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INNOCEAN/01/26





## Managing expectations

Actor Kriti Sanon speaks about navigating expectations and consciously avoiding box office comparisons

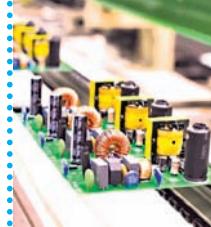
LEISURE PAGE



## Yemen conflict

Yemen's Saudi-backed government launches operation against UAE-backed separatists

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## Electronics boost

Foxconn, Dixon, Tata Electronics and Samsung among the 22 new proposals approved under the ambitious ECMS

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## HIL starts today

Tamil Nadu Dragons will cross swords with Hyderabad Toofans in the opening match of the men's Hockey India League Saturday

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BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY | JANUARY 3, 2024

Ensure fair, timely trial of activist Umar Khalid: US lawmakers to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Jan 2: A group of US lawmakers has written a letter to Indian Ambassador to the United States Vinay Kwatra, urging a fair and timely trial for activist Umar Khalid in "accordance with international law." US Representatives Jim McGovern and Jamie Raskin are among eight lawmakers who have expressed concern regarding the "prolonged pre-trial detention of individuals charged in connection with the February 2020 violence in Delhi," including Khalid.

Khalid and a few others have been booked under UAPA and provisions IPC for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the Delhi riots.

"The US and India share a long-standing strategic partnership that has historically been rooted in democratic values, constitutional governance and strong people-to-people ties," the letter said.

"It is in this spirit" that the lawmakers said they are raising their concerns regarding Khalid's detention.

India's manufacturing sector showed a marked loss of momentum in December, with growth slowing to its weakest pace in two years as softer domestic demand weighed on new orders and production, a business survey revealed. New orders rose at their slowest pace in two years, prompting firms to curb input purchases and slow hiring, which hovered close to stagnation. Factory output also cooled sharply, recording its weakest growth in 38 months amid fewer customer orders. At the same time, external demand offered limited support, with export growth slipping to a 14-month low, partly due to steep US tariffs on Indian goods, while a weaker rupee failed to boost exports.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 2: India's manufacturing sector expansion slowed to its weakest pace in two years in December on account of softer



expansions in new orders, prompting firms to limit input purchases, according to a business survey that also showed hiring had slowed to a near standstill.

The cooling in factory activity adds to signs the world's fastest-growing major economy is entering a slower phase after posting growth of more than 8% in the July-September quarter.

The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) compiled by S&P Global fell to 55.0 in December from 56.6 in November, lower than a preliminary estimate of 55.7. That marks the lowest read-

ing since December 2023. While the index has now remained above the 50 threshold separating expansion from contraction for more than four years, the latest dip underscores a clear loss of momentum.

Weaker domestic demand was the main drag, resulting in new orders - a key barometer of factory activity - rising at their slowest pace in two years.

The easing in demand fed into labour markets. Hiring barely increased in December, with the employment index slipping to its weakest level since early 2024 and hovering just above the 50

## Rupee slips 22 paise to 90.20 against dollar

Mumbai: The Indian rupee slipped below the 90-mark and settled the day lower by 22 paise at 90.20 against the US dollar Friday, amid disappointing macroeconomic data and strengthening of the American currency in overseas markets. Foreign traders said persistent foreign fund outflows and strong dollar demand from importers further dented investor sentiment. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 89.95 against the dollar, and touched an intra-day low of 90.25 and a high of 89.92 during the session. At the end of Friday's trading session, the rupee was quoted at 90.20 against the greenback, down 22 paise from its previous close.

mark, indicating near-stagnation in job creation.

Factory production also cooled sharply, rising at its slowest pace in 38 months, with companies citing lower customer numbers even as overall expansion remained solid by historical standards.

External demand offered little relief. Export growth slowed to a 14-month low,

likely weighed down by US tariffs of up to 50% on some Indian goods. HSBC noted export sales were largely derived from Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Notably, the Indian rupee's slide to record lows has yet to deliver the export boost many economists had anticipated. On the inflation front, input costs rose only slightly, allowing manufacturers to lift selling prices at the softest pace in nine months.

That suggests India's inflation, which edged up to 0.71% in November from a record low of 0.25% in October, will remain subdued for now - providing the Reserve Bank of India with room to cut rates further to boost weak urban household consumption. The central bank has now cut rates by a total of 125 basis points since February 2025, its most aggressive easing since 2019. Against this backdrop, business sentiment dimmed further. Confidence in future output fell to its lowest level in nearly three-and-a-half years.

## 5-year-old boy killed as SUV hits scooter in Puri



PNN & AGENCIES

## 3 DIE AS BUS, BIKE COLLIDE ON NH-220

Baripada: Three persons were killed after the motorcycle they were riding collided head-on with a bus on NH-220 in Mayurbhanj district Friday, police said. The accident took place near Rairangpur town police station limits in the afternoon, and all three died on the spot. The bus, which was on its way from Rairangpur town to Keonjhar, has been seized. Rairangpur SPD Gokulnanda Sahu said.

dragged it for some distance on the Grand Road leading to Jagannath temple. The police rescued the injured and admitted them to hospital. The body was sent for post-mortem, and further investigation is in progress, the police said.



BRAVING THE COLD: People participate in the annual polar bear dip in Oakville, Ontario, Canada

## GOVT DIRECTS 'X' TO REMOVE VULGAR, UNLAWFUL CONTENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: The government Friday issued a stern notice to Elon Musk's social media platform X to immediately remove all vulgar, obscene and unlawful content, especially generated by AI app Grok, or face action under the law.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT (Meity) has issued a notice to the Chief Compliance Officer for India operations of X for failure to observe statutory due diligence obligations under the Information Technology Act, 2000, and IT Rules, 2021.

Meity has also directed X to take action against offending content, users and accounts. The ministry has directed X to submit a detailed action taken report (ATR) within 72 hours of the date when the order was issued. The government has received from time to time, including through public discourse and representations from various parliamentary stakeholders, that certain categories of content circulating on X may not be in compliance with applicable laws relating to decency and obscenity, the order said.

ଜିଲ୍ଲାପ୍ରଦୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ  
ମସ୍ୟ ଓ ପ୍ରାଣିସମ୍ପଦ  
ମେଳା ଅବସରରେ  
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ବାର୍ତ୍ତା



DSPL - 454

IRREGULAR by MANJU



## Green stickers to be made available from January 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

port Authority (STA). The vehicle owners having a valid PUCC can collect the green sticker from the RTO offices, while the vehicles which will get the PUCC done at the pollution testing centres on or after January 10, can avail it from the centre only, the order said.

The RTOs have been asked to open separate counters in their offices to distribute the stickers free of cost after verifying the vehicle details.

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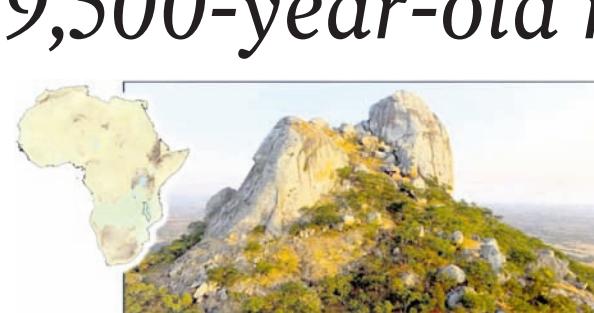
ଆମ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଜିଲ୍ଲାପ୍ରଦୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମସ୍ୟ ଓ ପ୍ରାଣିସମ୍ପଦ ମେଳା ଆୟୋଜିତ ହେଉଥିବା ଜାଣି ମୁଁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆନନ୍ଦିତ । ଡିସେମ୍ବର ମାସ ବ୍ରିତୀୟ ସମ୍ପଦରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିବା ଏହି ମେଳା ଜାନୁଆରୀ ବ୍ରିତୀୟ ସମ୍ପଦ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଚାଲିବ । ରାଜ୍ୟର ଗୋପାଳକ, ପ୍ରାଣିପାଳକ, ମସ୍ୟଚାଷୀ ଓ ମସ୍ୟଜୀବିମାନେ ପ୍ରାଣିପାଳନ ଓ ମସ୍ୟଚାଷ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ନୂତନ ଜୀବନୋଶଳର ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିଆରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଆୟୋଜନିତ କରିବା ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ଏହି ମେଳା ଆୟୋଜିତ ହେଉଛି । ଏହି ମେଳା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଢଶମୂଳ ପ୍ରରକରଣ ଥିବା ପ୍ରାଣିପାଳକ ଓ ମସ୍ୟଚାଷୀ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସରକାରୀ ଯୋଜନାର ସୁଧାର ବିଷୟରେ ସଚେତନ ହୋଇପାରିବେ ।

ରାଜ୍ୟର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଜିଲ୍ଲାରେ ଏହି ମେଳା ଦୁଇଦିନବ୍ୟାପୀ ଆୟୋଜିତ ହେଉଛି । ଆପଣମାନେ ଜିଲ୍ଲାପ୍ରଦୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମେଳାରେ ସାମିଲ ହୁଅନ୍ତିରୁ । ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ କାମଧେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଯୋଜନା ଭଲି ଅନେକ ନୂତନ ଯୋଜନା ଆମ ସରକାର ଆପଣଙ୍କ ହିତ ପାଇଁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ଜାଣି ନିଜ ରୋଜଗାରରେ ଉନ୍ନତି ଆଣିବା ସହ ରାଜ୍ୟର ବିକାଶରେ ସହାୟକ ହେବା ପାଇଁ ଏ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଭାଇଭରଣୀ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଅନୁରୋଧ ।

ଏହି ଅବସରରେ ମୁଁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଆତରିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଣ୍ଡୀ

Oldest known cremation in Africa poses a 9,500-year-old mystery



The pyre was found under a giant boulder near the base of Mount Hora

involving a cremated child.

The discovery was made at the Hora 1 archaeological site in northern Malawi. Excavators initially noticed thin layers of ash beneath a stone overhang. As digging continued, the ash thickened until a small, burned bone emerged: part of a human elbow joint, fractured and preserved among debris from Stone Age hunter-gatherer life. Further excavation revealed additional charred remains clustered within an ash layer roughly the size of a queen-sized bed, indicating an enormous fire.

Radiocarbon dating showed the cremation occurred about 9,500 years ago, far earlier than previously known African examples.

and the world's oldest known adult pyre cremation, The Conversation reported. Cremation requires sustaining an intense open fire capable of reducing a human body to burned bone fragments and ash, a task that demands planning, fuel and collective

OIPR-06014/13/0080/2526

# People should come together to make India self-reliant: CM

PNN &amp; AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday said people should come together to make India self-reliant.



Addressing an event to mark the 39th Freedom Fighters' Mahotsav and death anniversary of former CM Harekrushna Mahtab, Majhi said, "Today, there is no need for the freedom movement. But, there is a need for another movement to make India self-reliant. All should come together to make it happen."

He said Mahtab always stood against injustice and secured a special place among the greatest freedom fighters of the country.

"A full-size statue of Mahtab will be installed at a central location in Bhubaneswar in recognition of his contributions," he said.

Majhi emphasised that the state government, inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been consistently working to honor Odisha's great leaders by observing their birth and death anniversaries in their native places.

Majhi said his government is committed to the social security and all-around welfare of the families of freedom fighters.

"Our government has increased the monthly pension of the freedom fighters who were imprisoned, from Rs 10,000 to

Textiles, and Handicrafts Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta said, "Hundreds of freedom fighters sacrificed their blood and sweat on this land to give us freedom. Their unmatched patriotism and dedication can never be equaled."

Bhartruhari Mahtab, Cuttack MP and chairman of Freedom Fighters' Hall Trust, in his welcome address, said, "Before 1987, there was no specific day dedicated to freedom fighters. Since then, this day has been observed to keep alive the values, ideals, and sacrifices of freedom fighters and to inspire patriotism among future generations."

Similarly, the pension of freedom fighters who were not imprisoned was increased to Rs 15,000 from Rs 9,000 a month," he added.

Majhi said that apart from this, 152 people who were arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during the Emergency are also getting a monthly pension of Rs 20,000.

Works, Law and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said without Mahtab, the present geographical and administrative identity of Odisha might not have been possible. Mahtab laid the foundation for development in infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and irrigation in Odisha.

Cooperation, Handlooms,

and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said without Mahtab, the present geographical and administrative identity of Odisha might not have been possible. Mahtab laid the foundation for development in infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and irrigation in Odisha.

On this occasion, the CM felicitated the president of the Freedom Fighters' Day Celebration Committee and eminent freedom fighter Bimbashar Muduli. He also inaugurated and visited a photo exhibition on the life of Mahtab organised by the Information and Public Relations department.

## CIPET IPT holds GeM training



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** CIPET Institute of Plastics Technology (IPT), Bhubaneswar organised a two-day training programme focused on Government e-Marketplace (GeM) here Friday.

The programme was aimed at imparting skill upgradation and practical knowledge on the GeM platform to vendors and other key stakeholders. More than 100 stakeholders from different states across the country participated in the training, reflecting strong interest in enhancing digital procurement capabilities.

The training programme was formally inaugurated by CIPET IPT principal director and head Pramod Kumar Sahoo, who highlighted the importance of GeM in promoting transparency, efficiency and ease of doing business.

## CM to inaugurate National Road Safety Month today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** With an objective to significantly reducing road accidents and foster a culture of safe and responsible driving, National Road Safety Month will be observed across the country throughout the month of January. In Odisha, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will inaugurate the state-level campaign here Saturday, followed by a collective road safety oath-taking ceremony.

