



Aries

(21st March to 20th April)

The year 2026 will be marked by a blend of ambition, reflection, and deep emotional insight. The steady influences of Saturn, Mars, Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter shape this year, calling for a thoughtful balance between bold action and disciplined planning. This is a year where transformation is not only possible but also inevitable, as long as it is guided by purpose and clarity. Financial matters may see a continuous evolution. Early in the year, planetary alignments urge you to reflect on past spending habits and adopt smarter budgeting strategies. Venus and Mercury spotlight financial values, while the North Node emphasizes freedom through structure. Mars occasionally pushes impulsive spending, but Saturn's steady hand reminds you that financial success comes from discipline. In love and relationships, the year starts with high emotional intensity. Venus and Mars create romantic sparks and deep conversations, encouraging both singles and couples to seek meaningful connections. As the year progresses, February and March deepen bonds, calling for shared values and future planning. Career and business pursuits in 2026 are deeply transformative, beginning with a focus on leadership and efficiency. January sets the stage for refining your professional skills, and Mars enhances your ambition. February builds on past work, with Venus fostering emotional intelligence in the workplace. March through June offers opportunities for bold steps, career shifts, and financial refinement. Jupiter opens doors, but strategic planning is essential. Health and fitness in 2026 is shaped by a need for emotional and physical harmony. Early in the year, Mars offers energy bursts, but balance and rest are essential. February and March bring emotional depth, highlighting the link between mental and physical health. Mindfulness and emotional clarity support resilience. Education in 2026 is a journey of mental clarity and intellectual commitment. Mercury and Jupiter provide support for deeper understanding and sharper focus from the start. The North Node and Saturn encourage consistent routines, rewarding slow but steady academic effort. In March and April, mental energy soars, favoring exams, research, and creative approaches to learning. The months of March and April demand clarity between indulgence and value in your financial matters, pushing you toward practical investments and financial organization. Jupiter supports new income opportunities, but caution is advised before diving in.



Taurus

(21st April to 21st May)

The year 2026 begins with strong planetary influences guiding your life toward steady growth, emotional clarity, and smart choices. Each month brings its own lessons and opportunities. In the beginning of the year, Mercury may cause some mental restlessness, making it harder to focus or stay calm in your studies. You might feel pulled in different directions emotionally, especially in relationships. Venus encourages you to seek meaningful connections and emotional balance. If small tensions arise in your love life or family, stay calm and talk things through. Saturn begins to shape your financial mindset, reminding you to cut unnecessary expenses and start saving. February brings deeper self-reflection. The North Node pushes you to think about past relationships, helping you learn and grow from them. In love, honest conversations can improve bonds, while singles may be drawn to more mature, stable partners. Saturn continues to support smart financial habits. An old money-making idea could return if you plan carefully, it may work well. In career, your hard work is noticed, and your discipline starts paying off. For students, focus improves as Saturn helps you build a strong study routine. By March, Jupiter supports steady progress in learning. In love, emotional maturity grows as you let go of unrealistic hopes. It is a good time to talk about long-term goals with your partner. Financially, new income chances may come, but avoid risky decisions. In your job, past projects could come back with fresh potential. Health-wise, your energy rises, but emotional balance is still important, avoid stress and take breaks. April continues with calm, grounded energy. Saturn slows things a bit so you can focus on doing quality work. Whether it is in career or personal life, attention to detail matters. Your study habits remain steady, and step-by-step learning brings good results. In relationships, peace and understanding deepen emotional bonds. Financially, avoid major spending and stick to your plan. In May, Venus and Mars bring warmth, love, and passion. It is a good time for romance, whether you're in a relationship or meeting someone new. Mercury boosts your confidence in studies, especially in tough subjects. Financially, your thinking is sharp, good for spotting smart investment options. If you are self-employed, client interest grows. Career progress becomes more visible through feedback and small wins. June is a month of balance. Saturn and Mercury help you communicate clearly in love and work.



Gemini

(22nd May to 21st June)

The year 2026 brings with a strong emphasis on deliberate planning, emotional maturity, and long-term stability across all areas of life. The planetary forces serve as guiding energies, shaping experiences in finance, relationships, education, career, and health. Overall, this is a year marked by slow but consistent progress, with lessons rooted in self-awareness, discipline, and careful decision-making. 2026 begins with a cautious financial tone as Saturn urges long-term thinking and strict budget management. During the first two months, Mars may bring impulsive urges, but Mercury's clarity advises planning over spending. Mercury and Venus encourage honest conversations and tender connections in early months, whether for couples or singles. Past emotional matters may resurface, offering healing opportunities. The academic year begins strongly, supported by Mercury and Jupiter, which enhance mental clarity, curiosity, and organized study habits. Early months favor structured learning and group discussions. Professional life in 2026 demands structure and consistency from the beginning. Mercury and Saturn call for realistic planning and steady effort, while Venus enhances team dynamics. Mars revives stalled work but cautions against impulsive decisions. Health-wise, 2026 begins gently. Venus and Mercury promote emotional grounding and physical stability. Mars adds energy, but moderation is key. By May and June, Venus and Mercury provide financial gains such as delayed payments, yet Saturn continues to stress practical habits. Mid-year is ideal for budget reassessment, aided by tracking tools and strategic planning. From April, Saturn, Mercury, and Mars reinforce discipline and determination, especially helpful for competitive students. From April, Mars and the Sun boost ambition and leadership, with Venus and Mercury fostering collaboration. Entrepreneurs should revise strategies, and job seekers will find opportunities through thoughtful communication. From April to June, Saturn supports consistent routines and Mars fuels physical activity, while the Nodes highlight the need to drop emotionally harmful habits. Nutrition, hydration, and rest remain vital. In the second half, Venus, Mercury, and Saturn offer stability. Building long-term security, setting aside emergency funds, and resisting quick-fix money schemes will yield progress. Mid-year, Venus and the Moon bring calmness and emotional grounding, making it an ideal time to form or strengthen partnerships based on shared values.



Cancer

(22nd June to 22nd July)

This year brings steady progress, emotional growth, and practical success across all areas of life. The year begins with emotional warmth, as the Moon and Venus help strengthen personal relationships. Whether single or partnered, heartfelt conversations and emotional support come naturally. Financially, small gains and unexpected payments lift your mood, but caution is needed midmonth to avoid surprise expenses. Jupiter begins to open up financial opportunities, while Mars supports collaboration at work. Your focus shifts to self-care, emotional clarity, and planning for steady growth. From around the month of February, Mercury boosts curiosity and mental clarity, making it easier to make smart financial choices. Venus adds peace and emotional softness to relationships. Conversations with loved ones are deep and healing. Career-wise, your focus sharpens, and with Mars pushing you forward, you become more productive. However, don't overcommit. Take time to recharge, follow a routine, and maintain emotional balance. As the year advances, open conversations bring people closer, and singles seek deeper emotional bonds. Mercury brings financial clarity, review budgets and avoid impulsive spending. Mars fuels career progress through skill-building and collaboration. In academics, focus and planning help you stay on track. Venus and Jupiter encourage fresh energy in love, while Saturn helps keep your finances in check. The period around April brings calm in relationships, especially with shared routines. Financially, Saturn reminds you to be disciplined. Avoid risks and finish up past financial matters. Career progress is steady but slow, consistency matters. Emotional renewal and motivation come midmonth. If single, a bold, confident person may attract you, but check in with your feelings first. Gradually, Venus brings joy and playfulness to love. Relationships grow stronger through fun, and singles enjoy attention and charm. Saturn encourages budgeting and long-term planning. Mars drives ambition at work, while Mercury and Jupiter help organize studies. Emotionally, honesty strengthens relationships. By the end of May, love deepens, finances stabilize, and career moves forward through planning and teamwork. The latter half of year may bring emotional depth in love, supported by Venus. Trust grows through honest conversations. Saturn supports financial stability, review budgets and focus on saving. Mars calls for careful career planning, and Mercury improves communication. Midmonth, patience is needed as outcomes may be delayed.



Leo

(23rd July to 22nd August)

The year starts with Mercury turning your attention to finance, review spending and avoid impulsive choices. The Sun energizes your career, pushing you to set clear goals. In relationships, Mars adds passion, while Venus nurtures emotional bonds. The South Node reminds you to protect your emotional and physical health by embracing gentle routines. Educational curiosity is high, guided by the North Node, encouraging fresh learning methods. During February Mercury and Saturn guide smart financial planning. It's a good time to cut risky expenses and focus on savings. Venus enhances emotional closeness in love and marriage, helping to rebuild trust. Teamwork benefits career and study life. Avoid stress, the South Node emphasizes mental rest and simplicity. Financial discussions and shared money management bring stability. The South Node urges caution with spending during March, hold off on big financial decisions. In love, the North Node supports trust and long-term emotional connection. Career progress comes through teamwork and steady effort. Learning improves with clearer thinking, but major changes should wait. Focus on emotional wellness with rest and balanced routines. Stick to a financial plan as the South Node warns against risky choices during April. Saturn promotes loyalty and structure in love and marriage. Mercury helps complete tasks and improve work through feedback. Mental wellness improves with breaks. Be careful with property matters, wait for clarity before committing. Mercury highlights budgeting, especially for shared finances during May. Watch for unexpected expenses. In love, Venus brings playfulness and spontaneity, good for couples and singles. The Sun boosts confidence in career: new projects take off. Reflect on past lessons in education and revisit old topics. Health improves with emotional honesty and calm routines. June can be a good month for steady progress. Saturn and Venus guide practical financial planning. In love, small caring gestures deepen bonds. Career energy runs high with Mars, offering leadership chances. Mercury aids focus in learning. For health, balance activity with rest, don't overdo it. Saturn brings maturity to all areas especially money and relationships during July. Venus and Mars boost emotional awareness in love and marriage. Take initiative at work, but move thoughtfully. Review and revise studies; Saturn ensures slow, solid growth. Emotional healing is supported by honest conversations and routines. Budget carefully as Venus urges smart spending during August.



Virgo

(23rd August to 22nd September)

At the beginning of the year, the energy is calm and steady. Mercury and Venus work together to bring emotional clarity, better communication, and financial insight. This is a great time to reassess spending, set up budgets, and bring more structure to both relationships and personal routines. In love, couples reconnect through heartfelt conversation and shared values, while singles may attract emotionally sincere connections. Saturn's influence supports discipline in health and finances, perfect for cutting unnecessary expenses and committing to long-term goals. Emotionally, you feel grounded and thoughtful, while mentally you are better able to plan. Mars adds some drive to get organized in your career, though avoid overworking early on. In education and learning, focus and memory improve, thanks to Mercury and Saturn, helping you lay the groundwork for strong progress. From around April through the middle of the year, clarity deepens. Mercury and Saturn help you stay consistent with routines in health, money, and education. You become more thoughtful in your financial choices, canceling unused subscriptions, paying down debt, and avoiding impulsive purchases. In relationships, daily acts of care bring closeness. Clear boundaries and honest discussions strengthen love. Venus and the Moon encourage emotional healing and peaceful connection. Career-wise, this is a good time to refine your workflow and organize shared responsibilities. Mars brings energy to tackle tasks but avoid overcommitting. In learning, you gain more from explaining concepts to others or reviewing past material. Emotionally, this time supports patience and planning rather than quick changes. During the latter part of the year from around June onward, energy shifts toward deeper emotional growth, steadier progress, and stronger self-confidence. Venus and Mars fuel both passion and purpose, helping you make bold decisions while staying grounded. In married life or close partnerships, shared goals deepen intimacy. Singles may attract someone aligned with their values. Saturn and the South Node may bring up old emotional patterns, but now you are ready to face and release them. In finances, this is the time to stay disciplined, build savings, and be cautious with investments or large purchases. For your career, Saturn favors slow, stable growth, while Mercury supports long-term goal setting. Health routines become more consistent, and your emotional stability improves through rest and mindful habits.



Libra

(23rd September to 22nd October)

The year begins on a calm, emotional note with the Moon and Venus bringing gentle energy across all areas of life. You will feel drawn to reflect deeply whether it's about your finances, relationships, or health. In this phase till the end of March, Mercury brings clarity, helping you budget better, plan studies, and set realistic work goals. In love, honest conversations can bring closeness, while singles reflect on what they truly need. In studies, gentle focus and breaking work into small steps work best. At work, avoid rushing into new projects, Saturn favors slow, steady planning. For health, simple habits like better sleep and hydration help you regain strength. Property decisions should be delayed till plans are clear. From April, energy increases as Venus and Mars boost confidence and motivation. This phase till the end of June indicates that financial opportunities may arise as bonuses, raises, or new income streams but Mercury reminds you to double-check contracts and avoid impulsive spending. In love, laughter and shared joy return. Singles may meet someone through social circles. Relationship goals take shape. In education, your focus sharpens. Teamwork, projects, and exams go smoothly. Mars energizes both learning and business ideas, while Venus keeps work relationships peaceful. Be mindful of burnout; steady, not intense, effort is key. In health, try new fitness routines but keep it light yoga, walks, or dancing are ideal. Property-wise, it's a good time to revisit agreements or long-term wealth plans. This mid-year phase from July brings a slower rhythm, ruled by Saturn's structure and discipline. You may face delays in work or studies, but don't be discouraged as this the period till the end of September can be a time to build strong foundations. In finances, avoid risky investments or flashy purchases. Focus on saving and repaying debts. In love, emotional honesty deepens. Couples may revisit old issues with greater understanding, while singles may attract someone genuine. In studies, patience and consistency matter. Saturn may test your routines, but Mercury helps you stay organized. In health, stress may show up physically, rest and emotional care are essential during this phase. Property matters require caution now; research thoroughly before acting. The period from October brings with refinement and reward. Venus brings ease to relationships, emotional sincerity and shared goals strengthen bonds. Mercury supports smooth communication in finances, business deals, and studies. You feel ready to wrap up tasks, finish exams, and prepare plans for the next year.



Scorpio

(23rd October to 22nd November)


The year opens with emotional openness thanks to Venus and the Moon. Honest talks bring closeness for couples and help singles connect more deeply. In your career, Mars and Mercury push productivity from the start. Sudden shifts in January demand flexibility, while Saturn helps with setting clear work boundaries. Financial clarity begins in January under the Sun and Mercury's light. Careful planning, especially around shared resources, is key. January starts with improved well-being through balanced routines. Mercury sharpening mental focus and encouraging disciplined study habits. As February and March arrive, steady emotional energy builds trust, while intuition leads singles to sincere connections. During this phase, focus and cooperation drive success in your career. Mercury and Jupiter guide learning and help refine long-term goals. February advises budget tightening due to surprise expenses. In March, mindful spending is crucial. February and March call for rest and self-care. Jupiter promotes healthier habits, and Venus encourages emotional balance. This is a strong time for students and learners looking to try new techniques or study deeper topics. In April and May, balance and sincerity dominate relationships. Mars and Venus inspire deep emotional conversations, while Saturn supports long-term bonds. April brings ambition and new opportunities in your career while May requires letting go of outdated career habits. This period may reveal old money habits, reset budgets and avoid large purchases around the month of May. April boosts physical energy with mindful activity, while May aligns emotional growth with practical care. The South Node may bring helpful figures from your past around April and Mars supports strong preparation for tests or presentations. May continues the intellectual momentum. June brings emotional intensity—honesty is essential in your relation. July and August call for loyalty and maturity, as Venus and Saturn guide love toward deeper stability. For your career, Mars boosts leadership, but burnout is a risk around the month of June and July. Strategic moves and strong planning matter more than speed. August brings breakthroughs, especially mid-month, with support from Mars and Mercury. Also, June through August highlights the need for financial patience. Jupiter may bring gains, but Mercury warns against rushing decisions. July and August may require stress balancing effort with rest, avoid overwork. However, Mars and the North Node help you move confidently in the direction of your academic goals this time around.



