



## Unique resolution

Actor Hansika Motwani says, in 2026, she would stop being ready ahead of time for certain occasions

LEISURE | P2



## Hindu bizman dies

A Hindu businessman, who was brutally attacked, hacked and set on fire three days ago, died Saturday in Bangladesh

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## BYD beats Tesla

Tesla ceded its crown as the world's top electric vehicle maker to China's BYD, after annual sales fell for a 2nd year

BUSINESS | P11



## Mustafizur row

BCCI asks KKR to release Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman from its squad ahead of the IPL's 2026 edition

SPORTS | P12

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BHUBANESWAR | SUNDAY | JANUARY 4, 2026

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# US CAPTURES MADURO

*Venezuelan President and his wife aboard US warship Iwo Jima and headed to New York after US strikes*

*The unprecedented air-strikes launched by the US across Venezuela, followed by President Donald Trump's announcement that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, had been captured and flown out of the country, marked a sharp escalation in Washington's months-long pressure campaign against Caracas. Since September, 2025 the US has expanded its military presence off Venezuela's coast, struck alleged drug-trafficking boats, seized oil tankers, and designated Venezuelan gangs as terrorist organisations, actions that have reportedly killed more than 110 people. The Trump administration has accused Maduro of narco-trafficking, illegal migration, and regional destabilisation, even placing a \$50 million bounty on him. Venezuelan officials, however, claim the US aims to seize control of the country's vast oil reserves. The future of Venezuela's ruling regime now remains highly uncertain*



AGENCIES

## US to run Venezuela for now: Trump

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump said Saturday that US is "going to run Venezuela until safe transition of power can take place. Trump said the US planned to run Venezuela until a transition of power can take place. He claimed the American presence was already in place, though there were no immediate signs that the US was running the country. "We're going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition," Trump said at a Mar-a-Lago news conference where he boasted that this "extremely successful operation should serve as warning to anyone who would threaten American sovereignty or endanger American lives." Venezuelan state TV broadcast live images of small groups of Maduro supporters taking to the streets in Caracas in protest.

Trump consulted Congress beforehand — was not immediately clear. The stunning, lightning-fast American military action, which plucked a

nation's sitting leader from office, echoed the US invasion of Panama that led to the surrender and seizure of its leader, Manuel Antonio

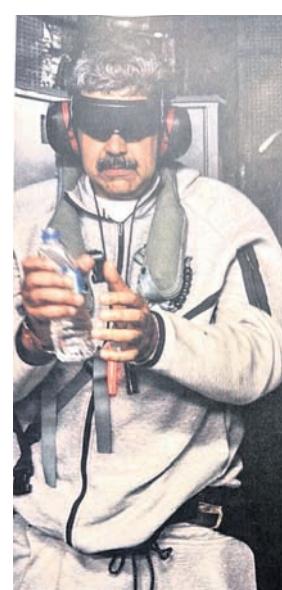


Image of Nicolas Maduro posted by Donald Trump on Truth Social

in American courts."

Maduro was indicted in 2020 on "narco-terrorism" conspiracy charges, but it was not previously known that his wife had been.

Early Saturday, multiple explosions rang out, and low-flying aircraft swept through the Venezuelan capital. Maduro's government accused the US of attacking civilian and military installations, calling it an "imperialist attack" and urging citizens to take to the streets.

Maduro, Trump said, "has been, along with his wife, captured and flown out of the Country. This operation was done in conjunction with US Law Enforcement."

The attack itself lasted less than 30 minutes, and the explosions — at least seven blasts — sent people rushing into the streets, while others took to social media to report what they'd seen and heard. It was not known if there were any deaths or injuries on either side or if more actions lay ahead, though Trump said in his post that the strikes were carried out "successfully."

MORE P10

Fill 151 more vacant posts: CM to OPSC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



vice and Odisha Cooperative Service have 10, eight, six and four vacancies respectively.

"However, keeping in view the resentment among job aspirants, the chief minister intervened and reviewed all these posts and directed to fill the vacant posts," an official release issued by the CMO said.

The OPSC had issued a notification for the Odisha Civil Services Examination 2025. These 314 posts comprised vacancies in seven services, of which 104 posts were reserved for women. The only Group A service, Odisha Police Service (OPS), has 12 vacancies.

Group B services like the Odisha Taxation and Accounts Service and Odisha Labour Service have vacancies of 176 and 98 posts respectively, while Odisha Skill Development and Employment Service, Odisha Tourism Service, Odisha Excise Service, Odisha Excise Service (OES), has 12 vacancies.

The CMO said that the chief minister's recommendation will help many youth aspiring for these posts. Majhi maintained that the state government is giving top priority to the employment sector, and about 40,000 government posts have been filled in the last 18 months.

## Woman BDO attacked by BJP leader at office

**Bhubaneswar:** A woman OAS officer was allegedly attacked by a local BJP leader at her office chamber in Rajnagar block headquarters in Kendrapara district, triggering protests. While the entire incident has been captured in CCTV installed in the office chamber, the day-to-day work at the block office came to a standstill as the staff resorted to ceasing work to register a protest against the attack on the woman officer. Vehicular traffic in the town was disrupted as BJD workers blocked the entry road to the town.

P5

## 4 killed in stone quarry explosion

POST NEWS NETWORK



being used, triggering the explosion. Authorities are examining whether safety norms were violated.

Videos and claims related to the incident have circulated widely on social media, adding to speculation. Officials said a clearer picture would emerge after daylight inspection and a detailed investigation.

Dhenkanal SP Abhinav Sonkar said Motanga police were sent to the site after receiving information. He said the late hour has created difficulties in the search operation and details of the incident remain unclear so far.

## 1 killed, 2 injured as bus hits auto in Bhubaneswar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** One person was killed and two others injured after a state-run bus rammed into an auto-rickshaw at the busy Rupali Chhak in Bhubaneswar Saturday afternoon, police said.

The auto-rickshaw was waiting at the traffic stop when the city hit it from rear, they said. The driver of the auto-rickshaw died in the accident, while two passengers in it were injured, they added.

"One of the passengers is undergoing treatment at the Capital Hospital, and another injured was discharged after treatment," an officer said. The bus driver, who fled the spot after the accident, was later arrested and booked for culpable homicide, he said.

"He could not clearly explain why the accident happened," the officer said.

The damaged vehicles were removed from the road and traffic flow restored, police said.



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## How did people invest in ancient Greece

AGENCIES

**Perth, Jan 3:** In Antiquity, there were no stock exchanges or complex financial products, but a true culture of investment already existed. Whether it was land, goods, or works of art, the Greeks and Romans, like today, sought to secure and grow their wealth despite economic and political risks.

"All I want is an income of 20,000 sestertes from safe investments," proclaims a character in a poem by Juvenal (1st-2nd century AD), the Roman poet. Today, 20,000 sestertes would be equivalent to approximately €170,000 in investment interest. Anyone would be very happy to have such a passive annual income.

As the Roman writer Petronius (1st century AD) once wrote, "He who has money



Roman gold ingot, dating to 375 AD, in Bank of England Museum

dwelling, where talents of chased silver are deeply buried," alongside "heaps of worked and unworked gold."

Talent was the largest unit of monetary measurement in ancient Greece and Rome, and was equivalent to approximately 25 kg of silver.

Besides metals, agricultural products were also highly valued, particularly cereals, olive oil, and wine. To profit from agricultural goods, land was purchased and these products were traded on the market.

They also invested in and traded precious goods, such as works of art. When the Romans sacked the city of Corinth in 146 BC, they stole its famous collection of works of art, and then later sold these masterpieces at auction for considerable sums in order to provide profits for the Roman state.

sails with a favorable wind and governs his fortune as he sees fit." So, in practical terms, how did the Ancients invest their money?

In ancient Greece and Rome, there was no stock market for buying and trading shares of a company. If one wanted to invest their cash, one of the most common options was to acquire

## leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

## ARIES

Ganesha says you are going to have the time of your life; that is if you make the right plans. At work, there will be the usual ups and downs. But plan the evening well and you may surprise yourself.

## TAURUS

It is quite possible that today, you will remain decisive and determined on new joint ventures, predicts Ganesha. The results may fall below your expectations in the afternoon. Fight off stress with a candlelight dinner with your sweetheart, says Ganesha.

## GEMINI

It is quite probable that your sweetheart will take most of your time either in person or in thoughts, predicts Ganesha. A casual conversation with someone special in the afternoon may lead to exhilarating moments later in the day. You may fill your wardrobe with new clothes.

## CANCER

Today, you will feel blessed. And blessed you are, indeed. You will have the proverbial Midas touch, albeit with a slight difference: you will not touch the people you love and turn them to gold. You will just touch their heart and make them happier.

## LEO

There are good days, bad days, and then there are days like today, when Ganesha foresees a mixed bag of fortunes for you. Make your family the centre of your world, and show them the love and affection that they deserve. Early in the day, you may make an attempt to sever ties with your spouse or life partner. Proceed cautiously and deal with this in an open manner. Just make sure that the tension does not escalate within the family.

## VIRGO

Handicrafts business will fascinate you today, predicts Ganesha. People will be left wondering what fuels all that dedication and commitment – at work and at home! Ganesha advises you to consummate those bonds of love and roll in the hay with your spouse.

## LIBRA

Ganesha's got a feeling that today is going to be a good day for you, as you go ahead and indulge yourself and the ones around you. Chances are that you may shop till you drop, and spend a sizeable amount buying goodies for your loved ones later in the evening. In matters of business, Ganesha foresees you displaying your maturity, and setting an example for others in the team.

## SCORPIO

Self-improvement is on your mind today. Self-employed people should expect good profits in business. Expenditure may be more at work today. At the end of the day, the cocktail of work and family will be a heady, pleasing mixture, says Ganesha.

## SAGITTARIUS

You act responsible today, and plan a secured future for your kids. For that matter, you go for long-term investments. You will put in extra efforts at work and come out with flying colours. In the evening, you are in a mood to paint the town red. Have a lovely evening!

## CAPRICORN

In total control of yourself, you will have the tendency to dominate those around you. It's a trait that keeps resurging at intervals, making you feel all powerful, says Ganesha. Later in the day, you may even enrol yourself for a personality development course to hone your communication and professional skills. But it won't be sailing smooth all throughout. An unfortunate incident at the end of the day may take you off guard, so be careful of your moves, Ganesha advises.

## AQUARIUS

Time is money, and you need to understand it fast! Scrap your old schedules and plan new ones that work. Ganesha suggests that the good old planner will work wonders in organising your work. Remember the old adage? A stitch in time saves nine. So get going.

## PISCES

Friends are the subject of all your activities today. You will make new acquaintances that will prove to be helpful in times of need. A loved one will make you happy like you've never been before. A candlelight dinner with your sweetheart is probably in the offing, says Ganesha.



## JESSIE'S NEW AMBITIONS

Jessie J wants to work in comedy after a difficult year where she underwent treatment after being diagnosed with breast cancer. The 37-year-old pop star revealed in June she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and after undergoing treatment in 2025, she is ready to move on and enjoy life this year.

## GOULDING TALKS DATING WOMEN

Ellie Goulding hinted she has dated women in between "toxic, fleeting and passionate" relationships with men. The 39-year-old singer – who has son Alfred, four, with ex-husband Caspar Jopling and is currently expecting a child with boyfriend Beau Minniear – revealed she has enjoyed romances with women in the past.



# Hansika's unusual resolution

**Mumbai:** Actress Hansika Motwani has shared a rather unusual New Year resolution, revealing that she plans "to be late" in 2026.

Taking to her Instagram stories, the actress posted a glimpse of herself waiting to begin her Pilates session. She went on to humorously mention that her resolution this year is to stop being ready ahead of time.

"This year and my new year resolution to be late and not be ready before time, if it's for my Pilates class," Hansika wrote as the caption.

An avid user of social media, Hansika shared a video of herself getting eyebrow microblading on her YouTube channel.

A few weeks ago, she shared a "pointless reel," giving a glimpse into her mood while getting ready.

The video captured a candid, light-hearted side of Hansika, as she playfully embraced the moment with *Sanun Nahar Wale Pool* by Noor Jehan playing in the background along with a text overlay that read: "The songs I listen to while I look like this."

Talking about the actress, Hansika began her career as a child actor in Hindi films, and later went on to appear in lead roles in Telugu films, including *Desamuduru*, *Kantri* and *Maska*.

IANS



**Mumbai:** Actress Minissha Lamba, who has worked in films such as *Corporate*, *Bachna Ae Haseeno* and *Bheja Fry 2*, has completed five years of embracing a vegetarian lifestyle, a decision she says has transformed her life in more ways than one.

Minissha took to Instagram, where she shared a picture of herself looking stunning in a black top paired with a monochrome skirt. She reflected on how the change began not as a lifelong resolution, but as a simple one-month commitment driven by her conscience.

Minissha wrote in the caption section: "Today is 5 years, since I turned vegetarian. Can't believe I made it this far. It started out within a month. Which is always a Long Time to give up anything that you like. But the thing is, I wasn't feeling good about eating meat for years leading up to that point."

She shared that for years she struggled with guilt over eating meat despite having vegetarian choices available.

"Constant guilt over eating animals when there were vegetarian options available. I didn't wanna live in this messed up no man's land of eating and feeling guilty. The guilt had to go. And intellectualising my meat consumption wasn't working anymore," she said.

**Ananya sets fresh goals**

**Mumbai:** Actress Ananya Panday has set some goals for the year 2026.

Through her latest social media post, Ananya revealed that in the New Year, she plans to manifest a special fitness goal, doing a chin-up. *The Kesari: Chapter 2* actress took to the Stories section of her Instagram handle and posted a picture of herself trying a chin-up. "2026 manifestation is to get a chin up (Crying face and fingers crossed emoji)," the text on her photograph from the gym read.

Ananya loves to stay on top of her fitness game to maintain that picture-perfect physique and also motivates netizens by providing a peek into her workout sessions time and again.

On another note, Ananya recently graced the new episode of the popular reality show *The Great Indian Kapil Show* with her *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri* co-star Kartik Aaryan.

During the episode, Ananya and Kartik were seen calling out red flags, green flags, and relationship rules of Gen Z.

Ananya further disclosed her dad Chunky Panday's masterplan. She explained that the *Housefull* actor believes that turning up together means earning less, so the smarter move is for each family member to appear individually across *The Great Indian Kapil Show* seasons and keep the money coming.