At the inaugural programme, participants will pledge to strictly follow traffic rules, respect pedestrians, avoid reckless driving, and actively promote road safety awareness among the public. This symbolic gesture aims to reinforce individual responsibility and collective commitment toward safer roads.

As part of the inaugural activities, a Padayatra intended to sensitise citizens about the importance of responsible road behaviour,

use of helmets and seatbelts, adherence to speed limits, and to avoid drunk driving will be organised from Mahatma Gandhi Marg to Ram Mandir, led by CM.

Senior government officials, public representatives, students, youth volunteers, traffic personnel, and members of civil society organizations will take part in the programme, reflecting a whole-of-society approach to road safety. Their presence will underscore state government's strong commitment to reducing road fatalities, preventing injuries, and ensuring safer road infrastructure and traffic management.

The programme will commence at 7:45 am at Mahatma Gandhi Marg marking the formal launch of a series of road safety awareness campaigns, educational programmes, enforcement drives, and community outreach activities, planned across the state throughout month.

Through sustained efforts

and public participation, the initiative aims to bring about lasting behavioural change and make Odisha's roads safer for all users.

As part of the awareness month, transport authorities in will conduct frequent and surprise vehicle checks across the state, targeting rule violations such as the non-use of helmets, seatbelts, and expired pollution control certificates (PUC). Authorities have stated that there will be no grace period, and any violation will result in immediate penalties, in line with the Motor Vehicles Act.

Apart from enforcement, awareness campaigns will be actively organised by various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and private companies. These initiatives will include rallies, training sessions, and public outreach programmes aimed at educating people about safe road behaviour and the importance of adhering to traffic rules.

## ₹40cr fraud: EOW nabs prime accused in WB

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Odisha Police arrested the prime accused in Rs 40 crore share trading fraud case from West Bengal (WB), a senior official said Friday.

The accused was identified as Amit Mandal, a resident of South Boilapara under Bishnupur police station area in Bankura district of WB.

He was arrested December 31, 2025 in connection with a case registered over the allegations of Sushant Kumar Das of Khurda district. Das alleged that the accused Mandal, along with his associates, induced him to invest in share trading by assuring returns of around 3.5 to 7 per cent per month.

The accused persons also executed an agreement with Das, apart from issuing post-dated cheques (PDCs) to win his



confidence. Lured by Mandal and associates, Das deposited Rs 8.5 lakh during the period 2022-2024.

The deposit was taken through the personal accounts of the accused Amit Mandal, who claimed to have one entity namely 'Kalpana Financial Services'. Das also alleged that although the returns were paid to the victim for a few months initially, they were later stopped and the accused Mandal absconded.

Subsequently, the complainant also came to know that Mandal had also cheated

several other people in Odisha, misappropriating deposits worth crores of rupees.

The EOW sleuths during the course of investigation ascertained that the accused Mandal along with some of his associates induced the general public to invest with him for share trading to get high monthly returns ranging from 3.5 to 7 per cent.

In order to induce the general public to give deposit, Mandal in connivance with his agents and associates in Odisha arranged several meetings in different hotels at Angul and Bhubaneswar.

"The accused Amit Mandal, during 2020-2024 period by inducing around 500 depositors from Odisha and 100 depositors from West Bengal has collected more than Rs 120 crore. At present, he has to return the invested amount of more than Rs 40 crore. He used to pay the

monthly returns from the successive deposits of the depositors. During 2023, the accused failed to pay the returns and falsely assured the depositors that their money will be reinvested in his newly formed company Kalpanit Consultancy Private Limited. But later he absconded, throwing the depositors into despair," the senior EOW official added.

Mandal used to collect the deposits in his personal accounts maintained with ICICI and HDFC bank for share trading in the name of Kalpana Financial Services, which is purely non-existent.

He has also collected some money through the account of Kalpanit Consultancy Private Limited and in the personal account of some of his associates.

The Odisha police during the probe found a transaction of Rs 122 crore in the ICICI account of the accused Mandal.

## Paddy procurement drive: State credits ₹2,566cr to farmers

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Odisha government credited a total of Rs 2,566 crore to farmers' bank accounts as part of the ongoing paddy procurement process, of fiscal sources said Friday.

So far, about 11,10,602 metric tonne of paddy have been procured from 2,49,888 registered farmers across 18 districts of the state. Of the total amount paid, Rs 1,961 crore has been disbursed towards the Minimum Support Price (MSP), while Rs 605 crore has been provided as input assistance. The government stated that payments are being transferred directly to farmers' bank accounts within 48 hours of the sale of paddy.

Registered farmers are selling their produce at designated mandis, which have been equipped with facilities such as temporary shelters, drinking water, and CCTV surveillance to ensure smooth operations. Officials have been deployed at each mandi to closely monitor the procurement process, an official said.

As per the government, farmers have been advised to avoid middlemen and sell their paddy only through the government procurement system, strictly adhering to official guidelines. Any grievances related to paddy sales can be reported to concerned officials and are being addressed promptly.

The procurement operation is currently underway in Balasore, Barghur, Bolangir, Boudh, Deogarh, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, and Sundargarh districts.

## CM Majhi lauds record-breaking success of Vigilance department

POST NEWS NETWORK

The department also conducted extensive raids, seizing 153 buildings, 417 plots, 12 farm-houses, 18.3 kg of gold, Rs 36.69 crore in bank deposits, and Rs 8.8 crore in cash. Additionally, 1,199 corrupt government employees' bank accounts were frozen. Majhi also praised the State Vigilance Academy for enhancing the training and capacity of vigilance officers. The academy has been awarded the ISO 9001:2015 certification, valid for the next three years, reflecting improvements in infrastructure, training quality, and best practices.

The review meeting also addressed key departmental needs, including skill development, appointments, and promotions. The Chief Minister assured that appropriate decisions on these matters would be made soon.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Anu Garg, Additional Chief Secretary Surendra Kumar, Vigilance Director Yashwant Kumar Jethwa, Chief Minister's Principal Secretary Shashwat Mishra, and Additional Director of Vigilance Asit Panigrahi.

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** In a comprehensive review of the Vigilance Department, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi lauded the department's record-breaking achievements in 2025 and reiterated his commitment to making Odisha completely corruption-free.

The Chief Minister, who also leads the Home Department, highlighted that over the past 20 years, Odisha Vigilance has set a benchmark in proactive anti-corruption measures, strengthened by the government's zero-tolerance policy. "The time has come to make Odisha completely corruption-free," he said, urging the department to continue its rigorous campaign against corrupt practices.

Between April and December 2025, the state government directed the Vigilance Department to investigate 125 cases—a record for such a short period. In total, 488 cases were decided, including 108 cases where penalties were imposed and a historic 173 cases involving disproportionate assets were concluded.

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# J'khand paddy stockpiled for sale at Odisha mandis



POST NEWS NETWORK

According to local sources, paddy worth several lakhs of rupees has been stockpiled in Badadund area under Jamda block, which lies close to the Jharkhand border. Paddy is reportedly being purchased from farmers at around ₹1,500 per quintal and stored for sale at higher MSP in Odisha.

Further, thousands of quintals of paddy have also been stored in warehouses in Pundighat village of Jharkhand, barely 2 km from Badadund, allegedly for onward sale in Odisha. Farmers claimed that such activities are being carried out with the tacit knowledge of certain officials, while no effective step has been taken to curb black marketing.

Though the district administration had earlier directed the police to seal border points and set up check posts to prevent illegal movement of paddy from Jharkhand and West Bengal, locals alleged that large quantities continue to be stockpiled

The alleged operation has raised serious concerns that paddy procured cheaply from Jharkhand farmers is being sold in Odisha at fixed MSP, resulting in a potential loss to the state exchequer.

## Ex-MLA Akshay Acharya dies

PNN &amp; AGENCIES

**Balasore, Jan 2:** Senior Congress leader and former MLA Akshay Kumar Acharya died here Friday, family sources said. He was 78.

Acharya is survived by his wife, three daughters and a son. He was suffering from cancer. He became serious Thursday night and was taken to Nilagiri Sub-Divisional



Hospital. But when he did not respond to treatment, doctors referred him to Balasore District Headquarters Hospital and he died on the way, according to family sources.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of Opposition and BJD president Naveen Patnaik, and Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das condoled the demise of Acharya.

"Deeply saddened to learn of the passing of former MLA Akshay Acharya. I express my condolences to the bereaved family and pray to Lord Jagannath to give peace to his soul. Om Shanti," the Chief Minister said in a post on X.

Acharya was elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly from the Nilagiri Assembly constituency on the Indian National Congress ticket twice in 1980 and 1995. He will be cremated at Nilagiri Friday, said family sources.

## 5 held for peddling brown sugar

PNN &amp; AGENCIES

underway, the officer added.

**Balasore, Jan 2:** Police arrested three persons, including a woman, after 140 gm of brown sugar was seized from their possession in Balasore district, an officer said Friday.

Based on credible information, police conducted a raid at Ambaliathia Chhak under Jaleswar police station limits, and three persons were apprehended with brown sugar, the officer said. The market value of the seized contraband is ₹14 lakh, police said.

One motorcycle, two mobile phones and ₹10,000 cash were seized from their possession, and further investigation is

During the operation, po-

lice seized 6 grams of brown sugar, ₹34,000 in cash, two mobile phones, a lighter, several paper slips and a motorcycle, officials said.

The raid was carried out in the presence of Angul additional tehsildar Shripal Bhardwaj, Sadar revenue inspector Machindra Maitri Ranjan Sahu, and junior revenue assistant Dinesh Kumar Majhi, in accordance with legal procedures.

A case has been registered at Angul Town police station, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the source of the contraband and possible links to a wider drug network, police said.

## Vig nabs forester for ₹55L fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pokhariguda Nanda Padah (50 hectares), Uparjhapi (50 hectares) and Kumjor (30 hectares).

The investigation revealed that Jaud allegedly prepared fake muster rolls and job cards to siphon off ₹55,04,607 government funds. He is also accused of opening fraudulent bank accounts in the names of 31 local beneficiaries to divert the money.

Departmental complaints had earlier been lodged against the forester on charges of corruption. Subsequent Vigilance verification reportedly established the veracity of the alle-

gations.

At present, Jaud is posted at Mushanal section of Bishwanathpur range in Lanjigarh block as in-charge of the elephant squad. Vigilance officials detained him from the section office Friday and brought him to the Vigilance office in Bhanwipatna for questioning.

Vigilance DSP Pradeep Kumar Aind said the accused would be produced before the court Saturday.

In another case, the former principal and the president of a college were arrested in Jajpur district for allegedly swindling government funds to the tune of ₹32.07 lakh.

Both of them were associated with the Chitalo Degree Mahavidyalaya, the officer said.

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The accused, identified as Mahesh Sahu, 62, and Gajanan Sahu, 26, of Patalghutkuri village under Amanara gram panchayat, and Dinesh Majhi, 62, Sukuram Chinda, 45, Purnachandra Majhi, 46, and Madhusudan Majhi, 55, of Saradhapur village under Boden police limits, were produced before a local court Friday, officials said.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Aziz Khan told reporters that forest officials received a tip-off about a leopard hide deal in Saradhapur village Thursday. Acting on the information, a raid

led to the seizure of one leopard skin and two sambar antlers, and the arrest of four people. Two suspects managed to flee.

Subsequently, a second raid in Patalghutkuri village recovered another leopard hide and two sambar antlers from the house of Mahesh Sahu, resulting in two more arrests.

Authorities said further investigation is underway to apprehend the remaining suspects and other individuals involved in the illegal wildlife trade. The accused have also been charged with possession of illegally sourced teak wood, officials added.

Assistant Conservators of Forests (ACFs) Prasanjit Nayak, Mohammad Mustafa Saha and other forest officials were present at the press briefing.

## Disappearance of termite mounds alarms Daringbadi

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Daringbadi, Jan 2:** Termite mounds, locally known as ui hunka and considered an important natural indicator of ecological health, are gradually disappearing from the forests of Daringbadi, triggering concern among locals and environmental observers.

Closely linked to nature and ecological balance, termite mounds play a significant role in forest ecosystems. However, climate change and large-scale degradation of forest cover have led to a steady decline in their numbers. Irregular rainfall patterns and unusual variations across summer, monsoon and winter seasons are increasingly being



felt in the region, residents said.

Often referred to as the "Kashmir of Odisha," Daringbadi is known for its pristine environment and unique geo-

graphical setting. Surrounded by hills and dense forests, the area is rich in rivers, streams, diverse flora and hundreds of medicinal plant species. Tra-

ditionally, these forests were dotted with numerous termite mounds, but their presence has reduced noticeably in recent years due to deforestation and environmental stress.

Termite mounds have a close relationship with climate and soil health. Experts say they help in identifying underground water sources and serve as natural indicators of groundwater availability. The mounds are formed by termites using a mixture of soil, organic matter and saliva, making them extremely strong and durable. Some mounds grow up to five to six feet high and provide a stable internal environment for the insects.

The structures are naturally porous, allowing air circulation while maintaining internal temperature and humidity levels, which also benefits surrounding soil conditions. Environmentally, termites play a crucial role by breaking down decaying wood and plant material, returning essential nutrients to the soil and improving soil aeration.

Environmentalists warn that the decline of termite mounds signals deeper ecological imbalance. Their disappearance not only affects soil fertility but may also weaken the natural groundwater recharge system, underscoring the urgent need for forest conservation and sustainable environmental practices in the region.

## ROAD ACCIDENTS CLAIM 5 LIVES

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada/Rairangpur/Badgaon, Jan 2:** Five youths were killed in two separate road accidents in Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts at a time when the state is observing Road Safety Awareness Month.