Sagittarius

(23rd November to 21st December)

The year opens with high energy as Mercury and Mars inspire motivation across finances, career, health, education, and relationships. Financially, it's a good time for exploring side hustles, but avoid impulsive spending due to the South Node's caution. In love and marriage, communication takes center stage; small misunderstandings can be resolved through honest dialogue. Academic focus improves through creative thinking, while career goals get a boost through strategic planning. Emotionally, Venus and the Moon push for inner healing, and physically, it's important to balance drive with rest. Jupiter and Mercury bring financial growth potential during February but surprise expenses require smart budgeting. Relationships deepen with sincere conversations and steady gestures. Education sees clearer focus and efficient routines. Professionally, recognition may come, but overcommitting could backfire—South Node and Saturn urge caution this time around. Emotionally, balance between solitude and connection is key, and Mars supports steady physical activity without overexertion. March is about refining systems. Mercury brings clarity in finances—ideal for reorganizing debts and planning smartly. Relationship-wise, this is a time for emotional openness and rebuilding trust. In married life, couples are encouraged to connect through shared activities and express long-term goals. Educational pursuits benefit from improved routines and focus, while in careers, leadership and negotiation skills shine. Health-wise, emotional regulation supports physical discipline. Saturn's influence calls for responsibility across areas from April. Budgeting and joint finance planning are crucial, especially for property and wealth matters. Love lightens up as Venus promotes social connection, but communication remains key in marriage. Academically, aligning studies with passions enhances learning. Career momentum grows, just double-check contracts. Health calls for time outdoors and stress reduction. With Venus supporting cooperation and clarity, both finances and married life thrive through respectful dialogue. Emotional safety is prioritized, and bonds deepen. Educational discipline increases, boosting academic outcomes. Mars brings career productivity, plan well to manage rising expectations. A sudden financial or property gain is possible but should be reinvested wisely. Health improves with a calm routine and nourishing choices. Mars and Saturn highlight ambition but also warn against overexertion during June. Finances are best managed with a focus on clearing debts and building stability.



Capricorn

(22nd December to 20th January)

The year begins with Mercury energizing your financial and career outlook. Careful planning and clear communication are key to managing money, with no room for impulsive expenses. In relationship, Venus and the Moon encourage emotional warmth and honest dialogue, perfect for laying a foundation of trust. Education benefits from structured study routines, while health calls for establishing gentle self-care habits. Mars brings energy to business initiatives but reminds you to pace yourself. During February, Mercury's influence enhances networking, offering new income possibilities and fresh ideas for business growth. Married couples should focus on patience and listening to resolve lingering tensions. Singles may cross paths with someone familiar, highlighting emotional potential. Educational pursuits improve through focus and review. Career progress demands discipline, with Saturn encouraging long-term planning. Health requires attention to stress management and regular physical activity to maintain balance. Venus supports emotional healing in relationships; couples can deepen intimacy through honest conversations during March. Financially, avoid risks; instead, reinforce budgeting and savings plans. Career opportunities arise from collaborations, and steady effort in education yields rewards. Health benefits from calming routines—meditation or gentle yoga can be especially helpful under the Moon's soothing influence. During April, Mars energizes career and business activities, pushing for action and innovation. However, Saturn warns against hasty decisions in money matters; long-term stability takes priority. A meaningful connection might emerge for singles, rooted in shared values. Married life may face challenges—communication must be clear to avoid misunderstandings. Education demands consistent effort, while health calls for monitoring energy levels and preventing burnout. Saturn's influence during May encourages a cautious approach to investments and property matters—no shortcuts. Relationships deepen as Venus fosters mutual respect and shared responsibility, especially around home and family. Career progress depends on patience and refining skills. Students do well focusing on mastering subjects rather than quantity. Health benefits from a structured routine and mindful eating habits. During June, Mercury highlights communication in both financial negotiations and relationships. Married couples experience improved understanding and emotional support. Singles are drawn to emotionally clear, steady connections.



Aquarius

(21st January to 18th February)

The year begins with mental clarity in finances, supported by the Sun and Mercury. Budget planning and spotting hidden income are favored. In love, Venus and the South Node encourage emotional honesty—singles may meet someone special, and couples deepen their bond. In education, discipline is key with Saturn; students are urged to make solid plans. Mars energizes your career, pushing leadership and communication. Health-wise, start slow: balance energy with proper rest and routines. During February, Mercury helps refine money decisions—great for reviewing deals and subscriptions. Avoid risky loans. In relationships, Venus brings tenderness and joyful connection. Emotional reflection heals wounds. Students benefit from clear study plans and group work. Career communication improves, boosting confidence. On the health front, be mindful of stress. Rest and self-care are important as Mars increases tension. Finances show returns from past efforts during March. Jupiter supports consolidation, while Mercury sharpens planning. Venus and Mars add emotional clarity and passion in relationships. Singles may feel drawn to unusual partners. In education, creative focus and collaboration thrive, but pacing is key. At work, leadership shines—just stay grounded. Health requires mental and physical balance. Don't overdo. Early April reveals financial leaks—perfect for making lasting money changes. Emotionally, couples and singles benefit from honest, quiet reflection. Venus lights up romance mid-month. Saturn supports academic discipline and the North Node encourages focused learning. Career talks and negotiation need patience. Health calls for balance—ambition should not overpower wellness. During May, Mercury helps resolve financial matters. Mars boosts income potential at work. Avoid spending to impress. Emotionally, the Moon and Venus calm relationships, encouraging honesty. Singles reflect on past patterns. Educational progress benefits from detailed planning. Career sees momentum, especially in collaborations. Health thrives with steady routines and emotional care. Financial planning sharpens—Mars and Venus favor practical decisions during June. Unexpected money challenges may arise but can be managed with steady resolve. Venus encourages honest love talks and playful bonding. Students experience clarity and leadership potential. Career growth is steady with improved negotiation. Health requires mindful rest and structure; avoid burnout. During July, Mercury and Saturn help reassess spending and avoid impulse buys.



Pisces

(19th February to 20th March)

The year begins with strong financial clarity from Jupiter, while Saturn reminds you to avoid impulsive spending. Mercury sharpens your budgeting mid-month, helping you plan long-term. Mars later warns of delays—be patient. Emotionally, Venus and the Moon promote honesty and connection. Communication improves, helping couples deepen bonds. Mercury also sharpens your thinking, a great time to set learning and career goals. Physically, Mars gives energy, but rest is vital—balance is key. In February, surprise income opportunities arise early, but Saturn advises cautious spending. Mid-month is ideal for reviewing expenses. Mercury helps resolve debts. Emotionally, Venus and the Moon encourage meaningful connections, while Mars gives courage to have healing talks. Learning flows easily with Jupiter and Mercury boosting curiosity. Energy stays steady—blend movement with emotional care. March brings more financial stability with Saturn and the Sun. Mars powers your budgeting, though Mercury may cause surprise expenses. Emotionally, deep talks foster security. Singles seek long-term love. Learning is creative and supported by mentors. Physical wellness improves through self-care and steady routines. In April, smarter spending continues with Mars and Mercury. Mid-month surprise costs test your patience, but planning with Saturn helps. Emotionally, clarity grows. Singles trust intuition, and old emotional patterns clear out. Intellectual curiosity peaks, blending emotions and facts. Light exercise and emotional awareness improve wellness. May begins with slow-building income. Avoid emotional spending—Mercury helps organize finances. Mid-month brings small financial boosts. Emotionally, old patterns surface; let go with honest conversations. Singles may meet surprising matches. Communication and teamwork thrive in learning and career. Focus on digestive wellness and rest. June supports resolving debts. Mercury and Saturn guide disciplined budgeting. Unexpected costs may come—stay flexible. Emotionally, patience brings balance. Authentic love deepens. Learning focuses on strategy and revision. Review your wellness routines; avoid emotional extremes. July emphasizes mindful spending. Rest meets money goals mid-month. Mars helps handle financial tasks directly. Emotionally, honesty deepens bonds. Singles gain clarity and break patterns. Intellectual pursuits grow, but take breaks to avoid burnout. Balance stamina with rest for physical and emotional health. August focuses on long-term planning. Saturn structures your finances, and Venus promotes teamwork in shared resources.

■ INDIA-PAK MEDIATION CLAIMS

After US, now China

AGENCIES

Beijing, Dec 31: After US President Donald Trump’s 70-odd assertions, China has now claimed a role in “mediating” a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, drawing a sharp contrast with New Delhi’s insistence that there was no third-party intervention in bringing the conflict to a pause.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi Tuesday said “tensions between India and Pakistan” were among the list of hotspot issues “mediated” by China this year.

New Delhi has been maintaining that the May 7-10 conflict between India and Pakistan was resolved through direct talks between the DGMOs (Director General of Military Operations) of the armies of the two countries.

At the May 13 press briefing, the Ministry of Exter-



nal Affairs had said, “regarding ceasefire and what sort of role other countries played, etc. See, the specific date, time and wording of the understanding was worked out between the DGMOs of the two countries at their phone call on 10th May 2025, commencing at 1535 hours.”

India has also been consistently maintaining that there is no place for any third-party intervention in matters relating to India and Pakistan.

“This year, local wars and cross-border conflicts

flared up more often than at any time since the end of WWII. Geopolitical turbulence continued to spread”, Wang said, speaking at the Symposium on the International Situation and China’s Foreign Relations in Beijing.

“To build peace that lasts, we have taken an objective and just stance, and focused on addressing both symptoms and root causes”, he added.

“Following this Chinese approach to settling hotspot issues, we mediated in northern Myanmar,

the Iranian nuclear issue, the tensions between Pakistan and India, the issues between Palestine and Israel, and the recent conflict between Cambodia and Thailand”, he said.

China’s role in the May 7-10 Operation Sindoor conflict between India and Pakistan this year came under serious scrutiny and criticism, especially the military assistance provided by Beijing to Islamabad.

On the diplomatic front, China May 7 called on India and Pakistan to exercise restraint even while expressing regret over India’s airstrikes.

But China’s active military support to Pakistan during the Operation Sindoor in May has become a sharp reminder about the negative impact of China-Pakistan close ties on Beijing’s relations with New Delhi.

Odisha’s first woman CS Anu Garg assumes office

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31: Senior IAS officer Anu Garg Wednesday evening took charge as the Chief Secretary (CS) of Odisha, becoming the first woman in the state to hold the prestigious post.

Garg took charge from outgoing Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, who retired from service Wednesday. She was also the first woman Development Commissioner (DC) of the state, appointed in March 2023.

Congratulating Garg, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said her appointment is a historic milestone that reflects the government’s commitment to excellence and empowerment.

“I am sure that her vast experience and vision will drive Odisha to scale new heights of development,” Majhi wrote on X.

He also expressed gratitude and best wishes to



Ahuja on his superannuation and said his tenure as the Chief Secretary has been marked by exemplary leadership and unwavering dedication to the state’s administration. “As one chapter of dedicated service concludes and a historic new one begins, I wish both Smt. Garg and Shri Ahuja the very best in their future endeavours,” the CM further wrote.

Speaking to reporters after assuming office, Garg said it was a big opportunity for her. “When someone joins the civil service, he/she has a dream to develop the allotted state. So, it is a big opportunity for me to re-

alise the dream,” Garg said.

The government, with participation of the general public, has prepared the ‘Vision Document’ for 2036 when the state will celebrate the centenary of its formation, and 2047 when India will complete 100 years of Independence, she said, adding, “My first priority will be to work towards realising the vision and dream.” Admitting that there are challenges to achieve the goals set in the Vision Document, Garg was confident that it can be achieved with the participation of all stakeholders.

Garg said she will also work for the empowerment of women and youths, development of tourism, ease of doing business and other works. Garg, born March 1, 1969 in Uttar Pradesh, is a 1991-batch IAS officer of Odisha cadre. She is an alumna of Lady Sri Ram College, New Delhi and did her Masters from the University of Lucknow.

Vig arrests addl tehsildar, PEO

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday arrested an additional tehsildar and panchayat executive officer (PEO) for allegedly possessing disproportionate assets (DA) to their known sources of income.

Jitendra Kumar Panda, additional tehsildar of Barang in Cuttack district, and Jitendra Kumar Jena, PEO of Bancho GP in Keonjhar district, have been put under arrest after detecting huge assets from them during raids conducted Tuesday, a Vigilance officer said.

The Vigilance registered two cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against the two and arrested them Wednesday, he said.

Meanwhile, the anti-corruption wing sleuths have also arrested Fanindra Kumar Sahu, former managing director of Jamankira Large-sized Agricultural Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Ltd, Sambalpur, for allegedly misappropriating public funds worth Rs 79.28 lakh.

SJTA stops calendar sale over pic

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31: Authorities of Srimandir in Puri Wednesday tendered an apology to the public and stopped the sale of calendars with a picture of the sibling deities in wrong positions on the ‘Ratna Singhasan’ in the 12th-century shrine.

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) explained that the photograph, which featured in the 2026 calendar, was a copy of a century-old artwork on a palm leaf manuscript, collected from the Odisha State Museum.

“This is the work of a painter of that time. It is hoped that lovers of Lord

Jagannath will not misunderstand it,” the SJTA said in a statement.

Amid statewide outrage over the picture of deities – Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath – in wrong positions on the ‘Ratna Singhasan’ (bejewelled throne), the chief administrator of the temple has asked officials concerned to ‘suspend the sale of the calendars and issue an apology for this unintentional mistake’, the SJTA said.

The BJD termed the change of position of the deities in the calendar picture as ‘extremely unfortunate’.

“In the illustrations, Lord Balabhadra has been placed in the position of

Lord Jagannath and vice versa. As a result, Goddess Subhadra is shown with Lord Jagannath on her right side and Lord Balabhadra on her left, which is contrary to tradition,” BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty told reporters.

He said the erroneous image has reportedly been printed on table and wall calendars, and in diaries released by the temple administration.