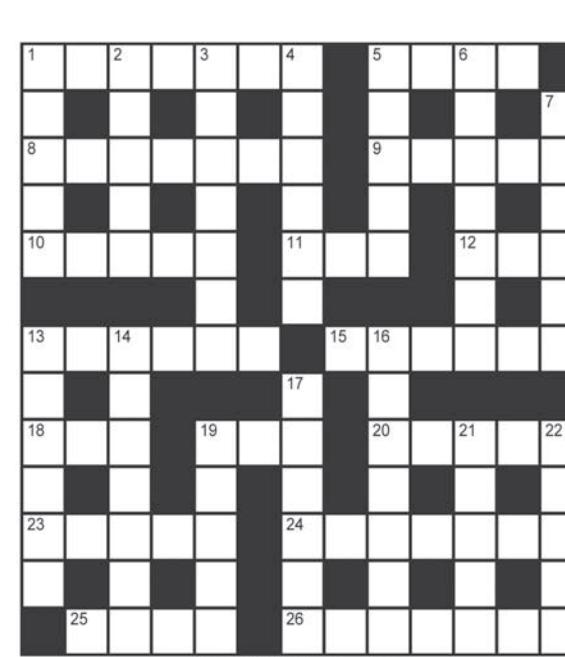
IANS



## Minissha on impact of vegetarianism

## FUN POST

## CROSSWORD



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## Across

- 1 Grape variety
- 23 Wedding helper
- 5 Paint ingredient
- 5 Plumbing problem
- 6 One of the Leeward Islands
- 8 Arrest type
- 25 Clever tactic
- 9 Demolish
- 10 European blackbird
- 11 Bagel topper
- 12 Tonic's partner
- 13 Raspy
- 14 Tough spot
- 15 Slicker, briefly
- 16 Vesuvius
- 17 City in SW England
- 18 Sound quality
- 19 Shindig
- 20 Quick look
- 21 Express
- 22 Gown fabric

## Down

- 1 Chocolate source
- 2 Standards
- 3 Tropical songbirds
- 4 Meek
- 5 Spirits
- 6 Summer activity
- 7 Shindig
- 8 Gown fabric
- 9 Raspy
- 10 Demolish
- 11 Bagel topper
- 12 Tonic's partner
- 13 Raspy
- 14 Tough spot
- 15 Slicker, briefly
- 16 Vesuvius
- 17 City in SW England
- 18 Sound quality
- 19 Shindig
- 20 Quick look
- 21 Express
- 22 Gown fabric

## SUDOKU

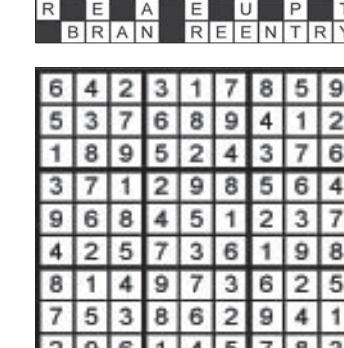
To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



## SOLUTIONS



## CROSSWORD

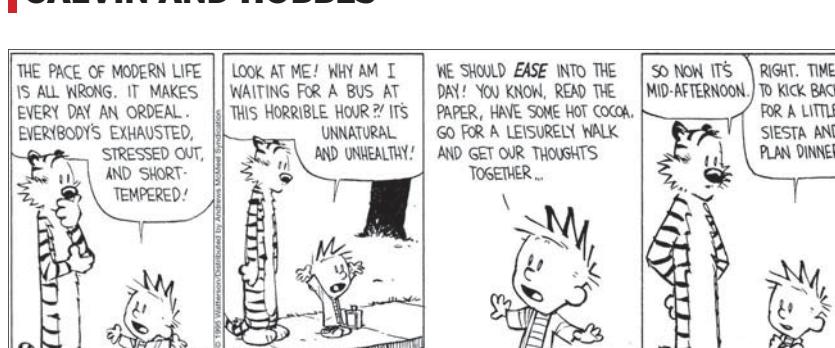


## SUDOKU

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## BREVITY



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## CITY SHOW

Artistes enact a play organised by 'Rangam' at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



[F](#) [G](#) [T](#) [Y](#) [R](#) [D](#) [S](#) [I](#) [N](#) [C](#)



# ODISHA 2ND-LARGEST CONTRIBUTOR TO NATION'S INVESTMENT INTENTS

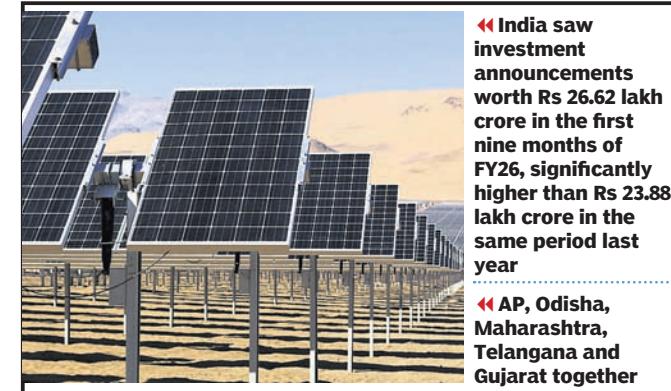
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 3:** India saw new investment announcements worth Rs 26.62 lakh crore in the first nine months of FY26, with Odisha bringing 13.1 per cent of such intents taking the second spot after Andhra Pradesh (25.3 per cent), according to a new report Saturday.

The latest figure is significantly higher than Rs 23.88 lakh crore worth investment announcements witnessed in the same period last year, according to a new report.

This is on the back of a very positive policy package of the government which has focused on capex, lowering of income tax rates and GST 2.0, it added.

Infrastructure-led sectors dominated investment intentions, with the top five sectors accounting for nearly 80 per cent of total announcements. Electricity (22.6 per cent), led by renewables, emerged as the largest contributor. Chemicals



« Infrastructure-led sectors dominated investment intentions, with the top five sectors, including electricity, accounting for nearly 80% of total announcements

« India saw investment announcements worth Rs 26.62 lakh crore in the first nine months of FY26, significantly higher than Rs 23.88 lakh crore in the same period last year

« AP, Odisha, Maharashtra, Telangana and Gujarat together accounted for around 68% of total proposed investments

(21.8 per cent) and metals (17.3 per cent) followed, highlighting strong capital goods and industrial investment, according to the Bank of Baroda report.

According to the report, consumer-oriented sectors remained marginal contributing less than 3 per cent of total in-

vestment intentions indicating that the current capex cycle is still largely supply-side driven.

“Investment activity was highly concentrated in Andhra Pradesh (25.3 per cent), followed by Odisha (13.1 per cent), Maharashtra (12.8 per cent), Telangana (9.5 per cent), and Gujarat (7.1 per cent). These five states together accounted for around 68 per cent of total proposed investments,” it pointed out.

Other notable states seeing meaningful investment interest included Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, suggesting gradual geographic broadening. The report said, “The current investment upturn is supported by government capex push, tax reforms, GST rationalisation, and easing interest rates, which have helped offset global trade headwinds.”

Going ahead, as consumption improves and capacity utilisation rises, investment is expected to become more broad-based, both across sectors and states, the report noted.

Further, there has been a tendency for interest rates to also come down which were to spur investment activity. Hence, the investment environment does appear to be positive in the present financial year, it added.



**SMOGGED & BLINDED:** Capital City wakes up Saturday covered in a thick blanket of fog reducing visibility to almost zero

OP PHOTO

## Edu institutions to sing Vande Mataram Jan 12

PNN & AGENCIES



Vande Mataram became the voice of India's freedom movement and continues to inspire national consciousness and patriotic fervour

SURYABANSI SURAJ | CULTURE MINISTER

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** All educational institutions across Odisha will observe a statewide programme of collective singing of Vande Mataram January 12, coinciding with Swami Vivekananda Jayanti and the National Youth Day, according to an official statement Saturday.

On the occasion, students will also recite the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Swadeshi Sankalp' and each institution will also nominate one student as an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Ambassador'.

Various competitions will be organised for students and meritorious participants will be felicitated. Youth clubs across the state will also participate in the collective singing programme, according to a statement issued by the Odia Language, Literature

and Culture department.

The department has asked all district Collectors for smooth implementation of the programme. In order to make the singing smooth, a statewide Vande Mataram training programme is being organised.

The state has been divided into five zones—Jeypore, Berhampur, Balasore, Sambalpur and Bhubaneswar—for conducting zonal-level training programmes.

Zonal training programmes were held at Berhampur, Balasore and Jeypore in Decem-

ber, while the Sambalpur zonal training was completed January 2. The Bhubaneswar zonal training concluded Saturday, an official said.

Addressing the Bhubaneswar zonal-level training programme held at Utkal University Saturday, Culture Minister Suryabansi Suraj said that Vande Mataram became the voice of India's freedom movement and continues to inspire national consciousness and patriotic fervour. He said the song instils courage and strength among citizens.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** The Mancheswar Police arrested four persons in connection with a violent ruckus and extortion attempt at a bar in the Palasuni area of the city, the police informed Saturday.

The incident took place near a bar in Rasulgarh under Mancheswar police limits on the night of Janu-

ary 1, 2026. The accused as

ers, the accused went on a rampage, damaging bar accessories. They also allegedly misbehaved with a woman singer performing inside the bar.

Acting on reliable information, police arrested four of the accused, who later confessed to their involvement during interrogation. However, two other accused involved in the incident are absconding.

## Rupali Square mishaps leave 1 dead, 2 critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** Two accidents involving the city bus service rocked Bhubaneswar as an auto-rickshaw driver was killed while a woman passenger suffered critical injuries after an electric bus rammed into an auto-rickshaw at Rupali Square, Saturday. Another accident took place at the same spot as another city bus hit a scooter from rear, leaving a man critically injured.

In the first incident, the electric bus hit the auto-rickshaw from rear. As a result of the impact, the auto-rickshaw hit a school bus in front of it and got sandwiched between the two buses.

The driver died instantly in



the mangled auto and the woman passenger sustained critical injuries. Locals rushed the woman to a nearby hospital.

Before people could capture the driver, he along with his helper fled from the spot. Tension escalated on the spot with locals blaming

the city bus drivers for rash driving. Traffic remained stranded for prolonged hours.

Police initiated efforts to pacify the angry crowd and removed the bus with a crane to clear the traffic. Later, DCP Jagmohan Meena also reached the spot and took stock of

the situation.

Later, the driver, aged 55, was arrested and booked under Section 105 of Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). In the second incident, which took place at the same spot, a scooterist suffered serious injuries after a city bus hit his vehicle from rear. Tension immediately escalated on the spot as the locals, who were furious since the first incident, vandalised the bus. When police arrived at the spot to take the driver into custody, a scuffle ensued between the locals and police. Locals thrashed the driver while the police were trying to take him in a PCR vehicle. However, the police managed to take the driver away from the location.

## 4 held for creating ruckus, extortion inside City bar

POST NEWS NETWORK

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## Expedite New City project works: Padhee to BDA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** A virtual meeting was held Friday under the chairmanship of Usha Padhee, Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development department, Odisha, with representatives of Surbana Jurong Infrastructure PTE Ltd, Singapore, to deliberate and finalise the draft scope of services for preparation of the Master Plan of the proposed New City in Bhubaneswar.

The meeting, held in Kharabela Bhawan, was attended by Chanchal Rana, Vice-Chairman, Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), Satrughna Kar, Additional Secretary, H&UD department, along with other senior officers of the H&UD department and BDA.

During the meeting, the Vice-Chairman, BDA, informed that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed January 17, 2025, between the Bhubaneswar Development Authority and Surbana Jurong Infrastructure PTE Ltd, during the state visit of the President of Singapore to India (January 14-18, 2025), for



cooperation in planning and development of the proposed New City in Bhubaneswar.

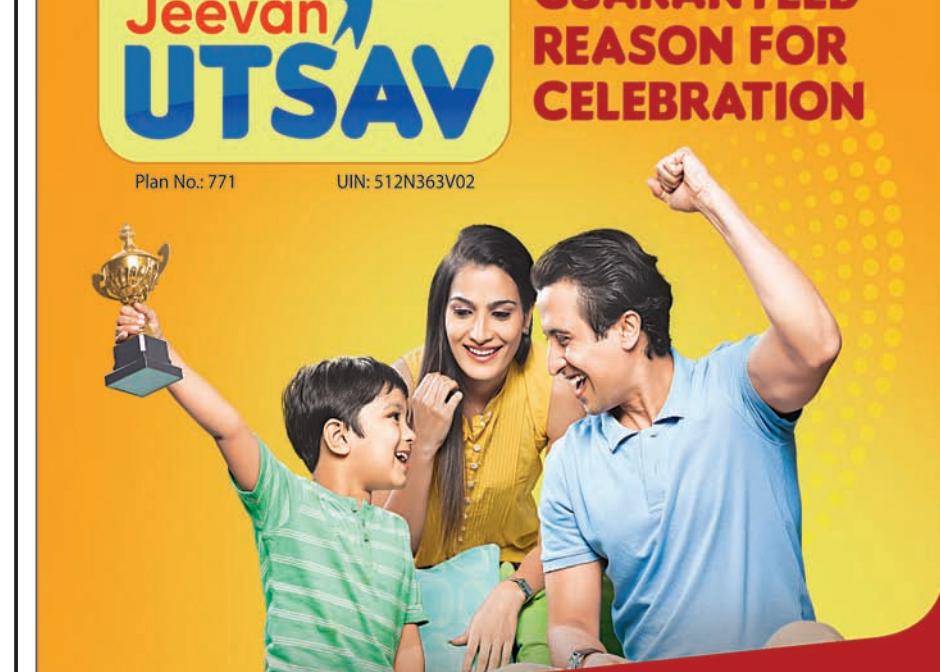
Following detailed discussions, the draft scope of services for preparation of the New City Master Plan was finalised. The proposal for development of the New City over an area of approximately 800 acres, covering Mouza Gothapatna, Malipada and Daspur within the Bhubaneswar Development Plan Area (BDPA), has already been approved by the State Cabinet in its meeting held September 10, 2025.

As per the agreed scope, Surbana Jurong will undertake projects of the New City Mas-

ter Plan, identifying priority projects across short, medium and long-term horizons, with defined objectives, scope, timelines and schematic urban design. The firm will also provide technical handholding and support for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs).

The scope further includes preparation of a comprehensive Urban Design Framework and Guidelines, outlining the overall spatial and development structure of the city. Detailed design guidelines will be provided for developmental areas, focus areas, catalytic projects, city centre, anchor developments and public spaces, along with schematic guidelines for forest and other non-developable areas, to ensure a cohesive and well-integrated master plan.

Usha Padhee advised the Bhubaneswar Development Authority to ensure close coordination with all stakeholders and adhere to timelines for early completion of the New City Master Plan, underscoring its importance for planned, sustainable and future-ready urban development of Bhubaneswar.