In Mayurbhanj district, three friends died after a passenger bus hit their motorcycle on National Highway 220 near Ranibandh under Rairangpur rural police limits Friday afternoon. The deceased were identified as Bikash Behera,



26, of Ratanasahi village in Badadali under Tiring police station; Prabir Debbarma, 26, of Adityapur in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharsawan district; and Bikash Debbarma, 28, of Bishalgarh area in Tripura's Sipahijala district.

Police said the victims were travelling from Rairangpur towards Jashipur around 1:30pm when the bus rammed into their bike near Ranibandh, dragging it for some distance. All three died on the spot. Tension prevailed briefly at the site before police brought the situation under control. A case has been registered at Rairangpur rural police station.

In a separate incident in Sundargarh district, two motorcyclists were killed in a head-on collision between two bikes near Sahajabahal under Badgaon police sta-

tion Thursday night. The deceased were identified as Ashish Gudiya, 24, of Sahajabahal village, and Arbind Kiro, 28, of Birangpada.

Three others — Anjana Gudiya, Rupa Tappo and Prabin Keruketta — sustained serious injuries and were initially treated at Badgaon hospital before being shifted to Sundargarh District Headquarters Hospital.

Police have registered a case, seized the bodies and handed them over to the families after post-mortem examinations. Investigations into both accidents are underway.

## Elephant found dead in Titilagarh

**TITILAGARH:** A female elephant was found dead at Limpada Nullah under Bijepur panchayat in Titilagarh police limits of Bolangir district Friday. A elephant died after falling into a stream at Limpada Nullah under Bijepur panchayat in Titilagarh police limits of Bolangir district Friday. Forest officials said a herd of elephants had been roaming the Titilagarh forest range for the past several months. The deceased elephant is suspected to have been separated from the herd and become unwell before it fell into the stream. Officials from Titilagarh range, along with the assistant conservator of forests (ACF) and the divisional forest officer (DFO), Bolangir, visited the spot and conducted a preliminary inquiry.



## Gajamitra critical after coming in contact with poachers' live wire trap

**BANTALA:** A wildlife volunteer, locally known as a Gajamitra, was rendered critical after coming in contact with an illegal electric snare laid by poachers in the Bantala forest range of Angul district, forest officials said Friday. The injured has been identified as Dilip Kumar Gochhayat, 48, of Basala Adiaghia village. Forest department sources said he sustained nearly 30 per cent burn injuries, mainly on his left hand and leg. The incident occurred near the Hamamira village boundary under the Kanja section of the Bantala forest division while a Forest department patrolling team was conducting routine surveillance in the Hamamira-Hindol border area Thursday night. The injured volunteer was immediately rescued by forest team members and rushed to the Angul District Headquarters Hospital in a Forest department vehicle. He was later referred to the AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, for advanced treatment. "He is currently undergoing treatment and his condition is being closely monitored," said Bantala range officer Prasanna Kumar Sahu.

## Man arrested for killing blackbuck

**BERHAMPUR:** Odisha forest department officers Friday arrested a man for allegedly hunting a blackbuck in Ganjam district. The accused has been identified as Rabindra Kumar Parida. Four other persons allegedly involved in the poaching of the Schedule-I animal at Kebripalli village under Jagannath Prasad forest range fled the spot when forest staff raided the area, Hemas Sekhar Mohanty, DFO, Ghumusur North division, said. Efforts are on to nab the absconding persons, he added. Around 30-kg of blackbuck meat and other organs of the animal were seized during the raid, Mohanty said. According to preliminary inquiry, the accused had laid a live wire trap to catch a wild boar, but instead a blackbuck was electrocuted, the forest officer said. During foot patrolling in the area, forest personnel spotted at least five persons who were engaged in dressing, cleaning and chopping of the blackbuck by hanging it from a branch of a tree. Upon seeing the forest personnel, they fled from the spot, while Rabindra was caught red handed by them, he informed.

## Leopard hides, sambar antlers seized; 6 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, Jan 2:** Forest officials in Nuapada district seized two leopard skins and four sambar antlers, and arrested six people for the illegal wildlife parts trade, authorities said Friday.

The accused, identified as Mahesh Sahu, 62, and Gajanan Sahu, 26, of Patalghutkuri village under Amanara gram panchayat, and Dinesh Majhi, 62, Sukuram Chinda, 45, Purnachandra Majhi, 46, and Madhusudan Majhi, 55, of Saradhapur village under Boden police limits, were produced before a local court Friday, officials said.

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Authorities said further investigation is underway to apprehend the remaining suspects and other individuals involved in the illegal wildlife trade. The accused have also been charged with possession of illegally sourced teak wood, officials added.

Assistant Conservators of Forests (ACFs) Prasanjit Nayak, Mohammad Mustafa Saha and other forest officials were present at the press briefing.

**Bank of Baroda**

**Regional Office: Cuttack Region**  
2nd Floor, Chalachitra Bhawan, Buxibazar, Cuttack, Odisha-753001

### REQUIRED PREMISES ON LEASE BASIS FOR SHIFTING OF BRANCH

The Bank of Baroda invites offers from the owners/ Power of attorney holders of premises in two bid system for acquiring premises on lease basis on **Ground Floor** preferably in Market Area beside Road & within 1Km from Main Market. It should have sufficient parking space for shifting of following branch at the below mentioned location.

#### 1. Phulnakhara Cuttack Branch with E-Lobby, Dist.: Cuttack

Carpet Area in 1000 to 1200 sqft.

The premises shall be ready to possession built up property, with sufficient parking and other amenities etc. The intending offerers shall submit their offers in two separate sealed cover superscribed Technical bid and Price bid to **Regional Manager, Bank of Baroda, Cuttack Region, 2nd Floor, Chalachitra Bhawan, Buxibazar, Cuttack, Odisha-753001** on or before **16.01.2026** up to **4.00 PM**. Priority shall be given to the premises belonging to Public Sector Units/ Govt. Departments. for details please log in on tender section of our website [www.bankofbaroda.com](http://www.bankofbaroda.com) or Contact: 8093047205. The Bank reserves its right to accept or reject any offer without assigning reasons thereof. Corrigendum/Addendum (if any) shall be issued on Bank's website only.

**Date: 02.01.2026**

**Asst. General Manager**



Genius discovers a system; average talent stereotypes it till it is shattered by fresh genius.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Institutional Shield

India-Bangladesh relations today feel like they're running on muscle memory, while politics keeps tugging at the steering wheel. For years, the relationship worked because institutions, security agencies, and seasoned diplomats on both sides quietly did the heavy lifting. Now, when tempers flare and rhetoric rises, their experience matters more than ever. Thankfully, India has a formidable bench of people who understand Bangladesh beyond the headlines.

Look at the depth of institutional memory India possesses. Former R&AW hands such as Amitabh Mathur, Amar Bhushan, Ravi (C.K.) Sinha, Shashi Bhushan Singh, Alok Tiwari, R. Kumar, and officers like Shashi Bhushan Singh Tomar have spent decades building networks, countering misinformation, handling crises and shaping quiet backchannel understanding. Add to that seasoned neighbourhood watchers like Alok Joshi, Ashok Sinha, and Vivek Johri, and you see why India's strategic brain trust is deep.

Even the Intelligence Bureau has officers who know Bangladesh from ground reality, not Power Point briefings — people like Sheel Vardhan Singh, Balbir Singh, Surendra Singh, Ramakant, and Sumit. Diplomatically too, voices such as Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty have long cautioned that our Bangladesh policy cannot be driven by ego or electoral reflexes.

Which is precisely the challenge today. Dhaka's political volatility and rising nationalist pressures have made diplomacy reactive rather than strategic. Visa disruptions, rhetorical blame games, and episodic friction show what happens when politics outrun institutional wisdom.

For stable ties, Delhi must lean on this institutional memory — the officers who understand nuance, can read Bangladesh's domestic pulse, and know when to use firmness and when to use patience. Relations aren't collapsing; they're being stress-tested. And this is when seasoned hands, not sound bites, should guide the relationship.

### Gujarat: Prime postings, familiar faces



### BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

There's a curious rule of gravity in Indian bureaucracy: spend time in Delhi, return to your cadre, and you somehow land a little closer to power than when you left. Gujarat offers a textbook case. Officers who've done stints in the Union government — especially anywhere near the Prime Minister's Office — seem to glide smoothly into the state's most influential chairs. Coincidence? Maybe. But patterns like these rarely lie. They usually tell you something about power, comfort zones, and a state government that clearly prefers familiar hands on the wheel.

Truthfully, Delhi-returned officers do bring weight. Exposure to the PMO, big-ticket ministries, and national policy machines gives them scale, visibility, and a ringside view of how politics and governance truly tango. Any government would want that expertise. The problem begins when this turns from a professional advantage into an unofficial entitlement program.

Because what does it say to equally capable officers who stayed back, kept systems running, faced public heat, dealt with the grind, while someone else comes back from the capital and jumps the queue? Merit starts to look suspiciously like "central connections." And when governance starts smelling like a loyalty ecosystem, morale and institutional fairness quietly take a hit.

Gujarat prides itself on efficiency and administrative discipline. But efficiency isn't just about trusted names and cosy familiarity. It's also about widening the talent pool, rewarding competence grounded in state reality, and resisting the temptation to build a closed circle of Delhi-certified insiders.

Sure, this trend may make political management easier. And when posting patterns mirror proximity rather than performance, it's not just a bureaucratic quirk but a governance signal. The question is: who's it really meant for?

### RHB's curious concession to babus

The Rajasthan Housing Board (RHB), established to bring the housing dream closer to economically weaker, lower, and middle-income individuals, has quietly employed a regulatory sleight of hand by slashing administrative charges for IAS, IPS, and IFS officers purchasing luxury flats. Gone from the usual 10 per cent to a cosy 5 per cent, this tweak translates into roughly Rs 8.9 lakh in savings per flat for senior officers. Meanwhile, the very citizens the board was supposed to champion continue to pay full freight with no such concession in sight.

This appears to be a classic case of policy capture by design. The housing board's mandate, enshrined in statute nearly five decades ago, is unambiguous: facilitate housing schemes that serve public needs, with transparency and fairness at the core. Yet here we are, watching a body created for equitable access hand out elite perks to the elite themselves.

*Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipcherian@twitter.com](mailto:dilipcherian@twitter.com). Let's multiply the effect*

## WISDOM CORNER

The journey matters as much as the goal.

KALPANA CHAWLA

You don't see any borders between countries from space. That's man-made, and one experiences it only when you return to Earth.

SUNITA WILLIAMS

We all are part of humanity, and the Earth is our one home, and all of us are in it.

SHUBHANSHU SHUKLA

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1777:** The Battle of Princeton was fought in New Jersey during the American Revolution. The clash, along with the Battle of Trenton, marked the first victory for the Revolutionary War general George Washington in the open field.

**1938:** U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis (later called the March of Dimes) to find a cure for polio, a disease he had been stricken with in 1921.

**1962:** Pope John XXIII excommunicated Fidel Castro after he took control of Cuba in 1959 and turned the country into the first communist state in the Western Hemisphere.

**1977:** Apple was incorporated by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. It went on to become one of the most recognizable brands in the world.

**1987:** Aretha Franklin became the first woman voted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. More than 80 other women have entered the hall since her induction was announced.

# power post

## FOCUS DEBT SUSTAINABILITY

# SOVEREIGN BORROWERS' CLUB

**O**ne of the most promising ideas in the Seville Commitment (Compromiso de Sevilla), which heads of state and government adopted in July, is the creation of a platform for borrower countries, supported by existing institutions and facilitated by a United Nations secretariat. This simple but potentially transformative concept could shift the balance of information and influence, which has long favored creditors. By allowing borrower countries to discuss technical issues and debt challenges, access capacity-building assistance, and coordinate their actions, the platform would amplify their voice in the global financial system.

While creditor coordination has long been institutionalized — through the Paris Club, the London Club, and industry-led efforts such as the Institute of International Finance — borrower countries have often been discouraged from sharing information, leading to ad hoc exchanges. Establishing a borrowers' club is therefore a political signal: it recognizes that enabling the Global South to speak with one voice can benefit financial stability.

This is not the first attempt at borrower coordination, and lessons should be drawn from past efforts, which began during the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and other countries in the region explored forming a "debtors' club," supported at the time by UN Trade and Development and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The result was the Cartagena Group, formed in June 1984 by 11 Latin American countries accounting for 75% of regional debt. The group highlighted the external origins of the cri-



While creditor coordination has long been institutionalized — through the Paris Club, the London Club, and the Institute of International Finance — borrower countries have often been discouraged

sis. Their proposals were sent to the 1984 G7 leaders' summit in London, only to be rejected in favor of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's case-by-case approach.

Subsequent attempts have faced similar barriers. More recent initiatives, such as the Sustainable Debt Coalition, established during the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt, and proposals by the V20 Group, have linked debt to climate breakdown, but remain fragmented.

During Europe's post-2008 sovereign-debt crisis, the inadequacy of existing tools led to the creation of new institutions such as the European Stability Mechanism. No such innovations exist for developing countries.

Of course, the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) offered temporary relief for low-income countries during the pandemic, but private and multilateral creditors largely did not participate, limiting its impact. And while the G20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments was designed to provide relief to countries in debt distress, only Zambia, Chad, Ghana, and Ethiopia have used the mechanism for debt restructuring, with

others citing concerns about timeliness and outcomes.

The IMF-World Bank Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable has identified promising strategies to address liquidity challenges — including a more flexible "three-pillar approach"

that combines reform, financing, and restructuring — but implementation remains slow.