He alleged that the SJTA did not consult intellectuals before using the old painting in the calendar.

“Such mistakes reflect a lack of sensitivity towards Jagannath Culture and Odia Asmita,” the BJD leader alleged.

Puri under tight security for New Year

AGENCIES

Puri, Dec 31: Puri was placed under an unprecedented security blanket Wednesday as thousands of people thronged the pilgrim town to celebrate the New Year (NY) and seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath.

Anticipating the arrival of over 3.5 lakh people to the holy city Wednesday night and Thursday, the administration has deployed around 70 platoons (2,100 personnel) force, installed over 300 CCTV cameras and engaged around 300 lifeguards on the beach to make the New Year’s



celebrations safe, Puri SP Prateek Singh said.

“The administration is taking no chances this time, especially in view of the irregularities witnessed during this year’s Rath Yatra,” a district official said, adding that

extensive arrangements have been made as many devotees wished to begin the New Year with the darshan of the Trinity – Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath.

Shree Jagannath Tem-

ple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee said the temple gates would open for devotees from 2am Thursday.

As large numbers of devotees queue up for darshan, Padhee said the temple doors would remain closed from 11pm to 2am for religious rituals.

Puri district Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida has cancelled the leaves of all government employees in the temple town till January 4 and urged them to help the administration in managing the crowd and traffic.

Police personnel have

been deployed both inside and outside the temple, and the entire shrine has been brought under CCTV surveillance.

“A total of 344 cameras have been installed in and around the temple premises,” an official said.

The Puri SP said 152 cameras were installed inside the temple, while 192 were placed outside to monitor crowd movement and traffic.

This apart, Odisha Fire Service has also engaged additional life guards on the beach as a large number of people take bath in the sea as part of New Year celebrations.

City AIIMS performs first liver transplant

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31: All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-Bhubaneswar has successfully conducted its first-ever liver transplant procedure on a 37-year-old man from Puri’s Pipli recently reaffirming its commitment to delivering advanced and life-saving medical services to the people of Odisha and neighbouring states, the hospital authorities said Wednesday.

The recipient is recovering well and the donor, 30, the recipient’s younger brother, has also made an uneventful recovery. The recipient’s brother donated a portion of his liver purely out of a sense of duty and affection, without any financial or material consideration. The surgery team, comprising of more than 50 members, took nearly 14 hours to complete the process, said AIIMS-Bhubaneswar Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas.

In order to ensure excellence and sustainable capacity building, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar had entered into a pact with the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS)-New Delhi, the country’s premier public sector institute dedi-

cated exclusively to liver and biliary diseases.

The Liver Transplant Programme at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, which was conceptualised in 2023, received the official license to initiate the programme in the same year. Later, the Liver Transplant Outpatient Department (OPD) became operational February 21, 2025. Further strengthening the transplant services, a 10-bed transplant Intensive Care Unit (ICU) has been fully operational since November 2025.

The procedure was performed by the Department of Surgical Gastroenterology, led by Dr Brahmadaatta Pattanaik, Head- GI & Liver Transplant Surgery, along with Dr Tannay Datta and Dr Sunita Gupta, under the mentored guidance of Prof Dr Vinayendra Pamecha, Head of Liver Transplant Surgery, ILBS-New Delhi, and his expert team. Dr. Subrat Kumar Sahoo, a trained paediatric liver transplant surgeon, was also a key member of the surgical team.

The programme received institutional support from Medical Superintendent Dr Dilip Kumar Parida, DDA Lt Col Abhijit Sarkar, Dr Manoj Kumar Mohanty, Head of the Department of Paediatric Surgery and OT Committee Chairman.



2026

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Student collapses during annual sports meet, dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Dec 31: A tragic incident occurred during the annual sports meet at Bhawanipur Eklavya Model School in Sundargarh district Wednesday, when a student collapsed while running and later died at hospital.

The deceased was identified as Jayadeep Sagar Beck, 18, a Plus II first-year Science student of the school. He was the only son of Phagunath Beck and Sukanthi Beck. According to sources, Jayadeep was participating in the two-day annual sports meet held on the campus playground beginning Tuesday. While taking part in the 200-metre relay race, he completed one round of 100 metres before suddenly sitting down on the track and collapsing. Significantly, Jayadeep had also fallen unconscious while participating in the race Tuesday, said school principal Sanghamitra Panigrahi.

When Jayadeep again devel-



Significantly, Jayadeep had also fallen unconscious while participating in the race Tuesday

oped physical complications Wednesday, teachers, school staff and the on-duty nurse, along with the school principal, rushed him to Government Medical College and Hospital,

Sundargarh. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Following the incident, officials including Town Police Station personnel, PA-ITDA Dharendra Kumar Sethi and district social welfare officer (DSWO) Bhagirathi Patel reached the hospital on the direction of District Collector Shubhankar Mohapatra to assess the situation and conduct a preliminary inquiry.

Speaking to reporters, the school principal confirmed that Jayadeep collapsed during the relay race and was rushed to the hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.

Police seized the body, conducted a postmortem and handed over the body to the family members in the evening. An unnatural death case has been registered and investigation is underway. The DSWO said after receipt of the postmortem report, the deceased student's family would be provided ₹5 lakh as ex gratia assistance.



IN MEMORIAM: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi greets people during the State-Level Veerta Diwas, marking the martyrdom of Saheed Madho Singh, at Ghens High School ground under Sohela block in Bargarh district Wednesday. State Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, Bargarh MP Pradeep Purohit, Bhatli MLA Irashis Acharya, Bargarh MLA Ashwini Kumar Sarangi and Attabira MLA Nihar Ranjan Mahanand are also seen

India test-fires 2 Pralay missiles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: India Wednesday successfully test-fired two Pralay missiles in quick succession off the coast of Odisha, paving way for its induction into the military.

Pralay is a short-range surface-to-surface missile with a payload capacity of 500-1,000 kg. It is capable of carrying multiple conventional warheads and has a range of 150 to 500 km.

It is an indigenously developed weapon system featuring state-of-the-art navigation system to ensure high precision.

The test-firing of the missiles was carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

"The flight-test was conducted as part of user evaluation trials. Both the missiles followed the intended trajectory meeting all flight objectives as confirmed by tracking sensors," the defence ministry said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh complimented the DRDO, the Indian Air Force, the Indian Army, the defence public sector undertakings and the industry on the successful launch of the missiles. The successful com-



pletion of the salvo launch of Pralay missile has established the reliability of the missile, he said. Samir V Kamat, secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development, and DRDO Chairman, too congratu-

lated the DRDO teams involved in the successful flight-tests of the missile and stated that the achievement indicates imminent readiness of induction of the system with the users.

The missile has been developed by Research Centre Imarat in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories including Defence Research and Development Laboratory, Advanced Systems Laboratory, Armament Research and Development Establishment, High Energy Materials Research Laboratory and Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory.

Bodies of two youths tied to pillar found

Bhubaneswar: Police have recovered the bodies of two youths with injury marks in a garage in Cuttack district Wednesday morning. The deceased were identified as Prasant Kumar Jena, 23, and Mohammad Soheb, 21, both from Choudwar police station area. The bodies were found tied to a pillar with a rope, a police officer said. The bodies have been seized and sent for postmortem. Cuttack (Rural) SP Vinit Agrawal said a case has been registered with Tangi police station and an investigation has been launched. Following a preliminary probe, police suspect the duo was tortured to death.

Puri state's sixth Municipal Corpn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31: Ending a long wait, the state government Wednesday officially upgraded Puri city from a municipality to a Municipal Corporation, an official said.

According to a release by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), a notification was issued by the Housing and Urban Development department regarding the upgrade of Puri Municipality into a Municipal Corporation.

With this, Puri has become the sixth city in the state to attain municipal corporation status, after Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, Sambalpur and Rourkela. In July, Chief Minister Mohan Majhi had said that he would upgrade the municipality into a municipal corporation.

The move is expected to improve civic amenities, infrastructure, and services for residents, pilgrims, and visitors, besides enabling the city to access central assistance under schemes for pilgrim centres and major urban areas. The CMO also said as a New Year gift, the state government declared four towns as notified area councils (NACs). They are: Loisingha in Bolangir district, Chandikhol in Jajpur district, Jashipur in Mayurbhanj district, and Basta in Balasore district.

**MERGER DAY
JANUARY 1**

JANAKI BALLAV DASH

From 598 AD, when Maharaja Jai Singh founded the realm, until 1949, Mayurbhanj stood as one of India's best-administered princely states. That year Maharaja Sir Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo signed the Instrument of Merger with Union Home Secretary MK Vellodi, and the kingdom was reduced to a mere district of Orissa (now Odisha). Overnight, tehsils such as Behragera, Chinchda, Gopiballapur, Mankidia, Raibania, Ulmara, Khuad, Khandamauda, Dhalbhumgarh, Seraikela and Kharswan were excised for "administrative convenience" and appended to Bihar (today's Jharkhand) and West Bengal, and Balasore district of Odisha. In a single stroke, a coherent state was carved into fragments.

The amputation was not only territorial. The state's High Court, medical services, Mayurbhanj State Bank and thousands of acres of debottar (temple-endowed) land were removed from local control. Yet the Maharaja secured one safeguard: the

COMMUNITY FEAST IN KESINGA LEAVES 100 ILL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kesinga, Dec 31: A community feast in Belkhandi village under Kesi ga block in Kalahandi district turned into nightmare as more than 100 people were afflicted with diarrhoea after consuming the food.

According to reports, a feast was organised at the residence of Subash Chhatrya in the colony area of the village Sunday morning that was attended by hundreds of relatives, friends and neighbours. The menu reportedly included chicken, fish and curd-based brinjal raita.

According to sources, many people took the food of their choice and returned to their homes. However, from Sunday night onwards, nearly 100 people began complaining of severe diarrhoea (along with vomiting). When the situation worsened, Belkhandi sarpanch Sushant Bag informed the local health authorities. However, he alleged that the response from Belkhandi health centre was delayed and that proper treatment was not provided initially. The issue was raised during a panchayat samiti meeting held Wednesday.

As the Belkhandi health cen-



tre lacked sufficient space to accommodate a large number of patients, many of the affected persons were shifted to community health centres at Karlamunda, Madanpur Rampur and Kesi ga.

Although a medical team from Belkhandi hospital visited the village, the sarpanch alleged that patients were not adequately treated before the team returned. He placed a formal complaint during the samiti meeting.

Belkhandi hospital medical officer Pratibha Ray said primary treatment had been provided to the patients. She said the patients were referred to

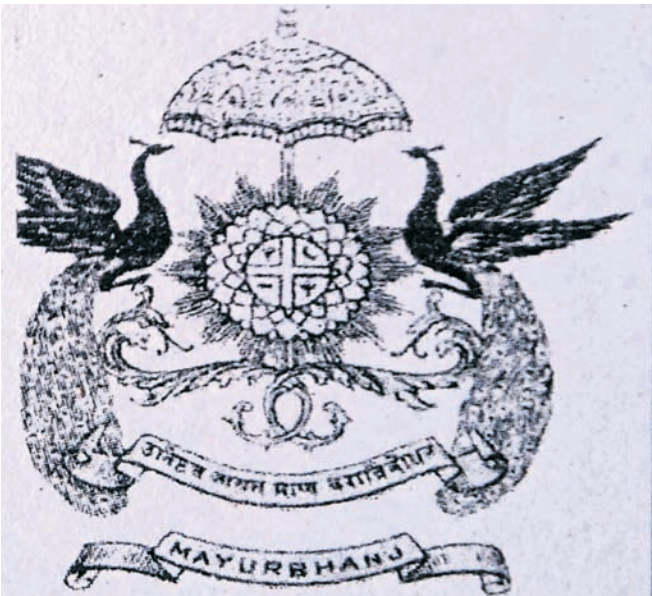
other hospitals due to the high load of cases.

As the outbreak continued for three days, medical teams from Pastikudi community health centre and Bhawanipatna reached the village Wednesday and began on-site treatment, Health department sources said.

At present, 12 patients, including Leelabati Tandi, 43, Binodini Tandi, 59, Samiksha Nayak, 22, and Kumudini Chhata, 56, are undergoing treatment at the Kesi ga community health centre.

Ray confirmed that the illness was caused by food poisoning.

Mayurbhanj's broken promises



merger agreement explicitly stated that once the High Court was absorbed into Odisha, it would be the "prime duty" of the state government to establish a circuit bench in Mayurbhanj. Seventy-five years later, the clause remains unfulfilled.

Similar demands from other regions have diluted Mayurb-

hanj's original claim, laments senior lawyer Bijan Das.

Infrastructure arrived at colonial speed. A railway line took a century to materialise; a medical college, decades more. A university—built on land donated by Maharani Takat Kumari—still lacks a centre dedicated to Mayurbhanj's unique Chau and



Jhumar arts, Similipal biodiversity, or the culture of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups such as the Mankidia, Khadia, Bhumi, Kohl and Bathudi.

Today the largest district in Odisha hears its name invoked only at election time.

"Development has been confined to slogans," says Maha-

rani Rashmi Rajyalaxmi Devi. The latest flashpoint is the administration's plan to cut thousands of fruit-bearing trees on the historic Hamilton Trust orchard—land bequeathed by the Maharajas for cooperative cultivation—to make room for a new bus stand.

Public outcry has temporarily stayed the axes, but the stand-off epitomises a deeper malaise: leaders come and go; Mayurbhanj's core issues remain in the back seat.

Determined to hold the state to account, a new cohort of activists has gone hunting for the 1949 merger agreement. State archives had no copy; repeated RTI applications finally traced fragments to the National Archives of India.

This writer and the sitting MP are now piecing together the full text, searching for an overlooked exit clause that allows the region to "withdraw" if promises are broken. Whether dusty parchment can still compel Bhubaneswar—and Delhi—to deliver overdue justice is the question the district has waited three generations to answer.

Bimalgarh station gets modern makeover



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bimalgarh, Dec 31: With an aim to provide better passenger amenities and infrastructure, Bimalgarh railway station in Sundargarh district is undergoing major redevelopment under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

Indian Railways is redeveloping more than 1,300 stations across the country under the scheme, with 59 stations selected in Odisha. Bimalgarh Junction, an important station for passenger movement and goods traffic, is among them.

The redevelopment includes construction of a new station building with an improved facade, new entry and exit gates, and a redesigned circulating area to ease passenger movement. Platform shelters are being

upgraded to enhance comfort, while platform surfaces are being improved for safety and convenience.

Special emphasis is being laid on differently-abled-friendly facilities. Accessible toilets are also being provided in the circulating area and on platforms, along with ramps, tactile pathways, Braille signage and water booths. Additional passenger amenities include a waiting hall, new seating arrangements, canopies and facade upgrades. Station walls will also be adorned with local art and cultural themes to reflect the region's identity.