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## downtown

# P-Pas: Govt introduces Aadhaar-based payment

PNN &amp; AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** In a first, the state government has implemented Aadhaar-based payments to ensure that only genuine farmers registered on Paddy Procurement Automation System (P-PAS) portal receive payment directly into their bank accounts.

According to a government notification, paddy procurement has commenced in 18 districts of the state during this Kharif season. A total of 2,71,318 farmers have been able to sell paddy at their nearest mandis while payment has been successfully credited to 1,85,820 farmers. So far, ₹2,247.52 crore towards minimum support price (MSP) and ₹693.51 crore towards input assistance have been disbursed.

The notification said nearly 1 per cent of the total payments has been identified as failed cases, primarily due to frozen accounts, Aadhaar de-seeding, pending KYC, bank accounts reaching the maximum transaction limit and other reasons.

All such failed cases have been identified, and the farmers concerned are being contacted directly from Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCSC) headquarters on their registered mobile numbers and advised to visit their respective bank branches to undertake necessary corrections.

At district levels, Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Society (DRCS) offices are also contacting such farmers to facilitate timely rectification of bank details and ensure prompt payment.

In this regard, farmers are informed to update their KYC details at the earliest. For any



**For any kind of clarification or assistance, farmers have been advised to contact OSCSC headquarters in person or by dialling toll-free helpline number 1967**

clarification or assistance, they may contact OSCSC headquarters in person or by dialling toll-free helpline number 1967.

The government is also conducting a satellite survey to verify agricultural plots to ensure transparency and fairness in the ongoing paddy procurement process.

Using satellite imagery, suspected non-cultivated paddy plots are being systematically identified and subjected to thorough field verification. This process helps confirm genuine paddy cultivation in registered land parcels and accurately detect non-cultivated areas.

A total of 26,14,137 plots across 30 districts have been identified for field survey till

January 2. Of these, verification has been completed for 24,94,437 plots. Official sources said all plots flagged as suspected through satellite imagery are undergoing mandatory field verification. Based on the verification completed till the said date, 5,46,591 plots have been confirmed as paddy-cultivated land, while approximately 19 lakh plots have been identified as non-paddy cultivated land.

DRCS officials have been directed to issue show-cause notices to farmers who have erroneously registered non-cultivated land as paddy fields under the Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2025-26.

The satellite verification process follows a three-step mechanism. Initially, suspected plots are identified using satellite imagery, followed by physical verification by district officials. In the final stage, the verified plots are approved by the DRCS authorities at the district level.

Once approval is granted, tokens are generated for plots confirmed to have paddy cultivation. However, tokens are not issued for plots that remain classified as suspected or are found to be non-paddy land.

According to Excise sources, officials received a tip-off about brown sugar being smuggled

## Body of missing elderly man recovered in Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput, Jan 3:** The decomposed body of an elderly man, missing since December 17, was recovered from the Hadput-Geruput hill range under Nandapur police station limits. After post-mortem examination, the body was identified and handed over to his family.

According to police sources, the body was recovered Friday from an open forest area of the Hadput-Geruput hills. As the deceased was initially unidentified, Nandapur police had appealed to the public for help in establishing his identity.

Saturday, the deceased was identified as Subarao Kamudi, husband of Tulasa Kamudi, a resident of Harijan Sahi, Kularib village under Padua police station. Family members said Subarao had been missing since December 17.

Nandapur IIC stated that after receiving information about the missing person, the police followed due procedure, conducted a post-mortem examination, and completed all legal formalities.

"The body was identified with the help of family members, and after post-mortem, it was handed over to them," the IIC said.

# Guv, CM pay tributes to JB Patnaik on 99th birth anniv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday paid tributes to former chief minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik on his 99th birth anniversary.

Patnaik served as the chief minister of Odisha from 1980 to 1989, and from 1995 to 1999. He also served as Governor of Assam from 2009 to 2014.



Governor of Assam."

Many senior Congress leaders garlanded the photograph of JB Patnaik at a memorial meeting held at Congress Bhawan here.

Former OPCC president Niranjan Patnaik described JB Patnaik as one of the architects of modern Odisha. "His vision, administrative acumen, and deep commitment to democratic values shaped the state. His intellectual legacy and contribution to literature and public life remain inspiring," he said.

## Law student among 2 held for brown sugar smuggling

POST NEWS NETWORK



**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** The Bhubaneswar Excise department Saturday arrested three persons, including a law student, for allegedly smuggling 265 grams of brown sugar in the City's Forest Park area.

The accused have been identified as Devi Prasad Das (30), a law student from the Bhimtangi area, Santosh Nayak (33) and Sukant Nayak (36).

According to Excise sources, officials received a tip-off about brown sugar being smuggled

among elite students and professionals in the City. Acting on the information, the Excise team tracked down the accused and arrested them inside Forest Park while they were allegedly attempting to sell the contraband. During the search,

265 grams of brown sugar was recovered from their possession.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the accused were procuring the contraband from Khurda and selling it in the city's Airport and Forest Park

areas. Sukant and Santosh are history-sheets—Sukant is a habitual drug peddler, while Santosh had earlier spent six years in jail in connection with a murder case registered at the Janla outpost.

"Devi was involved in peddling drugs to college and university students as well as elite sections. He was also using social media and other connections to distribute drugs. After tracking him, we arrested him along with two other peddlers," said Bhubaneswar Excise SP Debasish Patel.

## PATIENT, ATTENDANTS STUCK IN SLNMCH LIFT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput, Jan 3:** In what has exposed glaring lapses in medical infrastructure and administrative preparedness at Saheed Laxman Nayak Medical College and Hospital (SLNMCH), Koraput, a critically-ill patient was trapped inside a lift while being shifted to the General Medicine department Saturday, said sources.

The patient, father of advocate Krishna Sank, was rushed to SLNMCH after his health condition deteriorated. While the attendants were taking him

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

By the virtue of an Affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Nimapara on dtd 31.XII.2025 Tapan Debapani Samanta (in BSE Certificate) and Tapandev Panisamanta (in CHSE Certificate)

S/o JAYANTA KUMAR PANI, At:- Ambilihana, PO:- Bamanal, PS:- Gop, Block:- Nimapara, Dist:- Puri, State:- Odisha Changed his name as TAPANDEV PANISAMANT for all Purpose.

### LOST

Name - Upasana Jena, passing 10th matriculation from ICSE Board from Stewart School Bhubaneswar in year 2017, Index no. - 1172647/127, Unique id- 6574477. 12th from CBSE Board from

Mothers Public School, unit 1, Bhubaneswar in year 2019, Roll no.- 6608055. Marksheets and pass certificate of both examination damaged irrevocably by white ants.

through the lift around 2pm, it suddenly stopped midway, leaving the patient and his attendants stranded for nearly 15 minutes.

Pintu Sahu, who was accompanying the patient, said, "It was terrifying. The patient was serious, and there was no immediate response. In a medical college hospital, such negligence is unacceptable."

The incident has raised serious concerns over maintenance of essential facilities like lifts. Despite repeated assurances of improved healthcare services, such incidents highlight the gap between claims and ground reality.

Patients and attendants alleged that there was a delay in response from hospital authorities, pointing towards poor coordination and lack of emergency protocols.

Health activists and locals have demanded immediate intervention by the district administration, a thorough safety audit of hospital infrastructure, and accountability of those responsible, before a more serious tragedy occurs.

## Govt to restore Chilika lake



**Minister Harichandan says silting at the lake's mouth has disrupted its natural exchange of water with the sea**

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** The Odisha government will soon undertake restoration work at Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon and a designated Ramsar site, as its brackish character has been

adversely affected by silting at the lake's mouth.

Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan has directed Forest, Environment and Climate Change department officials, Chilika Development Authority (CDA), and IIT-Chennai to immediately initiate restoration measures and prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) based on comprehensive scientific studies.

Chairing a high-level meeting on biodiversity conservation and development of the Chilika region, the minister stated that the silting at the

lake's mouth has disrupted the natural exchange of water between the lake and the sea.

As a result, seawater is unable to enter the lake properly, affecting its brackish character and disturbing the ecological balance.

This disruption has led to noticeable fluctuations in fish populations and other marine species, posing a threat to the lake's rich biodiversity.

Discussions focused on dredging the blocked lake mouth, removing silt to improve water-holding capacity, conserving biodiversity, developing surrounding areas, and protecting the livelihoods of communities dependent on Chilika.

The minister said the CM would soon be briefed on the outcomes of the meeting, and the Central government would be apprised of the proposed action plan.

MP Sambit Patra, department's Principal Secretary Bhaskar Jyoti Sharma, IIT-Chennai Professor Neelanjana Saha, CDA Chief Executive Yogajay Nanda, and Chilika DFO Amlan Nayak were present in the meeting.

## 12th edition of KLF to begin Jan 8



RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 3:** The Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) Saturday announced its 12th edition, scheduled to be held from January 8 to 11 at Mayfair, Bhubaneswar.

KLF 2026 will bring together writers, thinkers, artistes, legislators, diplomats, policymakers and cultural leaders from India and abroad for four days of dialogue and celebration of ideas.

Founder and Director Rashmi Ranjan Parida said KLF has evolved into a global platform rooted in Odisha's civilisational ethos, while CEO Ashok Kumar Bal described literature as one of humanity's most enduring forces in shaping society.

Recognised as one of India's most inclusive and multilingual literary platforms, the festival will feature over 100 sessions across five parallel halls, with more than 500

speakers and 200 artistes. The central theme this year, 'Stories That Shape Humanity: Translating Worlds, Transforming Futures,' underscores the power of translation, storytelling and cultural exchange.

The festival will open with a grand inaugural ceremony, with Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati as the chief guest. The guests of honour include Sri Lankan Minister Upali Pannilage, Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh, Deo, Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh, MP Sujeet Kumar, former Nepal MP Binod Chaudhury, and Jnanpith Awardee Pratibha Ray.

The inaugural evening will feature the KLF Literary Awards, the launch of the Legislators for Literature initiative, a special Made in Nepal session, and a musical performance by Malini Awasthi and Yatindra Mishra.

## Neuralink can restore full body functionality: Musk

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



**Neuralink will start high-volume production of brain-computer interface devices and move to a streamlined, almost entirely automated surgical procedure this year**

that replaces a small piece of bone and is connected to the brain via a series of thin, threaded electrodes. The company's N1 implant includes 1,024 electrodes distributed among 64 threads, according to the company's website.

In September, the company announced that it had implanted its device in 12 patients.

The motor cortex technology feature was announced by Musk in 2022, and the testing began in humans in the same year.

The device includes a chip

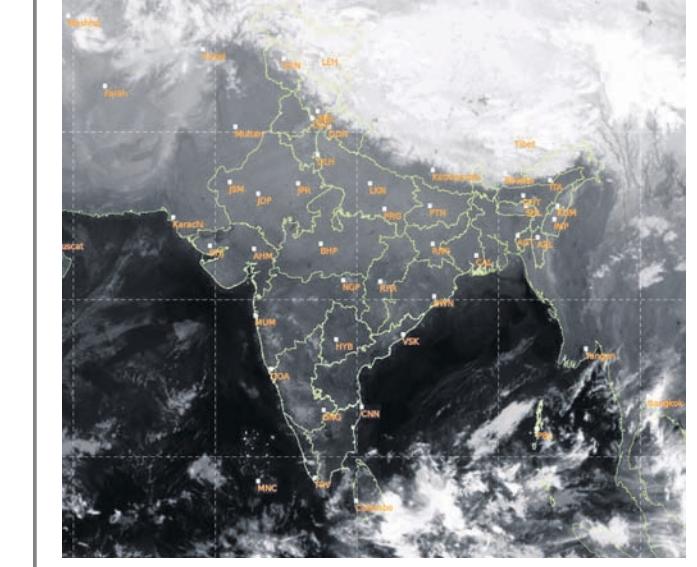
storing vision, with a brain implant that allows the visually impaired, even those blind from birth.

Blindsight, Neuralink's brain chip aimed at restoring vision, received "breakthrough device" designation from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in September 2024. The company is expected to begin high-volume production of the device this year.

"Neuralink will start high-volume production of

brain-computer interface devices and move to a streamlined, almost entirely automated surgical procedure in 2026. Device threads will go through the dura without the need to remove it. This is a big deal," he shared on X.

According to Musk, Blindsight will help people who have lost both eyes, and they will be able to see. He also claimed that, provided the visual cortex remains intact, the device can restore vision even in people who have been blind since birth.



### WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.2°	25.4°	
Min Temp	14.8°	13.4°	
Humidity	96%	96%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



# Woman BDO attacked by BJP leader at office



PNN &amp; AGENCIES

**Rajnagar, Jan 3:** A woman OAS officer was allegedly attacked by a local BJP leader at her office chamber in Rajnagar block headquarters in Kendrapara district, triggering protests.

While the entire incident has been captured in CCTV installed in the office chamber, the day-to-day work at the block office came to a standstill as the staff resorted to ceasing work to register a protest against the attack on the woman officer.

Vehicular traffic in the town was disrupted as BJD workers blocked the entry road to the town.

The incident occurred Friday afternoon. BJP leader Lalit Kumar Behera, who contested unsuccessfully in the last Assembly polls, along with his supporters, allegedly barged into the chamber of Rajnagar BDO Tilottama Prusty and intimidated her to expedite some office work.

Later, he allegedly tried to attack her. However, Behera was stopped by his supporters from physically assaulting the woman officer on duty.

No FIR has been registered so far, while an administrative inquiry has been ordered.

"The Rajnagar BDO has

informed me of the incident through a written complaint. The sub-collector is inquiring into it. Complainant officer Prusty alleged that the BJP leader tried to assault her while on duty. CCTV footage is being verified. Such an incident of attempted assault on an officer is unfortunate," said Kendrapara Collector Raghuram R Iyer.

The administration has taken it seriously and will ensure steps to avert such incidents," Iyer added.

Both the BJD and Congress have condemned the incident.

OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das in a social media post said, "Attack on a woman BDO at Rajnagar Block Office by BJP leader Lalit Behera and his supporters, exposed BJP's politics of intimidation.

Although she narrowly escaped unharmed from the incident, captured on CCTV, lays bare the BJP's culture of arrogance and goondam. I strongly condemn this incident and demand strict action against the accused. Odisha will not tolerate threats to women or the misuse of power to browbeat government officials."

BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said, "We strongly condemn the barbaric attack on the lady BDO of Rajnagar by a mob of 30 hoodlums, led by BJP leader Lalit Behera."

"The Rajnagar BDO has

## 70-yr-old detained for 'rape' of minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Jan 3:** Police Saturday detained a 70-year-old man in connection with the alleged rape of a minor girl in the Khetrapur police station area of Sambalpur city.

According to sources, the 16-year-old girl was alone at her residence Saturday evening when the accused, a neighbour of the victim, allegedly entered the house and raped her.

