a living ocean voyage, according to a defence release.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his best wishes to the crew of INSV Kaundinya.

“Wonderful to see that INSV Kaundinya is embarking on her maiden voyage from Porbandar to Muscat, Oman... My best wishes to the crew for a safe and memorable journey, as they retrace our historic links with the Gulf region and beyond,” the prime minister said in a post on X.

Built using the ancient In-



dian stitched-ship technique, this ship highlights India’s rich maritime traditions, Modi said.

“I congratulate the designers, artisans, shipbuilders and the

Indian Navy for their dedicated efforts in bringing this unique vessel to life,” the prime minister said. He also shared some photos of the ship and an image of

an old mural depicting an ancient ship. The vessel was formally flagged off by Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, Vice-Admiral, Krishna Swaminathan, in the presence of the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to India, Issa Saleh Al Shibani, in Porbandar.

Inspired by depictions of ancient Indian ships and constructed entirely using traditional stitched-plank techniques, INSV Kaundinya represents a rare convergence of history, craftsmanship and modern naval expertise, the defence ministry said.

The 65-feet-long vessel has been constructed using traditional stitched shipbuilding

techniques, employing natural materials and methods that date back several centuries.

With 18 sailors onboard, the vessel will cover a distance of 1,400 km and reach the shore of Oman after 15 days at sea, according to the release.

The voyage retraces ancient maritime routes that once connected the western coast of India with Oman, facilitating trade, cultural exchange, and sustained civilisational interactions across the Indian Ocean. The expedition is expected to significantly enhance bilateral relations between India and Oman by reinforcing shared maritime heritage and strengthening cultural and people-to-people ties.

of the day quote

It is not just mining but real estate development that is being opened up by the double-engine sarkar in New Delhi-Jaipur against the recommendations of the Forest Survey of India

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

xx Our party condemns any form of lynching, and we hope that the Bangladeshi observer or administrator, Mr Yunus, and his administration will take strong action against such incidents xx

ASADUDDIN OWAIS | AIMIM CHIEF

All pre-cautionary measures should be taken for the safety of women during the New Year celebrations. It should be ensured that no untoward incident occurs

SIDDARAMAIAH | CHIEF MINISTER, KARNATAKA

SHORT TAKES

2 Telangana women die in US car crash

Hyderabad: Two women from Telangana died in a road accident in the US, according to information received by their family members Monday. The victims, Meghana Rani and K Bhavana, both aged 24, died in a car accident in Bishop city of California, at around 3 am (IST) on Monday while they were on a tour. The two women, natives of Garla and Mulkanoor villages in Mahabubabad district, had gone to the United States for higher studies, police sources said. BRS Rajya Sabha member Vaddiraju Ravichandra expressed grief over the death of two women. Ravichandra spoke to the parents of the deceased and assured them that he would take up the matter with the officials concerned to facilitate the return of the mortal remains, according to a press release.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Birmaharajpur, No.226, Dt.20.12.2025, I, Meenakshi Agrawal, W/o-Prahallad Agrawal, R/o-Vill./P.O./PS-Subalaya, Dist.-Subarnapur declare that I have changed my name from Meena Kumari Agrawalla to Meenakshi Agrawal and DOB from 10.05.1977 to 28.05.1978. Henceforth I shall be known as Meenakshi Agrawal and DOB- 28.05.1978 for all purposes. Meenakshi Agrawal

I, Jayendra Behera, (Aadhaar- xxxx xxxx 5655), S/o- Dharani Behera, Kotapokhari, Nayagarh, Odisha declare that DHARANIDHAR BEHERA (as in H.S.C. Certificate) and DHARANI BEHERA (used in other documents) are variant spellings of my father's name and both refer to the same person. This affidavit is for correcting discrepancies for job and other applications etc.



It is the duty of the Centre to tell the states that such incidents should be stopped, there are evil people around and they will always be there. We have impressed upon the Centre repeatedly that India is a secular country and the Constitution gives people of all faiths a right to practice their religion

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

HANGUL POPULATION SHOWS STEADY GROWTH

The population of Kashmir Stag, popularly known as Hangul, has shown a significant and encouraging increase over the years at a breeding centre in south Kashmir. It reflects the success of sustained conservation efforts by the Department of Wildlife protection



Parliamentary panel discusses MGNREGA shortcomings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: A parliamentary panel Monday examined various aspects of the UPA-era rural job guarantee law MGNREGA, which has now been replaced by the Narendra Modi government's VB-G RAM G Act, and how to move ahead in the next six months for a smooth transition to the new legislation.

Sources said most members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj talked about ways to be adopted in the next six months for smooth transition when the government shifts work policies from MGNREGA to the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-G RAM G), how the payments would be made to beneficiaries during this period and how additional budgetary support would be arranged.

Committee Chairperson and Congress leader Saptagiri Ulaka said the members discussed various aspects of MGNREGA threadbare and how to go about in the next six months, as the new law will be implemented only when the rules are framed.

Controversy on redefining Aravallis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: The Aravalli hills, one of the world's oldest mountain ranges, have become the eye of a growing political storm over its new defining criteria and the environmental implications of the new definition.

1. What is the controversy about?

A committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) recommended a change in the definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges to protect the world's oldest mountain system in October this year.

The Supreme Court accepted the recommendations last month but kept the order in abeyance Monday.

2. What were the committee's recommendations?

The committee had recommended that the "Aravalli Hill" be defined as any landform in designated Aravalli districts with an elevation of 100 metres or more above its local relief, and an "Aravalli Range" will be a collection of two or more such hills within 500 metres of each other.

The committee, while defining the Aravalli hills, said,



Rajasthan Cong welcomes SC decision, suspends protest

Jaipur: Welcoming the Supreme Court decision to stay its November 20 order on the new definition of the Aravalli range, the Congress in Rajasthan Monday suspended its campaign over the matter. The apex court Monday kept in abeyance the directions in its November 20 verdict that had accepted a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges recommended by a committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma also welcomed the decision and said that it will further strengthen the government's efforts to curb mining mafias and illegal mining activities. "Our government is fully serious and committed to the conservation of the Aravalli range. We are always determined to establish the overall development of the state along with environmental protection," Sharma said. He said that the decision by the court to form a new committee for a thorough review of the Aravalli-related order is a welcome move.

"Any landform located in the Aravalli districts, having an elevation of 100 metres or more from the local relief, shall be termed as Aravalli

Hills... The entire landform lying within the area enclosed by such lowest contour, whether actual or extended notional, together with the Hill, its

SURVIVOR WELCOMES SC ORDER STAYING SENGAR'S LIFE SENTENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Unnao/New Delhi, Dec 29: The Unnao rape case survivor Monday expressed satisfaction after the Supreme Court stayed a Delhi High Court order suspending the convict Kuldeep Sengar's life sentence and said she has full faith in the justice system.