Officials said the redevelopment will make the station cleaner, safer and more passenger-friendly.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.15 ▲ 0.08	SENSEX	85220.60 ▲ 545.52	GOLD	₹135,759 ▼ ₹907
EURO	105.88 ▲ 0.27	NIFTY	26129.60 ▲ 190.75	SILVER	₹237,888 ▼ ₹13,124

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	24.8°	21.8°	Dense Fog
Min Temp	15.7°	13.4°	
Humidity	86%	92%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



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DELHI RECORDS LOWEST DAY TEMPERATURE SINCE 2020

A biting chill gripped the capital Wednesday as “cold day” conditions prevailed, while a thick shroud of fog descended over the city, with air quality in the ‘very poor’ category. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the maximum temperature settled at 14.2 degrees Celsius, 6.2 degrees below normal and the lowest day temperature recorded since 2020



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XPOST OF THE DAY

Unemployment at Peak. People dying due to drinking contaminated water. People demanding clean air. People demanding unadulterated food. Casteism. World is abusing Indians. But do you know what is the topic among Media and IT cell today? Priyanka Gandhi's son Rehan Vadera has engaged to a Muslim girl. Welcome to New India.

@DrNimoYadav

China's war mediation claim concerning: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: The Congress Wednesday termed Chinese claims of mediation between India and Pakistan concerning and said the people of India need clarity on the issue.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to break his silence on the claim, which he said seemed to make a joke of the country's national security.

“President Trump has long claimed that he personally

intervened to halt Operation Sindoor May 10, 2025. He has done so on 65 different occasions in various forums in at least seven different countries. The Prime Minister has never broken his silence on these claims made by his so-called good friend,” Ramesh said in a post on X.

“Now the Chinese Foreign Minister makes a similar claim and says China also mediated. On July 4, 2025, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen Rahul Singh had publicly stated that during Operation

Sindoor, India was actually confronting and combating China.”

“Given that China was decisively aligned with Pakistan, Chinese claims of having mediated between India and Pakistan are concerning – not just because they directly contradict what the people of our country have been led to believe, but because they seem to make a joke of our national security itself,” he added.

He said the claim must also be understood in the context of our relationship with China.

Centre bans high-dose nimesulide oral drugs over health risk concerns

New Delhi: The Union Health Ministry has banned the manufacture, sale and distribution of all oral formulations containing the popular painkiller nimesulide above 100 mg, citing serious risks to health, an official notification said. The decision was taken following a recommendation by ICMR, the apex health research body of India, it said. “The Central government is satisfied that the use of all oral formulations containing Nimesulide above 100 mg in immediate release dosage form is likely to involve risk to human beings and that safer alternatives to the said drug are available,” the notification issued Monday said. It stated that it is necessary and expedient in the public interest to prohibit the manufacture, sale and distribution of the drug in the country for human use.

DGCA seeks explanation from AI for operating Dreamliner despite snags

Mumbai: Aviation watchdog DGCA has sought an explanation from Air India for operating a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner despite repetitive technical snags, according to sources. In a show-cause notice issued this week, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has flagged snags pertaining to Dreamliner VT-ANI. Non-compliance with the Minimum Equipment List (MEL) for the flight operated on June 28 this year has also been mentioned in the notice. According to sources, the regulator has flagged that there were safety concerns related to aircraft dispatch, MEL compliance and flight crew decision-making during the operation of flights AI 258 and AI 357. While details about the dates of operations for these flights could not be immediately ascertained, these flights operate on the Delhi-Tokyo route.

Water contamination: Death toll reaches 7

Indore: Seven persons have died so far due to diarrhoea and vomiting after allegedly consuming contaminated water in Indore city of Madhya Pradesh, its Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava confirmed Wednesday amid conflicting claims over the number of fatalities. “The health department has reported three deaths due to the diarrhoea outbreak in the Bhagirathpura area. But to my knowledge, four more people suffering from the disease were brought to hospitals and they too died,” he told reporters. Bhargava said a preliminary assessment suggested that drainage water entered the drinking water pipeline due to leakage, which triggered an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting in the Bhagirathpura area. Meanwhile, District Magistrate Shivam Verma said doctors have confirmed four deaths due to the diarrhoea outbreak caused by contaminated drinking water. He said 149 patients suffering from the disease have been admitted to 27 hospitals across the city and their health condition is being monitored.

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Nightclub fire: Probe finds safety lapses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Dec 31: The Goa nightclub, where a deadly fire killed 25 people in early December, was built illegally on salt pan and allowed to operate without a valid trade licence, pointing to serious lapses and collusion at multiple official levels, said a government-constituted magisterial inquiry's report.

The probe report, made public Wednesday, noted the ill-fated structure stood in the middle of a salt pan and was “not permissible under any law”.

The ‘Birch by Romeo Lane’ nightclub, located in Arpora village in North Goa, continued to run illegally without a valid licence and no action was taken by the local panchayat to seal the property, said the report.

According to a police report cited in the inquiry, ordered by the state government after the tragedy, fire-works were organised at the establishment “without taking proper care and caution” and without adequate fire safety equipment, triggering the blaze December 6 night.

The report, placed before a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant in the presence of senior officials, states that the revised site sketch “depicts the hexagonal structure at the middle of salt pan/water body.”

“This clearly establishes that the structure is situated at the middle of the salt pan/water body which is not permissible to be erected under any law in force either now or earlier. Converting salt pan is in violation of Section 32 of Land Revenue Code as well as Coastal Zone Regulations,” it observed.

The state government Wednesday released the entire report to the media. The inquiry recorded that the village panchayat of Arpora, Nagoa issued an establishment licence December 16, 2023, to “Being GS Hospitality Goa Arpora LLP” for running a bar and restaurant-cum-nightclub, valid until March 31, 2024. The licence was not renewed thereafter.

88 injured in loco train collision inside Chamoli project tunnel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gopeshwar/Dehradun, Dec 31: Chamoli District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar Wednesday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the collision between two loco trains inside the Pipalkoti tunnel of the under-construction Vishnugad-Pipalkoti hydropower project, which left 88 people injured.

Earlier in the day, Kumar said that the accident occurred around 8.30 pm Tuesday at the TBM (Tunnel Boring Machine) site inside the tunnel being built by THDC (India).

A loco train carrying workers for tunnel excavation during the night shift was about two kilometres inside the tunnel when another loco train coming from the opposite direction lost control and collided with it.

One of the trains had workers and officials on board, while the other carried material. Upon receiving information about the collision, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami ordered proper treatment for the injured. He spoke to the DM over the phone and instructed him to ensure that all the injured receive the best possible medical facilities.

DM Kumar and Superintendent of Police Surjit Singh Panwar met the injured at the Gopeshwar District Hospital.

Kumar said 109 people were on board the loco train at the time of the accident, most of them labourers. None of the injured was serious, he said.

He said that 88 of them were injured, although none of them are in serious condition. They said that 84 workers were discharged after receiving first aid, while four are still hospitalized.

DM Kumar and SP Panwar also inspected the project site and sought detailed information about the incident from the project officials.

They instructed them to strictly implement all necessary safety standards to prevent a recurrence of such an incident in the future.

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Lifting the potential GDP growth to over 8%, the minimum required rate for achieving developed economy status by 2047, warrants factor and institutional reforms

taking the average growth of two years to 7.85%, far beyond the deflator washout hypothesis.

India's long term GDP growth since 2000 has been 6.5%. Seemingly, India's potential GDP growth has moved up to over 7%. What is adding up to this surmise is an array of reforms and affirmative actions taken by the government in the last decade. Macro-economic reforms include the consolidation of the fragmented indirect tax regime into GST and its rationalisation this year, legislative creation of the Exit Policy-Bankruptcy Code, Real Estate Regulatory Authority and Monetary Policy Committee. India has since comprehensively transitioned from fragile five in 2013 to an enviable economically stable geography represented by low inflation, low fiscal deficit, contained debt (just about 80%) to GDP ratio, endurable current account deficit and high forex reserves of over \$600 billion.

The RBI's State of the Economy paper published in December noted, "Continued focus on macro-economic fundamentals and economic reforms should help unlock efficiencies and productive gains to firmly keep the economy on high-growth trajectory amidst a fast-changing global environment." These major reforms have been supplemented by the cleanup of balance sheets of banks and corporates, creation of national digital public

infrastructure to bridge the digital divide, a major shift in public expenditure from revenue heavy to capital formation-infrastructure build up and the steady decline of fiscal deficit of 500 basis points reduction in five years.

In addition, some of the affirmative action schemes like Lakhpati Didis, Mudra Loans, and support to Farmers' Producers Organizations (FPO) launched in the last decade are now playing out. It is estimated that at the end of 2025, there were one crore Lakhpati Didis as against the target of three crore. By now, 52 crore Mudra loans amounting to Rs 33 lakh crore have been disbursed. National Agriculture Market, known as 'e-NAM', India's electronic trading portal that networks existing Agriculture Produce Market Committees and individual farmers, making it a unified national market for agricultural commodities, has been put on a robust frame.

Confidence amongst professionals and institutions in the stable public policies is validated in part by the growing number of Global Capacity Centres built in India. Currently, there are nearly 1,800 GCCs employing over 19 lakh people which generated revenue of \$64.6 billion by 2024. The number of GCCs continues to grow year after year and the revenue expected by 2030 is \$100 billion. 'Jan Viswas' steps like

self-attestation, self-assessment, decriminalization of hundreds of offenses/lapses, push for refund of public moneys by banks, insurance companies and mutual funds, and tax authorities seem to indicate that direction of governance is moving, albeit slowly, from policing to an administrative state. Implementation of recently announced labour reforms, the Gauba Committee recommendations focusing on easing the burden for MSMEs, Securities Market Code and SAKTI legislation will likely aid growth.

These steps are leading to growing economic engagement, improving infrastructure, declining logistics cost, reducing financial repression and rising incremental capital output ratio (INCOR). Whereas these reforms may not look like the Big Bang reforms of 1991, the trail of bits and pieces of incremental steps seem to be favourably influencing the potential GDP growth of India.

However, lifting the potential GDP growth to over 8%, the minimum required rate for achieving developed economy status by 2047, warrants factor and institutional reforms covering the judiciary, public administration, police, among others, in addition to land reforms, electricity reforms. These are essential for the reduction in time and cost of enforcement of contracts, land acquisition, ease in the delivery of public service and raising of total factor productivity. It is important to note that currently only one of the investment engines is firing at full throttle. This is the public sector. Public investments have budgetary limitations. Private sector investments continue to be sluggish even now. The government must engage with trade and industry bodies to understand why this is so and take appropriate measures to spur private sector investment. This is India's moment to capitalize the demography and build a prosperous nation.

The writer is a former Chairman of SEBI and LIC. Views are personal.

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SPECTRUM SOCIAL SECURITY

100% FDI in insurance: Promises & perils

The global insurance narrative is a study in contrasts between maturity and untapped potential. In advanced economies, insurance is a foundational pillar of the financial system, with the ratio of premiums to GDP often exceeding 7% to 9%. In these markets, insurance is not merely a tax-saving tool but a sophisticated mechanism for risk management and long-term wealth preservation. Conversely, India has historically occupied the other end of the spectrum. Despite being the world's most populous nation and its fastest-growing major economy, India's insurance penetration currently stands at a modest 3.7% to 4%, significantly trailing the global average of 7.4%.

For decades, the Indian insurance sector was a state-guarded fortress. It was only in 2000 that the gates were cautiously opened to private players with a 26% FDI cap. This threshold was raised to 49% in 2015 and 74% in 2021, each step bringing a surge of capital and expertise. However, the most definitive shift occurred in late 2025 with the passage of the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, which official-

ly permits 100% FDI in the sector. This landmark reform signals India's transition from a protective stance to one of full global integration, aiming to achieve 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

The logic behind allowing total foreign ownership is rooted in the 'patient capital' requirement of the industry. Insurance is a capital-intensive business with long gestation periods, often taking seven to ten years before a company turns profitable. Domestic promoters often find it challenging to continuously infuse the massive capital required to maintain solvency margins as they scale.

The advantages of this liberalization are multifaceted. First is the infusion of global best practices and technology. International players bring advanced AI-driven underwriting, sophisticated risk models, and seamless digital claims processing. This is expected to bridge the 'trust deficit' in the Indian market, where consumers have long been wary of cumbersome claim settlements. Second, competition is the greatest catalyst for innovation. With 100% ownership, global firms are more likely to introduce 'niche' products such as parametric insurance

for climate-affected farmers, cyber-risk covers for small businesses and 'sachet-sized' micro-insurance which were previously considered too risky or low-margin by domestic players.

Furthermore, the reform facilitates the introduction of composite licenses, allowing a single company to offer life, health and general insurance under one roof. This structural efficiency is expected to drive down operational costs, a benefit that will eventually be passed on to the consumer in the form of lower premiums. From a macro-economic perspective, the inflow of stable FDI will help stabilize the rupee and provide long-term funding necessary for India's massive infrastructure projects, as insurance funds are typically invested in long-dated government and corporate bonds.

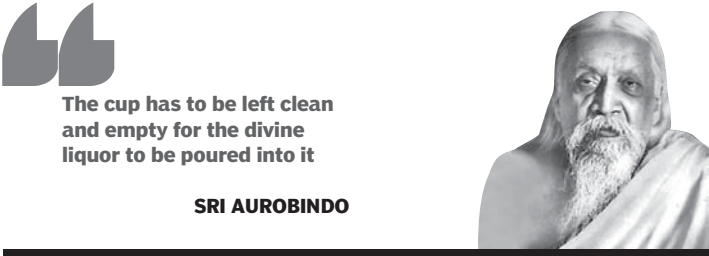
However, the path to 100% FDI is not without its thorns. A primary concern is the potential for predatory pricing. Deep-pocketed global conglomerates could theoretically underprice their products to gain market share, threatening the viability of smaller Indian firms. There is also the risk of 'cherry-picking,' where foreign insurers focus exclusively on high-margin, affluent

urban 'creamy layer,' neglecting the rural and social sectors that need protection the most.

Another point of contention is repatriation of profits. While the 2025 Bill includes 'guardrails' requiring companies to invest the entirety of their premium collections within India, the eventual outflow of dividends to foreign headquarters could impact the current account in the long run. There are also valid anxieties regarding data sovereignty and the protection of sensitive personal and health information of millions of Indian citizens when managed by fully foreign-owned entities.

As India embarks on this new chapter, the role of the regulator, IRDAI, becomes paramount. The transition from a rule-based to a risk-based supervisory framework will be essential to manage the complexities that global giants bring. If executed with transparency and robust oversight, this reform could be the catalyst that finally turns India into a truly 'insured' society, where every citizen has a shield against the uncertainties of tomorrow.

The writer is a former college principal and Founder of Supporting Shoulders.