After family members returned home, the victim reportedly narrated the incident to them. Acting on a complaint, police reached the spot and detained the accused, who was later taken to the police station for questioning. The victim has undergone medical examination.

A case (1/26) has been registered in this connection and further investigation is underway, said Khetrapur IIC Anil Pradhan.

According to official records, the case pertains to a former headmaster who retired in 2010 and is accused of drawing duplicate pension benefits under the same name, raising serious questions about lapses in administrative oversight and financial controls within the Education department.

The Directorate of Treasuries & Inspection (DTI) has issued a letter directing the Mohana Block Education Officer (BEO) and the Block Development Officer (BDO) to conduct a detailed inquiry into

# Curbs imposed as Talcher tops nationwide AQI list

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Talcher, Jan 3:** The Angul district administration Saturday imposed a series of curbs in Talcher after air pollution in the city, a major industrial and coal hub, reached alarming levels making it the most polluted in the country.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) crossed 300, categorised as "very poor," in six cities nationwide Saturday morning. Of these six cities, four are in Odisha.

With an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 355, Talcher ranked as the most polluted city in the country, followed by Angul at second place with an AQI of 329.

While conditions were severe Friday, there was no significant improvement Saturday, raising concerns over prolonged exposure and its impact on public health.

Officials warned that the high pollution levels pose serious risks to lung health, with even morning walkers reporting breathing discomfort.

In view of the "very poor" air quality in the Talcher Municipality area and keeping in mind the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) Stage-II guidelines, the Angul district administration has issued an order under Section 163(2) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), as per Order No. 19.

Under the directive, multiple restrictions have been imposed across the Talcher Municipal Council area for the next seven days to curb pollution levels.

Under the measures, all construction activities will be prohibited daily from 6pm to 10am. Any demolition or earthwork



within the civic body limits has been banned. Roads under the municipality area, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. (MCL) must be sprinkled with water at least three times a day.

Entry of heavy vehicles into Talcher has been completely barred. Open burning of garbage, burning of coal at roadside eateries, and lighting of any kind of open fire have been strictly prohibited.

Separate restrictions have been imposed on daytime movement of all coal and ash-laden trucks by the Talcher Sub-Collector and the regional transport officer. On National Highway 149, no truck will be allowed to operate without proper covering or tarpaulin.

The NHAI and the NH Division, Pallahara, have been directed to ensure regular water sprinkling at all their construction sites.

The order will remain in force for seven days unless extended. Police, municipal authorities, all executive agencies and the Regional Transport Office have been directed to ensure strict enforcement. The district administration has instructed the Talcher Sub-Divisional Magistrate to conduct daily monitoring and submit a daily compliance report to the office.

Residents alleged that amid prevailing cold conditions, commuting on roads has become extremely difficult due to dense dust and smoke. According to locals, nearly 80 per cent of Talcher's population is suffering from respiratory ailments.

The soil and water in Talcher are already contaminated, and now even the air has become heavily polluted. While the state and Central governments earn crores of rupees in revenue from Talcher, residents allege they are being deprived of basic rights.

As people cry out in distress over the worsening pollution, public representatives, the administration, the pollution control board and industrial authorities are accused of remaining silent spectators, knowingly ignoring the crisis. Even access to clean air has now become a rarity in Talcher.

## Gajapati teacher found drawing dual pensions

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mohana, Jan 3:** A retired government school teacher in Gajapati district allegedly received two pensions simultaneously for nearly 15 years, triggering a formal investigation by the state treasury after the irregularity recently came to light.



According to official records, the case pertains to a former headmaster who retired in 2010 and is accused of drawing duplicate pension benefits under the same name, raising serious questions about lapses in administrative oversight and financial controls within the Education department.

The Directorate of Treasuries & Inspection (DTI) has issued a letter directing the Mohana Block Education Officer (BEO) and the Block Development Officer (BDO) to conduct a detailed inquiry into

the matter. The directive was issued vide Letter No. 12131 dated November 20, 2025.

The retired teacher, identified as Radhakrishna Acharya, had served as the headmaster of Government Project Upper Primary School at Betarsing village under Mohana panchayat. He retired from service September 30, 2010.

Following his retirement, pension benefits were sanctioned with effect from February 14, 2011, based on a recommendation submitted by the then BDO. However, documents indicate that another pension approval in his name was again processed April 12, 2012, based on a separate recommendation, resulting in two pensions being disbursed simultaneously from October 1, 2010.

Officials said the alleged duplication continued uninterrupted for nearly 15 years without detection, even as several retired teachers across the district reportedly struggled to receive their rightful pension benefits.

Sources in the state treasury said the case is part of a larger statewide review, which has reportedly identified 32 retired teachers who have been drawing two pensions since 2010.

When contacted, Acharya claimed he was unaware that two pensions were being credited to his account.

He said that if an excess amount had been paid, the government could recover the money from his pension.

Mohana BEO Narendra Behera confirmed that the retired teacher was receiving two pensions and said an inquiry was underway to ascertain how the irregularity occurred. The incident has sparked debate among local intellectuals and civil society members.

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# One-third of Aravalli range under ecological risk: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Jan 3:** A people-led conservation collective, 'We Are Aravalli', Saturday released a satellite audit claiming that nearly one-third of the Aravalli mountain range is under ecological risk, and demanded a complete ban on mining across the region.

According to the collective, an independent forensic analysis using satellite data and the Bristol FABDEM bare-earth model has found that 31.8 per cent of the Aravalli hill area lies below 100 metres in height, making it vulnerable to loss of legal protection under existing classifications.

The group said the government's assessment of the affected area at 0.19 per cent does not reflect the geological reality of the range. Climate scientist and environment activist Sudhanshu, associated with the group, said the findings highlight a serious policy gap.

"Low-elevation hills are being wrongly dismissed as wasteland. Scientifically, these ridges are critical groundwater recharge zones and natural



dust barriers. Removing protection from them will accelerate desertification and water stress across north-west India," he said. The collective said the threatened zones play a crucial role in water security and air quality for nearly 300 million people across Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.

It warned that mining in these areas could worsen desert expansion from the Thar region, reduce groundwater recharge for cities such as Jaipur and Gurugram, and increase particulate pollution in the Delhi-NCR.

Interactive maps and datasets from the audit have been

made public, with all codes released as open source to enable independent verification, the group said. Based on the findings, the group has called for the entire Aravalli range to be declared a fully protected zone, the removal of height-based distinctions between hills and mountains, and an immediate ban on mining for construction and decorative stone.

It has also sought cancellation of existing mining leases, inclusion of regions such as Chittorgarh, Nagaur, Bundi and Sawai Madhopur within the recognised Aravalli system, and restoration of degraded hills.

# Temp dips below zero in parts of Kashmir

**Srinagar, Jan 3:** Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 1.5 degrees Celsius Friday night, down from the previous night's 0.1 degrees Celsius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 3:** After a few days of respite, the cold returned to Kashmir as the minimum temperatures dropped in the valley and settled below the freezing point at most places, officials said Saturday.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 1.5 degrees Celsius Friday night, down from the previous night's 0.1 degrees Celsius, they said.

The famous ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir remained the coldest spot, with the mercury dipping to minus 6.5 degrees Celsius, while the tourist resort of Pahalgam in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius.

Qazigund, the gateway town of the valley, saw the mercury settling at minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, Kokernag recorded a low of minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara in north Kashmir registered a minimum of minus 1.6 degrees Celsius.



**Qazigund, the gateway town of the valley, saw the mercury settling at minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, Kokernag recorded a low of minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara in north Kashmir registered a minimum of minus 1.6 degrees Celsius**

The region is currently in the midst of 'Chilla-e-Kalan', the 40-day period of extreme cold, during which night temperatures often drop several degrees below the freezing point.

However, current readings show a departure from normal

patterns.

During this period, the chances of snowfall are most frequent and maximum as well.

However, the plains of the valley have not received any snowfall so far this season.

The India Meteorological De-

partment forecasts light rains or snow at the isolated places in the higher reaches of north and central Kashmir January 5 and 6.

The weather is expected to remain largely dry until January 4.

## LoC gets first community radio station in Rajouri



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rajouri/Jammu, Jan 3:** The first community radio station along the Line of Control has been set up in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, strengthening information outreach in border areas, officials said.

The station, 'Radio Sangam' has been established by the Indian Army in collaboration with the civil administration and locals at Keri village, nearly one kilometre from the Line of Control (LoC), they said.

Officials said this is the first community radio station on the LoC, which aims to counter misinformation and propaganda from across the border while providing a credible platform for sharing authentic information and addressing local issues.

Due to its strategic location, the station's broadcasts can also be heard in areas across the LoC, they added.

The radio station was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner of Rajouri Abhishek Sharma in the presence of civil society members, civil administration officers and locals.

Addressing the gathering, Sharma said the station would promote social awareness and public participation, help amplify local voices, and strengthen the link between the administration and border residents, while also countering propaganda from across the LoC.



Rajasthan's nomadic Rabari tribesmen with their camels during 'International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists', in Bhopal, Saturday

## 732 ha of sanctuary land denotified

**Kota (Raj):** Rajasthan government has issued a notification altering the boundaries of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, freeing from restrictions 732 hectares of land on both sides of the Chambal river, a decision welcomed by homeowners and traders in the area but which has also sparked environmental concerns. According to the notification, issued by order of the Governor and signed by the state Principal Secretary, the Gharial sanctuary area will now include the Chambal River stretch from Jawahar Sagar Dam to Hanging Bridge, which, before the de-notification, extended to Kota Barrage. The de-notified area includes forest land, riverine areas and uninhabited land from the Hanging Bridge up to the Kota Barrage. The revised boundary notification is aimed at clearly defining protected areas of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary while excluding specified revenue regions, ensuring better administrative clarity and conservation management, officials said. Located on the Chambal River near the tri-point of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the sanctuary is known for its rich biodiversity, including endangered species such as the gharial, red-crowned roof turtle and Ganges river dolphin, and several species of migratory birds and is also home to slothbears, leopards, etc.

## Raj mandates newspaper reading in govt schools

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



— one Hindi and one English — while government upper primary schools must ensure the availability of at least two Hindi newspapers.

The expenditure towards newspaper subscriptions will be borne by the Rajasthan School Education Council, Jaipur. Schools have also been asked to identify five new words from the newspapers each day and explain their meanings to students to strengthen language skills. During morning assemblies, one national-level newspaper in English and one in Hindi will be read aloud. The order

further states that students should be divided class-wise and encouraged to read and discuss editorials and major national, international and sporting developments.

Officials said the programme is designed not only to improve students' general knowledge and social awareness but also to prepare them better for competitive examinations.

The move comes a week after the Uttar Pradesh government introduced a similar directive in government schools, making newspaper reading a mandatory activity.

## Tourists flock to Guldanda to witness season's first snowfall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Jammu province. The sudden rush of visitors has brought cheers to the faces of tour operators and hoteliers, as all hotels and homestays are packed to capacity, which is considered a good omen for winter tourism.

The tourism industry was literally on a ventilator after the Pahalgam attack, and the war-like situation between India and Pakistan that followed Operation Sindo.

"But the snowfall on the first day of 2026 acted as a catalyst to break the ice. Since the last two days, all the hotels and guesthouses are packed with tourists from across the country," Manish Kotwal, a hotelier from Nalih-Bhaderwah, said.

He expressed hope that the positive trend will continue in the coming months.

Not only the hoteliers, but the small vendors putting up

make-shift shops in Guldanda are also overjoyed with the sudden spurt in tourist footfall.

"The tourists are very happy, and so are we. The arrival of

Tourists from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan were seen enjoying the snow-clad slopes in Guldanda and Chhattargalla, describing the experience as "fairy-tale-like" as they admired the beauty of the adjoining alpine meadows.

"We are regular visitors to the Vaishno Devi shrine, but this is our first visit to Bhaderwah, and the experience is unbelievable. The beauty of this valley is beyond words, and the vibe is so wonderful that we feel like staying here forever," Aadiya Vajpayee, 21, from Kanpur said.

She said they reached here on New Year's Eve and were blessed to witness the snowfall.

"We were extremely excited to see snow for the first time. It felt like a fairy-tale," Monica from Churu in Rajasthan said.

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

No. 10239  
Nature of Works : Civil Works and El Works  
Number of Works : 6 (Six) Nos.  
Amount put to Tender : Rs. 3.70 to 47.00 lakhs  
Class of Contractor : B&HT Class  
Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal : 05.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.  
Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal : 21.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.

Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 13.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M.  
Name & address of the Office : Superintending Engineer, Bhadrak (R&B) Division

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only.  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://tendersodisha.gov.in".

All future corrigendum will be available on ONLINE mode only.  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
Bhadrak (R&B) Division

OIPR-34079/11/0033/2526

WORKS DEPARTMENT No. B-903  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BHADRAK (R&B) DIVISION

e-mail: bhadrakrbddivision@gmail.com

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice  
Bid Identification No. SE (R&B) BDK-30/2025-26  
Letter No. 6986/RWDG-I/BAM// Date: 24.12.2025

1 Name of the Work : Building Works  
2 Estimated Cost : Rs. 81.03 lakhs  
3 Period of Completion : 09 (Nine) Calendar Months as shown in Column No. 06 of Annexure  
4 Date & Time of Availability of Bid Documents in the Portal : From 04.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 21.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.  
5 Last Date/Time for Receipt of Bids in the Portal : 21.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.  
6 Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Ganjam, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal website https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd/- Executive Engineer  
OIPR-25085/11/0047/2526 R.W. Division-I, Ganjam, Berhampur

WORKS DEPARTMENT No. B-903  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BHADRAK (R&B) DIVISION

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No. 10239<br

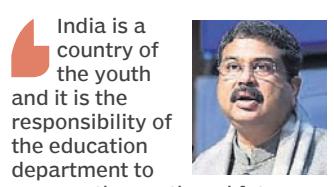
## national

of the day quote



Vajpayee taught us to remain humble while in power and to serve national interests while in opposition. Even while criticising anyone, he always maintained dignity and avoided hurting them

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER



India is a country of the youth and it is the responsibility of the education department to prepare the youth and future generations with education in mother tongue, competency based studies and skill based studies

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION MINISTER



We will ensure Sangli transforms into a clean city with modern upgradation. Work on the pre-feasibility report for an airport in Sangli is underway

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | CHIEF MINISTER, MAHARASHTRA

## SHORT TAKES

## Dog lovers protest at Jantar Mantar

**New Delhi:** Animal rights activists and volunteers from various animal protection groups gathered for a peaceful demonstration at the Jantar Mantar Saturday, demanding the Supreme Court reconsider its recent order to remove street dogs from public spaces. The protest, held ahead of a hearing on the matter in the top court next week, saw around 30 participants holding placards with creative visuals to highlight their concerns, with one wearing a dog costume to draw public attention, the organisers said. One of the participants termed the Supreme Court order to relocate street dogs from schools, hospitals and transport hubs both "impractical" and "inhumane", which will result in millions of dogs getting confined to shelters for life.