The apex court, after hearing the Central Bureau of Investigation's plea challenging the high court's decision, issued a notice to Sengar, directing him to file his response.

"I am very happy with this decision. I have got justice from the Supreme Court. I have been raising my voice for justice from the very beginning," the survivor told PTI over phone from Delhi.

"I do not make allegations against any court. I have faith in all courts, but the Supreme Court has given me justice and will continue to do so," she said.

She further said, "I will not rest until he is hanged. I will keep fighting. Only then will

UNNAO RAPE CASE



my family and I get justice. We receive threats even today."

Family members also expressed relief over the Supreme Court's intervention. The survivor's sister said she had complete faith that the court would ensure the accused is not released.

"He is a monster. He first raped my sister and then de-

stroyed the entire family. I am satisfied today. His bail should remain rejected," she said, adding that the family would continue to pursue the case.

The survivor's mother thanked the top court for the relief and told reporters that those who killed her husband should receive death sentence.

The Supreme Court Monday

stayed the Delhi High Court order that had suspended Sengar's life sentence and granted him bail in the 2017 Unnao rape case.

Sengar, a former legislator from Unnao, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in the case that had triggered nationwide outrage and renewed debate on crimes against women and political accountability.

Meanwhile, Sengar's younger daughter Ishita Sengar posted an emotional message on social media platform X, appealing for fair justice.

In her post, Ishita wrote that her family has been silently waiting for justice for the last eight years and continued to place trust in the law and institutions.

She said her identity has been reduced merely to "the daughter of a BJP MLA" and that she has constantly faced hatred, abuse and threats on social media.

I will not rest until he is hanged. I will keep fighting. Only then will my family and I get justice. We receive threats even today

SURVIVOR

UP records highest domestic tourism among states in 2025



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 29: Extensive renovation of religious, cultural and historical sites, along with the development of modern tourism infrastructure, have posited Uttar Pradesh as the most popular destination for domestic tourism and in fourth place in terms of foreign tourist arrivals.

According to data released by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, more than 137 crore domestic tourists visited Uttar Pradesh in 2025, besides 3.66 lakh foreign tourists, the state government said in a statement Monday.

The most significant contributor to this achievement was the grand Mahakumbh 2025 in Prayagraj, which witnessed a historic

footfall of over 66 crore devotees, the statement said, adding that Ayodhya, Varanasi, Mathura Vrindavan and Shravasti have emerged as major tourism hubs.

New avenues of religious and cultural tourism have developed across the state, the statement asserted, saying regular events organised by the tourism and culture department such as the 'Deepotsav', 'Rangotsav', 'Dev Deepawali' and 'Magh Mela' have become major attractions for tourists from India and abroad.

Uttar Pradesh has always been a vital centre of Indian culture and history, but tourism destinations that remained neglected before 2017 have been revived and transformed under the leadership of Chief Min-

ister Yogi Adityanath, it said.

Along with restoration, emphasis was laid on strengthening transport, hospitality and connectivity. Improved air connectivity, expanded rail and bus services, and growth of accommodation facilities have led to a significant rise in foreign tourist arrivals.

According to statement, in 2025, the state tourism department initiated development projects worth ₹1,283.33 crore.

Major projects include beautification of ghats in Varanasi, construction of an integrated circuit house and convention centre, development of the Kalinjar integrated route in Chitrakoot, and creation of tourist facilities centres along the Ram Van Gaman Marg.

Restoration work is in progress at Bhagwanpur Temple in Moradabad, Ajitashram Yog Kunj in Shahjahanpur, Valmiki Nagar's Lav Kush Kut, Tretayug Bhoomi Kut, Bharatkothi, Sita Rasoi and Kausalya Sthal.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPALITY, PATTAMUNDAI

No 4447/PM Date 24-12-2025

Notice inviting Expression of Interest (EOI)

No.C-1913 : The Executive Officer, Pattamundai Municipality on behalf of Municipal Council of Pattamundai Municipality invites sealed Expression of Interest from SHG/Firm for operation and maintenance of Smart Park tatana, Ward No. 18 & Children's Park, Near Municipality Office, Ward No. 18 Pattamundai Municipality.

The proposal sealed in an envelope and the envelope must have written on top 'Submission of Proposal for Operation and Maintenance of Smart Park & Children's Park of Pattamundai Municipality' to be submitted along with requisite documents addressing to Executive Officer, Pattamundai Municipality through speed post/ courier by Dt. 14-01-2026 by 5 PM which will be opened on 11AM of 15-01-2026.

Detailed of EOI may be downloaded from <https://kendrapara.odisha.gov.in>, <https://pattamundaimunicipality.in> or may be collected from cash counter of this office of the undersigned in working days from 11am of 26-12-2025 to 5pm of 15-01- 2026.

Sd./- Executive Officer
Pattamundai Municipality

OIPR-13220/11/0027/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER,
KHORDHA (R&B) CIRCLE, KHORDHA
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

No.B-910: No.2946, Dated 12.12.2025
EOI Identification No.CCE-Khordha (R&B) Circle-01/2025-26
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- The Chief Construction Engineer, Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha (the "Authority") on behalf of the Works Department, Government of Odisha (The government) invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible registered service providers as mentioned below:
- Nature of Work : Arrangement of Venue set-up Logistics and other allied activities associated with state level function at different locations under Khordha (R&B) Circle.
- Available of bid document in the website: From 10.30 A.M. of 30.12.2025 to 4.00 P.M. of 29.01.2026.
- Date of Opening of Bid :- Dt.30.01.2026 at 11.00 AM

The bidders have to participate in Online Bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd./- S.M. Padhi
Chief Construction Engineer
Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha

OIPR-34127/11/0051/2526

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER
WATCO PROJECT DIVISION

Email:gmprojectsbp@gmail.com, Tel.No.0663-2411911

e-Procurement Notice

Bid Identification No.08/Project/WATCO/SBP/2025-26
Dated 23.12.2025

- Name of the Work : Civil Sewerage Work
- Estimated Cost : Varies approximately from Rs.12.43 Lakhs to Rs.38.47 Lakhs for 3 (Three) nos. of works.
- Period of Completion : Refer to DTCN
- No. of Works : 3 (Three) Nos.
- Tender Paper Cost : Refer to DTCN
- Class of Contractor : B, C & D Class
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : 11.00 hrs. of 01.01.2026 to 17.00 hrs. of 10.01.2026
- Last date / time for receipt of bids : 12.30 hrs. on dtd.12.01.2026
- Name and address of the O.I.T. : General Manager, WATCO Project Division, Sambalpur At-40 MLD STP Campus, Bhatra, Dhanupali, Sambalpur,768005

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in".