The cup has to be left clean and empty for the divine liquor to be poured into it

SRI AUROBINDO

Financing Security

Intensifying great-power rivalries have made increased defense spending a priority that few states dare to question. This growing sense of insecurity propelled global military spending, which increased by 37% from 2015 to 2024, when it reached \$2.7 trillion – a sum almost equivalent to Africa's entire GDP.

The NATO alliance accounted for over 50% of this spending, with most of its members investing more in defense at the expense of other public spending. In Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany, foreign aid has taken a hit. Tepid public support for such programming makes it politically expendable, while security anxieties and the search for a defense-industrial boom fuel military spending.

Yet surging military budgets have not improved global security. Instead, military investment increases instability, destroys ecosystems, fuels arms races, and heightens conflict risks. It can also indirectly crowd out public investment in a guns-versus-butter tradeoff. The financing gap for the non-climate-related Sustainable Development Goals would have easily been closed in 2024 if the increases in defense spending had been redirected for that purpose. And since sectoral investments in health, education, and energy infrastructure have larger "fiscal multipliers" than military spending, these investments would likely have boosted GDP by more than we can expect defense spending to.

Public investment in human capital and infrastructure builds resilience and makes it more likely that societies will resolve disputes without violence and displacement. Most countries' biggest security risks are not territorial; they are threats like pandemics, climate change, and cyberterrorism. An aid-for-defense swap may be politically rational, but it amounts to robbing Peter (a resilience-based multidimensional understanding of security) to pay Paul (a narrow, militarized understanding).

The development-finance gaps resulting from this swap are unlikely to be funded by private sources. Fragile countries tend to be more dependent on grants and highly concessional loans, and social sectors generally do not generate the kinds of returns that private investors seek. That is why countries like Haiti and Sudan have long struggled to attract foreign direct investment, and why infrastructure projects in larger and less risky emerging markets appeal to private investors.

Now, pension funds, insurance companies, and banks are rushing to seize opportunities created by increased public-sector investments in defense, some of which are being directed by new multilateral entities like the Defense, Security and Resilience Bank. Stimulating such capital flows raises questions about the future of global ESG (environmental, social, and governance) investment frameworks, which have typically assigned defense industries a higher risk, owing to uncertainties about their business ethics, product use, governance, and environmental impact.

Security financing does not have to be a zero-sum game. An improved defense financing framework could help us address the complexities of today's collective security challenges.

A better approach would have three pillars. First, it would embrace a more multidimensional perspective on security. In June, NATO members agreed to spend 5% of their GDP on defense by 2035, with 3.5% of GDP focused on core defense and 1.5% on security-related spending to "protect our critical infrastructure, defend our networks, ensure our civil preparedness and resilience, unleash innovation, and strengthen our defense industrial base." For now, at least, the 1.5% is more focused on civilian defense than a holistic understanding of security.

We have already seen creative accounting practices to minimize the fiscal burden of the higher target, as in the case of Italy's effort to include a \$15.8 billion suspension bridge. Moreover, direct contributions toward Ukraine's defense will count toward the 5% target, providing a template for funding future military operations elsewhere in the world. In a promising sign, some NATO members are now exploring whether development spending in security-adjacent areas like international peacekeeping missions, early-warning systems for climate shocks, and resilient supply chains for essential medicines and vaccines might count toward the 1.5% target. But while shoehorning these budget lines into NATO's accounting framework could protect them from cuts, it might also jeopardize the integrity of standardized defense accounting if the boundaries of "security-related" remain unclear. It also raises the likelihood of "securitizing" aid and politicizing engagement in ways that will endanger lives.

A better approach, then, is to measure the full spectrum of national inputs for global security and assess their value in terms of military defense and deterrence, as well as economic growth and resilience. As the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs approaches, a multidimensional perspective on security could be a good starting point for discussing its successor framework.

The second pillar is a modern security financing framework featuring more transparent estimates of defense investment needs. In NATO's case, these are classified, even though transparent national estimates of minimum defense-investment requirements are key to preventing waste and ensuring that spending deters legitimate threats without raising the likelihood of conflict.

Setting military-spending targets as a share of GDP assumes that countries should spend whatever they can afford on defense, rather than focusing on what they (or their allies) actually need to contain genuine threats. Such a crude formula for burden-sharing inevitably militarizes economies by turning weapons proliferation and global conflict into industrial and commercial advantages. Input spending targets incentivize quick disbursements that can jeopardize procurement processes intended to ensure value for money.

Releasing aggregate estimates of true defense needs should be possible without compromising national security. Doing so would ensure accountability for defense outlays and allow for multidimensional security investment that targets both military and non-military threats.

The third pillar comprises stronger fiscal safeguards for key spending priorities. Global defense spending now outpaces development aid by 13 to one, a trend that is already generating ripple effects – from diplomatic layoffs to the collapse of global health investment. The opportunity cost of such massive defense investments could well be global cooperation itself. But some countries are seeking a better way. "We are building weapons, when we should be building social infrastructure," warned South African President Cyril Ramaphosa at last year's United Nations General Assembly, echoing concerns made by Brazil, Kazakhstan, and Nepal (among others). For her part, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, recognizing the symbiotic relationship between diplomacy, defense, and development, has proposed that G20 members earmark 1% of their military spending for sustainable development.

International cooperation is at a turning point, with the Global North far more committed to funding defense than defending development. A 21st-century approach to financing security threats should ensure that defense and development pull in the same direction.

The writer is Principal Research Fellow at ODI Global and an associate at Trinity College, University of Toronto.

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GN Bajpai

PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENTS CONTINUE TO BE SLUGGISH EVEN NOW



Nilima Gulrajani

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IS AT A TURNING POINT, WITH THE GLOBAL NORTH FAR MORE COMMITTED TO FUNDING DEFENSE THAN DEFENDING DEVELOPMENT



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

INDIA'S INSURANCE PENETRATION CURRENTLY STANDS AT A MODEST 3.7% TO 4%, SIGNIFICANTLY TRAILING THE GLOBAL AVERAGE OF 7.4%

Letters TO THE EDITOR

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

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PROMISES & POSSIBILITIES

As 2026 opens its door for us, it stores a bouquet of promises and with it, a host of events and happenings across the plains. Be it politics, specifically geopolitics, sports or even from entertainment, the year seems to have so much to offer. If 2025 kept us on our toes, 2026 won't disappoint us by keeping our adrenalin at peak. Here is a snapshot of all the probable happenings in Odisha, India and in the world that are going to stir the pot this year



Odisha Budget 26-27

The Annual Budget 2026-27 will be presented in the Odisha Legislative Assembly in the month of February, 2026. As Odisha aims to become a USD 500 billion economy by 2036, and to grow into a USD 1.5 trillion economy by 2047, these economic ambitions should be anchored in inclusive development: creating over a crore of new jobs, ensuring quality education and healthcare, and leading the nation in green energy, tourism, manufacturing, and technology. We can expect to see an increased expenditure in these sectors in the upcoming Budget.

SCBMCH to turn AIIMS++

SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack is set to turn into an AIIMS++ level institution soon. It is targeted for completion by June 2026. Upgraded at a cost of Rs 4,474.49 crore, the hospital's bed capacity will surge to 3,796, enhancing specialised care and medical education infrastructure. The revamp includes modern facilities such as advanced diagnostic centres, upgraded surgical units, and expanded academic spaces. Further, SCB MCH's elevation to AIIMS++ standards aligns with the state's goal to establish it as a regional healthcare hub.

Boost for road infra with RVEC

The Raipur-Visakhapatnam Economic Corridor (RVEC), a 6-lane highway project, is set for completion by December 2026, significantly reducing travel time through tribal districts of Odisha. It stretches across the forests of Chhattisgarh, mineral-rich landscapes of Odisha and hills of Andhra Pradesh. The corridor is being built at a total cost of Rs 16,482 crore and is expected to be completed by December 2026. It is set

to cut down the distance from 597 km with the existing NH-26 to 465 km — saving 132 km in distance and nearly seven hours of travel time.

AI in school curriculum

The Ministry of Education's new curriculum, which integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computational Thinking for students from Class 3 onwards, is set to begin implementation in the 2026-27 academic year in collaboration with state governments.



ELECTIONS AROUND WORLD

Nepal general election March 5

Early general elections are expected to be held in Nepal March 5, 2026 to elect the 275 members of the House of Representatives as announced September 12, 2025 by the President of Nepal, on the recommendation of Government of Nepal.

- » Portugal presidential election (Jan 18)
- » Thailand general election (Feb 8)
- » Colombia presidential election (May 31)
- » Mexico, Canada, US general elections, The three North American nations will host general elections over the course of the year
- » Brazil general election (Oct 4)
- » Israel legislative election (Oct 27)
- » Gambia presidential election (Dec 5)

Bangladesh general election February 12

General elections are scheduled to be held in Bangladesh February 12, 2026 to elect members of the Jatiya Sangsad. This election will determine the next Government of Bangladesh. The vote will take place under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, which has governed the country since August 2024. A constitutional referendum on the July Charter will be held alongside the election. Major parties are expected to contest, however, the Awami League, the winner of previous four elections, is currently suspended, and is not participating in the election. A total of 2,582 candidates are contesting for 300 seats in this election.

Key political events & summits

- » World Economic Forum Annual Meeting (Jan 19-23) in Davos, Switzerland, where global leaders will discuss the world's economic and political priorities
- » New START Treaty Expiration (Feb 4) between the US and Russia, which will leave both nations without legal restrictions on their nuclear forces
- » US Midterm Elections (Nov 3), which will determine control of the House of Representatives, one-third of the Senate, and numerous state governorships and legislative seats
- » G7 Leaders Summit (Jun 14-16) in Évian-les-Bains, France, for discussions on the global economy, international security, and climate issues
- » NATO Summit (Jul 7-8) in Ankara, Türkiye, where member states will review and direct alliance policies
- » UN General Assembly High-Level Debate (Sep 22 onwards) in New York City, where world leaders gather for annual discussions
- » G20 Leaders' Summit (Dec 14-15) in Miami, USA

In 2026, Indian sportspersons will compete across cricket, hockey, badminton, tennis, athletics, archery, shooting, wrestling, boxing, and multi-sport events like the Asian Games and Winter Olympics, making it a busy and exciting year for sports enthusiasts

Men in Blue eye title defence

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 will be held from 7 February to 8 March in India and Sri Lanka, featuring 20 teams and 55 matches. Defending champions India will aim to continue their winning streak and carry momentum from their 2025 success.

Women in Blue seek repeat

The ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 will be played from 12 June to 5 July in England and Wales, featuring 12 teams. With marquee clashes like India vs Pakistan, the Women in Blue will look to carry winning momentum from their historic 2025 ODI World Cup triumph.

Future stars chase glory

The ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026 will run from 15 January to 6 February in Zimbabwe and Namibia, featuring 16 teams and 41 matches. India, who last won the Under-19 World Cup in 2022, will look to continue their strong youth legacy on the global stage.

Landmark event at Kalinga Stadium

Odisha will host India's first World Athletics Continental Tour Silver-level event August 22, 2026, at the Kalinga Stadium, marking an upgrade from the Bronze event held there in 2025 and offering high-level competition for Indian athletes. This single-day meet, part of the Athletics Federation of India's 2026 calendar, provides significant ranking points and boosts India's global athletics profile.

Hockey heroes seek world crown

The FIH Hockey World Cup 2026, held from 15-30 August in Belgium and the Netherlands, will see India's men's and women's teams among the 16 elite contenders. Both teams aim to build on recent successes, striving to make a strong impact and compete for the prestigious global titles.

Countdown to Winter Olympics 2026

The 2026 Winter Olympics will be held in Milan-Cortina, Italy from February 6 to 22 2026. Indian athletes are expected to participate in skiing, skating, and other winter sports, representing the nation on a global stage. India aims to gain experience and achieve personal bests in these challenging snow events.

Football's biggest celebration awaits

The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be the largest ever, featuring 48 teams across the USA, Canada, and Mexico from 11 June to 19 July. Favourites Brazil, France, Argentina, and England face strong challenges from emerging nations. Legends Messi, Ronaldo, and Neymar Jr may play their final World Cup, aiming for historic glory.

AFC glory beckons eves

In 2026, India's women's teams make a historic return to the AFC Asian Cups. The senior team comes back after 23 years, the U-20s return after two decades, and the U-17s qualify for the first time, marking a remarkable resurgence and growing strength of Indian women's football.

Messi vs Yamal showdown

The Finalissima 2026, set for late March, will pit CONMEBOL champions Argentina against European champions Spain in an exciting intercontinental clash. Fans will witness Lionel Messi's experience going head-to-head with rising star Lamine Yamal, promising dazzling skills, youthful energy, and a high-stakes battle of footballing talent.

Union Budget

The Union Budget of India for 2026-27 is the most anticipated financial event of early 2026. As of late December 2025, the Ministry of Finance has already begun the formal "lock-in" preparations for what will be Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's ninth consecutive budget. The most discussed detail right now is the date. Traditionally, the budget is presented February 1. February 1 falls on a Sunday, which is also the restricted holiday of Guru Ravidas Jayanti. While parliamentary conventions suggest the FM could still present it Sunday (as happened during special sessions in 2012 and 2020), the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs will make the final call in January. If postponed, it will be moved to Monday, February 2.

STATE ELECTIONS

While there is no General Election (the next Lok Sabha polls are in 2029), five key states and union territories will head to the polls. These elections are often seen as a mid-term litmus test for the central government. **WEST BENGAL:** A high-stakes battle as the TMC looks to defend its stronghold. The 2026 West Bengal Assembly Election is being framed as a direct, high-stakes duel between Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) and a resurgent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The current Assembly's term expires May 7, 2026.

TAMIL NADU: Expected to be a major contest between the DMK and AIADMK/BJP.

KERALA: The Kerala Legislative Assembly election is expected in April-May 2026, with the current term ending May 23, 2026.

ASSAM: The next Assam Legislative Assembly election is set for March-April 2026.

Religious & cultural events Magh Mela

(PRAYAGRAJ): While the Maha Kumbh was in early 2025, the annual Magh Mela in Prayagraj will be held from January 3 to February 15, 2026.

Summits

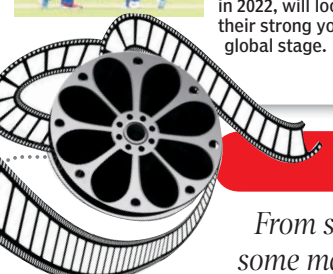
INDIA-AI IMPACT SUMMIT (FEB 16-20, 2026): To be held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. It will focus on "AI for Global Good" and showcase India's leadership in the digital economy. **ICANN 85 MEETING (MARCH 7-12, 2026):** A major global internet governance meeting taking place in India.