## TMC RS MP Mousam Noor returns to Cong

**New Delhi:** Ahead of West Bengal assembly polls, Trinamool Congress Raja Sabha MP Mousam Noor returned to the Congress Saturday, saying she wants to carry forward the legacy of her uncle and former party stalwart Ghani Khan Chaudhary. Noor (46), whose tenure as Raja Sabha MP ends in April, is likely to contest the upcoming assembly polls in West Bengal from Maldah. She was a two-time Congress MP representing Maldah from the Lok Sabha from 2009 to 2019. She has also been a Youth Congress president in West Bengal. Noor rejoined the Congress at the party headquarters in the presence of Jairam Ramesh, Congress in-charge for West Bengal, Ghulam Ahmed Mir, and the party's state unit president, Shubhankar Sarkar.

## Accused Bilal Malla sent to judicial custody

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court Saturday remanded Dr Bilal Naseer Malla, one of the accused in the November 10 Red Fort blast case, to judicial custody for 13 days till January 16. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) produced Malla at the Patiala House Court amid tight security Saturday, upon the expiry of his 8-day NIA custody granted on December 26. Mediapersons were barred from covering the proceedings.



After assuming office in April 2022, our government launched a massive recruitment drive under which 61,281 government jobs have been provided so far

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

## Cong to launch nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram'

Ramesh claimed that no BJP-ruled state is in a position to implement the G RAM G law, which is against the federal structure of the country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 3:** The Congress Saturday announced a nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' from January 10 to February 25 to demand the withdrawal of the VB G-RAM-G Act, and restoration of MGNREGA as a rights-based law, the right to work, and the authority of panchayats.

Addressing a joint press conference, Congress general secretaries KC Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh said through the new VBG RAM G Act, the Centre has ensured complete centralisation as "employment will no longer be a right under the new Act", which will be challenged in court.

On whether the states ruled by the INDIA bloc constituents would not implement the new Act or oppose it, Venugopal said the Congress would hold consultations with all the alliance partners on the way forward.

A consensus will be reached within the opposition-ruled chief ministers, and "we will explore possibilities of how to move forward on this", Venugopal said. Ramesh claimed that no BJP-ruled state is in a position to implement the G RAM G law, which, he said, is against the federal structure of the country.

Venugopal also termed the Act an attack against the federal structure itself, as "no dis-



**MGNREGA Bachao Sangram will commence January 10 and continue till February 25**

cussion was held with the states to implement it, even as their finances will be disturbed".

He said through the 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram', the Congress aims to defend the right to work, protect the Panchayati Raj institutions, and stand with the women workers, Dalits, Adivasis, and the rural poor by taking the issue to every village of the country.

"Our clear demand is to withdraw the VB GRAM G Act and restore MGNREGA in its original, rights-based form, restoring people's right to work and the authority of the panchayats," Venugopal said.

Sharing details, he said the MGNREGA Bachao Sangram will commence January 10 and continue till February 25.

"This is not only a Congress programme... We will hold detailed discussions with all the opposition-ruled states, and

fight together," Venugopal said. District-level press conferences will be held January 10, followed by a day-long fast and symbolic protests at the district headquarters January 11, the Congress leaders said.

From January 12 to 29, panchayat-level chauhals and mass contact programmes will be organised at all the gram panchayats, followed by ward-level peaceful sit-ins January 30 to press for the right to work, they said.

From February 7 to 15, state-level gheraos of Vidhan Sabhas will be organised, while four major rallies will be held between February 16 and 25 before the culmination of the nationwide movement, Venugopal said. Ramesh said it is not just a 'MGNREGA Save Campaign', it is the 'MGNREGA Save Struggle' and its first phase will begin January 8 with preparatory meetings at all the state Congress headquarters to finalise plans for the agitation.

While the VB G RAM G Act has a grand name, the only guarantee in it is "dangerous centralisation", Ramesh said.

"There is no guarantee of employment or financial assistance for the state governments," he noted.

## KERALA GEARS UP FOR ATTUKAL PONGALA FESTIVAL

Preparations for the annual Attukal Pongala festival, scheduled from February 23 to March 4, were reviewed at a meeting chaired by Kerala Education and Labour Minister V Sivankutty Saturday. Officials from various government departments attended the meeting to assess arrangements for the temple festival



## GANDHINAGAR TYPHOID SURGE

## Over 100 persons hospitalised; Shah reviews situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gandhinagar, Jan 3:** Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi Saturday reviewed the situation at Gandhinagar Civil Hospital after 104 patients, including children, were admitted for suspected typhoid.

Typhoid cases have been increasing in the Civil Hospital in the last three days, with 104 patients admitted to the paediatric ward, officials said.

**Union Home Minister Amit Shah discussed the situation with the district collector over the phone three times and will take a review again in the evening**

Sanghavi said senior officials, including the deputy collector, have been asked to assess the situation at the hospital, while arrangements such as food and other facilities have been made for families of admitted patients. A team of 22 doctors has been formed to treat the patients, he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah discussed the situation with the district collector over the phone three times and will take a review again in the evening, Sanghavi added.

"At present, 104 suspected cases have been reported. The administration is continuously strengthening treatment and monitoring arrangements.

Efforts are ongoing to provide better facilities to patients and their families," he said.

## HIMACHAL RAGGING-LINKED DEATH

## Assistant Professor suspended; HP, UGC order separate probes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shimla (HP), Jan 3:** As outrage mounted over the death of a 19-year-old Dalit student, the Himachal Pradesh government Saturday suspended an assistant professor booked on charges of sexually harassing her and announced an inquiry into allegations, including those of ragging and cast related abuse of the victim, while the University Grants Commission also set up a fact-finding committee.

The accused, Assistant Professor (Geography) Ashok Sharma of Government College, Dharamshala, in Kangra district, denied the allegations. Police said he was being questioned.

Taking serious note of the case, the National Commission for Women said it highlights the "serious failure of the security mechanism in educational campuses" and directed the state Director General of Police to ensure immediate arrest of all the accused, fair and time-bound investigation, preservation of post-mortem and medical records and strict action under the various laws.

Kangra police said the investigation in the case, registered on the complaint of the deceased girl's father, is being conducted by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Dharamshala, and all relevant evidence, including medical records, video clips and statements of witnesses, are being collected.

"The family members of the deceased woman have been included in the investigation



and the police team took some documents and a mobile phone in possession. The accused assistant professor is being questioned," said Additional Superintendent of Police, Kangra, Veer Bahadur.

The police said that according to the college administration, they did not receive any written complaint regarding ragging.

A case of sexual harassment under section 75 of BNS was registered against Ashok Sharma, while three female students were booked for voluntarily causing hurt and common intention under section 115(2) and 3(5) of BNS besides Section 3 of the Himachal Pradesh Educational Institution (Prohibition of Ragging) Act 2009 Thursday (January 1).

The order of the assistant professor's suspension came hours after the Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu promised strict action in the matter.

"Based on the video statement of the deceased woman in which she had named the professor, the accused professor would be immediately suspended and an inquiry would be initiated against him. Strict action would be taken against all those involved," he told reporters.

## Sandeshkhali mob attack on police injures 6; 9 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**CHHATTISGARH ANTI-MINING PROTEST**

## 5 held for assaulting woman cop, tearing off her clothes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Raigarh, Jan 3:** Five persons have been arrested for allegedly assaulting and ripping off the uniform of a woman police constable during an anti-mining protest in Libra village in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district, officials said Saturday.

A demonstration by residents of 14 villages against a coal mining project turned violent in the Tamnar block December 27, resulting in arson and stone pelting.

The arrested persons have been identified as Mangal Rathia, Chhinesh Khamari, Prem Singh Rathia, Kirti Shriwas, all residents of Amgaon village, and Vanmal Rathia, who is from Jharna village. Two others are absconding, a police officer said.

They were booked under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita and section 67(A) of the Information Technology Act, he added. A mob had surrounded a woman constable in a field and assaulted her.

A video surfaced on social media Thursday showing the constable lying on the ground

and begging for mercy even as two men rip her clothes off and question her presence at the protest site. She was seen crying with folded hands and repeatedly requesting the mob to let her go. "Don't tear, bhai. I will not do anything. I did not hit anyone," she says.

One of the accused is seen pulling her torn uniform, while another films the assault and later threatens her with a sandal and yells at her.

A blurred video of the assault was shared on Facebook by the All India Mahila Congress Friday. "The video of a female police constable being assaulted while her clothes were torn in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, is extremely disturbing. If even female police officers are not safe, what hope is there for ordinary citizens?" the Congress stated on a Facebook post.

"We have arrested nine people so far, but Musa Mollah is still absconding. Efforts are on to nab

as officers tried to pick up Mollah from his residence and place him inside the police vehicle, a group of villagers, described by police as his supporters, allegedly blocked the car, threw stones and vandalised it.

Six policemen, including an officer, were injured and later treated at a local hospital before being discharged.

Taking advantage of the chaos, Mollah managed to escape, police said, revising earlier information that he had been arrested.

"We have arrested nine people so far, but Musa Mollah is still absconding. Efforts are on to nab

him," a senior police officer told PTI. Earlier it was reported that Mollah was nabbed by the police. Police sources said Mollah had been served repeated notices in a land dispute case, which he allegedly ignored.

Following complaints that agricultural land was being filled with saline water, a Basirhat sub-divisional court had imposed prohibitory orders on the disputed property.

Reinforcements were rushed to the area after the police team came under attack. Besides ar-

resting nine people, the police detained two local TMC leaders, including the gram panchayat pradhan and upa-pradhan of Boyermari Gram Panchayat 2, for allegedly instigating the violence, officials said.

Raids were carried out in nearby houses and CCTV footage was being examined to identify other accused, police said, adding that the situation was under control with additional forces deployed as a precaution.

The incident triggered sharp

political reactions. BJP leader Sajal Ghosh said the attack reflected the "desperation and brazenness" of ruling party activists under Mamata Banerjee's government.

"From attacks on central agencies earlier to attacks on state police now, the pattern remains the same," he said. The ruling TMC sought to distance itself from the violence. Party spokesperson Arup Chakraborty condemned the attack as "deplorable" and said the party did not support such acts.

## NCC plans to train 1L cadets as first responders for disasters



These cadets will be known as Yuva Apda Mitras, and they will be trained and linked with the national database, so that the services can be used by the nation in case of need in future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

who can contribute to bolstering India's digital defence mechanism, a top official said Saturday.

These will be integrated with the national database, Director General, NCC, Lt Gen Virendra Vats said during a press conference on the NCC's Republic Day Camp 2026 that began December 30 at the Cariappa Parade Ground at Delhi Cantonment.

He announced that for the "first time, parade and contingent commanders of the NCC will march carrying a sword during the 2026 Republic Day Parade, "at par" with the members of military contingents.

The officer also said the NCC

has started work on raising four to five hubs across the country where select cadets can be trained on drone and counter-drone aspects.

A total of 2,406 NCC cadets,

including 898 girls, from across the country are participating in the annual camp this year. More than 200 cadets from over 20 friendly foreign countries, including Bhutan, Sri Lanka,

Brazil, Bangladesh, Nepal and Malaysia, are also taking part.

The month-long camp features several inter-directorate competitions and events like the best cadet competition, small arms firing, marching contingent, flag area designing.

This year, 127 cadets from Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh Union territories, and 131 cadets from the Northeastern region are participating, officials said. Lt Gen Vats, in response to a query, said the NCC plans to increase its strength from 17 lakh to 20 lakh in a phased manner, and "we plan

to achieve it by 2028".

Girls cadets form 40 per cent of the total current strength, he added. He also made a PowerPoint presentation on the occasion outlining various future plans of the NCC.

In coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the NCC has planned to train as many as one lakh cadets as "first responders" in the wake of any natural disaster, he said. These cadets will be known as Yuva Apda Mitras, and they will be trained and linked with the national database, so that the services can be used by the nation in case of need in future, Lt Gen Vats said.

# national



Heartiest congratulations to Subi Taba on being conferred the Ramnath Goenka Sahitya Samman for Best Fiction 2025 for her acclaimed work Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains

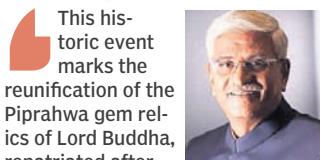
PEMA KHANDU | CHIEF MINISTER, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

## 3-DAY WORLD TELUGU CONFERENCE KICKS OFF

The three-day World Telugu Conference kicked off here on Saturday with a celestial wedding ceremony of Lord Venkateswara. Andhra Pradesh Assembly Speaker C Ayyannapatrudu participated in the conference today



of the day quote



This historic event marks the reunification of the Piprahwa gem relics of Lord Buddha, repatriated after 127 years, with relics, gem relics, and reliquaries from the 1898 excavation and subsequent 1971-1975 excavation at the Piprahwa site

GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHWAT | UNION CULTURE MINISTER



The government expects these officials to visit their adopted schools at least once a month to offer career counselling and prepare the students for competitive examinations

SUKHINDER SINGH SUKHU | CHIEF MINISTER, HIMACHAL PRADESH



The Congress along with the public, labourers and all like-minded will fight until the VB-G RAM G Act is withdrawn, like it was done in case of farm laws

SIDDARAMAIAH | CHIEF MINISTER, KARNATAKA



Adani supplies power to Bangladesh- not a traitor. Our EAM visits Bangladesh and reaches out- not a traitor Sheikh Hasina is housed in India- not a traitorous act. KKR buys Mustafizur and @iamsrk is a traitor, and KKR is bullied by the BCCI into dropping the Fizz. What a joke!

@ajay43

### SHORT TAKES

#### Ex-Kerala min gets 3 years jail term

**Thiruvananthapuram:** A court here Saturday sentenced former Kerala transport minister Antony Raju and a court official to imprisonment for tampering with evidence in a 1990 drug seizure case. Raju, a serving MLA of the Janadhipathy Kerala Congress and an LDF ally, was convicted by the Nedumangad Judicial First Class Magistrate Ruby Ismail in connection with tampering with evidence related to the seizure of 61.5 grams of hashish from an Australian national at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport in 1990. The court also convicted K S Jose, a former clerk of a court in Thiruvananthapuram, in the case.

#### 20 Maoists surrender before T'gana police

**Hyderabad:** In a significant blow to the CPI (Maoist) insurgency, high-ranking commander Badse Sukka alias Deva, along with 19 underground cadre, surrendered before the Telangana police. This surrender sounded the death knell for the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and the Telangana State Committee of the CPI (Maoist) party.