Sd./- GENERAL MANAGER
WATCO PROJECT DIVISION, SAMBALPUR

OIPR-13236/11/0016/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
PHULBANI (R&B) DIVISION, PHULBANI

e-mail- eep1brb@gmail.com
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

'e' Procurement Notice

Bid Identification No. SE-R&B-PLB--10-2025-26

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) (a) Name of the Work | : Building works - 1 (One) no. |
| 2) Estimated Cost | : 42.87 Lakh |
| 3) Period of completion | : As Notified in Tender Call Notice |
| Date & Tiem of availability of Bid documents in the portal | : From 30.12.2025, 10.00 A.M., 15.01.2026, 5.00 P.M. |
| 4) Last date / time for receipt of bids | : Up to 5.00 P.M. of dated 15.01.2026 in the portal |
| 5) Name and address of the O.I.T. | : Superintending Engineer, Phulbani (R&B) Division |

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in Corrigendum, if any, shall be published only in the above website.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Phulbani (R&B) Division
OIPR-34066/11/0006/2526

No.B-882



We haven't resolved everything, but I think we are making progress in the right direction, and we have to keep up the momentum

SIHASAK PHUANGKETKEOW | FOREIGN MINISTER, THAILAND

IRAQ'S NEW PARL CONVENES

Iraq's newly elected parliament convened Monday for its first session since the November national election, opening the way for lawmakers to begin the process of forming a new government.



of the day quote

As president who has the responsibility to protect the lives and safety of the people, I offer my deepest apologies. The disaster clearly revealed the systematic problems and limitations of our society. What's needed now is not perfunctory promises or empty words but rather real change and action.



LEE JAE MYUNG | PRESIDENT, SOUTH KOREA

The Mexican Navy has informed me that, tragically, 13 people died in the Interoceanic Train accident



CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

The unrelenting hostilities against the minorities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, Christians and Buddhists, at the hands of extremists is a matter of grave concern



RANDHIR JAISWAL | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, INDIA

SHORT TAKES

3 cops, 6 IS militants killed in Turkey

Turkey: Three Turkish police officers and six Islamic State militants were killed in a gunfight in northwest Turkey Monday, the Interior Minister said, a week after more than 100 suspected IS members were detained for planning Christmas and New Year attacks. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said eight police and another security force member were wounded in a raid on a property in the town of Yalova, on the Sea of Marmara coast south of Istanbul. More than 100 addresses were raided nationwide early Monday. Turkey has stepped up operations against suspected IS militants this year, as the group returns to prominence globally.

Fire kills 16 at Indonesian home

Manado: Fire at an Indonesian retirement home killed 16 older people Sunday evening, police said. The fire in the single-story house in Manado, Indonesia's North Sulawesi Province, started while the residents were asleep, police said Monday. "The team on the ground has confirmed that the death toll currently is 16," North Sulawesi police spokesperson Alamsyah Hasibuan said. "Fifteen of them were burned to death, while one victim's body remains intact." There were 15 survivors who were treated at two hospitals in Manado, Hasibuan said.

Tarique Rahman files nomination papers

Dhaka: Bangladesh Nationalist Party acting chairman Tarique Rahman submitted his nomination papers Monday for the upcoming elections. The papers were filed around 12:00 pm Monday at the office of the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner in Segunbagicha, the Daily Star reported. Abdus Salam, BNP chairperson's adviser, accompanied by Professor Dr Farhad Halim Donar, chief adviser of the Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), submitted the nomination on Rahman's behalf. Rahman will contest the February 12 election from the Dhaka-17 constituency. Today is the final day for the submission of nomination papers for the 13th National Parliamentary Election. Speaking at a briefing, Salam expressed gratitude to all, saying city residents warmly welcomed Rahman after 17 years in exile.

Nepal: Ex-rapper to run for PM in key vote after Gen Z protests

REUTERS

Kathmandu, Dec 29: Two popular leaders have formed an alliance ahead of March parliamentary elections in Nepal that will challenge the older parties which have dominated the Himalayan nation's politics for over three decades, party officials and analysts said Monday.

Rapper turned-Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah, known as Balen, a popular elected official, joined the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) or national independent party, led by a former TV host-turned

politician Rabi Lamichhane Sunday, party officials said.

They said under the agreement with RSP, 35-year old Balen will become the prime minister if the RSP wins the March 5 elections while Lamichhane, 48, will remain the party chief.

Both have vowed to address the demands raised during the "Gen Z" or youth-led protests against widespread corruption in September in which 77 people were killed and led to Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli resigning.

"It is a very smart and strategic move by the RSP to bring in



Balen and his young supporters into its fold," analyst Bipin Adhikari said.

"Traditional political parties are in pain for fear of losing their young voters to RSP,"

US offers Ukraine 15-yr security guarantee



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, Dec 29: The United States is offering Ukraine security guarantees for a period of 15 years as part of a proposed peace plan, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday, though he said he would prefer an American commitment of up to 50 years to deter Russia from further attempts to seize its neighbour's land by force.

US President Donald Trump hosted Zelenskyy at his Florida resort Sunday and insisted that Ukraine and Russia are "closer than ever before" to a peace settlement.

Negotiators are still searching for a breakthrough on key issues, including whose forces

withdraw from where and the fate of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, one of the 10 biggest in the world. Trump noted that the months-long US-led negotiations could still collapse.

"Without security guarantees, realistically, this war will not end," Zelenskyy told reporters in voice messages responding to questions sent via a WhatsApp chat. Ukraine has been fighting Russia since 2014, when it illegally annexed Crimea and Moscow-backed separatists took up arms in the Donbas, a vital industrial region in eastern Ukraine.

Details of the security guarantees have not become public, but Zelenskyy said Monday that they include how a peace deal

would be monitored as well as the "presence" of partners. He didn't elaborate, but Russia has said it won't accept the deployment in Ukraine of troops from NATO countries.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump were expected to speak in the near future, but there was no indication the Russian leader would speak to Zelenskyy.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Kyiv's allies will meet in Paris in early January to "finalise each country's concrete contributions" to the security guarantees.

Trump said he would consider extending US security guarantees for Ukraine beyond 15 years, according to Zelenskyy. The guarantees would be approved by the US Congress as well as by parliaments in other countries involved in overseeing any settlement, he said.

Zelenskyy said he wants the 20-point peace plan under discussion to be approved by Ukrainians in a national referendum.

However, holding a ballot requires a ceasefire of at least 60 days, and Moscow has shown no willingness for a truce without a full settlement.