25TH ANNIV OF THE 21ST CENTURY

January 1, 2026, marks the exact point where the first quarter of the century is completed, likely to be celebrated with national reflections on the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Space race

ISRO is targeting a major expansion in 2026 with seven planned missions before March, heavily focused on the Gaganyaan human spaceflight program, including uncrewed test flights. **GAGANYAAN UNCREWED MISSIONS (G1 & G2):** The primary focus is executing uncrewed orbital flights to test critical systems—such as life support, re-entry, and crew escape mechanisms—before the planned 2027 crewed mission. **COMMERCIAL & SCIENTIFIC PAYLOADS:** ISRO aims to launch several commercial satellites and technology demonstrators using PSLV rockets to boost the country's space economy. **ADITYA-L1 SOLAR MISSION:** The solar observatory will continue its operations, with 2026 expected to be a critical year for observing maximum solar activity.



BIG-TICKET RELEASES

From sequels like Dhurandhar 2 to Shah Rukh Khan's King and to Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey, 2026 has some major releases to surprise movie aficionados. A look at a few of them that the audience can't wait to watch

Dhurandhar 2

After taking the global box office by storm, the second instalment of the Aditya Dhar directorial is set to hit theatres March 19. The movie features Ranveer Singh in the lead alongside Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, R Madhavan, and Rakesh Bedi.



King

Dubbed as one of the costliest Indian films ever made, the movie features Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone in the lead. The high-octane action thriller is directed by Siddharth Anand and is also a theatrical debut for Suhaana Khan.



Avengers: Domsday

The upcoming American superhero film is based on the Marvel Comics superhero team the Avengers. Featuring an ensemble cast including Chris Hemsworth, Vanessa Kirby, Letitia Wright, Paul Rudd, Channing Tatum, Pedro Pascal, and Robert Downey Jr., the movie set to hit theatres December 18, 2026.



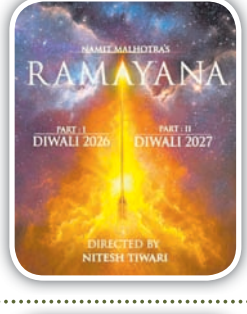
Battle of Galwan

On the 60th birthday of Salman Khan, makers unveiled the teaser of the highly anticipated war drama. Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, it is inspired by the true story of the 2020 clash between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley.



Ramayana

Ramayana Part 1 has already created a buzz even before its release. Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, it stars Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, Sai Pallavi as Sita and Yash as Ravana, with Sunny Deol as Hanuman. With music by AR Rahman and Hans Zimmer, this mythological epic is reportedly set to release in November 2026.



Toy Story 5

The upcoming American animated comedy film produced by Pixar Animation Studios for Walt Disney Pictures is the fifth main installment in Pixar's Toy Story film series. Written and directed by Andrew Stanton. Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Joan Cusack, Tony Hale, Blake Clark and John Ratzenberger are set to reprise their respective roles from the first four films, with Anna Faris, Ernie Hudson, Conan O'Brien and Greta Lee joining the cast.



Salaar 2

Salaar Part 1: Ceasefire left fans with a cliffhanger, and Part 2 is expected to be one of the biggest releases of 2026. With Prabhas in a never-seen-before avatar, the film promises epic action and drama. Directed by Prashanth Neel it stars Prithviraj Sukumaran, Shruti Haasan and Jagapathi Babu.



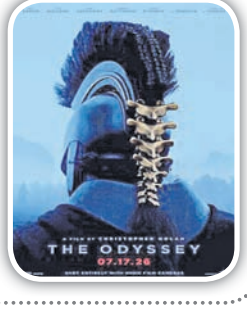
Dune: Part Three

The movie is the sequel to Dune: Part Two (2024) and the final installment in Villeneuve's Dune film trilogy. Timothy Chalamet, Zendaya, Florence Pugh, Jason Momoa, and Anya Taylor-Joy all reprise their roles from the previous films, with Robert Pattinson joining the cast. The movie is scheduled to be released in the United States and Canada on December 18, 2026.



The Odyssey

The upcoming epic action fantasy, written and directed by Christopher Nolan, is an adaptation of Homer's ancient Greek epic the Odyssey. The film stars Matt Damon as Odysseus, the Greek king of Ithaca, and chronicles his long and perilous journey home after the Trojan War as he attempts to reunite with his wife, Penelope, played by Anne Hathaway.



of the day quote

Finland is prepared for security challenges of various kinds, and we respond to them as necessary



ALEXANDER STUBB | PRESIDENT, FINLAND

We will discuss it. No one wants to exclude the centre-left, but the reform must be done



ANTONIO TAJANI | FOREIGN MINISTER, ITALY

Fraudsters are a serious issue that the state has spent years cracking down on but that this move is part of 'Trump's long game'



TIM WALZ | GOVERNOR, MINNESOTA

SHORT TAKES

Iran appoints new central bank governor

Tehran: Iran Wednesday appointed a new governor to the central bank after the former one resigned following a record currency fall against the US dollar that sparked large protests. The plummeting of the rial, Iran's currency, sparked the largest protests in the country in three years, with rallies that began Sunday and continued until Tuesday. A report by the official IRNA news agency said President Masoud Pezeshkian's Cabinet appointed Abdolnasser Hemmati, a former economics minister, as new governor of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He replaces Mohammad Reza Farzin, who resigned Monday.

Travel ban on US nationals

Bamako, Mali: Mali and Burkina Faso said late Tuesday they would ban US citizens from entering their countries in retaliation for US President Donald Trump's decision to ban Malian and Burkina citizens from entering the United States. The announcements, made in separate statements by the foreign ministers of the two West African countries, marked the latest twist in the frosty relationship between West African military governments and the US. Trump expanded earlier travel restrictions to 20 more countries, including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Dec 16, which are run by juntas and have formed a breakaway association from the regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States.

Turkiye detains 125 more ISIS suspects

Ankara: Turkish authorities Wednesday pressed ahead with nationwide operations against suspected Islamic State members, detaining 125 people in simultaneous raids across 25 provinces. In the past week, police have taken hundreds of Islamic State (IS) suspects into custody in nationwide raids aimed at preventing possible attacks during Christmas and New Year festivities. Members of a suspected IS cell opened fire on police carrying out one such raid in the northwestern province of Yalova Monday.

Pak Dy PM Dar to visit China

Islamabad: Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar will visit China later this week to co-chair the 7th round of a bilateral strategic dialogue. The Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue will take place in Beijing January 4, according to a statement by the Foreign Office. Dar is undertaking the visit at the invitation of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi.



Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait share a bond of blood and kinship. The reunification of our motherland, a trend of the times, is unstoppable

XI JINPING | CHINESE PRESIDENT

Taiwan stays on high alert

CHINESE SHIPS PULL BACK AFTER MASSIVE DRILLS

REUTERS

Taipei/Beijing, Dec 31: Taiwan remained on high alert Wednesday after China staged massive military drills around the island the previous day, keeping its emergency maritime response centre running as it monitored Chinese naval manoeuvres, the coast guard said. The exercises named "Justice Mission 2025" saw China fire dozens of rockets towards Taiwan and deploy a large number of warships and aircraft near the island, in a show of force that drew concern from allies in the region and the west.

Beijing announced late Wednesday the completion of the drills, saying its military would remain on high alert and continue to strengthen their combat-readiness.

In reply, Taiwan's defence ministry said that as there were still a significant number of Chinese planes and vessels in its response area, its armed forces would maintain an "appropriate contingency mechanism". It did not elaborate.

"The Chinese Communist Party's aggressive and militaristic provocations endanger regional security and stability, and have been condemned by democratic allies in the international community," it said in a statement.



CHINA'S DRILLS INVOLVED ROCKETS, WARSHIPS, AND AIRCRAFT NEAR TAIWAN

TAIWAN CONDEMNED DRILLS AS THREAT TO REGIONAL SECURITY

CHINA'S EXERCISES FOLLOW ANNOUNCEMENT OF US ARMS PACKAGE FOR TAIWAN

AMBASSADORS FROM QUAD NATIONS MET IN BEIJING TUESDAY

China's President Xi Jinping struck a familiar tone on Taiwan in his New Year address shortly after Beijing's announcement, repeating last year's warning to what it regards as forces seeking Taiwan's independence.

"Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are bound by blood ties thicker than water,

and the historical trend toward national reunification is unstoppable," he said in a speech televised by state broadcaster CCTV.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, and it has not ruled out using force to take it under Chinese control. Taiwan, which rejects China's claims, condemned the latest drills as a threat to regional security and a blatant provocation.

Chinese ships were moving away from Taiwan by Tuesday night, according to Kuan Bilong, head of Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council.

"The maritime situation has calmed down, with ships and vessels gradually departing," she said in a post on Facebook late Tuesday.

US DOJ to review 5.2mn pages of Epstein files, document shows

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 31: The US Justice Department revealed it has 5.2 million pages of Epstein files left to review and needs 400 lawyers from four different department offices to help with the process through late January, according to a government document reviewed by Reuters Tuesday.

This is likely to extend the final release of the documents to much later than expected after a December 19 deadline set by Congress, the document said.

The Trump administration ordered the Justice Department to release the files tied to criminal probes of Jeffrey Epstein, the late financier and convicted sex offender, who was friends with US President Donald Trump in the 1990s, in compliance with a transparency law

passed by Congress last month. Collectively, the Criminal Division, the National Security Division, the FBI and the US Attorney's office in Manhattan are providing 400 attorneys to review the files, the document said, a more precise, and potentially much larger, figure than previous estimates from the department. The review will occur between January 5-23, the document added.

Department leaders are offering telework options and time off awards as incentives for volunteers, the document said, adding that lawyers who assist will be expected to devote three to five hours a day to review about 1,000 documents a day.

The DOJ said last week it had uncovered more than a million additional documents potentially linked to Epstein.

So far, the disclosures have



been heavily redacted, frustrating some Republicans and doing little to quell a scandal that threatens the party ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

The law, approved by Congress with broad bipartisan support, requires all Epstein-related files to be made public, despite Trump's months-long effort to keep them sealed. Under the statute, all documents were to be released by December 19, with redactions to protect victims.

Trump knew Epstein socially in the 1990s and early 2000s. He has said their association ended in the mid-2000s and that he

MAMDANI'S INAUGURATION

New York, New Year, new mayor



REUTERS

New York, Dec 31: Zohran Mamdani was a trailblazing candidate whom many in his city of 8 million -- some with hope, some with trepi-

dation -- expect to be a disruptive New York mayor. The democratic socialist's plans for his first day in office Thursday nod to his politics and priorities, without straying far from his predecessors with a sober official midnight oath-taking followed by a more celebratory ceremony in the afternoon.

New York law spells out that four-year mayoral terms start on the January 1 after elections. To avoid any ambiguity about who's in charge of America's most populous city, it has become a tradition to hold a small midnight swearing-in.

Mamdani has chosen as the site of his midnight oath the Old City Hall subway stop, which was decommissioned in the middle of the previous

century and is accessible only a few times a year through guided tours.

The subway site, according to Mamdani's transition team, reflects his "commitment to the working people who keep our city running every day."

Mamdani, a 34-year-old former state lawmaker, promised a freeze on rents and free buses and childcare, building a campaign around affordability issues that some have seen as a path forward for his Democratic Party around the country ahead of midterm elections.

Mamdani inspired a record-breaking turnout of more than 2 million voters and took 50 percent, nearly 10 points ahead of Andrew Cuomo running as an independent and well ahead of Republican Curtis Sliwa.

New York State Attorney General Letitia James, who was among Mamdani's earliest prominent backers, was to administer the midnight oath to Mamdani. During the first administration of President Donald Trump, James began investigating his business

practices in New York, resulting in a judge finding in 2024 that Trump fraudulently overstated his net worth to dupe lenders. The Trump administration has targeted James during his second term, accusing her of mortgage fraud.

Thailand frees 18 Cambodian soldiers

REUTERS

Bangkok/Phnom Penh, Dec 31: Thailand released 18 Cambodian soldiers Wednesday under an renewed ceasefire agreed by the two countries at the weekend, authorities from both countries said, easing tensions after weeks of deadly border clashes.

The Southeast Asian neighbours agreed to halt fighting at noon Saturday (0500 GMT), ending about 20 days of clashes that killed at least 101 people and displaced more than half a million civilians on both sides. The fighting included fighter jet sorties, exchanges of rocket fire and artillery barrages.

Cambodian Defence Ministry spokesperson Maly Socheata said the soldiers were transferred at a border checkpoint at 10 am (0300 GMT) Wednesday, after 155 days in Thai custody. The governor of Cambodia's Battambang province, Sok Lou, described the returnees as "heroic soldiers". Thailand's Foreign Ministry said the detainees had been treated "in accordance with international humanitarian law and principles" during their detention.

The border clashes flared up again this month after a previous ceasefire deal brokered by US President Donald Trump and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim collapsed.

As part of Saturday's deal to halt the fighting, Thailand agreed to release the 18 soldiers in its custody if the ceasefire held for 72 hours.

EAM Jaishankar meets BNP's Tarique Rahman



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 31: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Wednesday represented India at the funeral former prime minister Khaleda Zia and handed over to Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Tarique Rahman a letter of condolences from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In his meeting with Rahman, a front-runner for prime ministership in the February 12 parliamentary polls, Jaishankar expressed confidence that Zia's "vision and values" will guide the development of partnership between the two nations.

Rahman, currently serving as the acting chairman of BNP, is the eldest son of Zia.

The three-time Bangladesh prime minister and BNP patriarch died Tuesday following prolonged illness.

At a room where senior ministers and dignitaries from neighbouring countries attending Zia's funeral converged, Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq exchanged pleasantries with Jaishankar. It was the first such encounter following Operation Sindoor.

Indian government sources said nothing should be read into the exchange of greetings.

"Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, exchanges greetings with Indian External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar in Dhaka Wednesday ahead of the funeral programme of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia," Bangladesh interim government chief Muhammad Yunus's office posted on 'X' along with a photograph. Jaishankar also exchanged pleasantries with other dignitaries including new Nepalese foreign minister Balananda Sharma and a few others.

Riaz Hamidullah, Bangladesh's high commissioner to India, said Jaishankar briefly discussed with Rahman the future of ties between the two countries based on shared interests, driven by "pragmatism and mutual interdependence."

"On arrival in Dhaka, met with Mr Tarique Rahman @trahmanbnp, Acting Chairman of BNP and son of former PM of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia. Handed over to him a personal letter from Prime Minister @narendramodi," Jaishankar said on social media.

He added, "Conveyed deepest condolences on behalf of the Government and people of India. Expressed confidence that Begum Khaleda Zia's vision and values will guide the development of our partnership."