These piecemeal initiatives, which have largely disappointed, should inform the design of a borrowers' club under the Seville Commitment. The governance structure must accommodate diverse debt profiles and complex political realities, and the funding model must guarantee institutional independence and protect decision-making from creditor influence. The secretariat must be capable of generating credible data and countering misperceptions that inflate borrowing costs for developing countries. There must also be coordination mechanisms to ensure effective alignment with the newly created Seville Forum on Debt.

Such a club should not be a confrontational bloc, but rather a mechanism for mutual capacity-building in four main areas.

First, debt restructuring

must emphasize preserving market access. Many countries avoid the Common Framework (like the DSSI before it) and even precautionary IMF programs because they fear rating downgrades and negative market reactions. Borrowers need stronger communication strategies to present credible macroeconomic programs and provide consistent, evidence-based messaging to rating agencies and private creditors.

Second, long-run sustainable growth must be integrated into financial programming, as required by the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable's three-pillar approach. Given that current models do not capture climate-transition risks or opportunities, borrowers need shared analytical tools that allow them to articulate credible, comparable, and climate-aligned growth strategies.

Lastly, debt transparency must be improved. The World Bank advocates "radical transparency," but many countries struggle to operationalize this in debt-management practices. A borrowers' club could help standardize templates, disclosure protocols, and peer-review processes tailored to developing-country contexts.

Some progress has been made toward alleviating the developing world's debt crisis.

To seize this opportunity, Global South countries and international financial institutions must build on the momentum of the Seville Commitment and the G20 leaders' summit in South Africa.

**Homi Kharas** is a senior fellow at the Center for Sustainable Development at the Brookings Institution while **Mahmoud Mohieldin** is a former minister of investment of Egypt (2004-10).

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## SPECTRUM NEW HIGHER EDUCATION BILL

# Outcomes matter more than intent

**I**n line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Union Government has introduced the Developed India Education Institutions Bill-2025 in Parliament, proposing the creation of a National Higher Education Regulatory Council. In a vast and diverse country like India — marked by historical, social, and regional variations — there is an undeniable need for a coherent, democratic, and inclusive regulatory framework that ensures equity, transparency, and justice in higher education.

India has previously witnessed the benefits of independent regulatory reforms. Institutions such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI, 1992), the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI, 1997), and the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA, 2016) have largely functioned with minimal political interference and have delivered tangible public benefits through timely reforms.

The proposed council will comprise three interlinked verticals: a Regulatory Council, an Accreditation Council, and a Standards Council.

Institutions of national importance such as IITs, IIMs, and NITs will also come under this framework. One of the stated objectives is to address persistent issues such as delayed approvals, overlapping regulations, excessive compliance burdens, and regulatory inconsistency caused by multiple authorities. A single regulator could potentially streamline governance and enhance efficiency.

However, a significant departure from NEP 2020 is the government's decision not to establish an independent Higher Education Financing Authority as originally envisaged. Instead, funding will remain under the direct control of the Ministry of Education.

While the government argues that diversified funding sources make a single authority impractical, this raises concerns about excessive centralisation of financial power.

Although the regulator will not have the authority to fix fees, it will frame policies to prevent the commercialisation of education.

The Bill aims to unify regulatory norms, improve transparency, and strengthen quality assurance.

Strict penalties — up to Rs 2 crore — and even cancellation of affiliation are proposed for violations.

These measures may help curb malpractices such as fake certificates, irregular admissions, and poor infrastructure, par-

ticularly in the private sector.

Yet, many structural challenges in higher education remain unresolved: outdated curricula, limited emphasis on research, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving; rote-based examination systems; weak industry-academia linkages; bureaucratic interference; and rampant commercialisation. Social inequities continue to obstruct inclusive access, especially for Dalits, backward classes, and marginalised communities.

While the Bill has several positive features, apprehensions persist regarding over-centralisation, erosion of university autonomy, and transitional challenges in implementation. Questions also remain about adequate representation of women, minorities, and tribal communities in the new regulatory structure, and whether regional needs will be meaningfully addressed.

Despite having over 1,300 universities and 52,000 colleges, India's global standing in higher education and research remains weak. Compared to Asian peers like China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, India lags significantly in patents and innovation.

Every year, Indian students spend nearly Rs 30,000



**WHILE CHINA HAS OVER 5.7 MILLION PATENTS, INDIA'S COUNT STANDS AT AROUND 2.28 LAKH**

**Letters**  
TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

## Drunken drivers

**S**ir, The incident of December 23, involving the Vancouver-Delhi flight where a pilot was offloaded for being under the influence of alcohol, is deeply disturbing and shameful. It dangerously blurs the line between a drunken bus driver and an airline pilot — both entrusted with precious human lives, yet betraying that trust through reckless behavior. A pilot does not merely fly an aircraft; they carry the hopes, safety, and lives of hundreds of passengers. Such acts of indiscipline and moral failure cannot be treated lightly. Monetary fines or mild penalties are grossly inadequate. Pilots and drivers found guilty of such misconduct should be immediately removed from operational duties and reassigned to administrative roles. This serves not just as punishment, but as a harsh reminder of the immense responsibility they carry. Lives are not expendable, and negligence must never be normalized.

**RS Narula, PATIALA**

## Indore: A lesson to learn

**S**ir, It only took just a few days for Indore to tumble down from the chart of best city to the worst because of the contaminated water crisis causing deaths and hundreds hospitalised due to gastrointestinal issues. Laboratory and medical investigations have confirmed that contamination occurred due to a pipeline leakage. The horrifying incident has raised serious concerns about drinking water safety not only in this city, which was ranked the cleanest for eight consecutive years, but in other Indian towns and cities as well raising serious doubts about drinking water supply. It highlights the urgent need for regular monitoring of drinking water pipelines and faultless design and laying of water and drainage pipelines. Also it is really shocking to note that when the residents of the affected locality repeatedly complained about water quality no effective measures were taken by the authorities. Laxity, neglect and dereliction on the part of the civil authorities have paved way for this crisis. The incident is a lesson for all local body administrations — to be alert, accountable, responsible, efficient and prompt in serving the public.

**M Pradyu, KANNUR**



# TWO STATES



# Cong boycotts Vaiko's Equality March

**TN CM CALLS FOR ELIMINATING DRUG TRAFFICKING NETWORK**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu), Jan 2:** The TNCC boycotted the maiden political gathering of the DMK allies for this year to mark the launch of MDMK chief Vaiko's Equality March from here Friday by Chief Minister MK Stalin.

Stalin, president of the DMK, who flagged off the ten-day padayatra, said the drug trafficking network was wide and the drug menace affected the youth, and called for concerted efforts by the Centre and states to eliminate drug trafficking at ports and other entry points in the country.

Tamil Nadu Congress chief K Selvaperumthagai had earlier announced that the party would not take part in the event as the invitation allegedly carried a photograph of the slain LTTE leader V Prabhakaran.

Tiruchi Urban District Congress president Rex later told reporters that the decision to abstain from the meeting was made based on the invitation.

However, leaders of other allies of the DMK, viz, VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan and IUML



leader Khader Moideen, took part. State Ministers K N Nehru and Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi also participated along with the chief minister in the event.

Before flagging off, the Chief Minister, who pitched for concerted efforts to eradicate drug trafficking, said the state government has taken several steps to contain the drug menace.

Though such measures yielded

positive results to some extent, the state and the Central governments should join hands to combat the drug menace, he said.

"It's a big network. Both states and the Centre should take coordinated steps to eliminate drugs at the entry points through ports," the chief minister said, flagging off the "Equality March" of MDMK chief Vaiko, here.

The ten-day 'Samathuva Nadai Payanam', which marks Vaiko's political campaign before the Assembly election, aims to promote communal amity and to create awareness on the evil effects of drug and alcohol use. It will conclude January 12 in Madurai after traversing nearly 175 km. Vaiko will be accompanied by 100 volunteers from the MDMK, of which he is the general secretary.

At the launch, which marked the first political event of Stalin this year ahead of the Assembly polls, the CM said parents and teachers should also supplement the government's efforts in weaning away youngsters from the influence of drugs.

"The state government is taking various steps to contain drugs, and these are yielding results to some extent. It's important to give up addiction, and others around them should reform them (addicts)," he said.

The recent police action led to the confiscation of over one lakh tables, which penetrated Tamil Nadu through Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The police even arrested a suspect from Nigeria in connection with the trafficking of drugs, he said.

"Drug elimination should be a joint liability of society. I urge the parents and teachers to ensure

sure their wards don't go wayward," the Chief Minister said.

"We are witnessing hate speeches resulting in the Christians, Muslims and SCs living in apprehension due to attacks on them. Instead of living together, they are causing a division and are using religion to spread hatred rather than bring people together," Stalin claimed.

Wishing Vaiko all the success for his padayatra, the chief minister expressed concern for his age and remarked, "Your objective is big for you. So is our concern for your health. Be cautious. Please don't undertake such arduous tasks in the future. You can always order your party members to take up the yatra," he advised.

Though Vaiko is 82 years old, his determination and enthusiasm seemed like that of a 28-year-old man, Stalin said.

In his speech, Vaiko said this equality walk was to highlight that there was no place for caste and religious conflicts in Tamil Nadu and to create a drug-free society.

Speaking on the occasion, VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan said the poll battle in the Assembly election this year will be between "Samathuvam" (equality) and Sanatanam, which was keen on gaining a foothold in the state.

# Kerala issues fresh K-TET guidelines after Supreme Court ruling



As per the new guidelines, candidates who have cleared either K-TET

Category I or Category II

will continue to be eligible

for appointment as Lower Primary (LP) and Upper Primary (UP) teachers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 2:** The Kerala government has issued new guidelines on the Kerala Teachers' Eligibility Test (K-TET) for appointments and promotions in government and aided schools, following recent Supreme Court judgments on the mandatory nature of Teachers' Eligibility Tests.

The decision comes in the background of a Supreme Court judgment dated August 7, 2023, and a later ruling September 1, 2025, in Writ Petition No 1385/2025 and connected civil appeals.

The government said it sought clarification from the Director of General Education and examined the issue in detail before issuing the revised norms. As per the new guidelines, candidates who have cleared either K-TET Category I or Category II will continue to be eligible for appointment as Lower Primary (LP) and Upper Primary (UP) teachers.

However, those who have passed K-TET Category III will

be considered only for High School Teacher posts.

The government has also clarified that High School language teachers must possess both K-TET Category III and Category IV qualifications.

In a major change, the earlier exemption from K-TET for candidates holding higher qualifications such as SET, NET, MPhil, PhD or MED has been withdrawn. The government said these candidates will now also have to clear the relevant K-TET category.

For promotions, only serving High School teachers who have K-TET Category III qualification will be considered for promotion as Headmasters and for by-transfer appointments to Higher Secondary School Teacher (HSST) and HSST (Junior) posts. The existing exemptions for Central Teachers' Eligibility Test (CTET) candidates will continue. Those who have passed the CTET Primary Stage will be eligible for LP teacher appointments, while candidates with CTET Elementary Stage qualification can be considered for UP teacher posts.

The government has said that current procedures for promotion to the post of Higher Secondary School Principal will remain unchanged.

## EAST COAST RAILWAY

Auction Catalogue No. SDCM-KUR-EMR-26  
Lot No./Category: MSS-KUR-BBS-MedStn-107-251 (Misc-Static-Services-Medical facilities at station)

**DESCRIPTION :** OPERATION OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL ROOM (EMR) AT BHUBANESWAR RAILWAY STATION FROM LEADING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS i.e. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSPITAL/ NURSING HOME/ POLYCLINIC/ CLINICS/ PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS/ COMPANIES/ FIRMS/ INSTITUTIONS/ NGO'S INVOLVED IN HEALTHCARE FOR PROVIDING ROUND THE CLOCK EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES IN EMERGENCY MEDICAL ROOM (EMR) BY CHARGING OF CONSULTATION FEES FROM THE RAILWAY PASSENGERS/ VICTIMS/ PERSONS WHO NEEDS EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AT RAILWAY STATION ALSO PROVISIONING OF SETTING UP MEDICAL STORE, ROUND THE CLOCK AMBULANCE SERVICES AND ENGAGING OF MEDICAL PRIVATE PRACTITIONER AT EMERGENCY MEDICAL ROOM (EMR) FOR RAILWAY PASSENGERS/ VICTIMS ON PAYMENT BASIS.

Auction Start Date & Time : 16.01.2026 at 1100hrs. Auction End Date & Time : 16.01.2026 at 1130 hrs.

Complete details available at website: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Sr. Divl. Commercial Manager / PR-966/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

## EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 61/ET/SBP-ENGG/2025-26, Dated : 24.12.2025

(1) e-Tender No. 63-eT-DENE-SBP-25

**NAME OF WORK :** CONSTRUCTION OF GRP OUT POST BUILDING AT RAIRAKHOL STATION IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 89,72,445.66, Bid Security : ₹ 1,79,500/-

(2) e-Tender No. 55-eT-DENS-SBP-25

**NAME OF WORK :** INSTALLATION OF TRACK MOUNTED AUTOMATIC GAUGE FACE LUBRICATOR (ELECTRONIC TYPE) ON CURVES 61 NOS. UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / WEST AND DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / SOUTH OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 9,30,29,440.80, Cost of Tender Form : ₹ 11,800/-, Bid Security : ₹ 6,15,200/-

(3) e-Tender No. 34-eT-SDENW-SBP-25

**NAME OF WORK :** EXECUTION OF TSR (P) - 52.633 TKM USING PQRS MACHINE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / WEST OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 84,16,76,784.85, Bid Security : ₹ 8,83,400/-

Completion Period for the Work : 08 (Eight) Months (for Sl. No. 1), 66 (Sixty Six) Months (for Sl. No. 2) and 12 (Twelve) Months (for Sl. No. 3).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 20.01.2026 (for all Tenders).