Explosive activity concentrates at the north-east crater of the Mount Etna, as an eruption started on Dec. 24 continues, in Sicily, Italy, Monday

AP PHOTO

B'desh Gen-Z party faces revolt over Islamist alliance

REUTERS

Dhaka, Dec 29: A Bangladeshi youth-driven party born out of the country's 2024 uprising is facing an open revolt from within after sealing an election alliance with an Islamist group, a move analysts say could jeopardise its future and reinforce established parties.

At least 30 senior leaders of the National Citizen Party (NCP) have openly opposed its alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami, announced on Sunday, with several resigning in protest.

The Muslim-majority South Asian nation goes to the polls on February 12.

Before the deal, opinion polls had predicted Jamaat finishing a close second behind the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, while the NCP lagged far behind in third place.

"The NCP presented itself as a youth-driven alternative to traditional power structures. That identity is now under serious strain," said H.M. Nazmul Alam, an academic.

"Youth-based movements do not collapse only because they lose elections. They collapse when they lose clarity and internal unity."

The NCP was formed earlier this year by leaders of the protests that ousted long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August, 2024, forcing her to flee to India. Driven by Gen-Z activists born after the late 1990s, it says it aims to free the nation from decades of nepotism and the dominance of Hasina's Awami League and the BNP.

China stages record drills to encircle Taiwan

REUTERS

Beijing/Taipei, Dec 29: China launched its most extensive war games around Taiwan Monday to showcase Beijing's ability to cut off the island from outside support in a conflict, testing Taipei's resolve to defend itself and its arsenal of US made weapons.

The Eastern Theatre Command said it had deployed troops, warships, fighter jets and artillery for its "Justice Mission 2025" exercises to encircle the democratically governed island, conduct live fire and simulated strikes on land and sea targets, and drills to blockade Taiwan's main ports.

The live-firing exercises will continue Tuesday across a re-



cord seven zones designated by China's Maritime Safety Administration, making the drills the largest to date by total coverage and in areas closer to Taiwan than previous exercises. The military had initially said artillery firing would be

confined to five zones.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said there was also an extra zone for a two-hour drill on Monday morning, which took place without a Chinese announcement in the eastern waters of the island. The Trans-

port Ministry said more than 100,000 passengers on scheduled international flights will be affected by Tuesday's drills, while around 80 domestic flights are set to be cancelled.

China's sixth major round of war games since 2022, after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the democratically governed island, follows stronger rhetoric promoting Beijing's territorial claims in response to Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggesting a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan could trigger a military response from Tokyo.

Taiwan rejects China's claimed sovereignty, maintaining that only its people can decide the island's future.

Young Africans find hope in farming as urban life gets expensive

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tambacounda, Dec 29: On a blazing afternoon in Senegal, 33-year-old farmer Filly Mangassa heaved peanut plants onto a horse-drawn cart, sending clouds of dust swirling.

Ten years ago, he left his village for the capital, Dakar, dreaming of becoming a professor. But the high cost of living and lack of jobs put that dream out of reach.

"Particularly after COVID, companies weren't hiring, and prices were rising," said Mangassa, who has a master's degree in criminology. "I thought: My father and my grandfather were farmers, so why not use that experience and go back to my hometown and try to make a living in agriculture."

Across much of Africa, farming has long been seen as low-status work, pushing young people to cities in search of office jobs.

"For my father and some people in my family, they sort of saw me returning to the countryside as a step back," Mangassa said.

But that perception is changing. Rising food prices, investments in irrigation and access to new technologies are making agriculture more profitable. Governments and nonprofits now fund programs that teach advanced farming skills and support farmers with equipment, fertilisers, pesticides and seeds.

"When my father saw that I had a clear, thorough business plan, he encouraged me and



helped me with the administrative process to acquire land," Mangassa said.

He is part of a trend of young Africans leaving cities to try their luck at farming. Mangassa says he makes a profit of around 2 million CFA (USD

3,500 a year), far above Senegal's average yearly income of about USD 2,500.

Africa is the world's fastest-urbanising region, with cities growing at an average rate of 3.5% per year. As city populations increase, so does

the cost of living.

Median rents and grocery prices in places like Dakar or Kenya's capital of Nairobi are approaching those of major European cities, despite median salaries being significantly lower, according to the World Bank.

Meanwhile, between 10 and 12 million young Africans enter the job market each year while only about 3 million formal jobs are created, according to the African Development Bank.

"A lot of my friends who graduated at the same time as me now work as motorcycle taxi drivers and barely make a living," Mangassa said.

Mangassa now owns a 32-acre farm where he grows peanuts, corn, vegetables and fruit. He received some funding to buy

land from a World Food Program initiative helping young Africans start careers in agriculture.

Launched in 2023 and set to run through early 2027, it has supported around 380,000 people in launching agricultural businesses.

It works with local governments to allow young farmers to acquire land, often a challenge because of complex ownership systems and young people's difficulty in obtaining loans, as they are seen as high risk.

In Senegal, the program has supported over 61,000 people, with more than 80% launching farms, according to WFP. It also operates in Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Tanzania.

of the day

quote

2025 has just been one of those wild years, with geopolitical drama everywhere, layoffs hitting the IT world hard, no end to the tariff debate -- all sorts of curve-balls keeping the market on edge



ANUJ PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

We are committed to offering the best solutions for managing chronic metabolic diseases like diabetes, and addressing obesity is one of the most urgent global health challenges



NILESH GUPTA | MD, LUPIN

India's electronics manufacturing growth is increasingly being driven by regional clusters beyond the traditional hubs



RAJOO GOEL | SECRETARY GENERAL, ELCINA

SHORT TAKES

Record RE addition

New Delhi: The country added a record 44.5 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity, including 35 GW from solar, till November this year, an official statement said Monday. The total renewable energy installed capacity reached 253.96 GW in November 2025, registering an increase of over 23 per cent as compared to 205.52 GW a year ago, the statement from Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) said. The highest-ever renewable energy capacity addition has been made during 2025. The total renewable energy capacity added during the year (till November) is 44.51 GW, nearly double as compared to 24.72 GW during the same period last year. Solar is the major contributor in this progress. Solar capacity addition is 34.98 GW as compared to 20.85 GW during the same period last year. The overall solar energy installed capacity reached 132.85 GW in November 2025, registering an increase of over 41 per cent as compared to 94.17 GW in November 2024. Wind capacity also registered a substantial growth with capacity addition of 5.82 GW compared to 3.2 GW during the same period last year. Wind energy installed capacity crossed 50 GW mark in March 2025. The wind energy installed capacity reached 53.99 GW in November 2025, which is an increase of over 12.5 per cent as compared to 47.96 GW in November 2024.