#### Woman held for killing daughter-in-law

**Thane:** A 60-year-old woman from Maharashtra's Thane district has been arrested for allegedly killing her daughter-in-law over a dispute involving a railway job and gratuity funds, police said Saturday. While the accused woman wanted to keep her deceased son's gratuity money, she also wanted her grandson to get a job on compassionate grounds, not the victim, an official said.

# 14 Naxalites killed in separate encounters

*In 2025, a total of 285 Naxalites were gunned down in separate encounters with security forces in Chhattisgarh*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sukma/Bijapur, Jan 3:** In the first Naxalite encounter of 2026, at least 14 Maoists, including wanted ultras Vetti Mangdu and Madvi Hunga, were killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh's Sukma and Bijapur districts in the Bastar region Saturday, officials said.

While 12 Naxalites, including Mangdu and Madkam, and five women, were neutralised by the security forces during an exchange of fire in Sukma, the bodies of two Maoist cadres were found in the forests of Gaganpalli village in Basuguda, Bijapur.

State Police unit, District Reserve Guard (DRG) had launched the anti-naxal operations based on inputs about the presence of Maoist cadres, a senior police official said.

Hailing the security personnel, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that due to the precise strategy, sustained pressure, and strong ground presence of the security forces, the Maoist network has been rapidly weakening.

The operation in the southern region of Sukma was launched Friday night by the DRG. An exchange of fire broke out around 8 am in the forest of the Kistaram area, said Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan.

"The bodies of 12 cadres, including five women, and automatic weapons were recovered from the encounter site,"



he said.

Two among them were identified as Vetti Mangdu, incharge of the Konda area committee of Maoists, and Madvi Hitesh alias Hunga, the secretary of the same formation, Chavan said, adding that the identity of the remaining cadres is yet to be ascertained.

A cache of weapons, including AK-47, INSAS, and self-loading rifles, has been recovered from the encounter site.

Mangdu and Hunga were involved in several Maoist incidents, including an IED blast in Konda area in June last year in which then Additional Superintendent of Police (Konda) Akash Rao Girepunge was killed, Chavan said.

Girepunge was killed, and two other police officers were

injured June 9 when an IED planted by Naxalites exploded at a stone quarry near Dondra village.

During a separate operation in Bijapur, a gunfight broke out in a forest in the southern region of the district around 5 am, another official said, adding that the bodies of two Naxalites were recovered. Their identity is yet to be established.

CM Sai, meanwhile, stated that trust, development, and security are new directions for Bastar, where peace, not violence, has now become the only option.

Decisive success has been achieved in the anti-Naxal operations conducted by security forces in Bijapur and Sukma districts, in which 14 Maoists were neutralised, he stated.

## Avoid travel to Venezuela: MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 3:** India Saturday night advised its nationals to avoid all non-essential travel to Venezuela in view of the situation arising out of the capture of the oil-rich country's president by the US.

The Ministry of External Affairs also asked all Indians who are in Venezuela to exercise extreme caution and restrict their movements. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was captured in a large-scale US strike on the capital city of Caracas, according to President Donald Trump.

The US action has triggered political uncertainty in the South American country, with many leading powers, including Russia and China, slamming Washington for the operation and capture of Maduro and his wife. "In view of recent developments in Venezuela, Indian nationals are strongly advised to avoid all non-essential travel to Venezuela," the external affairs ministry said.

"All Indians who are in Venezuela for any reason are advised to exercise extreme caution, restrict their movements, and remain in contact with the Embassy of India in Caracas," it said.

The ministry asked Indians to get in touch with the embassy through phone number +58-412-9584288 (also for WhatsApp calls) as well as email.

There are around 50 Non-Resident Indians and 30 Persons of Indian Origin in Venezuela.

Hours after the operation in Caracas, Trump posted a photo of Maduro aboard the US warship USS Iwo Jima.

Maduro is being brought to New York, where he will face charges relating to supporting drug cartels, according to US authorities.

## Left parties condemn US aggression on Venezuela



**The Communist Party of India also strongly condemned the aggression, and called a gross violation of the UN Charter, international law, and the universally accepted principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference**

enforce regime change. This is the real face of the US National Security Strategy 2025, announced in the first week of December 2023," the CPI(M) said.

It said the concentration of US forces in the Western Hemisphere and open declaration of its intent to bring the entire region under its control represented the "Trump corollary to the Monroe Doctrine".

The Monroe Doctrine is a US foreign policy declaring the Americas off-limits to future European colonization and interference.

"Latin America should be declared a zone of peace and the US should not be allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign countries," the CPI(M) said.

The Left party also said the UN Security Council should pass a resolution condemning the US aggression and international pressure must be mounted on the US to immediately stop its aggression on Venezuela.

The CPI(M) Liberation also condemned the attack, and said aims to impose a US-backed colonial order.

## INDORE WATER CONTAMINATION TRAGEDY

# Cong, BJP workers clash

#### 45 Oppn party members detained

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indore, Jan 3:** Around 45 Madhya Pradesh Congress functionaries were detained Saturday as a "precautionary measure" after a clash with BJP workers when a fact-finding committee of the Opposition party was at Indore's Bhagirathpura area, where water contamination has claimed six lives.

The Congress committee under former state minister Sajjan Singh Verma, which includes MLAs Mahesh Parmar and Pratap Grewal, was on its way to meet affected families when BJP workers gathered at the spot carrying black flags and shouted slogans, eyewitnesses said. Congress workers too replied with slogans denouncing the ruling party, following which the two sides clashed, scuffled with each other and threw slippers, they added.

A police team that arrived at the spot escorted the Congress' fact-finding committee members and workers out of the area and took them to the



central jail, they said.

"To maintain law and order in Bhagirathpura, 45 people, including 10 women, were detained as a precautionary measure. They were later released on bail," Deputy Commissioner of Police Rajesh Vyas told PTI.

Congress leaders alleged the police acted at the behest of the ruling BJP and prevented the fact-finding committee from meeting the affected families.

This was, however, rejected by BJP leaders who said the Congress was indulging in "dirty politics" over the water contamination tragedy.

According to officials, six people have died and more than 200 were hospitalised in an outbreak of vomiting and diarrhoea caused by contaminated drinking water in Bhagirathpura, which has a large population from low and middle-income groups.

The death figures, however, vary, ranging from 10 to 16.

While Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava had said on Friday that he had information about 10 patient deaths linked to the outbreak, residents put the figure at 16, including that of a 6-month-old child.

# Modi inaugurates exhibition of sacred Piprahwa Relics

*The prime minister said the sacred Piprahwa Relics travelled to different countries with significant Buddhist populations, including Vietnam, Thailand and Russia, where waves of faith and devotion arose, and people turned up in huge numbers to pay homage*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 3:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday inaugurated an exposition of sacred ancient gems and bone fragments linked to the Buddha, asserting that they were not mere artefacts but part of India's revered heritage.

The prime minister said the sacred Piprahwa Relics travelled to different countries with significant Buddhist populations, including Vietnam, Thailand and Russia, where waves of faith and devotion arose, and people turned up in huge numbers to pay homage.

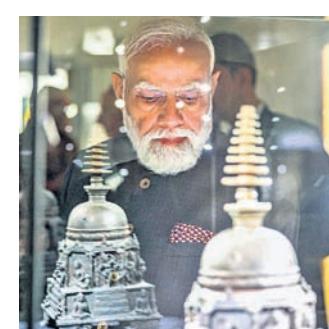
He recalled that the sacred relics were returning to India after more than 125 years at the intervention of the government and the Godrej Group, which together stopped them from being auc-

tioned off in Hong Kong last May.

"For India, the sacred relics of Bhagwan Buddha are not merely artefacts; they are a part of our revered heritage and an inseparable part of our civilisation," the prime minister said at the event here in the presence of Buddhist scholars, diplomats and other guests.

"India is not only the custodian of Lord Buddha's sacred relics but also the living carrier of his tradition," he said.

Striking a personal note, Modi said his birthplace — Vadnagar in Gujarat — was a major centre of Buddhist studies and Sarnath near Varanasi, where



Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon, was his karmabhoomi. The prime minister represents

the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat in Parliament.

Modi said before being in government, he travelled as a pilgrim to Buddhist sites, and as Prime Minister, he has the privilege of visiting Buddhist pilgrimage centres across the world. He recalled his visits to Lumbini in Nepal, To-ji Temple and Kinkaku-ji in Japan, Giant Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an, China, and the Gandan Monastery in Mongolia.

The prime minister said his visit to Jaya Sri Mahabodhi in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, was an experience of connecting with the tradition sown by

Emperor Ashoka, Bhikkhu Mahinda, and Sanghamitra.

He said that his visits to Wat Pho in Thailand and the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple in Singapore further deepened his understanding of the impact of Lord Buddha's teachings.

The prime minister said he made a point to carry saplings of the Bodhi tree to places of Buddhist pilgrimage centres across the world.

"One can imagine the profound message for humanity when a Bodhi tree stands in the botanical garden of Hiroshima, a city devastated by the atomic bomb," he said.

## international



We will not yield to the enemy (US). We will speak with the protesters but talking to rioters is useless. Rioters should be put in their place

AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI | SUPREME LEADER, IRAN

**SYRIA UNVEILS NEW CURRENCY**

Syria started the process of circulating new currency bills Saturday as the crisis-hit nation seeks to stabilise the economy as it recovers from the fall of Bashar Assad's government. A decree issued earlier this week by President Ahmad al-Sharaa said that "old Syrian currency" will be gradually withdrawn from circulation



of the day quote

Pakistan firmly rejects the irresponsible assertions made by the Indian External Affairs Minister. India seeks to deflect attention from its own troubling record as a neighbour that contributes to regional instability

TAHIR ANDRAI | FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESPERSON, PAKISTAN

China is willing to take this visit as an opportunity to enhance political mutual trust and expand mutually beneficial cooperation with Ireland

MICHAEL MARTIN | PRIME MINISTER, IRELAND

Let us all pray together for peace: first, among nations bloodied by conflict and suffering, but also within our homes, in families wounded by violence or pain

POPE LEO XIV | HEAD OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

**SHORT TAKES****Trump blocks chips deal**

**Washington:** President Donald Trump Friday blocked US photonics firm HieFo Corp's \$3 million acquisition of assets in New Jersey-based aerospace and defense specialist Emcore, citing national security and China-related concerns. In an order, opens new tab released by the White House, Trump said HieFo was "controlled by a citizen of the People's Republic of China" and that its 2024 acquisition of Emcore's businesses led the president to believe that it may "take action that threatens to impair the national security of the United States." "The Transaction is hereby prohibited," Trump said, ordering HieFo to "divest all interests and rights in the Emcore Assets, wherever located," within 180 days.

**Migrant boat capsizes**

**Banjul:** Dozens are missing after a boat carrying more than 200 migrants on their way to Europe capsized off the coast of Gambia, the West African nation's leader said late Friday, setting off a frantic search and rescue operation. At least 102 survivors have been rescued and seven bodies recovered from the boat that capsized on New Year's Eve in northwest Gambia's North Bank region, Gambian President Adama Barrow said in a state broadcast.

**Chopper crash kills 4**

**Superior:** A private helicopter crashed Friday in a mountainous area of Arizona, killing all four people aboard, officials said. Those killed were the 59-year-old pilot, two 21-year-old women and a 22-year-old woman, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office said in a post on the social platform X. Their names have not been released. It may have been caused when the helicopter hit a "recreational slackline" that was more than half a mile (more than a kilometre) long and strung across the mountains, the office said.

**At least 10 dead in Iran protests**

**Dubai:** Violence surrounding protests in Iran sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy killed two other people, authorities said Saturday, raising the death toll in the demonstrations to at least 10 as they showed no signs of stopping. The new deaths follow US President Donald Trump warning Iran on Friday that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters," the United States "will come to their rescue."

# Shock US strike upends Venezuela



The attack followed months of escalating pressure by the Trump administration, which has built up naval forces in the waters off South America and, since early September, has carried out deadly strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the eastern Pacific and Caribbean

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Caracas (Venezuela), Jan 3:** The United States carried out a lightning military strike on Venezuela early Saturday, capturing President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, and spiriting them out of the country. American officials say the pair will face narco-terrorism charges in US courts.

The overnight operation left Venezuela reeling, with its leadership uncertain and details of casualties and the impact on its military still to emerge. Countries across the region and the wider world were absorbing the destabilising implications of the apparently unilateral US action.

Rising US pressure, then an overnight attack

Explosions rang out, and low-flying aircraft swept through Venezuela's capital, Caracas, early Saturday. At least seven blasts were heard in an attack that lasted less than 30 minutes. The targets appeared to include military infrastructure. Smoke was seen rising from the hangar of

a military base in Caracas, and another military installation in the capital was without power.

Venezuelan officials said people had been killed, but the scale of casualties was unclear.

Trump said in a social media post that Maduro "has been, along with his wife, captured and flown out of the country."

**US terrorism charges**

US Attorney General Pam Bondi said on social network X that Maduro and Flores had both been indicted in the Southern District of New York and "will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts."

She said Maduro faced charges of "Narco-Terrorism Conspiracy, Cocaine Importation Conspiracy, Possession of Machineguns and Destructive Devices, and Conspiracy to Possess Machineguns and Destructive Devices against the United States."

Maduro was indicted in March 2020, during Trump's first term, but the indictment against Flores was not previously made public.

**Questions over legality**

The US does not recognise the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and the legal implications of the strike under US law were not immediately clear.

Mike Lee, a US senator from Utah, said on X that the action "likely falls within the president's inherent authority under Article II of the Constitution to protect US personnel from an actual

• Trump says US successfully hit Venezuela, took away Maduro

• Most direct US action in region since 1989 Panama invasion

• Explosions rock capital Caracas and other locations

The Trump administration maintains that Maduro is not the legitimate leader of Venezuela and claims he has effectively turned Venezuela into a criminal enterprise at the service of drug traffickers and terrorist groups.

Mike Lee, a US senator from Utah, said on X that the action "likely falls within the president's inherent authority under Article II of the Constitution to protect US personnel from an actual

or imminent attack."

Maduro's government accused the United States of an "imperialist attack" on civilian and military installations and urged citizens to take to the streets.

**World leaders split**

Venezuela's neighbour, Colombia, sent troops to the border and anticipated an influx of refugees from Venezuela.

Cuba, a supporter of the Maduro government and a longtime adversary of the United States, urged the international community to respond to what President Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez called "the criminal attack."

Russia's Foreign Ministry said the attack and capture of Maduro would be "an unacceptable infringement on the sovereignty of an independent state."