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

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://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 and ensure compliance of all instructions including check lists, para 3.1 additional check-list) of Tender form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter 2 of Tender documents, submission of Annexure-B duly verified and signed by Chartered Accountant.

Chief Administrative Officer (Con) / PR-213/C/25-26 Bhubaneswar

# Kochi-Muziris Biennale draws 1.6L footfalls in first 20 days



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Jan 2:** Around 1.6 lakh people visited the Kochi-Muziris Biennale contemporary arts festival from December 12 to 31, 2025, organisers said Friday.

A statement by Kochi Biennale Foundation (KBF) said that the numbers reflect strong tourist engagement and a growing local audience that returns multiple times to

experience this edition's scale and diversity.

The integration of AI-based data tools into visitor management and analytics systems is expected to further refine projections and insights in the coming weeks, KBF said.

Biennale officials said this would enable more accurate tracking of visitor flows, peak timings, venue popularity, and engagement patterns, helping to improve planning,

## REQUIREMENT OF BUILDINGS FOR 2 ODISSA BN NCC, BERHAMPUR

2 Odisha BN NCC, Berhampur requires buildinghouse for the following purpose:

Sl. No.	Purpose	Period	Plinth Area including Parking (Approx. In Sq.ft.)
1	PI Staff Accommodation of 2 (O) BN, 10 (O) Brn, 3 (O) Med Coy & 1 (O) Naval Unit NCC, Berhampur	03 years w.e.f. 01.03.2026	15759.02 Sq ft

The building preferably be surrounded by boundary wall. The same should be in well condition, maintained properly and also hygienic from sanitation point of view. The building should be connected by road and in suitable location at Berhampur, Dist. Ganjam. All electrical and plumbing fittings should be in good working condition. Adequate water supply should also be available with separate electric meter. The property should have well parking space. The property should be free from any litigation/demand. The interested property owners will submit their property details with valid ownership documents in the following address within 20 days from the date of publication of the advertisement.

The Defence Estates Officer Govt. of India, Ministry of Defence 163, Prachi Enclave, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, Odisha - 751016 Tele: 0674-2747631, 345, E-mail: [deobhub-stats@nic.in](mailto:deobhub-stats@nic.in)

## TENDER NOTICE

Tender Ref. No. BBSR/ESTB/BHADRAK BO/INTERIOR REFURBISHMENT/CIVIL & ELECTRICAL WORK

E-tenders are invited in 2 bid system from the interested parties/firms through online mode only for appointment of Contractor for interior refurbishing works of our Bhadrak Office located at Biswai Complex, Samariaipur, Post: Prachi Nagar, Bhadrak-756181. The details/documents are available on our website: [www.newindia.co.in](http://www.newindia.co.in) in (public notice section) & [www.tenderwizard.com](http://www.tenderwizard.com) / NIAEPROC.

Amendments / Corrigendum / cancellation / retender etc. if any shall be published only on the above website. The pre bid meeting on site would be on 12.01.2026 at 03:00 PM & the last date for submission of e-tender is 22.01.2026 till 05:00 PM followed by opening of technical bid & price bid on 23.01.2026 (tentative).

Sd/- Dy. General Manager Bhubaneswar RO CIN No.- L66000MH1919G0I000526

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) PR-962/Q/25-26 Sambalpur

Chief Administrative Officer (Con) PR-213/C/25-26 Bhubaneswar

## national



With the world's largest flower 'mandala' and the world's largest flower portrait of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ji, the Ahmedabad Flower Show has registered a hat-trick of world records for the third consecutive year

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

## CASHLESS HEALTH SCHEME TO BE ROLLED OUT IN PUNJAB

Punjab Health Minister Dr Balbir Singh Friday said the 'Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna' to provide free cashless medical treatment of up to Rs 10 lakh to every family in the state will be formally launched January 15



## CDS inaugurates upgraded runway at IAF's Car Nicobar base

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan 2: Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan Friday inaugurated the upgraded runway at the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Car Nicobar air base in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The apron areas have been expanded for smooth aircraft movement, and the facility will help the IAF carry out long-range firing exercises in a minimal time, officials said.

The upgraded runway will also support the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS-UDAN), improving civil air connectivity to remote island areas.

It will further enhance Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief capability by enabling swift mobilisation of resources during natural calamities and emergencies in the earthquake and tsunami-prone region and adjoining areas, the officials said.

Gen Chauhan arrived in Car Nicobar Island around 11.30 am and was welcomed by Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar, Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), and several other senior officials.

"The CDS inaugurated the resurfaced and upgraded runway at the Indian Air Force's Car Nicobar Air Base," an official said.

Located nearly 535 km from Sri Vijaya Puram, Car Nicobar in Nicobar district suffered the maximum damage during the 2004 Tsunami.

## 10 DEAD, OVER 1,000 AFFECTED



Family members of a victim, who died after consumption of allegedly contaminated water, mourn in Bhagirathpura area of Indore

PTI PHOTO

## INFANT BORN AFTER 10-YEAR WAIT DIES

In a narrow, quiet lane of Marathi Mohalla, the silence is heavy in the Sahu family with grief that no amount of money can compensate, as they mourn their six-month-old baby, born after ten years of fervent prayers, medical treatments and sacred vows. Last week, baby Avyan, referred to as a miracle child by the family, was extinguished by a simple, everyday act of diluting the infant's milk with tap water. Baby Avyan is now the youngest face of a devastating water contamination crisis in Indore's Bhagirathpura area, a tragedy that has turned India's "cleanest city" into a site of mourning.

rathpura, at a spot over which a toilet has been constructed. They claimed the leakage led to contamination of the water supply.

More than 1,400 people have been affected by vomiting and

diarrhoea in Bhagirathpura over the past nine days. A health department official, citing the situation till Thursday night, said that 272 patients were admitted to hospitals in the area, of whom 71 have been

discharged. The official said 32 of the 201 patients currently hospitalised are undergoing treatment in intensive care units. Officials have said that a leakage was found in the main drinking water supply pipeline near a police outpost in Bhagirathpura at a spot over which a toilet has been constructed. They claimed the leakage led to contamination of the water supply in the area.

Additional Chief Secretary Sanjay Dubey told PTI, "We are closely examining the entire drinking water supply pipeline in Bhagirathpura to find out if there is any leakage elsewhere."

He said after inspection, clean water was supplied to households in Bhagirathpura through the pipeline Thursday, though as a precaution, people have been advised to use the water for drinking only after boiling it.

## 'No plans to change land acquisition policy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: With land acquisition emerging as one of the biggest impediments in the timely execution of infrastructure projects in the country, Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan said the government has no plans to change its policy for acquiring land.

He said that in the over 3,300 projects worth Rs 85 lakh crore that were taken up during review meetings of the Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 7,735 issues were raised, and 7,156 of them were resolved.

Regular issues are resolved at the ministry level, while complex and critical issues are escalated for review by it. Somanathan said PRAGATI has a multi-tier follow-up mechanism that ensures the timely implementation of decisions.

Projects are tracked and monitored by the Cabinet Secretariat, while schemes and grievances are reviewed at the ministry level, with continuous PMO oversight and finally at the level of the prime minister, he said.

Addressing a press conference here, the country's top bureaucrat said that of the 7,156 issues resolved through PRAGATI, 35 per cent pertained to land acquisition, 20 per cent were forest, wildlife and environment related issues, and 18 per cent were about right of use/way, while other projects were delayed due law and order, construction, power utility approvals and financial matters.



An aerial view of boats anchored at the Sangam on the eve of the Paush Purnima snan during the Magh Mela, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

## Red Fort blast: NIA

## conducts searches

## Srinagar: The National

## Investigation Agency (NIA)

## Friday carried out searches

## in Jammu and Kashmir's

## Shopian and Pulwama

## districts as part of its probe

## into the November 10 blast

## near the Red Fort in Delhi,

## officials said. They said the NIA

## sleuths, assisted by police and

## CRPF, brought along one of the

## accused - Yasir Ahmad Dar

## -- to the searches. Ahmad was

## arrested in connection with the

## "white collar" terror module.

## Three murdered in

## separate incidents

## Medinagar/Hazaribag

## (Jharkhand): Three persons,

## including two women, were

## allegedly murdered in separate

## incidents across Jharkhand's

## Hazaribag, Palamu and Gumla

## districts, police said Friday. In

## Hazaribag, a person was killed

## and two others injured after

## a clash between two groups

## at Indrapuri Chowk under

## Lohsinghna police station limits

## Thursday night, an official said.

## In Gumla, a man allegedly

## murdered his 19-year-old wife

## and dumped her body in a

## forest near Aamtiapuri village

## within Gurdari police station

## limits, police said. In another

## incident in Palamu district,

## a man allegedly killed his

## wife and buried her body

## in a pit at Darauna village

## within Nawabazar police

## station limits.

## The court said it could not

## embark upon a roving or final

## inquiry at the interim stage

## and was required to arrive

## at a reasonable figure on the

## basis of available material,

## surrounding circumstances,

## lifestyle indicators and the ad-

## mitted earning capacity of the

## earning spouse.

## "It stands admitted that the

## husband is gainfully employed

## with Amazon.com Services LLC

as a software engineer and he has also not denied that he is residing in the US." "It is also admitted that the wife is unemployed, and the wife had specifically asserted that her husband has been earning approximately Rs 1.76 crore per annum," the court pointed out. It noted that the wife had submitted an affidavit regarding the husband's income in US dollars and the conversion rates prevailing at the relevant time.

"In the present case, it is undisputed that the husband is earning in foreign currency and is residing in the US. Consequently, he is also required to incur expenses in foreign currency, and the standard as well as the cost of living in the US cannot be equated with that prevailing in Delhi," the court observed. It, however, said the entirety of the husband's income could not be equalised or proportionately mirrored in the amount of maintenance. "Mere earning in foreign currency does not, by itself, entitle the wife to claim maintenance by mechanically converting the husband's foreign income into Indian currency and applying the formulae evolved by Indian courts without due regard to the attendant circumstances," the court said.

The court was hearing revision petitions filed by the woman and her husband against a May 2023 order of a family court awarding Rs 50,000 as monthly interim

## MAINTENANCE

## THE WIFE HAD SOUGHT AN ENHANCEMENT OF THE AMOUNT, WHILE THE HUSBAND HAD CONTESTED THE AWARD ORDER

## IN AN ORDER DATED DECEMBER

## 23, THE COURT SAID, "THE DETERMINATION OF INTERIM

## MAINTENANCE IS NOT AN EXERCISE CAPABLE OF MATHEMATICAL

## PRECISION"

## THE COURT WAS HEARING

## REVISION PETITIONS FILED BY

## THE WOMAN AND HER HUSBAND

## AGAINST A MAY 2023 ORDER OF

## A FAMILY COURT AWARDING RS

## 50,000 AS MONTHLY INTERIM

## MAINTENANCE

## .....

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## A FAMILY COURT AWARDING RS

## 50,000 AS MONTHLY INTERIM

## MAINTENANCE

## .....

## THE WIFE HAD SOUGHT AN

## ENHANCEMENT OF THE AMOUNT,

## WHILE THE HUSBAND HAD

## CONTESTED THE AWARD ORDER

## .....

## IN AN ORDER DATED DECEMBER

## 23, THE COURT SAID, "THE

## DETERMINATION OF INTERIM

## MAINTENANCE IS NOT AN EXERCISE

## CAPABLE OF MATHEMATICAL

## PRECISION"

# national



No bigger satisfaction than saving precious lives! 4 years back, we started a mission to strictly enforce road safety measures on New Year's eve to reduce accidents & save lives

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

## 'INDIA TO LAUNCH DRONE SHAKTI MISSION SOON'

India will soon launch a mission to achieve technology sovereignty in the manufacturing of drones, which are playing a key role in applications ranging from product delivery to warfare



## 4 FIRs registered after clash over installation of banner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ballari (Karnataka), Jan 2:** Four FIRs were registered in connection with the violent clashes that erupted over the installation of banners ahead of a Valmiki statue unveiling programme here, police said

Failure to do so would attract a penalty of at least Rs 10,000.

Such manufacturers will have to install a CCTV system covering all packing machines and manual process units. The footage must be preserved for 24 months and provided to officers within 48 hours upon request.

One person died in the clashes Thursday, and BJP MLA Janardhana Reddy is among those booked in connection with the clashes.

The Chief Minister Siddaramaiah ordered an inquiry into the incident. Security was beefed up in Ballari, even as the situation remained peaceful Friday, a day after clashes allegedly broke out between supporters of BJP MLA Janardhana Reddy and Congress MLA Bharath Reddy over the installation of banners, police said.

BJP MLA Janardhana Reddy and former minister Sriramulu, and others were booked in connection with the clashes, police said.

Superintendent of Police (In-charge) Ranjit Kumar Bandaru said there was a ruckus in front of Janardhan Reddy's residence in the Hambavanhavi area Thursday in connection with the installation of a flex regarding the unveiling of the Valmiki statue between the supporters of Janardhan Reddy, Sriramulu and the supporters of local MLA Bharath Reddy and his supporter Satish Reddy.

"There was stone pelting and an accidental firing leading to the death of a person. All of this led to a frantic situation. Police subsequently brought the situation under control by dispersing the people gathered," he told reporters here.

Stating that the situation is currently peaceful, the officer said, "We have got extra forces, ten Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) and 12 District Armed Reserve (DAR) parties. Officials and forces have been called from Chitradurga, Koppal and Vijayanagara districts, and bandobast has been made."

The post-mortem of the deceased Rajashekhar Reddy has been conducted, and necessary bandobast has been made for his last rites, he said.