ATM numbers dip

Mumbai: The number of automated teller machines (ATMs) declined moderately in FY25, with the increase in digitisation, a RBI report said Monday. The number of bank branches increased by over 2 per cent on the back of network expansion by the public sector banks, the report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India for FY25 said. The overall number of ATMs declined to 2,51,057 as of March 31, 2025, from 2,53,417 in the year-ago period, driven down further by private-sector banks' strategies, it indicated. Private sector banks' ATM network declined to 77,117 from 79,884 in the last year, while the public sector banks also had a decline to 1,33,544 from 1,34,694 in the year-ago period, it said, adding that the decline was due to both groups shutting down offsite ATMs. Public sector banks' ATM distribution was evenly distributed between rural, semi-urban, urban and metropolitan areas, while the private sector banks and foreign banks had a concentration in the urban and metropolitan areas in their ATM networks. However, banks continue to open new branches despite the ingress of alternative channels powered by digital technologies, the report said.




From January 1, 2026, 100 per cent Australian tariff lines will be zero-duty for Indian exports, unlocking fresh opportunities for labour-intensive sectors

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

DARK CLOUDS OVER AVIATION SECTOR

The domestic aviation industry is estimated to post around ₹17,000-18,000 crore net loss in the current fiscal year on account of a likely lower passenger traffic, among other factors, ratings agency ICRA said Monday. Earlier, the industry was projected to post a loss of ₹9,500-10,500 crore during 2025-26



2-YEAR HIGH

Manufacturing boosts factory output to 6.7%

During the April-Nov period of FY26, the country's industrial production growth decelerated by 3.3% compared to 4.1% in the same period YoY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: India's industrial production grew at a two-year high of 6.7 per cent in November this year, driven by strong performances in mining and manufacturing, mainly on account of order pile-up following a cut in GST rates, according to official data released Monday.

The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), had expanded by 5 per cent in November 2024. The previous high was recorded at 11.9 per cent in November 2023.

Ahead of the festivals, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates were cut on a host of consumer items, effective from September 22, 2025, to boost demand and consumption in the country.

This led to piling of manufacturing orders to get benefit of GST rate reduction.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Head - Research & Outreach, ICRA, said, "The impact of the US tariffs and penalties is likely to reflect across some of the manufacturing segments, partly offsetting the positive impact of the GST rate rejig."

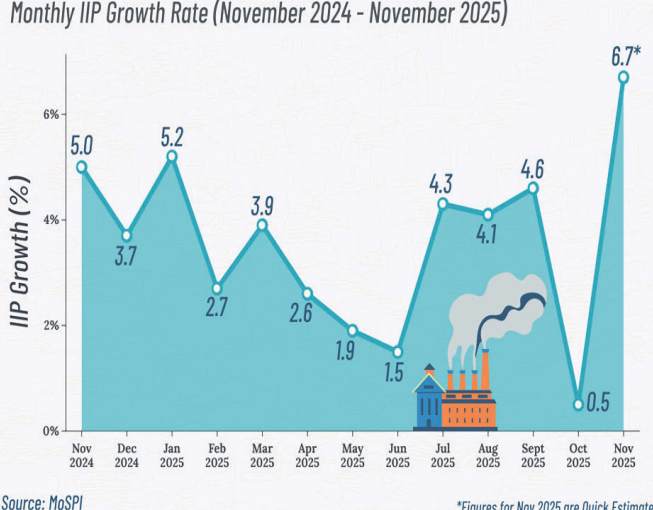
However, she stated that the electricity demand expanded in December 2025 after a gap of two months, which should boost power generation in the month, auguring well for IIP growth in the month.

"We expect the IIP growth to ease to 3.5-5.0% in December 2025, as the base effect normalises and the benefit from restocking wanes," she added.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) revised the industrial production growth to 0.5 per cent for October 2025 from the provisional estimate of 0.4 per cent released last month.

The NSO data showed that the manufacturing sector's out-

Monthly IIP Growth Rate (November 2024 - November 2025)



Month	IIP Growth (%)
Nov 2024	5.0
Dec 2024	3.7
Jan 2025	5.2
Feb 2025	2.7
Mar 2025	3.9
Apr 2025	2.6
May 2025	1.9
Jun 2025	1.5
Jul 2025	4.3
Aug 2025	4.1
Sep 2025	4.6
Oct 2025	0.5
Nov 2025	6.7*

Source: MoSPI *Figures for Nov 2025 are Quick Estimates

The impact of the US tariffs and penalties is likely to reflect across some of the manufacturing segments, partly offsetting the positive impact of the GST rate rejig

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, HEAD - RESEARCH & OUTREACH, ICRA

ROBUST PERFORMANCE IN FY25

Bad loans of banks dip to multi-decadal low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 29: Commercial banks maintained robust performance in 2024-25, with the gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio declining to a multi-decadal low of 2.2 per cent at March-end, according to a RBI report released Monday.

The banking sector remained resilient during 2024-25, supported by a strong balance sheet, sustained profitability and improved asset quality, said the Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2024-25.

Bank credit and deposit growth continued in double-digits, albeit with a moderation. Capital and liquidity buffers remained well above the regulatory requirements across bank groups.

"Strong banking sector fundamentals provide a buffer against risks, which, together with prudent regulation, create conditions for sustained credit flow," the report said.

Net profits of commercial banks increased during 2024-25, albeit at a slower pace compared to the previous year, it added.

From baskets to blink: The year 10-minute delivery became a utility

Rising household incomes and a growing preference for convenience have made quick commerce the preferred shopping channel for an increasing share of urban consumers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: The era of the 'delivery day' ended in 2025 as India's retail landscape underwent a fundamental transformation, with the great convergence of traditional e-commerce and quick commerce erasing the boundaries between planned shopping and instant gratification.


What began as an experimental race to deliver groceries in ten minutes has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure play that now moves everything from high-end electronics to white goods in minutes.

In a single calendar year, the question for the Indian consumer has permanently shifted from "will it arrive?" to "how many minutes until it does?" As the year draws to a close, the data reflect the sector in hyperdrive.

According to a year-end report by RedSeer Strategy Consultants, quick commerce has become India's fastest-growing retail format, reaching 33 million monthly users across 150+ cities. By 2030, it will command 10 per cent of branded retail sales. E-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart had to launch their own quick commerce arms to not miss out on the massive treasure trove of quick commerce market.

The launch of 'Amazon Now' and 'Flipkart Minutes'—both offering sub-30-minute deliveries—signalled that speed is no longer a premium vertical but the industry's new baseline.