The external affairs minister also briefly met with his Bangladesh counterpart Touhid Hossain, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul and National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

'E' PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

The E-Tender have been already uploaded in website : <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

No. MCS/Stores/E-Procure/Tender Notice/ Bogle Frame Assly/431, Dt. 23.12.2025

Tender No.: 92256047

DESCRIPTION : Bogle Frame Assembly for LHB Coaches as per RCF's Drg. No. LW03007 alt. g or latest. Mat. Spec. - MDTS 213 Rev. 04 or latest. [Warranty Period: 84 Months after the date of delivery]

[Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0], [UVAW Linking: Item:2400021, Flat bogie frame with coil spring, Sub Item: Flat bogie frame with coil spring]

Item Type: Goods (supply)

Quantity: 15 Nos.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 27.01.2026

Dy. Chief Materials Manager, CRW / Manchesterwar

PR-957/Q/25-26

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. EPC-CECONII BBS2025058, Dated : 17.12.2025

NAME OF WORK : CONSTRUCTION OF ONE IMPORTANT BRIDGE NO. 950 (11 X 45.7M OPEN WEB STEEL GIRDER OVER RIVER RUSIKULYA AT CH. 118019M) AND 18 MAJOR BRIDGES IN BETWEEN GANGADHARPUR-ICHCHAPURAM IN THE EAST COAST RAILWAY ZONE ON ENGINEERING, PROCUREMENT AND CONSTRUCTION MODE IN CONNECTION WITH 3RD LINE BETWEEN NERGUNDI-BARANG (22 KM) AND KHURDA ROAD-VIZIANAGARAM (363 KM) ON BHADRAK-VIZIANAGARAM SECTION (385 KM).

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 32468.79 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 1,62,34,400/-, Completion Period of the Work : 30 (Thirty) Months.

Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1200 hrs. of 16.02.2026

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

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.

The tenderers should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions.

Chief Administrative Officer (Con)/ Bhubaneswar

PR-203/CI/25-26

SEA SPRINT SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED

K3-783, Maheshwala, Paraganas South, West Bengal - 700141

Ph. No. - 9229024800, www.nimiedu.co.in

TENDER NOTICE

No. NINI/SSSP/Facilitation/CTI/2025-26

Sea Sprint Services Private Limited (SSSP) on behalf of National Inland Navigation Institute (NINI), Patna requests the quotation/tender for following items to be construction/supplied at Odisha Maritime Academy (OMA), Paradip, Odisha - 754142.

S.N.	Particulars	Estimated Cost in Rs. (approx.)
1.	Modular Fire Fighting Mock-up Drill Structure and Equipments	44.00 Lakhs

Last date of sale of tender document 19.01.26 Last date of tender submission: 19.01.26 upto 15:00 hrs., Date of technical bid opening: 20.01.26 at 15:30 hrs. Cost of tender documents: Rs. 500/- The above costs are inclusive of all taxes/excise and for OMA /NINI basis. Tender document can be obtained by e-mail from info@nimiedu.in or by hand at the NINI, Gaighat, Guizabagh, Patna during office hours.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PURI (R&B) DIVISION, PURI

WORKS DEPARTMENT

Short Tender Call Notice

E-mail: eerbpuri@yahoo.co.in

Bid Identification No.SE (R&B) Puri-48/2025-26

No.B-917: The Superintending Engineer, Puri (R&B) Division, Puri on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in Double Cover / Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE from the eligible class of contractors registered with the State Governments and contractors of equivalent Grade/Class registered with Central Government / Railways.

1. Nature of Work : Civil & Temporary barricading works.
2. No. of Work : 2 Nos.
3. Tender Cost : Rs 6000.00 & Rs.4000.00 (Online)
4. Class of Bidders : 'D' & 'C' Class
5. Available of Bid documents : From 10.00 AM of Dt 01.01.2026 to 05.00 PM of Dt 08.01.2026
6. Last Date of receipt of tender: Dt 08.01.2026 upto 05.00 PM
7. Date of Opening of Bid : Dt 09.01.2026 at 11.00 AM
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://tenderodisha.gov.in>. Any Addendum/ Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

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

OIPR-

GOVT. OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.),

AGRI. ENGG. DIVISION, CUTTACK

AT/PO:NAYABAZAR,DISTRICT, CUTTACK-753004

Phone No. (0671)-2952638 E-mail:ID:-eeagrilcuttack@gmail.com

e-Procurement Notice :Dated 29.12.2025

Bid Identification No. EE(AGRI) Cuttack Division-11/2025-26

No. L- : The Executive Engineer (Agri.), Agri.Engg. Division, Cuttack, Odisha on behalf of the Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system from the eligible class of contractors through e-procurement in ONLINE MODE only in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in, for civil works/construction of buildings in the district of Cuttack as detailed below:

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Approximate Estimated cost put to Tender (Excluding G.S.T) (Rs. In Lakhs)	Cost of Bid Documents (in Rs.)	EMD (1%) in (Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion
1	Total 1 No. (One No. of work) 1. Furnishing works/modernization work and other civil works	4.20	Refer DTCN 11/2025-26	1% Of The Amount Put To Tender (Refer DTCN 11/2025-26)	'C' & 'D' Class (Refer DTCN 11/2025-26)	60 Days

1. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: 01.01.2026 at 10.00 A.M to 07.01.2026, 5.30 P.M
2. Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 07.01.2026 up to 5.30 P.M
3. Date of submission of original bid documents in Tender Box: 01.01.2026 at 10.00 A.M to 08.01.2026, up to 5.30 P.M
4. Date & Time of opening of original Documents & Verification : -09.01.2026 at 11:00 A.M
5. Date & Time of opening of Online bids: 09.01.2026 at 2:00 P.M onwards.

The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only in the e-Procurement website of Govt. of Odisha: www.tendersodisha.gov.in with matching class DSC. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender /other details of the DTCN can also be seen in the said website. Authority reserve the right to reject/accept any or all of the tenders, without assigning any reasons thereof.

Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agri.), Cuttack Division, Nayabazar, Cuttack

OIPR-

business

of the day quote

Looking ahead, we project GDP growth at 6.7 per cent and inflation (largely driven by base effects) at 5 per cent in fiscal 2027. We believe that weak capital inflows and sharp currency depreciation are transitory phenomena

Gold and silver surged over the past year on the back of a powerful mix of macro factors, such as structural demand and physical supply tightness

From 1 January 2026, every shipment of Indian steel and aluminium entering the EU will carry a carbon cost as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) moves from reporting to payment phase

SHORT TAKES

Govt freezes VI's dues

New Delhi: The government Wednesday approved a major relief package for Vodafone Idea, freezing its outstanding AGR dues, approving a five-year moratorium on payment, and clearing the way for reassessment of the capped statutory charge - giving a critical lifeline to the beleaguered telco. The relief measures approved by the Union Cabinet aim to protect the interest of the government (which has about 48.9 per cent stake in the telco), enable orderly payment of dues to the Centre by way of spectrum auction charges and AGR dues, ensure competition in the sector and safeguard the interests of 20 crore consumers of Vodafone Idea, according to sources. The Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, agreed to freeze AGR dues of Vodafone Idea at Rs 87,695 crore, while the struggling company now has to start paying from 2031-32 fiscal and clear by 2040-41, sources aware of the decision said.

Centre rolls out ₹4,531cr export aid

New Delhi: The government Wednesday launched Rs 4,531 crore market access support for exporters under which financial support will be provided to participate in activities such as international fairs and exhibitions. It will help exporters at a time when they are facing a steep 50 per cent tariff by the US. The measure is a part of the Rs 25,060-crore export promotion mission, which is aimed at enhancing competitiveness of Indian exporters. It has 11 components. Market Access Support (MAS) is the first component of the mission that has been operationalised from Wednesday and the remainder will be rolled out by January-end, Director General of Foreign Trade Ajay Badhoo said.

Hyundai to hike prices around 0.6%

New Delhi: Hyundai Motor India Ltd Wednesday said it will increase prices by around 0.6 per cent across its model range, effective from January 1, 2026, citing a rise in the cost of precious metals and commodities. The company will implement a weighted-average price increase of around 0.6 per cent across its model range due to the rise in the cost of precious metals and commodities, Hyundai Motor India Ltd said.



Maintaining financial stability and strengthening the financial system remains our north star

SANJAY MALHOTRA | GOVERNOR, RBI

ACs, REFRIGERATORS TO GET DEARER

Prices of cooling appliances such as room air conditioners and refrigerators may go up 5-10 per cent from January 1, 2026, as the new revised star rating from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency comes into force. This hike, which will be applicable from January 1, 2026, will almost offset the price advantage which the consumers have got from the GST reforms in September this year on room air-conditioners, where duty was slashed 10 per cent



Shares advance in year's final session

Stock markets rally nearly 1%; Nifty jumps 10.50% annually

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 31: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty jumped nearly 1 per cent Wednesday, the final trading session of 2025, driven by sustained buying by domestic institutional investors and strong gains in Reliance, Tata Steel and Kotak Bank.

Following a subdued trend in equity markets recently, value buying emerged in energy, PSU banks, metal and consumer durable counters, which pushed indices higher, traders said.

After five days of decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 545.52 points, or 0.64 per cent, to settle at 85,220.60. During the day, it surged 762.09 points, or 0.90 per cent, to 85,437.17.

A total of 2,799 stocks advanced, while 1,413 declined and 162 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty soared 190.75 points, or 0.74 per cent, to end at 26,129.60 after four days of decline.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Steel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, Titan and Trent were among the biggest gainers.

However, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Bajaj Finance and Sun Pharma were the laggards.

"Indian equity benchmarks rebounded sharply on Wednesday, snapping their recent losing streaks as strong buying in metal stocks lifted overall sentiment. Sentiment was further aided by a mild decline in crude oil prices, which helped



In 2025, the Sensex rallied 7,081.59 points, or 9%, and the Nifty zoomed 2,484.8 points, or 10.50%

Mc cap of BSE-listed firms surged by Rs 33.84 lakh crore to Rs 4,75,79,238.11 crore (\$5.29 trillion) in 2025

Indian benchmarks lagged their emerging and Asian market peers in 2025 amid record foreign outflows

Among sectoral indices, oil & gas surged 2.73 per cent, energy (2.28 per cent), metal (1.51 per cent), consumer durables (1.39 per cent), utilities (1.25 per cent), PSU bank (1.22 per cent), capital goods (1.12 per cent) and power (1.12 per cent).

BSE Telecommunication, IT, and BSE Focused IT were the laggards.

This year, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 509.68 points or 1.09 per cent, while the BSE smallcap index dropped 3,655.14 points or 6.62 per cent.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,844.02 crore on Tuesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 6,159.81 crore, according to exchange data.

Falling for the fifth consecutive day Tuesday, the Sensex dipped 20.46 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 84,675.08. The Nifty skidded 3.25 points or 0.01 per cent to 25,938.85.

ease inflation concerns, and a cooling in volatility, with India VIX slipping below 9.5. Value buying also emerged after the recent correction, as investors selectively accumulated stocks following multiple sessions of decline in the benchmarks," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.19 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 1.01 per cent.

Zomato, Swiggy boost rider incentives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: Food delivery platforms Zomato and Swiggy are offering more incentives to their delivery partners, a standard practice they follow on festive periods, to ensure minimal disruptions in services on New Year's Eve amid strike call by gig workers' unions.

Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU) and Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT) have claimed that lakhs of workers are set to join the nationwide strike to demand better payouts and improved working conditions.

The strike may affect the operations of food delivery and quick commerce firms like Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit, Instamart and Zepto on New Year's Eve, when demand is at an all-time high, according to industry sources.

Zomato has offered delivery



partners payouts of Rs 120 to Rs 150 per order during peak hours between 6 pm and 12 am on New Year's Eve. The platform has also promised earnings of up to Rs 3,000 over the course of the day, subject to order volumes and worker availability, people in the know of the development said.

In addition, Zomato has temporarily waived penalties on order denials and cancellations, they said, however, stressing that it was a standard operating protocol followed during high-demand festive and year-end periods.

"This is part of our standard annual operating protocol during festive periods, which typically see higher earning opportunities due to increased demand," an Eternal spokesperson told PTI.

Eternal owns Zomato and Blinkit brands.

Similarly, Swiggy has also increased incentives around the year-end period, offering delivery workers earnings of up to Rs 10,000 across December 31 and January 1, according to people aware of the development.

On New Year's Eve, the platform is advertising peak-hour earnings of up to Rs 2,000 for the six-hour period between 6 pm and 12 am, in a bid to ensure adequate rider availability during one of the busiest ordering windows of the year, they said, maintaining that increased payouts were a standard practice during such periods.

₹ plunges 5% in 2025 amid dollar strength

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 31: The rupee slumped 5 per cent in 2025 as persistent capital outflows from foreign investors, alongside heightened dollar demand from importers, making it one of the worst-performing Asian currencies.

On the last trading session of 2025, the rupee depreciated 13 paise to close at 89.88 against the US dollar as month-end demand and FPIs' dollar buying kept it lower.

The domestic currency has exhibited a negative bias throughout the year, making it Asia's worst-performing currency in 2025, with foreign portfolio investors pulling out USD 16.5 billion from equities this year, further denting investor sentiments, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 89.89 against the dollar and touched an intra-day low of 89.95 and a high of 89.84 against the American currency.

At the end of Wednesday's trading session, the rupee was quoted at 89.88 against the greenback, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee rose 23 paise to close at 89.75 against the greenback.

BoM unveils two branches

Bhubaneswar: Bank of Maharashtra (BoM), one of the premier public sector banks has opened new branches at Badamba in Cuttack district and Chhatia in Jajpur district. With this addition, the bank has now eight branches in Cuttack, three branches in Jajpur and 64 branches in Odisha. The bank also announced its plans to further strengthen its presence and customer reach in the state. The new Chhatia branch was inaugurated by Manas Kumar Tripathy, Tahasildar, Darpan and new Badamba branch was inaugurated by Mohita Kar, Principal, MS College, Badamba, in presence of Dilip Kumar Raulo, Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone, Sanjib Kumar Dash, Deputy Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone and Branch Manager of Chhatia Navin Kumar and Branch Manager of Badamba Saroj Kumar Behera. In this occasion, branch managers of both the branches appreciated the service rendered by the public sector banks and stated that the people of both the areas should come forward to avail themselves of the services and benefits offered by them. Commenting on the recent branch expansion, Raulo said, "We are happy to inaugurate two more branches in Cuttack and Jajpur, rapidly growing and strategically important destination in Odisha. This would be a step ahead to support our commitment to provide banking services to customers through a fast-expanding network of branches and other channels. This will facilitate smooth and timely delivery of customer service, improve credit delivery and reduced turnaround time for Retail, Agri and MSME sectors in the area, will further enhance customer satisfaction."



Govt's fiscal deficit at ₹9.76 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of November stood at Rs 9.76 lakh crore, or 62.3 per cent of the annual budget target for 2025-26, compared to 52.5 per cent in the year-ago period, according to government data released Wednesday.

The Centre estimates the fiscal deficit (the gap between expenditure and revenue) during 2025-26 at 4.4 per cent of GDP, or Rs 15.69 lakh crore.

According to data released by the Controller and Auditor General of India (CAG), the central government received Rs 19.49 lakh crore (55.7 per cent of the corresponding BE 2025-26 of total receipts) up to November 2025.