US allies in Europe — critical of Maduro but mindful of international law — offered muted responses as they scrambled to understand the scale and implications of the attack.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said the bloc "has repeatedly stated

## Maduro's heavy-handed rule finally ended by Trump

THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT'S 12-YEAR RULE IS MARKED BY ECONOMIC COLLAPSE AND SOCIAL CRISSES

Nicolas Maduro ruled Venezuela with a heavy hand for more than 12 years, presiding over deep economic and social crises and resisting pressure from domestic opponents and foreign governments for political change. His rule abruptly ended Saturday when President Donald Trump announced US forces had captured him and flown him out of the country. A 63-year-old socialist and the handpicked successor of the late Hugo Chavez, Maduro was long accused by critics both at home and abroad of being a dictator who jailed or persecuted political opponents and repeatedly staged sham elections. Maduro, a salsa aficionado with a flair for theatrics, often called opposition politicians "fascist demons" and took pride in resisting US pressure against him, even having his invocation to Trump of "yes peace, not war" remixed into an electronic song.

He was sworn in for a third term in January 2025 following a 2024 election that was widely condemned as fraudulent by international observers and the opposition. Thousands of people who protested against the government's declaration of victory were jailed.

Venezuela's opposition, the United States and many other Western countries also considered Maduro's election win in 2018 to be a sham. His government's repressive measures were highlighted by the awarding of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize to opposition leader Maria Corina Machado.

Maduro was born into a working-class family on November 23, 1962, son of a trade union leader. He worked as a bus driver during the time army failed coup for Chavez from prison

attempt to be and backed his fervent leftist agenda in an era when socialism was well out of favor.

Nicolas Maduro and his wife, describing it as a hegemonic act that seriously violates international law. "China is deeply shocked by and strongly condemns the US's blatant use of force against a sovereign state and action against its President," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

**YEMEN CONFLICT**

## Saudi allies reclaim eastern city

REUTERS



■ Yemen crisis triggered major Gulf feud  
■ Saudi-backed forces retake areas in eastern Yemen  
■ Southern separatists seek independence referendum

## Hindu bizman dies 3 days after attack in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Jan 3:** A Hindu businessman, who was brutally attacked, hacked and set on fire three days ago, died Saturday in Bangladesh, reports and a minority faith group leader said.

This is the fifth death of a person from Hindu community since December and radical groups in Bangladesh are visibly trying to intimidate the minority faiths, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council spokesman Kajol Debnath said.

Khokon Chandra Das, 50, was assaulted near Keurbangha Bazaar in Damudya in Shariatpur district, about 100 kilometres south of Dhaka, Wednesday night while returning home after closing his shop. "Das died this morning after battling for life for three days," Debnath confirmed.

Das, who ran a medicine



shop and mobile banking business, was travelling in an autorickshaw when the attackers intercepted the vehicle and allegedly beat him up, hacked him with sharp weapons and then poured petrol on his head before setting him on fire, media reports had said Thursday.

In a bid to save himself, Das jumped into a roadside pond as locals raised an alarm. The attackers fled the scene, police

said, adding that he was rescued by locals, taken to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, and then referred to Dhaka due to the severity of his injuries.

Doctors in Dhaka said Das suffered multiple injuries across his body, including a serious wound to his abdomen, along with burn injuries on his face, head and hands.

On December 18, 25-year-old Dipu Chandra Das was lynched by a mob and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Mymensingh city.

A week later, December 23, unidentified men set on fire a Qatar expatriate workers Shukh Shil and Anil Shil's home in Raojan area on the outskirts of Chattogram, but the residents managed to come out of the building unharmed.

On December 24, another Hindu man Amrit Mondal was lynched over alleged extortion in Rajbari town's Pangsha upazila. Post reported Saturday.

Xi, 72, currently in his unpreceded third five-year term as President, started the anti-graft campaign against "tigers and flies," meaning big and small officials, when he took over power in 2012.

State media reports previously said over a million officials, including dozens of high-level military officials, were punished. Several top army generals were also removed last year in the anti-graft campaign.

Observers say that the intensity of the campaign and its continuation also helped Xi to consolidate his power in the party and military.

In an October internal speech, excerpts of which were made public Wednesday, Xi emphasised that corruption was "the greatest threat" facing the party and said the cases were another reminder that the fight remained "grim and complex."

The latest to be detained was Zhang Shiping, 71, former vice-chairwoman of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

She was detained Tuesday for suspected corruption, the Post report said.

## Pak backs China's Op Sindoor mediation claim

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



It was diplomacy for prosperity, for security, and this has been a hallmark of a number of international efforts that went into resolving that conflict in those three to four fateful days

TAHIR ANDRAI | FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESPERSON, PAKISTAN

security in the region. So, I'm sure that the Chinese characterisation of mediation is correct," he said Thursday while replying to a question about Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's claim that India-Pak tensions were among the list of hotspot issues "mediated" by China in 2025.

India has maintained that the conflict with Pakistan in May last year was resolved through direct talks between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of both countries' armies.

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

Andrahi described China's claim of mediation as "diplomatic

macy for peace".

Speaking at a symposium in Beijing Tuesday, Wang said tensions between India and Pakistan were among a list of hot issues mediated by China in 2025.

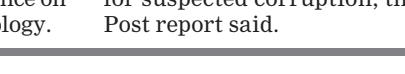
India launched Operation

Pak tests indigenous 'Taimoor' missile

Pakistan Air Force has successfully conducted a flight test of the indigenously developed Taimoor Weapon System, capable of hitting targets at 600 kilometres, it was announced Saturday. This launch marks another significant milestone in the advancement of national aerospace and defence capabilities, the army said in a statement issued in Rawalpindi.

"Taimoor Air-Launched Cruise Missile is capable of engaging enemy land and sea targets with high precision at a range of 600 kilometers, carrying a conventional warhead," it added. Equipped with a state-of-the-art navigation and guidance system, Taimoor is designed to fly at very low altitudes, enabling it to effectively evade hostile air and missile defence systems.

with an understanding to stop the military actions May 10. Pakistan employed Chinese hardware during the conflict, highlighting its dependence on Beijing's defence technology.





**“** I think by 2032, we would be very significant among the top 4 nations of the semiconductor industry, and by 2035, we would be among the best. This direction is clearly visible. This can be clearly predicted

ASHWINI VAISHNAV | UNION MINISTER

**NTPC'S NUCLEAR PLANS**

NTPC is exploring multiple international collaborations in the area of technology and fuel to push its nuclear ambitions to diversify energy generation. NTPC is looking to set up around 30 GW of company-owned nuclear projects across various locations in the country in line with the government's ambition of having 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047. Sources said the company is eyeing 2 GW of nuclear capacity as early as 2032



of the day quote

India's future workforce must not only be digitally aware but AI-confident

JAYANT CHAUDHARY | UNION MINISTER

Enduring markets are not built on momentary highs or cycles of optimism. They are built on institutions that inspire trust, regulation that evolves with markets, and systems that continuously adapt and upgrade

TUTHIN KANTA PANDEY | CHAIRMAN, SEBI

Distributors remain key market enablers in taking Indian components across India and global supply chains

ASHOK CHANDAK | PRESIDENT, IESA

**SHORT TAKES****Bharat Coking Coal IPO to open Jan 9**

**Mumbai:** State-owned Bharat Coking Coal, a subsidiary of Coal India, has filed its Red Herring Prospectus with the Registrar of Companies to launch its Initial Public Offering January 9, marking the first mainboard IPO of the new year 2026. The public issue will be entirely an offer-for-sale of 46.57 crore equity shares by its promoter Coal India. There is no fresh issue component, which means the company itself will not receive any funds from the IPO. All proceeds from the issue will go to Coal India as the selling shareholder. In its prospectus filed on January 2, Bharat Coking Coal said the main objectives of the IPO are to carry out the offer-for-sale and to gain the benefits of listing its equity shares on the stock exchanges.

**PNB's global business surges 9.57% in Q3**

**Mumbai:** State-owned Punjab National Bank Friday said its global business rose 9.57 per cent year-on-year to ₹28.92 lakh crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal. The bank has shared its provisional business figures for the period ended December 31, 2025, with the stock exchanges. According to the exchange filing, its domestic business stood at ₹27.65 lakh crore during the October-December period, up 9.09 per cent over the corresponding quarter of 2024-25. Bank's global deposits grew 8.54 per cent year-on-year to ₹16.6 lakh crore, and domestic deposits rose 8.32 per cent year-on-year to ₹15.97 lakh crore. Punjab National Bank further said its global advances were up 10.98 per cent year-on-year to ₹12.32 lakh crore, while domestic advances increased 10.15 per cent annually to ₹11.68 lakh crore.

**Hindustan Zinc mined metal production rises**

**New Delhi:** Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) reported a four per cent rise in mined metal output to 2,76,000 tonnes in the third quarter of the current fiscal year, primarily on account of higher ore production. The company's mined metal output was 2,65,000 tonnes in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. The production of saleable metal during the third quarter also rose by four per cent. Of the total saleable metal output, refined zinc production was 2,21,000 tonnes and refined lead output was 49,000 tonnes. However, the saleable silver production during the quarter declined marginally by one per cent to 158 metric tonnes, the company said in a filing to BSE.

# Tesla loses EV crown to BYD

In a first, the Chinese automaker's electric vehicle sales surpass Musk's Tesla after years of narrowing the gap

REUTERS



Washington, Jan 3: Tesla ceded its crown as the world's top electric vehicle maker to China's BYD, after annual sales fell for a second year, hit by rising competition, the expiry of US tax credits and brand backlash.

With global EV sales rising 28% last year, BYD outsold Tesla for the first time on an annual basis, helped by rapid growth in Europe, where the Chinese automaker has been widening its lead over the US rival.

Tesla, whose sales fell about 8.6% in 2025, is facing intense competition, especially in Europe, raising questions about its ability to revive the core auto-business as CEO Elon Musk steers the company towards robo-taxis and humanoid robots.

**END OF TAX CREDIT IN US PINCHES TESLA**

Tesla's fourth-quarter figures come after third-quarter deliveries were supported by a rush to lock in \$7,500 in federal tax credits after President Donald Trump's administration decided to pull the plug on the incentive in September.

In the US, EVs accounted for 6.2% of retail vehicle sales in the quarter, down 3.6 percentage points from a year earlier, while average transaction price

- Tesla's annual sales decline for second consecutive year
- EV demand softens after US tax credit expiration

rose nearly \$6,000 to \$53,300, according to J.D. Power data.

Tesla said it delivered 418,227 vehicles in the October-December quarter, down 15.6% from 495,570 a year earlier. Analysts expected 434,487 vehicles, or a 12.3% drop, according to Visible Alpha.

For the full year, Tesla delivered 1.64 million vehicles, compared with 1.79 million in 2024. Analysts polled by Visible Alpha had expected de-

- Tesla's focus shifts to robotics and self-driving technology
- Tesla loses top EV maker title to China's BYD

liveries of about 1.65 million vehicles.

The decline in deliveries was not a major surprise, given the market had already priced in weaker demand after US EV tax credits ended, said Seth Goldstein, senior equity research analyst at Morningstar.

Meanwhile, Tesla said it deployed 14.2 GWh of energy storage products, a record high. It is set to report fourth-quarter results January 28.

**INTENSIFYING COMPETITION IN NORTH AMERICA, EUROPE**

Growing competition from Chinese and European automakers such as BYD, Volkswagen and BMW has weighed on Tesla's sales momentum.

Tesla registrations declined across much of Europe in December but jumped in Norway, where record sales contrasted with shrinking market share in the rest of the region in 2025.

BYD said sales outside of China climbed to a record 1 million vehicles in 2025, up about 150% from 2024. The company has said it aimed to sell as many as 1.6 million vehicles outside China in 2026, though it has not dis-

**96% ELECTRIC**

Norway zips ahead in EV race

Almost all new cars registered in Norway last year were fully electric, official data showed, headed by booming Tesla sales as the Nordic country cements its global lead in phasing out petrol and diesel-powered vehicles. Oil-producing Norway's rapid switch to battery-powered vehicles contrasts with the rest of Europe, where weak demand for EVs prompted the European Union last month to reverse its planned 2035 ban on internal combustion engine cars. Driven by tax incentives, 95.9% of all new cars registered in Norway in 2025 were EVs, with that number at almost 98% in December. The annual figure was up from 88.9% in 2024, Norwegian Road Federation (OFV) data showed. A record 179,549 new cars were registered in Norway during the year, a 40% increase from 2024, the OFV said. Tesla was Norway's top-selling car brand for a fifth consecutive year, with a 19.1% market share, followed by Volkswagen at 13.3% of registrations and Volvo Cars at 7.8%.

closed an overall sales target.

Tesla in October launched stripped-down "Standard" versions of the Model Y and Model 3, priced about \$5,000 below the previous base models, as it sought to defend sales volumes after the tax credit loss and appeal to customers in Europe looking for cheaper options.

The move disappointed some investors who had expected a larger price cut or a meaningfully new mass-market product.

Even as vehicle deliveries have weakened, Tesla shares rose about 11.4% in 2025, boosting Musk's wealth.

## Transport Ministry plans Aadhaar-style ID for EV batteries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: The transport ministry has proposed assigning Aadhaar-like unique identification number to EV batteries to ensure their end-to-end traceability and efficient recycling.

The proposed framework will make it mandatory for battery producer or importer to assign a 21-character Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) to batteries, as per the draft guidelines issued by the ministry.

They will also have to upload the relevant Battery Pack Dynamic data on the official portal of BPAN.

"The battery producer or importer shall have the obligation of assigning a unique Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) to each battery that they introduce in the market and the battery they put to self-use."

"BPAN shall be in a clearly visible and accessible position. The location shall be chosen in a way that it cannot be destroyed or deteriorate," the guidelines said.

BPAN will capture and store vital information starting from raw material extraction and manufacturing to its usage, recycling, or final disposal, as per the 'Guidelines For Implementation Of Battery Pack Aadhaar System'.

According to the guidelines, any change in attributes of BPAN due to recycling and repurposing shall result in a new BPAN by the same or a new producer or importer.

This system aims to bring transparency, accountability, and sustainability to the battery ecosystem by enabling accurate tracking of performance, and environmental impact.

BPAN will play a crucial role in enabling second-life usage, regulatory compliance, and efficient recycling.

Electric vehicle applications account for 80-90 per cent of the total lithium-ion battery demand in India, significantly exceeding demand from industrial or non-automotive applications.

While the guideline recommends applicability of BPAN for industrial batteries above 2 kWh, it is proposed that electric vehicle batteries be given priority during standard formulation, considering their scale, safety implications, and regulatory relevance.