Dark stores transitioned from small neighbourhood hubs to megapods. These larger facilities, typically around 10,000-12,000 sq ft, are now capable of stocking over 50,000



According to a year-end report by RedSeer Strategy Consultants, quick commerce has become India's fastest-growing retail format, reaching 33 million monthly users across 150+ cities

Benchmarks in freefall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 29: Benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 346 points while Nifty closed below 26,000 Monday due to selling in utilities, IT and blue-chip oil & gas shares, foreign fund outflows and thin year-end trading.

Extending the downtrend to the fourth day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 345.91 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 84,695.54. During the day, it dropped 403.59 points or 0.47 per cent to 84,637.86.

Registering its third day of decline, the 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 100.20 points or 0.38 per cent to 25,942.10.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Adani Ports was the biggest loser, dropping by 2.22 per cent. HCL Tech fell by 1.86 per cent, Power Grid by 1.85 per cent, Trent by 1.36 per cent, Bharat Electronics by 1.26 per cent and Bharti Airtel by 1.14 per cent.

Reliance Industries was a major drag on key indices, closing 0.88 per cent lower. According to sources, the government is seeking over \$30 billion from Reliance Industries and BP as compensation, alleging the partners built larger-than-required facilities at the KG-D6 fields and subsequently failed to meet natural gas output targets.

Tata Steel was the biggest gainer among Sensex shares, rising by 1.83 per cent. Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, and Eternal also advanced.

Broader markets also came under pressure as the BSE smallcap gauge declined by 0.58 per cent and midcap index dipped by 0.45 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, utilities tanked the most by 0.91 per cent, followed by power (0.86 per cent), IT (0.80 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.79 per cent), realty (0.76 per cent) and capital goods (0.71 per cent).

BSE telecommunication, PSU bank, oil & gas and FMCG ended higher.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth ₹2,759.89 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

On Friday, the Sensex dropped 367.25 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at 85,041.45. The Nifty declined by 99.80 points or 0.38 per cent to 26,042.30.

RECORD-SETTING RALLY

Silver scales new lifetime high

GOLD & SILVER

10g = ₹1,41,800*

1kg = ₹2,40,000*



Spot gold prices for 24-carat in Delhi for per 10 grams Silver prices are in national capital for per kg Source: All India Sarafa Association *Provisional

White metal surges ₹3,650 to hit record ₹2.4 lakh per kg in Delhi markets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: Silver prices extended the record-setting rally for the fifth straight day on Monday, jumping ₹ 3,650 to ₹2,40,000 per kg in the national capital due to persistent buying by traders, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The white precious metal had closed at ₹2,36,350 per kilogram Friday. Meanwhile, gold of 99.9 per cent purity retreated from its record levels by declining ₹500 to ₹1,41,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had climbed ₹1,500 to hit a fresh record of ₹1,42,300 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

Gold traded weak on Monday as traders booked profit after the yellow metal in the international markets slipped nearly \$70 to USD 4,463 per ounce amid high volatility, Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

In the overseas markets, spot gold was trading lower by \$69.67, or 1.54 per cent, at \$4,462.96 per ounce.

Spot silver retreated from lifetime highs to trade lower by \$4.06, or 5.13 per cent, to

SO FAR THIS YEAR, SILVER PRICES HAVE DELIVERED REMARKABLE RETURNS, SURGING 167.55%, OR ₹ 1,50,300, FROM ₹89,700 PER KG RECORDED DECEMBER 31, 2024

"In 2025, gold, and silver reached record highs, driven by a potent blend of macroeconomic shifts, industrial demand, and structural supply tightness."

He further said commodities have arguably become the standout outperformer while equities continue to deliver modest gains, it's the surge in raw materials that's capturing attention.

"This divergence reflects rising demand for tangible assets amid inflation concerns, resilient industrial consumption post-Covid, and mounting geopolitical risks, factors that have boosted commodities' appeal relative to paper assets," Hareesh V said.

On the market outlook, he added that in 2026 and beyond, the bullish trend in commodities appears poised to persist, driven by enduring structural dynamics across multiple sectors.

All-new VICTORIS wins Indian Car of the Year 2026 award

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: Maruti Suzuki VICTORIS 'Got it All' SUV has been recognised as the winner of the prestigious 'Indian Car of the Year (ICOTY) 2026' award, reaffirming the brand's leadership in innovation and customer-centric mobility.

To mark the achievement, Maruti Suzuki dealers from Bhubaneswar and Cuttack celebrated the milestone with VICTORIS customers in the city.

The VICTORIS, positioned as a premium mid-size SUV, stands out for its segment-first features and advanced technology. It offers a "Theatre on Wheels" infotainment experience with an 8-speaker premium sound system featuring Dolby Atmos, paired with a 25.65 cm (10.1-inch) SmartPlay Pro X touchscreen. Enhancing safety and convenience, the SUV is equipped with an advanced Level-2 ADAS suite, a high-definition 360-degree view camera, and customisable 64-colour ambient lighting.

In terms of powertrain op-



tions, the VICTORIS is available with a 1.5-litre Strong Hybrid system featuring EV mode for a refined and near-silent drive. The Strong Hybrid variant delivers an impressive fuel efficiency of 28.75 km/l (e-CVT) combining performance with economy. Adding to its list of innovations, the VICTORIS S-CNG variant introduces a segment-first underbody fuel tank design, enabling full utilisation of boot space.

With its blend of technology, safety, efficiency, and versatility, the VICTORIS ICOTY 2026 win underscores its strong appeal among Indian car buyers.

ASIA CUP ROW

PCB to approach ICC over conduct, warns of 'equal terms'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, Dec 29: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Mohsin Naqvi has reiterated that India will have to come to Dubai to collect the T20 Asia Cup 2025 trophy, saying there will be no deviation from the existing protocol on handing over the silverware.

"There is a status quo on trophy handing. If India wants the trophy, they must send their captain to Dubai and receive it from me," Naqvi said.

The trophy is still lying in the

Asian Cricket Council (ACC) office in Dubai ever since India captain Suryakumar Yadav refused to receive it from Naqvi during the presentation ceremony following their victory over Pakistan in the Asia Cup final.

Naqvi claimed he was entitled to hand over the trophy as president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

Pakistan, Naqvi said, will write to the International Cricket Council (ICC) over the rude behaviour of Indian Under-19 players in the Junior Asia Cup. "We will be writing a letter to the ICC to complain about the behaviour of Indian Junior players during the final of the Junior Asia Cup which was not acceptable."



Naqvi also said that there will be no compromise with India, and if they do not want to shake hands with our players, everything will be on equal terms.

"If India does not allow their

players to shake hands with our players then it will be dealt with on equal terms and there will be no compromise," Naqvi said in response. "We have no interest in shaking hands with

them," he added.

The controversy over Indian T20 captain Yadav not shaking hands with Pakistani counterpart Salman Agha at the toss, followed by the same action after all three matches marred the Asia Cup in September in Dubai, as a handshake between rivals is the norm in international matches.