This comprised Rs 13,93,946 crore of tax revenue (net to Centre), Rs 5,16,366 crore of non-tax revenue and Rs 38,927 crore of non-debt capital receipts.

CGA data showed Rs 9,36,561 crore was transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by the Centre during the period, a rise of Rs 1,24,498 crore year-on-year.

The total expenditure incurred by the Centre was Rs



29.26 lakh crore (57.8 per cent of the corresponding BE 2025-26), out of which Rs 22,67,700 crore was on revenue account and Rs 6,58,210 crore on capital account.

Out of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 7,45,765 crore was towards interest payments and Rs 2,88,333 crore on account of major subsidies.

Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist with Icra, said the rating agency anticipates a shortfall of Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the Centre's gross tax revenues in the current fiscal relative to the FY2025-26 budget estimate (BE).

"Overall, we expect the potential miss on the taxes side to be offset by higher-than-budgeted non-tax revenues and sizeable expenditure savings on the revenue spending front. As a result, we do not anticipate fiscal slippage at the current juncture," Nayar said.

Wishing you a year filled with joy, laughter, and endless possibilities

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026

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VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Odisha hand big defeat to Delhi

Odisha continue winning streak against star-studded Delhi; at top of the table with 12 points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Alur (Karnataka), Dec 31: India keeper Rishabh Pant's indifferent form coupled with Delhi's leading batters failing to fire saw their unbeaten run being interrupted by Odisha, who carved out a huge 79-run victory in a fourth-round Group D match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here Wednesday.

With the national selectors set to announce the squad for the three-match ODI series against New Zealand in first week of January, it was the charismatic India keeper-batter and Delhi skipper Pant, who was the focus of attention.

But the feisty cricketer could score only 24 as the much-vaunted Delhi batting imploded, managing just 193 in 43.3 overs in the chase of an immensely gettable 272/8 scored by Odisha after being sent in to bat first.

Delhi's innings have largely been built around one solid batting performance so far this season. But the absence of one Wednesday cost them not just the match but also their top position on the points table, which could come back to haunt them as the tournament progresses.

Odisha went top of the table with 12 points and a healthy



net run rate (NRR), while Delhi, despite being on the same number of points, slipped to fourth, with even Railways and Haryana getting ahead of them on better NRR.

It was also the first time so far this season that Delhi could not cross 200, something which looked so easy when Virat Kohli slammed a century against Andhra in the opener, and opener Priyansh Arya scored a fine 78 in the previous game against Saurashtra.

Pant, following scores of 5, 70, 22 could only manage 24 off 28 balls before he was dismissed by pacer Debabrata Pradhan (3/28), who along with young right-arm pacer Sambit Baral (3/34), hastened Delhi's collapse.

Odisha's competitive total was built around veteran skipper Biplab Samantray, who scored a 74-ball-72 after they lost three wickets before their scored crossed the 100 mark.

Odisha's lower rung made small but useful contributions to frustrate the Delhi bowling attack, led by India players Navdeep Saini and Nitish Rana, though off-spinner Hrithik Shokeen returned excellent figures of 4/27 in his 10 overs.

Delhi's batters were off to an awful start losing openers Priyansh Arya and Sarthak Rangan on single-digit scores to be two down for just six runs on the board. Pant's dismissal saw Delhi teetering at 50/3 in only the 11th over, which quickly

became 55/5.

A recovery from this stage was next to impossible but due credit to Harsh Tyagi (43) and Hrithik Shokeen (32) for delaying the inevitable with some gritty batting.

Meanwhile, Saurashtra defeated Andhra by 74 runs with right-arm pacer Ankur Panwar taking a five-for and dismissing the rivals for 180 in the chase of 255.

BRIEF SCORES

Odisha 272 for 8 in 50 overs (Biplab Samantray 72; Hrithik Shokeen 4/27, Prince Yadav 2/57) beat **Delhi** 193 in 42.3 overs (Harsh Tyagi 43; Rajesh Mohanty 2/42, Debabrata Pradhan 3/28, Sambit Baral 3/34) by 79 runs

PREMIER LEAGUE

ARSENAL THRASH VILLA TO END YEAR AT TOP

This was the Gunners' fourth straight victory as they ended Villa's 11-match winning run in all competitions

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, Dec 31: Arsenal ended the year on top of the Premier League table after an outstanding second-half showing saw the Gunners cruise past third-placed Aston Villa 4-1.

This was the Gunners' fourth straight victory as they ended Villa's 11-match winning run in all competitions.

Villa showed enough in the first half to suggest they could achieve a club-record 12th straight win in all competitions, but the Gunners turned on the style to race four goals ahead with a scintillating second-half performance.

In his first start since early November, Gabriel Magalhaes profited from some poor goal-keeping from Emiliano Martinez to open the scoring three minutes into the second half, Premier League reports.

Martin Zubimendi then tucked home in the 52nd minute, before Leandro Trossard and Gabriel Jesus both added sublime curling finishes.

Ollie Watkins scored a stoppage-time consolation goal for Villa, who are now six points adrift of Arsenal. Second-placed Manchester City could move



back to within two points of the leaders when they visit Sunderland on New Year's Day.

On the other hand, West Ham United ended a run of three successive losses with a pulsating 2-2 draw against Brighton & Hove Albion.

Although Nuno Espirito Santo's side closed the gap on 17th-placed Nottingham Forest to four points, West Ham were twice pegged back by their visitors in a dramatic game.

Jarrod Bowen slotted the home side into a 10th-minute lead, but their advantage was short-lived as Danny Welbeck sent Alphonse Areola the wrong way with a clinical

penalty.

Just moments later, Welbeck chipped his second penalty of the game onto the crossbar. That miss was punished in the fourth minute of stoppage time, when Lucas Paqueta converted the match's third spot-kick after Lewis Dunk was penalised for handball.

However, Areola's error from a corner then gifted Brighton an equaliser as Joel Veltman pounced from close range. The 2-2 draw means the Hammers end 2025 in the relegation zone, in 18th place, while Brighton dropped to 14th after failing to win any of their December matches.

AIFF proposes new ISL format, clubs to confirm participation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) Wednesday asked the clubs to confirm their participation in the delayed season of the Indian Super League (ISL) and the proposed format within a day so that it can inform the continental body the exact number of matches to be played in the competition.

With the ISL 2025-26 yet to start, it is certain that the clubs will not be able to play the mandatory 24 matches in the season -- including top division league and domestic cup -- to be eligible to feature in the AFC Champions League 2.

In that regard, the ISL clubs had urged the AIFF to request the Asian Football Confederation for a one-time relaxation in the minimum requirement of 24 matches so that they can play in the ACL 2.

The representatives of the clubs and a committee formed by the AIFF have had five meetings since December 24 on how to hold the 2025-26 ISL season.

"... the meetings held on 28th December 2025, wherein the ISL Clubs requested the All India Football Federation to take up the matter with the Asian Football Confederation regarding a one-time relaxation in the minimum requirement of 24 matches," the AIFF said in a letter to the ISL clubs.

"AIFF asks ISL clubs to confirm participation and the proposed competition format in ISL 2024-25 by January 1, 2026. The AFC, the Sports Ministry



and the Supreme Court will be informed accordingly.

"Considering the urgency of the matter, it would be highly appreciated if the above confirmation is received by tomorrow, i.e., 1st January 2026. We trust you will appreciate the seriousness and time-sensitive nature of the situation."

The AIFF also said it is required to submit the outcome of the meetings it had with the ISL clubs to the Sports Ministry before January 2, 2026.

The AIFF had proposed two competition formats for the ISL 2025-26 season, which it wants to start in the first week of February.

The first option is a conference-based league structure where the 14 participating teams would be divided equally into East and West groups. Teams would play against each other

Lin first woman to claim Sydney to Hobart overall title

Sydney: Jiang Lin became the first woman to skipper the overall winner of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race after her double-handed entry Min River was promoted to first place Wednesday following a protest.



Lin and co-skipper Alexis Loison seized victory when race officials penalised French boat BNC for a sail breach, stripping it of top spot and handing Min River the handicap honours at the 80th edition of the race. The New Caledonian-flagged BNC, skippered by Michel Quintin and Yann Rigal, had appeared set for the overall win before the race committee imposed a penalty of one hour and five minutes following a successful protest. "I cannot believe it," Lin told reporters. "It will encourage more women I hope ... Look at me, if I can do it, surely you can." The triumph marked a double milestone -- the first female-skippered yacht and the first double-handed entry to win the race's overall title. Master Lock Comanche took line honours in the Sydney to Hobart race Sunday after pulling clear of a three-way tussle with supermaxis LawConnect and HSK Scallywag 100.

Five Indians join FIFA list of match officials for year 2026

New Delhi: Five more Indian match officials have been added to the FIFA International List of Match Officials for 2026. Rachana Kamani (Gujarat) -- along with Ashwin Kumar (Puducherry) and Aditya Purkayastha (Delhi), have been added to the FIFA list of women and men referees, respectively. Meanwhile, Muralitharan Pandurangan (Puducherry) and Peter Christopher (Maharashtra) have been inducted as Assistant Referees. Ashwin Kumar and Aditya Purkayestha, along with making the FIFA list, have also completed their AFC Referee Academy course in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Rachana Kamani is currently undergoing the same course. As many as 19 match officials from India are a part of the FIFA list for 2026. The draw for the 2026 FIFA World Cup was conducted at the John F. Kennedy Center, setting the stage for the first 48-team edition of football's biggest tournament. With expanded group formats and an unprecedented number of matches across Canada, Mexico, and the United States, the draw ceremony delivered several headline-grabbing clashes.



AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Tanzania, Tunisia book last two top 16 spots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rabat (Morocco), Dec 31: Tanzania and Tunisia secured the last two available spots in the Africa Cup of Nations last 16, completing the lineup before half of the groups had concluded their final games.

Tanzania's 1-1 draw with Tunisia in Group C wrecked Angola's hopes of squeezing through as one of the best third-place finishers with just two points from Group B. Angola's goal difference was better than that of Comoros, the third-place finisher in Group A. Feisal Salum's equalizer for

only within their respective conferences. The top four sides from each group will advance to a single-leg championship round to decide the ISL winner. All the matches would be played at two centralised venues.

Under the second option, all the teams would compete in a single-leg format without conferences. There would be no playoffs, with the league table alone determining the champion at the end of the season.

India has two spots in the ACL 2 -- one in group stage for ISL Shield winners and another in playoff round for Super Cup winners.

Each club in the domestic top division also needs to play a minimum of 24 matches in a season -- including top division league and domestic cup -- to be eligible to feature in the ACL 2.

The AIFF proposed a new structure for the ISL, under which the league would be owned and operated by the national body in accordance with its new constitution for the next 20 seasons last Friday. According to the new proposal, the league will implement a promotion and relegation system from the upcoming season.

The 2025-26 ISL season was put on hold in July due to the uncertainty over the renewal of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) between the league's former organisers, Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), and the AIFF. The deal expired December 8, creating a contractual impasse that also required Supreme Court intervention.

Pro Wrestling League player auctions Jan 3

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 31: The organisers of the Pro Wrestling League (PWL) have announced that player auctions will be held January 3. The league has also revealed the names of the six franchises that will compete in PWL 2026, returning to action after a six-year hiatus.

The fifth season of PWL 2026 will run from January 15 to February 1, 2026, and is expected to showcase elite Indian and international talent competing in a fast-paced, high-intensity format.

The six franchises set to compete in the upcoming season five are Haryana Thunders, Tigers of Mumbai Dangals, Punjab Royals, Maharashtra Kesari, Delhi Dungal Warriors, and UP Dominators. Together, they represent some of India's most prominent wrestling regions, reinforcing PWL's national footprint and its team-based competitive model.

The player auction Saturday is expected to be a major focal point in the lead-up to the season, with over 300 professional wrestlers from more than 20 countries set to be auctioned off. The auction pool features Olympic and World Championship medallists, along with a strong contingent of Indian men and women wrestlers, underscoring the league's international reach and depth of competition.

With its refreshed identity and reimagined competitive structure, beginning with the January 3 auction, the league aims to usher in a new chapter for professional wrestling in India, combining world-class competition with renewed fan engagement.



Tanzania sent the Taifa Stars through. While Tanzania and Angola both finished with two points and a goal difference of minus 1, the goal scored by Salum, who is commonly known as Fei Toto, took Tanzania's tally to three -- one better than Angola's two goals.

OLDEST FOOTBALLER

REUTERS

Tokyo, Dec 31: Japanese soccer great Kazuyoshi Miura, 58, has signed a new loan deal with the Japanese third division side Fukushima United, setting him up for his 41st season as a professional footballer.

Miura, known as 'King Kazu', will also be playing his first season in five years in the top three divisions of Japanese football.

"My passion for football hasn't changed, no matter how old I get," Miura, who turns 59 in February, said. "I'm very grateful to be given this opportunity. I promise I



My passion for football hasn't changed, no matter how old I get. I'm very grateful to be given this opportunity. I promise I will play with everything I have to make a contribution. Let's make history together

KAZUYOSHI MIURA

will play with everything I have to make a contribution. Let's make history together," he added.

The forward, who started his professional career for Brazilian club Santos in 1986, also competed at several European clubs across Italy (Ge-

noa), Croatia (Dinamo Zagreb) and Portugal (Oliveirense) throughout his career. This will be his fourth loan spell since 2022 from J2 League side Yokohama FC.

He went goalless last season, playing a total of 69 minutes across seven games at fourth-tier club Atletico Suzuka, while his side was relegated to Japan's regional leagues.

Miura scored 55 goals in 89 appearances for Japan after making his debut in 1990, but was famously dropped from the side for their first World Cup appearance in 1998, before he retired from international football in 2000.



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PUBLIC HOLIDAYS	14 January - Makara Sankranti, 23 January - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti/Vir Surendra Sai Jayanti/ Basanta Panchami, 26 January - Republic Day, 3 March - Dola Purnima, 4 March - Holi, 21 March - Id-ul-Fitre, 27 March - Shree Ram Navami, 1 April - Odisha Day, 3 April - Good Friday, 14 April - Maha Vishuba Sankranti, Dr Ambedkar Jayanti, 1 May - Budha Purnima/Birthday of Pandit Raghunath Murmu, 16 May - Sabitri Amabasya, 27 May - Id-ul-Zuha, 15 June - Raja Sankranti, 26 June - Muharram, 16 July - Ratha Yatra, 15 August - Independence Day, 26 August - Birthday of Prophet Mohammad, 27 August - Jhulana Purnima, 4 September - Janmastami, 14 September - Ganesh Puja, 15 & 16 September - Nuakhai, 2 October - Gandhi Jayanti, 17 October - Maha Saptami, 20 October - Vijaya Dasami, 24 November - Rasa Purnima, 25 December - X-mas Day
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