## Pan masala makers must register under cess law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Pan masala manufacturers need to apply for registration under the health and national security cess law immediately after it comes into effect from February 1, the finance ministry said Friday.

For manufacturers who have machines installed in more than one factory, separate registration shall be required for each factory, and they have to apply on the Automation of Central Excise and Service Tax (ACES) portal, according to an explanation under the FAQ (frequently-asked questions) issued by the finance ministry.

Such businesses will have to

file the declaration on the ACES portal within seven days of the grant of registration. This declaration must specify the parameters of your machines (maximum rated speed, weight of specified goods, etc) relevant for the computation of the cess.

Tax officers will conduct physical verification of the factory and machines within 90 days of the filing of the initial declaration. To a query on when an existing pan masala manufacturer should apply for registration under the Cess act, the FAQ said: "You must apply for registration immediately upon the commencement of the Act and the HSNS Cess Rules, i.e., on 1st February, 2026".

Since the liability to pay

cess begins from that date, businesses must submit the registration application on the portal at the earliest.

"Your registration certificate will be effective from the date you become liable, which for existing manufacturers is

1st February, 2026," the FAQ said.

Once a business applies for registration, the application is deemed to have been approved in case a tax officer fails to take action within seven working days.



Such manufacturers can pay the cess liability after obtaining the temporary registration number upon successful submission of the registration application.

The Act requires that the cess be collected from every taxable person at the beginning of each month, but no later than the 7th day of that month.

Failure to do so would attract a penalty of at least Rs 10,000.

Such manufacturers will have to install a CCTV system covering all packing machines and manual process units. The footage must be preserved for 24 months and provided to officers within 48 hours upon request.

## Student dies after ragging, harassment; four booked

*In his complaint, the deceased student's father alleged that his daughter was beaten by three seniors, Harshita, Aakriti and Komolika, September 18, 2025, while a college professor, Ashok Kumar, indulged in obscene acts with her*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Shimla/Dharamshala (HP), Jan 2:** Three students of a government college in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala have been booked for ragging and voluntarily causing hurt while a professor has been booked for sexual harassment of a 19-year-old woman who died December 26, police said Friday.

Confirming that a case has been registered, Kangra Superintendent of Police (SP) Ashok Ratan said that all the allegations are being thoroughly investigated. Medical records, video evidence and statements of all concerned are being examined, he said.

The case gained momentum after a video of the victim on her deathbed went viral on social media. In the video, the victim accused the professor of indecent acts, mental harassment and intimidation when she protested against his behaviour.

The police said that a complaint was initially received through the Chief Minister's Sankalp Seva Helpline and an investigation team but the student's statement could not be recorded as she was unwell at the time. The police later recorded the statement of the victim's father.

Preliminary investigations by the police pointed out that the deceased student was enrolled in the college in 2024. She allegedly faced ragging by some students and failed her BA first-year examination.

She subsequently stopped attending college after the results

were declared in July 2025. Her name was struck off the college rolls August 21, 2025.

The student is believed to have visited the college again in September seeking admission, where she was informed that she would be admitted to the second year only if she cleared the re-evaluation, failing which she would have to re-enrol in the first year.

Meanwhile, the accused professor has denied all allegations levelled against him. Some teachers have come in support of the professor.

The professor said that the student had studied under him in a previous academic session and was not his student in the current session.

ABVP state secretary Nancy Atal said that the accused should be brought to book to ensure that such incidents do not occur in future.

A delegation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) led by former mayor of Shimla Municipal Corporation, Sanjay Chauhan, Friday submitted a memorandum to the director general of police here demanding an impartial inquiry into the case by a senior police officer. Chauhan said that as the woman belonged to the Dalit community, the case should be probed from relevant aspects.

A social activist, Ravi Kumar Dalit, sat on a dharna at the Ridge here demanding a judicial inquiry into the case.

## Rajnath Singh flags 'white-collar terrorism'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Udaipur, Jan 2:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Friday said that an alarming trend of white-collar terrorism is emerging in the country, wherein highly-educated people are engaging in anti-social and anti-national activities.

Singh pointed at the November 10 car bomb blast near the Red Fort in Delhi, where the perpetrators were found to be doctors.

"Today, an alarming trend of white-collar terrorism is emerging in the country. Highly-educated people are working against society and the country," Singh said at the 104th foundation day event of Bhupal Nobles' University here.

"The perpetrators of the (Delhi) bomb blast were doctors - those who write 'Rx' on prescriptions, yet have RDX in their hands. This highlights the need for knowledge to be accompanied by values and character," the defence minister said.

"The purpose of education is not only professional success but also the development of morality, ethics and human character," he said.

"When I talk about religion, it should not be associated with going to the temple, mosque or church for prayer. Religion is a sense of duty. Education devoid of religion and morality will not be useful to society, and sometimes it can even prove fatal. This is why educated people are sometimes found to be involved in crimes," Singh said.

Terrorists are not necessarily illiterate; they can hold university and college degrees, yet they become terrorists because they lack wisdom, the defence minister said.



Saeed - among others.

Singh added that knowledge leads to competence, which leads to prosperity, and prosperity leads to righteousness, and ultimately, true happiness comes only from righteousness.

"Any education system that cannot fulfil this objective, which does not impart humility, a sense of character and 'dharma' (righteousness) along with knowledge, is incomplete," Singh said.

"There was stone pelting and an accidental firing leading to the death of a person. All of this led to a frantic situation. Police subsequently brought the situation under control by dispersing the people gathered," he told reporters here.

Stating that the situation is currently peaceful, the officer said, "We have got extra forces, ten Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) and 12 District Armed Reserve (DAR) parties. Officials and forces have been called from Chitradurga, Koppal and Vijayanagara districts, and bandobast has been made."

The post-mortem of the deceased Rajashekhar Reddy has been conducted, and necessary bandobast has been made for his last rites, he said.

## MP: 200 parrots die of food poisoning

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Khargone, Jan 2:** At least 200 parrots have died on the banks of the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district due to food poisoning, officials said Friday.

The carcasses were found in the last four days near an aqueduct bridge on the riverbank in the Badwah area, and a post-mortem report has ruled out bird flu as the cause, they said. Some parrots were alive during rescue operations, but the toxicity of the food was so severe that they died shortly

thereafter, District wildlife warden Tony Sharma said.

The deaths triggered panic in the area after a suspected bird flu scare, but veterinary examinations found no trace of the infection. Forest department officials have banned feeding near the aqueduct bridge and deployed staff at the site for strict enforcement. Viscera samples from the birds were sent to Jabalpur for further examination, officials said.

Teams from the veterinary and forest departments, as well as the wildlife wing, have been monitoring the area for the past four days after being alerted by residents. Veterinarian Dr Manisha Chauhan, who conducted the post-mortems, said symptoms of food poisoning were found in the parrots, with no indicators of bird flu.

## OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, POLASARA, GANJAM QUOTATION CALL NOTICE

Letter No. 3557 Date: 30.12.25

No. C-1968: Sealed quotations in conformity with detail quotation schedule are invited from the intending authorized High End Engineering Execution Organisations accredited to ISO 9001-2015/Entrepreneurs registered under Start-up India, Start-up Odisha/MSME with Udyam Status/Agencies having (IT/MTV) and Civil licence and having credential of executing similar projects for execution of the following Welcome gate projects as Polasara NAC area.

SL. No.	Name of the Work	Bid cost including GST in INR	EMD (L.S.) in INR
1	Construction of IT enabled Day Night illuminated LED Acrylic Digital graphics Welcome Gate at Kalambala Road of NAC, Polasara	7080.00	20000.00
2	Conversion of Mechanical structural Gate to IT enabled Day Night illuminated LED Acrylic Digital graphics Welcome Gate at Ranipada road of NAC, Polasara	7080.00	20000.00
3	Conversion of mechanical structural Gate to IT enabled Day Night illuminated LED Acrylic Digital graphics Welcome gate at Ranipada road of NAC, Polasara	7080.00	20000.00

The bidders interested to take part in quotation are requested to visit the site prior to quote their rates. The quotation schedule with detailed design and specification can be obtained from the office of the N.A.C., Polasara during the office hours from Dt.02.01.2026 to 12.01.2026 (excluding Govt. Holidays) on payment of the bid cost in shape of Bank Draft/Banker Cheque from any Nationalized Bank in favour of the Executive Officer, N.A.C., Polasara, payable at Polasara. The bidders are requested to attach EMD of Rs.20,000/- (Twenty thousand only) in shape of FD/TDR/NSC pledged to the Executive Officer, NAC, Polasara and the Xerox copy of PAN Number, GST Clearance/Credentials/EPF, ESIT registration etc. along with the quotation. The quotations will be received at the office of the undersigned on or before 1.00 PM. of 13.01.2026. The quotation will be opened on DL13.01.2026 at 03.30 P.M. in presence of the bidder or their authorized representative. All terms and conditions are printed in the quotation schedule for information of the bidder. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-13214/11/0033/2526 Sd./- Executive Officer, N.A.C. Polasara

## OFFICE OF THE COLLECTOR AND DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, KEONJHAR (Social Welfare Section)

Date 31/12/25

**NOTICE**

No.I-449 : The advertisement published vide this office order No.9147 Dtd. 31.12.2025 inviting applications from eligible experienced organisations / agencies for submission of proposal for "Establishment and Management of Crèches in Keonjhar District under DMF Keonjhar."

The detailed terms and conditions along with the RFP documents can be downloaded from the district website <https://kendujhar.odisha.gov.in/>. The proposal complete in all respects should reach the undersigned by 21/01/2026 by 5.00 P.M., via means of courier / speed post only.

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

Sd./- District Social Welfare Officer, Keonjhar

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

e-mail: [eeplrb@gmail.com](mailto:eeplrb@gmail.com)

CORRIGENDUM NOTICE No.-I

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

No.B-924: The following corrections are hereby made to the Invitation for Bids (IFB) regarding the Bid Identification Number cited above:

1. Estimated Cost: To be read as Rs.47.23 Lakh in place of Rs.42.87 Lakh

2. Availability of Bid Documents: To be read as from Dt.05.01.2026, 10.00 A.M.

3. Last date of receipt of bids: To be read as Dt.15.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M. in place of Dt.15.01.2026.

Note:All other terms and conditions of the original Bid Identification No. SE-R&B-PLB-10-2025-26 remain unchanged. Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).

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

## GOVERNMENT OF Odisha "e" Tender Notice Bid Identification No. 20 RWS&S/KJR 2025-26

No.3420 Dt.30.12.2025

e-mail : [erwss22keonjhar@gmail.com](mailto:erwss22keonjhar@gmail.com)

1. No. of the work

2. Estimated Cost

3. Period of completion

4. Date and Time of availability of Bid document in the portal

</

# international



Beginning today, we will govern expansively and audaciously. We may not always succeed, but never will we be accused of lacking the courage to try

ZOHRAH MAMDANI |  
MAYOR, NYC

## XI TO HOST LEE

China's President Xi Jinping will host South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on a state visit starting Sunday, as Beijing looks to strengthen ties with Seoul amidst rising tensions with Japan over Taiwan



of the day quote



I wanted to hold a get-together among SAARC leaders, even if only for five minutes

ALI HAIDER AHMED |

MINISTER, MALDIVES



Trump should know that intervention by the US in the domestic problem corresponds to chaos in the entire region and the destruction of the US interests

ALI LARJANI | SECRETARY OF THE SUPREME NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, IRAN



The Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations remains applicable to UNRWA, its property and assets, and to its officials and other personnel. Property used by UNRWA is inviolable

STEPHANE DUJARRIC | SPOKESMAN FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

## SHORT TAKES

### Magnitude 6.3 quake hits southern Mexico

**Guerrero:** A magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck the southern Mexican state of Guerrero Friday, the German Research Center for Geosciences (GFZ) said. The quake was at a depth of 10 km (6.21 miles), GFZ said. There was no serious damage in Guerrero reported immediately, Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum said on X, after speaking with the state's governor. She added that no damage had been reported in the capital, Mexico City. Sheinbaum was speaking at her morning news conference when earthquake alarms sounded, with the president calmly evacuating alongside journalists.

### SL navy arrests 11 Indian fishermen

**Colombo:** Lanka Navy said it has arrested 11 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly fishing in the island nation's waters. Sri Lanka Navy spokesperson Commander Buddhika Sampath told PTI that the fishermen were arrested late Thursday night north of Kankesanthurai in the northern province. After arrest, they were being brought to the Myladi fisheries inspectorate for further action, the navy said. The fishermen issue is a contentious matter in India-Sri Lanka ties. Most of these incidents happen in the Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka's northern tip, which is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. Sri Lanka Navy personnel sometimes even fire at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seize their boats for illegally entering Sri Lanka's territorial waters.

### Zelenskiy appoints new chief of staff

**Kyiv:** President Volodymyr Zelenskiy named Ukraine's defence spy chief as his top adviser Friday, placing a popular military leader at the heart of decision-making as Kyiv seeks to strengthen its defences against Russia and its hand in US-backed peace talks. The appointment of Kyrylo Budanov, a decorated war veteran widely respected by Ukrainians, as presidential chief of staff marks a significant shift for a position traditionally occupied by a civilian mainly focused on domestic politics. Budanov, 39, replaces longtime Zelenskiy confidante Andriy Yermak, a widely criticised power broker who resigned in November amid a corruption scandal that fuelled public anger as Ukraine fights for survival against Russia.

## YEMEN CONFLICT

# Saudi jets strike UAE-backed forces

REUTERS

**Dubai, Jan 2:** Yemen's southern separatist movement said Friday it aimed to hold a referendum on independence from the north in two years, following its seizure of swathes of the country last month in a move that triggered a major feud between Gulf powers.