The trend was also followed by the Indian teams at the Women's World Cup in Sri Lanka in November, the Rising Star Asia Cup in Doha in the same month, and the Under-19 Asia Cup in Dubai this month.

The tension was sparked after India and Pakistan engaged in a four-day military conflict in May following a deadly militant

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MOHSIN NAQVI | CHIEF, PCB

attack on tourists in Pahalgam in J&K. New Delhi blamed Pakistan for the massacre, a charge denied by Islamabad.

Pakistan team's mentor, Sarfaraz Ahmed, had complained about the behaviour of Indian Junior players and termed it "Uneducated and unacceptable."

Pakistan won the heated final by a significant 191-run margin last Sunday.

SHORT TAKES

ICC hands demerit point to MCG

Dubai: The ICC Monday rated the pitch used in Melbourne for the fourth Ashes Test between England and Australia as unsatisfactory and handed the venue one demerit point after it was deemed to be too much in favour of the bowlers in match referee Jeff Crowe's assessment report. Twenty wickets fell on the opening day of the Test which England eventually won by four wickets inside two days. The pitch at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the venue for the fourth Ashes Test, has been deemed 'Unsatisfactory' with the venue handed one demerit point under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process, read a statement from the ICC. Accumulation of six demerit points leads to a 12-month ban on the venue. The MCG pitch was too much in favour of the bowlers. With 20 wickets falling on the first day, 16 on the second day and no batter even reaching a half-century, the pitch was 'Unsatisfactory' as per the guidelines and the venue gets one demerit point, he stated. The pitch drew heavy criticism with England captain Ben Stokes saying it wasn't great for the game. Cricket Australia called it bad for business. The spectators witnessed a total of 36 wickets fall across only 142 overs and no batter managing to reach the 50-run mark.

Bhutan's Sonam sets T20 world record

New Delhi: Bhutan spinner Sonam Yeshey has scripted history by becoming the first bowler to take eight wickets in a men's T20 International match. The left-arm spinner achieved the unprecedented feat during the third T20I against Myanmar in Gelephu Mindfulness City, Bhutan, December 26. The 22-year-old returned remarkable figures of 8 for 7, bowling Myanmar out for 45 in response to Bhutan's 127 for 9. No bowler had previously taken an eight-wicket haul in any T20 match, international or otherwise. The previous best bowling figures in T20 Internationals belonged to Malaysia pacer Syazrul Idrus, who claimed 7 for 8 against China in 2023. Apart from Idrus, only Bahrain's Ali Dawood has taken seven wickets in a T20I, returning figures of 7 for 19 against Bhutan earlier this year. Netherlands all-rounder Colin Ackermann, who returned figures of 7 for 18 for Leicestershire against Birmingham Bears in 2019, and Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed, who claimed 7 for 19 for Durbar Rajshahi against Dhaka Capitals earlier this year, are the only two players to have achieved the feat in T20s.

Eves eye whitewash

The five-match series against SL has formed a significant part of India's preparation for the T20 World Cup in June-July next year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 29: India will look to continue their aggressive intent and complete a 5-0 series whitewash against a vanquished Sri Lanka in the fifth and final women's T20 International here Tuesday.

The five-match series has formed a significant part of India's preparation for the T20 World Cup in England in June-July next year. Following Tuesday's game, India will play three T20 Internationals each in Australia and England before the showpiece event.

After a group-stage exit in the 2024 T20 World Cup, India recalibrated their approach, opting for a more aggressive style of play, a shift that has yielded two series wins this year.

"It was a great series for all of us. That's what we discussed after the World Cup — that we have to raise our standards and be more aggressive in T20s," captain Harmanpreet Kaur had said after sealing the series against the Islanders.

India's bowlers have been the primary architects of the dominant run, with batters having very little to do in the



opening three matches. But the big-hitting Shafali Verma has impressed. However, fielding remains an area of concern. After a sloppy showing in the series opener, India faltered again in the previous match, missing two catches and a stumping opportunity.

There have been several positives as well. Pacer Renuka Singh Thakur has made a successful return to the format after a year-long absence, while the ever-reliable Deepti Sharma continues to deliver consistently.

Twenty-year-old debutant left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma has also lived up to her promise and is currently the joint-highest wicket-taker of the series with four scalps at an economy rate of 5.73.

With the bat, Shafali has

been a constant menace for Sri Lanka, scoring three half-centuries in four matches at a blistering strike rate of 185.82.

Another major boost for the hosts was the return to form of vice-captain Smriti Mandhana after a lean patch. The elegant left-hander will hope her big outing -- 80 off 48 balls -- in the fourth T20I helps her carry the momentum forward.

Shafali and Mandhana produced a masterclass in aggressive batting in the fourth T20I, putting on 162 runs off just 92 balls-- India's highest opening partnership in women's T20 Internationals.

India's decision to promote Richa Ghosh to No 3 also paid rich dividends, with the wicket-keeper batter smashing an unbeaten 40 off just 16 deliveries.

After the first three matches were low-scoring affairs, the fourth T20I turned into a run-fest, with both India and Sri Lanka registering their highest-ever totals in the format.

Although India's 221 for 2 proved too much for Sri Lanka, who managed 191 for 6, the Islanders would take confidence from their vastly improved batting display as they seek a consolation win.

Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu has often led from the front, and her string of low scores had hurt the side.

Athapaththu too broke the rut with a 37-ball 52 in the previous match, and with more support from the other batters, Sri Lanka would hope for a stronger showing in the series finale.

BACK-TO-BACK WINS FOR ODISHA

Standout performance by Govinda Poddar helps Odisha thrash Andhra Pradesh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore, Dec 29: Odisha produced a composed and confident all-round performance to defeat Andhra Pradesh by six wickets in Match 3 of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025-26 at the Alur Cricket Stadium, Bangalore. After winning the toss, Odisha chose to field first—a decision that proved decisive as their bowlers applied consistent pressure throughout Andhra's innings.

Batting first, Andhra were bowled out for 221 in 49.2 overs. Their innings was anchored by SDNV Prasad, who played a responsible knock of 66 off 64 balls, striking six boundaries and two sixes. He held the innings together during the middle overs, rotating the strike well and countering Odisha's disciplined attack.

However, Odisha's bowlers ensured Andhra never fully broke free. Govinda Poddar emerged as the standout performer with the ball, delivering a superb spell of 3 for 36 from eight overs, including a maiden. He used the conditions intelligently, mixing his pace and extracting movement to dismantle the middle order. Biplab Samantaray complemented him well, also claiming three wickets while conceding 36 runs in 7.2 overs, effectively halting Andhra's late surge.