Southern Transitional Council leader Aidarous al-Zubaidi called on the international community to sponsor talks between concerned parties in the south and north on a path and mechanisms that "guarantee rights of the people of the south".

The announcement comes as the Saudi-backed internationally recognised government moved to recapture the crucial region of Hadramout from the STC, which is backed by the United Arab Emirates.

#### RIFT BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND UAE

The STC's sudden seizure of swathes of southern and eastern Yemen from the government in early December

STC says starting two-year process towards referendum

Saudi-backed forces took back parts of Hadramout on Friday

Crisis has triggered Gulf feud



revealed a bitter rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE and caused a major fracture in the coalition fighting the Iran-aligned Houthi movement, which holds Yemen's capital Sanaa and the heavily populated northwest.

Earlier Friday, the Hadramout governor under the internationally recognised government said he had launched a "peaceful" operation to restore control over the area.

Saudi airstrikes hit an air-

port in Hadramout, according to a spokesperson for the province's tribes, and the governor said his forces had taken control of the most important military base in the area.

Oil-producing Hadramout borders Saudi Arabia and many prominent Saudis trace their origins to the province, lending it cultural and historical significance for the kingdom. Its capture by the STC last month was regarded by the Saudis as a threat.

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# business

of the day quote

Social media should be responsible for the content they publish. Intervention is required



ASHWINI VAISHNAV | UNION MINISTER

A high degree of localisation has enabled us to achieve such scale while maintaining world-class quality, highlighting the strength and global competitiveness of India's automotive manufacturing ecosystem



HISASHI TAKEUCHI | MD AND CEO, MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA

We look forward to 2026 with confidence. We will be collaborative, agile, and bold... working as one team to live our purpose and achieve our potential. Think big. Do less. Execute flawlessly. And, most importantly, enjoy the journey



ANISH SHAH | CEO AND MD, MAHINDRA GROUP

## SHORT TAKES

### CIL opens auctions to neighbour nations

**New Delhi:** State-owned CIL Friday said buyers from neighbouring nations Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal can now join its online coal auctions directly, skipping the Indian middlemen. The move will help in utilising the surplus coal resources better and promote transparency. Earlier, access to Coal India Ltd's (CIL) dry fuel by consumers across the borders was only through domestic coal traders who were allowed to buy and sell without any end-use restrictions. "In a first, effective January 1, 2026, CIL has permitted coal consumers located in the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, who wish to import coal from India, to directly participate in the Single Window Mode Agnostic (SWMA) auctions conducted by the company," CIL said. SWMA auction is a unified, simplified e-auction system launched in 2022 to replace multiple existing auction windows (Spot, Special Spot, Forward) into one single platform, making coal procurement easier, transparent, and market-driven for all buyers.

### ₹7,295-cr scheme to ease export credit

**New Delhi:** The government Friday announced a Rs 7,295-crore export support package, comprising a Rs 1,181-crore interest subvention scheme along with a Rs 2,114-crore collateral support, to improve exporters' access to credit. Both measures will be rolled out over a period of six years (2025-31). Additional Secretary in the Commerce Ministry Ajay Bhadoo said that these interventions will address the trade finance issues of exporters. Under the interest subvention scheme, exporters will get a subsidy on pre- and post-shipment export credit. This is the second component of the Rs 25,060-crore export promotion mission (EPM) approved in November 2025.

### UCO Bank sees 13% growth in total biz

**Kolkata:** Public sector lender UCO Bank Friday reported a 13.29 per cent growth in its total business to Rs 5.54 lakh crore for the third quarter of the current fiscal. The bank's total business stood at Rs 4.89 lakh crore in the corresponding period of the previous year. According to a regulatory filing, the Kolkata-headquartered bank's total advances rose by 16.27 per cent to Rs 2.43 lakh crore during the quarter that ended in December, compared to Rs 2.09 lakh crore in the year-ago period.



I repeat -- gig work is one of the largest organised job creation engines in India. And we provide insurance, fair, timely and predictable wages. Gig doesn't need more regulation, it needs less regulation

DEEPINDER GOYAL | FOUNDER, ETERNAL

## BANK CREDIT TO INDUSTRY ZOOMS

Bank credit to industry grew at a faster pace of 9.6 per cent in November 2025 as against 8.3 per cent in the same month of the preceding year, according to Reserve Bank data. On a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, non-food bank credit grew by 11.4 per cent as on the fortnight ended November 28, 2025, compared to 10.6 per cent during the corresponding fortnight of the previous year (November 29, 2024).



# Govt accelerates electronics mfg

Foxconn, Dixon, Samsung among 22 projs cleared for electronics components manufacturing scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Foxconn, Dixon, Tata Electronics and Samsung are among the 22 new proposals approved by the government under the ambitious Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), with a projected investment of Rs 41,863 crore and production worth Rs 2,58,152 crore.

The approvals - third set of clearances under the scheme - are expected to generate 33,791 new jobs, reduce India's import dependence for critical electronic components, and accelerate the build-out of high-value manufacturing capabilities in the country.

Taken together with previous ECMS tranches and ongoing semiconductor initiatives, the latest clearances underline India's firm resolve to emerge as a major hub in global electronics supply chains.

According to sources, a large chunk of investments and employment will come from Apple's new vendors, who are now joining its global supply chain. Some of them will be exporting to Apple's international locations.

Notably, Motherson Electronic Components, Tata Electronics, ATL Battery Technology India, Foxconn (Yuzhan Tech India's), and Hindalco Industries are five vendors from Apple's ecosystem.

The approved projects are spread across eight states, including Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, and reflect the government's focus on geographically balanced industrial growth and expansion of electronics manufacturing across the country, according to the IT Ministry.

At a briefing announcing the new set of investment proposals approved by the government,

## Total approvals under ECMS so far

Tranche	Projects Approved	Investment
1st	7	Rs 5,532 crore
2nd	17	Rs 7,172 crore
3rd	22	Rs 41,863 crore
Total	46	Rs 54,567 crore

The approval of the third tranche under the ECMS sets a powerful new trajectory for India's electronics manufacturing journey

PANKAJ MOHINDROO | CHAIRMAN OF INDIA CELLULAR AND ELECTRONICS ASSOCIATION

ment, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav underlined the Centre's focus on big reforms, enabling policies, and efficient and speedy execution of projects and initiatives.

The results are clearly visible sector after sector, Vaishnav said. The minister asked the industry to prioritise setting up design teams and nudged players to go for Six Sigma to be globally competitive.

In the latest batch, the maximum investments are set to come in the category of enclosures (mobile enclosures are structural housings that protect and support internal electronic components, widely used in smartphones and handheld devices), where three projects will attract Rs 27,166 crore worth of investments.

Nine projects fall in the PCB space (commonly used in con-

sumer electronics, industrial controls, and automotive systems, among others) and would involve an investment of Rs 7,377 crore, while Rs 2,922 crore investment would go into a lithium-ion cell project.

Li-ion cells are rechargeable energy storage components used to power portable consumer electronics, including smartphones, notebooks, tablets, power banks, and audio accessories.

Of 11 products, 5 are bare components, such as PCBs, capacitors, connectors, enclosures, and Li-ion cells; 3 pertain to sub-assemblies, such as camera modules, display modules, and optical transceivers; and 3 are supply chain items like aluminium extrusion, anode material, and laminate.

As per a background note circulated by the ministry on the new tranche of approvals, the nod includes the manufacturing of 11 target segment products that have cross-sectoral applications, such as mobile manufacturing, telecom, consumer electronics, strategic electronics, automotive, and IT hardware.

The MoU was signed by Anima Tripathy, Chief General Manager (HR), OHPC, and Vivek Dwivedi, General Manager (Marketing) I/c, ALIMCO, in the presence of OHPC Directors Sandeep Patnaik (HR) and Amiya Kumar Mohanty (Operation) I/c, along with senior officials from both organisations.

The initiative underscores OHPC's commitment to social responsibility and inclusive development, reinforcing its focus on empowering vulnerable sections of society to lead lives of dignity and independence.

## OHPC signs MoU with ALIMCO to empower Divyangjans, sr citizens

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Odisha Hydro Power Corporation Ltd. (OHPC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), Bhubaneswar, to distribute aids and assistive devices to around 400 Divyangjans and senior citizens across Odisha under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

Fully funded by OHPC, the programme aims to enhance mobility, independence, and quality of life for persons with disabilities and eligible elderly citizens. As per the MoU, ALIMCO will supply and distribute a wide range of modern, need-based assistive devices. These include tricycles, motorised tricycles, wheelchairs (including joystick-operated models), rollators, walkers, CP chairs, hearing aids, crutches, Braille and smart canes, smartphones for the visually impaired, and ADL kits for leprosy patients.

Senior citizens will receive support equipment such as walking sticks, elbow and axilla crutches, walkers, wheelchairs with and without commode, commode chairs and stools, silicon foam cushions, knee braces, spinal and cervical supports, lumbar-sacral belts, rollators with brakes, walking sticks with seats, foot care kits, and other essential aids to ensure comfort and safety.

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# Nifty hits record intra-day peak

Rising for the third-straight session, the 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 182 points, or 0.70%, to 26,328.55.

During the day, it surged 193.45 points, or 0.73%, to reach an all-time peak of 26,340



helped Indian equities to touch a fresh all-time high. Investor sentiment remains broadly constructive as attention turns to Q3 earnings, which are expected to guide near-term market direction," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Unabated capital infusion by domestic institutional investors amid a sharp rally in Asian peers also supported the domestic stock market, traders said.

Charting out a firm trend, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 573.41 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at 85,762.01.

During the day, it jumped 623.67 points, or 0.73 per cent, to 85,812.27.

A total of 2,772 stocks advanced, while 1,449 declined and 150 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Rising for the third-straight session, the 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 182 points, or 0.70 per cent, to 26,328.55.

During the day, it surged 193.45 points, or 0.73 per cent, to reach an all-time peak of 26,340.

"After the New Year holiday, the global markets initiated 2026 on a positive note, while strong domestic automobile sales

ITC's stock ended 3.79 per cent lower at Rs 350.15 on the BSE. During the day, the stock tumbled 5.11 per cent to Rs 345.35 -- its 52-week low. ITC emerged as the biggest laggard among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms.

In contrast, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan Company, Axis Bank and Bharti Airtel were the laggards.

Shares of cigarette and tobacco product makers ITC, Godfrey Phillips and VST Industries ended lower Friday, extending their previous day's decline, after the government imposed an additional excise duty on such products effective February 1.

ITC's stock ended 3.79 per cent lower at Rs 350.15 on the BSE. During the day, the stock tumbled 5.11 per cent to Rs 345.35 -- its 52-week low. ITC emerged as the biggest laggard among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms.

On the weekly front, BSE benchmark jumped 720.56 points or 0.84%, and Nifty climbed 286.25 points or 1.09%

## LIC launches spl campaign to revive lapsed policies

AGENCIES

if eligible for revival, LIC said in a statement.

There is a 100 per cent waiver of late fee for micro insurance policies to facilitate affordable restoration of risk cover, it said. Policies which are in a lapsed condition during the premium-paying term and not completed policy term are eligible to be revived in this campaign, it said. There are no concessions on medical/health requirements, it said.

The campaign is launched for the benefit of policyholders who were not able to pay premiums on time due to any unfavourable circumstances, it said.

Nine projects fall in the PCB space (commonly used in con-

## Odisha to host Mining and Infrastructure International Expo

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Reinforcing its position as the 'Mineral Hub of India', Odisha will host the 4th Edition of the Odisha Mining and Infrastructure International Expo 2026 from January 8 to 11 at Baramunda Ground, Bhubaneswar.

The four-day international B2B trade show aims to position Odisha as India's mining powerhouse and a global hub for innovation, sustainable mining and advanced infrastructure solutions.

The expo seeks to create a robust ecosystem for environmentally responsible mining, cutting-edge technologies and global policy dialogue. Rec-

ognised as India's largest mining exhibition, the event will showcase advanced machinery, equipment and services while connecting entrepreneurs, start-ups and young professionals from Odisha with global industry leaders.

Announcing the event, Swami Prem Anveshi, Chair-

man, Futurex Trade Fair and Events Pvt Ltd, said, "Over the past three years, the expo has emerged as a catalyst for the future of mining in India and beyond. The 2026 edition will feature over 250 exhibitors from 10+ countries, spread across 30,000 sq. mtrs, with 20,000+ visitors and 150 live demonstrations," he added.

The expo will be inaugurated by Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and conclude with the valedictory ceremony graced by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi as chief guest.

## Union Bank celebrates 'Ethics & Compliances Week'

**Bhubaneswar:** Union Bank of India has conducted walkathon for observing 'Ethics & Compliances Week' in Bhubaneswar. The walkathon started from Rupali Square, proceeded to Ram Mandir Square, and returned to the starting point.

It was attended by Hare Krishna Das, Zonal Head, Bhubaneswar, D Venkateswarlu, Deputy Zonal Head, Bhubaneswar, Niranjan Barik, Regional Head, Bhubaneswar Region, Vinay Sharma, Deputy Regional Head, Bhubaneswar Region, Jeetendra Kumar Samal, Deputy Regional Head, Bhubaneswar Region, along with staff members from various offices and branches in and around Bhubaneswar. On this occasion, the officials of the bank encouraged for following Ethics, Sincerity, good practices in every sphere of life.



The deal comes at a time when fast-food operators in India are grappling with slowing same-store sales and pressure on margins, as consumers cut back on eating out and ordering food amid rising living costs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Sapphire Foods India and Devyani International Ltd (DIL), the two leading operators of the KFC and Pizza Hut brands, are set to merge, creating a fast-food giant with over 3,000 stores.

## Set to retire, Pak-born Aussie Khawaja criticises racial stereotypes

The first Muslim to play for Australia has scored 6,206 runs at an average of 43.49 in his 87 tests with 16 centuries and 28 half-centuries

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Sydney, Jan 2:** Veteran Australia batter Usman Khawaja has announced he will retire from international cricket after the fifth Ashes test beginning Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

He didn't go quietly. The Pakistan-born Khawaja, who was the first Muslim to play for Australia, used his retirement announcement Friday to criticize the "racial" stereotyping he experienced during his career. It will be the 39-year-old

## INDIAN WOMEN'S LEAGUE

## East Bengal go top of table after drubbing Nita FA 5-0



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kalyani, Jan 2:** Defending champions East Bengal FC rose to the pole position in the Indian Women's League 2025-26 with a 5-0 win over Nita Football Academy at the Kalyani Stadium in Kalyani, West Bengal, Friday.

What was, at least on paper, a top-of-the-table clash turned out to be anything but a tussle of equals on the pitch. East Bengal's familiar scorers Sulanjana Raul (6) and Soumya Gugulot (42) netted in the first half before the Ugandan duo of Resty Nanziri (50) and Fazila Ikwput (63) put the game to bed early in the second half. Substitute Priyangka Devi Naorem capped off the scoring with a fifth goal in the 88th minute.

With four wins in four, East Bengal moved to the summit of the points table. Sethu FC, who won by an equally handsome margin of 5-0 against Sesa Friday, are in second place with 10 points from five games. Nita FA also have 10 points and have slipped to the third spot, trailing Sethu on goal difference.

Coming off the back of their record 9-0 win over Sesa, East Bengal began the new year just how they ended the previous one. Sulanjana Raul opened the scoring in only the sixth minute with a stupendous finish. Receiving a cut-back from the by-line by Resty Nanziri, the 18-year-old set herself up with a perfect first touch before curling it into the far corner with the inside of her right boot.

Fazila, aiming to win her third consecutive IWL golden boot, almost scored another in the 78th minute when she rattled the crossbar from inside the box.

Khawaja's 88th and final test — played at the ground where he began his first-class career. Khawaja scored his first Ashes century at the SCG with 171 against England in 2018.

It was also at that the SCG where he revived his career at age 35, scoring two centuries against England. That prompted one of the great late-career revivals, as Khawaja hit seven centuries in his next two years back in the side. But Khawaja's position had come under scrutiny and criticism this season after being unable to open in the first Ashes test in Perth due to back spasms and then missing the Brisbane test with the injury.

He was then initially left out in Adelaide until Steve Smith's vertigo allowed Khawaja to return, before an 82 in the first innings there ensured he would stay in the side for the fourth test



Once the racial stereotypes came in, of me being lazy, it was things I've dealt with my whole life. Pakistani, West Indian, colored players...we're selfish, we only care about ourselves, we don't care about the team, we don't train hard enough

USMAN KHAWAJA

in Melbourne. Australia, with a 3-1 lead going into the fifth test, has retained the Ashes.

Khawaja said he felt he was treated "a little bit different, even to now," because of his Pakistan and Muslim background.

"Different in the way I've been treated, different in how things have happened," he said at a media conference in Sydney. "I had back spasms, it was something I couldn't control. The way the

media and the past players came out and attacked me... I copped it for about five days straight. Everyone was piling in.

Khawaja was criticized in the days leading up to the Perth match for golfing twice and not taking part in an optional training session. Some commentators suggested the golf might have been responsible for his back issues. "I can give you countless number of guys who have played

golf the day before a match and have been injured, but you guys haven't said a thing," Khawaja told the assembled media. Khawaja said he knew the end of his career was imminent. "I guess moving into this series, I had an inkling this would be the last series," he said. "I'm glad I can go out on my own terms."

"Usman has made a huge contribution to Australian cricket both through his outstanding achievements as one of our most stylish and resilient batters... and off field, particularly through the Usman Khawaja Foundation," Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg said in a statement. Khawaja said his No 1 emotion on announcing his retirement was "contentment." "I'm very lucky to have played so many games for Australia the way I have," Khawaja said.

## India may tour Bangladesh for three-match ODI, T20I series



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Indian team will reach Bangladesh August 28 for their limited-overs affair. In July last year, India's tour of Bangladesh was called off indefinitely and the six-match white-ball tour was deferred for more than one year.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) have mutually agreed to defer the white-ball series, three ODIs and three Twenty20 Internationals, between Bangladesh and India in August 2025 to September 2026," the BCCI had informed in a statement last July.

National Shooting C'ship  
Ameerah, Zuhair claim titles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, Jan 2:** Haryana's Ameerah Arshad delivered a composed performance under pressure to clinch the 10m Air Rifle women's title at the 68th National Shooting Championship (Rifle) here Friday.

She edged past Railways' Rajashree Anilkumar Sancheti by a razor-thin margin of 0.1 point.

In other events, Zuhair Khan of Uttar Pradesh won the men's trap gold with 43 hits.

Ameerah finished the women's final with a score of 251.9, narrowly ahead of Sancheti, who settled for silver on 251.8, while Chhattisgarh's Pranju Shree Somani secured the bronze medal with 230.5.

At the shotgun range in New Delhi, junior men's trap bronze-medallist, Zuhair finished second on 120 (+3), ahead of Ahvar Rizvi, who also shot 120 but finished behind on shoot-off (+2).

In the men's trap team event, Uttar Pradesh clinched the gold medal with an aggregate of 345 through the combined efforts of Ahvar Rizvi, Mohd Asad Sultan (118), and Rayyan Rizvi (107).

Punjab secured silver, while Uttarakhand took the bronze medal. In the 10m air rifle junior women final, Karnataka's Tilottama Sen carried her strong qualification form into the final to claim gold with an impressive 253.1. Maharashtra's Samiksha Subhash Patil finished second to take silver with 250.0, while Haryana's Ramita added a bronze medal to her tally with a score of 230.0.

Tilottama completed a memorable day by clinching her second gold in the youth women's 10m air rifle final, finishing on 251.6.

## HOCKEY INDIA LEAGUE

## Hunt for glory begins

Home favourites Tamil Nadu Dragons face Hyderabad Toofans in HIL opener

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 2:** Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons will bank on the home support when they cross swords with Hyderabad Toofans in the opening match of the men's Hockey India League (HIL) here Saturday.

The second edition of the revived Hockey India League is scheduled to be held in multi-cities, starting with Chennai before it moves to Ranchi and ends in Bhubaneswar with the final scheduled for January 26.

The Toofans had finished runners-up in the last edition, having lost narrowly to the title-winner Shrachi Bengal Tigers. While Toofans will be looking to change their fortunes this edition, the Tamil Nadu Dragons will be vying to start on a high note after missing out on the 3rd place finish last season.

This season will have a single round-robin stage, with the top four teams advancing to the knockout rounds, unlike the previous edition, which split the teams into two groups of four teams for the first phase.

In the playoffs, the top 2 teams will compete against each other in Qualifier 1, with the winner advancing to the final and the loser going into Qualifier 2.

The second team of Qualifier 2 will be decided by the winner of Eliminator 1, which will be against the team ranked 3rd and 4th on the league table.

Among the top Indian players to watch out for this season are India captain Harmanpreet Singh (JSW Soorma Hockey Club), Hardik Singh (HIL GC), Manpreet Singh (Ranchi Royals) and Rupinder Pal Singh, who returns to competitive hockey with SG Pipers.

Junior World Cup bronze medallists will also be in action, with India captain Rohit and Dilraj Singh rep-



resenting SG Pipers, Amir Ali and Manmeet turning out for Ranchi Royals, Sunil PR playing for Vedanta Kalinga and Prince Deep

Singh for Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons.

Among the foreign stars, Tom Boon will feature for Ranchi Royals, Christopher Ruhr

The second edition of the revived Hockey India League is scheduled to be held in multi-cities, starting with Chennai before it moves to Ranchi and ends in Bhubaneswar with the final scheduled for Jan 26

for Shrachi Bengal Tigers, Vincent Vanasch and Victor Wegnez for Soorma Hockey Club, Arthur Van Doren and Alexander Hendrickx for Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, and Sam Ward for HIL GC.

## Vedanta Kalinga Lancers meet Odisha Deputy CM

**Bhubaneswar:** Vedanta Kalinga Lancers met and interacted with Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Deputy Chief Minister of Odisha, during a pre-season meet and greet in Bhubaneswar Friday, as the team prepares for the upcoming season of the Hockey India League, set to get underway in Chennai. The evening was marked by a strong sense of Odisha pride, bringing together players, coaching staff and senior leadership ahead of the new campaign. As part of the event, players were handed over their official jerseys for the season, showcasing readiness and renewed ambition as the Vedanta Kalinga Lancers look ahead to the Hockey India League. Senior Vedanta leadership present at the event included C Chandru, CEO, Vedanta Jarsuguda, and S Suresh, CFO, Aluminium Mines, reinforcing Vedanta's commitment to contributing to Odisha's rich hockey legacy. Sharing excitement for the new season, Head Coach Jay Stacy said, "It has been a great experience being in Bhubaneswar. The warmth of the people and their passion for hockey is evident everywhere. It was an honour to meet Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and to see the support the state continues to extend to the sport. Representing Vedanta Kalinga Lancers in a state that has contributed so much to hockey is something we value deeply. We have had some very good training sessions at the Kalinga Stadium, and the group is excited for the new season. Our focus is on giving our absolute best, returning to Bhubaneswar in a strong position and, hopefully, playing the final in front of our home crowd." The team was undergoing an intense pre-season camp at the Kalinga Stadium, with the entire squad training under the supervision of Head Coach Jay Stacy, as they prepared for their first match January 4 in Chennai.



The 45-year-old is set to become the oldest woman to compete in an Australian Open main draw 5 years after her last appearance as she receives wild card

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Melbourne, Jan 2: Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams received a wild card entry into the main draw at the 2026 Australian Open.

It will be her first appearance at Melbourne Park since 2021 and the first time she will have competed outside the United States since 2023.

Of her seven Grand Slam singles titles, none have come in Melbourne. Venus reached the final twice, in 2003 and 2017, and both times her sister and 23-time Grand Slam champion, Serena Williams, emerged victorious.

In addition to her two AO finals, Williams reached the semifinals in 2001 and another

six quarterfinals, contributing to her tournament win-loss record of 54-21.

The 45-year-old is set to become the oldest woman to compete in an AO main draw, surpassing the record previously held by Japan's Kimiko Date, who was 44 when she lost in the first round of the Australian Open 2015.

Following a 16-month layoff, Venus returned to tennis last July and competed in three tournaments in 2025. She defeated compatriot Peyton Stearns 6-3, 6-4 in the first round at the Mubadala Citi DC Open, before falling to Magdalena Frech.

In August, Williams fell to Spain's Jessica Bouzas-Maneiro 4-6, 4-6 in the first round of

Cincinnati and took 11th seed Karolina Muchova to three sets in the first round of the US Open. In doubles, playing alongside Leylah Fernandez, Williams advanced to the quarterfinals, where they fell to eventual finalists Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend.

Venus will prepare for the Australian Open 2026 at the Hobart International, where she also received a wildcard and will join fellow major champions Barbora Krejcirova and Emma Raducanu. The Australian Open 2026 main draw begins on January 18.

It's great to be back. After 4.5 years, I return with fresh energy and a clear vision to support

the team's growth and help the players achieve their full potential on the world stage," Marijne stated in a press release issued by Hockey India.

## Marijne returns as chief coach of embattled women's hockey team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Dutchman Sjoerd Marijne was Friday re-appointed as the chief coach of India's women's hockey team, five years after guiding the side to a historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics following which it has been battling a difficult transition phase.

Marijne would be replacing Harendra Singh, who had to resign in December last year due to the team's underwhelming results and allegations of a "high-handed coaching approach".

The 51-year-old Marijne, who was associated with the team from 2017 to 2021, will be supported by Matias Vila as analytical coach. Also returning to the Indian hockey set-up is South African Wayne Lombard, who will once again serve as scientific advisor and head of athletic performance.

"It's great to be back. After 4.5 years, I return with fresh energy and a clear vision to support

the team's growth and help the players achieve their full potential on the world stage," Marijne stated in a press release issued by Hockey India.

Marijne, who had immense goodwill within the team and was widely credited for building a cohesive unit that revelled in each other's success, quit immediately after the Tokyo Games, citing family reasons. During his tenure, India also broke into the top 10 of world rankings.

Vila, a former Argentina mid-fielder, made his international debut in 1997 and represented his country at the Olympic Games in 2000 and 2004. He has been involved in coaching for over two decades.

**Transition woes** After the Tokyo high, the team was hit by a challenging transition period when key players like injury-ravaged captain Rani Rampal, Vandana Kataria and Deep Grace Ekka, retired from the game.

The women's team eventually failed to qualify for the 2024 Paris



Olympics but finished on the podium in both the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the 2023 Asian Games, clinching bronze medals.

The team won a silver medal at last year's Asia Cup but it was not enough to ensure direct qualification for the World Cup this August in Belgium and the Netherlands. The side was also relegated to the Nations Cup after managing just two wins from its 16 games in the elite FIH Pro League last year.

Marijne's first big challenge as chief coach will be the World Cup Qualifiers in Hyderabad, Telangana from March 8 to 14. He will arrive in India January 14, while the National Coaching Camp begins on January 19 in SAI, Bangalore.



I'm excited to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing during the Australian summer. I've had so many incredible memories there, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to return to a place that has meant so much to my career

VENUS WILLIAMS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

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