In reply, Odisha chased down



the target with assurance, reaching 223 for 4 in 43.4 overs. The chase was built on a solid foundation laid by OM T Munde, who played a patient and mature innings of 91 off 111 deliveries. Though not flashy, Munde's knock was invaluable, as he absorbed pressure and ensured stability after early wickets. His seven boundaries reflected his ability to find gaps without taking unnecessary risks.

Govinda Poddar capped off an outstanding all-round display with the bat, scoring a vital 89 off 105 balls. His innings was marked by nine fours and excellent strike rotation, keeping the required rate under control. The partnership between Munde and Poddar effectively sealed the contest, frustrating Andhra's bowlers and steadily tilting the match in Odisha's favour.

Andhra Pradesh: 221 all out in 49.2 overs (SDNV Prasad 66, Saurabh Kumar 47; Biplab Samantaray 3/36, Govinda Poddar 3/36) lost to **Odisha:** 223/4 in 43.4 overs (Govinda Poddar 89, Om T Munda 91; Satyanarayana Raju 2/49) by 6 wickets.

World Blitz: Erigaisi stuns Carlsen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, Dec 29: Top Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi demonstrated strong endgame technique and quick calculation to stun reigning champion Magnus Carlsen and renowned Grandmaster Nodirbek Abdusattorov to emerge joint leader with nine points after 11 rounds of the FIDE World Blitz Championships here Monday.

With two more rounds to go on the day, world No 1 Carlsen, who is aiming for his ninth World Blitz title to go with his sixth Rapid crown he won Sunday, could easily overcome the setbacks with his never-say-die attitude.

Behind joint leaders Erigaisi and Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave are Daniil Dubov, American GM Fabiano Carua-



na and China's Yu Yangyi on 8.5 points, while eight players, including Carlsen, leading title contender GM Alireza Firouzja and India's Sunilduth Narayanan, are in sixth spot with eight points.

Fresh from his bronze-winning performance Sunday, 22-year-old Erigaisi, known for his highly pragmatic and aggressive approach, had eight wins, two draws and one loss,

which put him in pole position.

However, the victory that counted the most came in the ninth round against Carlsen, where he won as black and then defeated the highly-rated Uzbek GM Abdusattorov in Round 10 to open up a half-point lead at the top.

Two-time World Rapid champion Koneru Humpy could not recreate the form she displayed Sunday on way to the bronze in the Rapid section, slipping to joint 61st position after 10 round, concluding her day on five points with leading Chinese GM Tan Zhongyi for company. The 38 year-old Indian lost five games.

Five more rounds will be played Tuesday with the top-four players moving into the semifinals, followed by the final.

State-of-the-art indoor swimming pool inaugurated

SPORTS MINISTER REVIEWS PROGRESS OF FOOTBALL GROUND AND SYNTHETIC TRACK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: A new 25-meter indoor swimming pool was officially inaugurated Monday at the Government College of Physical Education (GCPE) campus in Tamando here.

Suryabanshi Suraj, Minister of Sports and Youth Services, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and dedicated the project to the public. The facility was constructed by the Odisha Bridge & Construction Corporation (OBCC) at an estimated cost of Rs 11.69 crore.

The event was attended by several distinguished officials, including Bijay Swain, Additional Secretary, Pratap



Behura, ADM Khordha, Dr Swarup Nanda Sahoo, Deputy Secretary, Gitanjali Panda, District Sports Officer (DSO), Khordha, Suresh Mohapatra,

Principal of GCPE, along with the college faculty and OBCC officials.

During his address, Suraj highlighted that swimming

offers the greatest potential for the country to win medals. Consequently, the state government has initiated work to establish swimming pools in 13 more districts. On this occasion, the minister also reviewed the progress of the football ground and synthetic athletic track, which are currently being developed by the Odisha State Police Housing & Welfare Corporation (OPHCW).

At the conclusion of the programme, Suraj extended his best wishes and congratulations to all the young sporting talents present. He encouraged the athletes to strive for success at both national and international levels to bring pride and glory to the state.

From 'lazy' to title challengers: Aston Villa the big surprise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 29: When Aston Villa was on a five-match winless run to start the Premier League season, the team looked more like a potential relegation candidate than a title contender.

Manager Unai Emery was describing his players as "lazy." Villa's big names — including England internationals Ollie Watkins and Morgan Rogers — were showing no form at all. There were major concerns about the club's lack of activity in the summer's transfer window.

How, then, to explain the position Villa finds itself in heading into its final game of 2026?

On the back of 11 straight victories in all competitions, Villa is on its best winning streak in more than a century and is being viewed as a legitimate challenger for the Premier League title.

Indeed, beat first-place Arsenal Tuesday and Villa will be tied on points with the Gunners at the top of the league halfway through its campaign. They and Manchester City have broken away from the rest and are separated by three points after 18 of 38 games, with Liverpool a further seven points back in fourth place.

And Villa will not be scared of Arsenal. After all, just three weeks ago, Villa scored a last-



gasp goal to defeat the leaders 2-1 at home and keep its winning run going. That continued Saturday with a come-from-behind 2-1 triumph at fifth-place

Chelsea, secured thanks to two second-half goals by Watkins.

Much of the team's success is being put down to Emery, the Spanish coach whose savvy tac-

tics, well-timed substitutions and belief in his players leaves no task insurmountable.

It means Villa goes to Emirates Stadium — where Arsenal hasn't lost in any competition this season and has taken 25 points from a possible 27 in the Premier League — seeking a sixth straight away win.

The match might be regarded as much a test of Arsenal's title credentials as Villa's.

"Not really," Emery, a former Arsenal manager, replied Saturday when asked if his team can stay in the title race.

No one will believe him three days later if Villa — most recently English champion in 1981 — racks up another win.

NATIONAL SHOOTING

Neeru takes women's trap gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: Asian Championships gold medallist Neeru Dhanda braved chilly weather to deliver a composed performance on way to clinching the women's trap gold medal in the National Shooting Championship at the Karni Singh Range here Monday.

The 25-year-old shooter, who took the top-podium spot in the continental showpiece in Kazakhstan recently, finished on top with 41 hits in the final.

She held off a strong challenge from Delhi's Kirti Gupta, who settled for silver with 40. Neeru's state team-mate from Madhya Pradesh, Pragati



Dubey claimed the bronze with 32 hits. Earlier in qualification, Pragati topped the field with 117, followed by Neeru on 114 and Rajeshwari Kumari on 113.

Addya Katyal qualified fourth with 112, while Preeti Rajak (111) and Kirti Gupta (111) rounded off the top six. In the final, Delhi shooter Addya finished fourth with 27, followed by Preeti (21) and Rajeshwari (17).