"This approach will ensure that the Battery Pack Aadhaar framework addresses the most impactful segment of the Indian battery ecosystem in its initial phase," the draft guidelines said.

They also recommended that the Battery Pack Aadhaar framework be taken forward through the Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) route under the Automotive Industry Standards Committee (AISC), following the established multi-step standardization process.

This will enable structured stakeholder consultation, technical validation, and harmonization with existing automotive regulations while ensuring national uniformity and regulatory acceptance, it said.

## Indians lose over ₹52,976 crore to cyber frauds over six years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Indians lost over ₹52,976 crore to various frauds and cheating cases over the past six years, with Maharashtra recording the highest monetary losses in such offences, according to reports.

Losses of about ₹19,813 crore and 2,177,524 cheating-related complaints were recorded in 2025, according to data from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) that compiled information from National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

Reported losses in 2024 was ₹22,849.49 crore with 1,918,852 complaints, and smaller sums were recorded in earlier years pointing to a worrying surge in financial crimes such as investment traps, digital arrest, online scams and banking frauds.

Analysts attributed the sharp rise to rapid digitisation, increased online transactions and more sophisticated scam networks. The data showed Maharashtra suffered the largest monetary losses from cheating cases last year at ₹3,203 crore with 2,833,20 complaints, followed by Karnataka at ₹2,413 crore and 2,132,28 complaints, according to a report from Indi-

**ALARMING TREND**

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- Reported losses in 2024 was ₹22,849.49cr with 1,918,852 complaints
- Maharashtra suffers largest monetary losses of ₹3,203cr last year

Tamil Nadu posted losses of 1,897 crore and 1,232,90 complaints, Uttar Pradesh at ₹1,443 crore and 2,752,64 complaints; and Telangana with ₹1,372 crore of losses and 95,000 complaints, were among top five states accounting for more than half the

national total, the report said.

Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS) data showed that around 21 crore cyber fraud complaints were reported in 2025 with 45 per cent of them originating from Southeast Asian countries – Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos.

The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal has been launched to enable citizens to report complaints relating to various categories of cybercrime, with a special focus on offences targeting women and children. A dedicated cybercrime helpline number, 1930, provides immediate assistance to victims of online financial frauds.

This will enable structured stakeholder consultation, technical validation, and harmonization with existing automotive regulations while ensuring national uniformity and regulatory acceptance, it said.

## Flexible gig work ensures reliable income: Deepinder

According to estimates, there are over 12.7 million gig workers in India, with government think tank NITI Aayog saying this workforce is expected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029-30

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 3: Amid the debate on gig workers' payoffs and working conditions, Eternal Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said this model does not pressure riders, and flexible schedules and welfare benefits make gig work a reliable source of income for many.

Eternal owns Zomato and Blinkit businesses.

His remarks come at a time when gig workers' unions have been staging protests, demanding better payoffs and

improved working conditions. "In 2025, Zomato and Blinkit spent over ₹100 crore on insurance coverage for delivery partners. In 2025, average earnings per hour (EPH), excluding tips, for a delivery partner on Zomato were ₹102. In 2024, this number was ₹92. That's a ~10.9 pc year-on-year increase. Over a longer horizon also, EPH has shown steady growth," Goyal said on X.

He claimed that the 10-minute delivery promise does not pressure riders, explaining how flexible schedules and welfare



benefits make gig work a reliable source of income for many.

However, his comments drew mixed responses from internet users on X, with several accusing riders of rash driving and violating traffic rules to meet 10-minute delivery deadlines.

service delivery mandates to prioritise worker safety".

Goyal also batted for "less regulation" for India's gig economy, arguing that it will eventually help bring more people into the "organised" workforce.

"Delivery partners are not overworked on our platforms. In 2025, the average delivery partner on Zomato worked 38 days in the year and 7 hours per working day, reflecting true gig style participation rather than fixed schedules. Only 2.3 pc of partners worked more than 250 days in the year. Demanding full-time employee benefits like PF, or guaranteed salaries for gig roles doesn't align with what the model is built for," he argued.

The Eternal founder said most delivery partners work

for a few hours and only a few days in a month.

"But if someone were to work for 10 hours/day, 26 days/month, this translates to ~Rs 26,500/month in gross earnings. After accounting for fuel and maintenance (~20 pc), the net earnings for the partner are ~Rs 21,000/month," he stated.

In November, the government notified all four labour codes, ushering in major reforms, including universal social security coverage for gig workers.

The labour ministry has proposed a 90-day annual work threshold as the mandatory eligibility criteria for gig and platform workers to access social security under new draft rules on the Social Security Code 2020, published on December 31.

## INDIA-NZ ODIs

# Siraj makes comeback, Iyer included subject to fitness



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 3:** Senior India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj Saturday made a comeback to the ODI side for the three-match home series against New Zealand while batter Shreyas Iyer was included subject to fitness clearance.

Siraj, who was overlooked for the home series against South Africa, is back in the ODI setup. His new ball partner Jasprit Bumrah was expectedly rested from the series with the focus on the shortest format ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning next month.

Iyer, who was hospitalised during the ODI series in Australia in November for spleen laceration, will need to prove his match fitness in a Vijay Hazare Trophy game January 6 to get fitness clearance from the Centre of Excellence (COE). He returns to the squad as vice-captain.

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya was not cleared by the COE to bowl 10 overs in a match and therefore the

selectors did not include him in the team for the series beginning in Vadodara January 11. There is also little point in risking him with T20 show-piece around the corner.

The other two matches will be played in Rajkot and Indore January 14 and 18 respectively.

"Shreyas Iyer's availability is subject to fitness clearance from BCCI COE," said the BCCI in a statement.

"Hardik Pandya has not been cleared by the BCCI COE to bowl 10 overs in a match, and considering the ICC Men's T20 World Cup to follow, his workload is being managed," it added.

Rituraj Gaikwad could not get the selectors' nod despite scoring a fine hundred during the South Africa series. With captain Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer not part of the South Africa ODIs due to injuries, Gaikwad had made a splendid 105 off 83 balls batting at number four in Raipur.

After being dropped from the T20 World Cup squad, Gill will take back the ODI leader-

ship mantle from KL Rahul, who led the team in the former's absence.

Despite speculation, Rishabh Pant has retained his place as the second wicket-keeper in the squad. Tilak Varma and Dhruv Jurel, who were part of the previous series, have been left out with senior players returning from injuries.

The pace attack comprises Siraj, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh with all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy being the fourth option.

India superstars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, now one format players, are once again expected to draw huge crowds to the three venues.

## SQUAD

Shubman Gill (C), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (WK), Shreyas Iyer (VC; subject to fitness clearance), Washington Sundar, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohd Siraj, Harshit Rana, Prasidh Krishna, Kuldeep Yadav, Rishabh Pant (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Arshdeep Singh, Yashavji Jaiswal

## HIL: Lancers to take on Ranchi



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

son opener, head coach Jay Stacy highlighted the importance of preparation and composure in the opening game.

"The group has worked hard in preparation, and the focus has been on clarity in our roles and discipline across the pitch. Opening games are about settling quickly and playing smart hockey," said Stacy.

The Lancers, last season's second-highest goal scorers, aim to maintain their attacking approach this year while also improving their defensive setup.

Kalinga Lancers will play two matches in Chennai, with their second match against defending champions Bengal Tigers Thursday (January 8).

Speaking ahead of their sea-

**Wawrinka opens farewell tour in style**

**Perth:** Stan Wawrinka's 40-year-old legs didn't let him down over three-plus hours in his first singles match of a 2026 farewell tour

Saturday. Three-time Grand Slam singles champion Wawrinka beat Arthur Rinderknech of France, who is ranked 29th to Wawrinka's 157th, 5-7, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (5). The match went 3 hours, 16 minutes. Wawrinka

announced in December that this year would be his last on the ATP tour. "Today was a tough battle. . . it's amazing to come here for the first time, to have so much support," Wawrinka said Saturday.

"Twenty years on tour, you kind of always play in the same place and tournaments. So for me it's amazing to have this opportunity this year to play in Perth." Ahead of his first match, Wawrinka said he hoped to improve on his current ranking and move back into the top 100 before he retires. His highest ranking was No 3, achieved when he won the Australian Open in 2014.

selection panel will take a final call on the strength of the Indian athletics contingent for the Asian Games."

Sumariwalla, who is also one of the vice presidents of the World Athletics said, the core group of athletes gave a good account of themselves in 2025, which augurs well for the 2026 season.

"Indian athletics contingent won 29 medals, six of them gold at the previous edition of the 2022 Asian Games held in China," Sumariwalla added. "I'm confident that the overall medal tally in athletics will be better at the Asian Games in Japan."

Sumariwalla said, the sixth place finish in track and field events at the previous Asian

Games held in China was the benchmark for 2026 Asian Games. However, in several events including 200m, 400m, 800m and high hurdles the qual-

# KKR releases Mustafizur amid tensions

## BCCI DIKTAT



The pressure had been mounting on the BCCI over the Bangladeshi player's participation after recent killing of a Hindu man in the country and India's expression of concern for the safety of minorities there

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, Jan 3:** Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman has been released by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders after being instructed to do so by the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) amid heightening diplomatic tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

KKR had acquired the services of the 30-year-old left-arm bowler for Rs 9.20 crore from a base price of Rs 2 crore after an intense bidding war with Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals at the players' auction last month.

The BCCI said KKR will be allowed to name a replacement player if required for the event scheduled to start March 26.

"The BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to release Mustafizur Rahman from its squad. They can ask for replacement, if needed. And upon request, BCCI will allow a replacement player," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI here Saturday.

Asked why the BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to do so, he replied, "Because

of recent developments all across."

In a statement, the franchise said it has released the player as instructed by the BCCI.

"Kolkata Knight Riders confirms that BCCI/IPL as the regulator of IPL has instructed it to release Mustafizur Rahman from the squad ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

"The release has been carried out following due process and consultations, upon the instruction of the Board of Control of Cricket in India," KKR said in a statement.

The pressure had been mounting on the BCCI over Rahman's participation after recent killing of a Hindu man in the country and India's expression of concern for the safety of minorities there.

The criticism has also extended to KKR co-owner and Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan with some politi-

cians from the ruling BJP questioning the call to include the bowler in the current scenario.

Rahman has featured in eight IPL editions since 2016, missing the tournament only in 2019 and 2020.

He has played for teams such as Sunrisers Hyderabad, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals. The upcoming edition was going to be his first for three-time IPL winners KKR. Neither him, nor the Bangladesh Cricket Board have reacted to the development yet.

Rahman was allowed to register for the auction by the Indian Board but the Indo-Ban-

**The BCCI has taken this decision after thorough consultation, and Mr Saikia has already conveyed it to the media. The decision is related only to the IPL; we have not discussed the World Cup yet. We will share details once that is done**

MITHUN MANHAS | PRESIDENT, BCCI

## Haryana snap Odisha winning streak

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bangalore, Jan 3:** Haryana registered a composed four-wicket victory over Odisha in Match 5 of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025-26 at Alur Cricket Stadium II, Bangalore, riding on a commanding century by Parth Vats in a high-scoring contest.

Asked to bat first after Haryana opted to field, Odisha posted a competitive 305 for 9 in their allotted 50 overs. The innings was anchored by Swastik Samal, who struck a fluent 101 off 102 balls, laced with 10 fours and three sixes. Samal found solid support from Govinda Poddar, who contributed a patient 77 off 82 deliveries, ensuring Odisha maintained momentum through the middle overs.

Haryana's bowlers, however, pulled things back at crucial junctures, with Parth Vats and Anuj Thakral sharing three wickets apiece. While runs flowed freely, Haryana managed to restrict Odisha from crossing the 320 mark, keeping the chase within reach.

In reply, Haryana showcased remarkable composure in pur-



Soumya Ranjan Lenka makes his List-A debut Saturday

suit of the 306-run target. Opener Parth Vats led from the front with a superb unbeaten 157 off 136 balls, displaying a fine blend of patience and controlled aggression. His innings included 13 fours and five sixes and laid the foundation for the chase. Anuj Thakral complemented him perfectly, remaining not out on 59 from 48 balls, striking timely boundaries to keep the

asking rate under control. The duo stitched together a decisive partnership that took the game away from Odisha.

For Odisha, Debabrata Pradhan and Biplab Samantray picked up two wickets each, but their efforts were not enough to halt Haryana's steady progress. Haryana eventually reached 309 for 6 in 48.4 overs to seal the contest comfortably.

The win underlined Haryana's batting depth and chase temperament, while Odisha were left to rue missed opportunities despite posting an imposing total.

## BRIEF SCORES

**Odisha** 305 for 9 in 50 overs (Swastik Samal 101, Govinda Poddar 77, Biplob Samantray 47; Anuj Thakral 3/68, Parth Vats 3/60) lost to **Haryana** 309 for 6 in 48.4 overs (Parth Vats 157 not out, Anuj Thakral 59 not out) by 4 wickets

## Pandya unleashes carnage

**India** all-rounder Hardik Pandya Saturday clobbered nearly half a dozen sixes including five in an over on way to a 93-ball 133, for Baroda against Vidarbha in their Vijay Hazare Trophy contest here. Pandya hit an overall 11 sixes and eight fours to turn the tables on Vidarbha, who had taken control of the game by reducing Baroda to 71 for five at one stage and then 136 for six in the first half. However, batting as low as No 7 in his first match of the competition, Pandya came out all guns blazing to bring up his maiden List A century in his 119th match, taking Baroda to a competitive total of 293 for nine in their 50 overs. In the 39th over, Pandya went after Vidarbha spinner Parth Khadeka to collect a total of 34 runs which included five sixes and a four. The first five balls of the left-arm spinner went flying over the ropes while the final ball was hit for a boundary.



Games held in China was the benchmark for 2026 Asian Games. However, in several events including 200m, 400m, 800m and high hurdles the qual-

ification mark has been fifth place finish. "The government (Sports Ministry) has been apprised of the AFI qualification mark," the AFI spokesperson

but the first major track and field event—National Senior Athletics Federation Competition will be held from May 22 to 25 in Bhubaneswar.

The National Inter State Senior Athletics Championships is scheduled to be held from July 8 to 12 in Bhubaneswar. Both the above track and field competitions will be a good platform to earn qualification marks for the Asian Games.

"It is also mandatory for all to compete in state meets and two regional competitions to be eligible for the main track and field competitions," Sumariwalla added. "Athletes who

skip state meets without prior permission will not be eligible for main track and field events."

## Eyeing 2026 Asian Games, AFI announces qualification marks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 3:** With a goal to improve overall medal tally in track and field at the Asian Games in Japan, the AFI (Athletics Federation of India) announced qualification mark here Saturday.

While announcing the Asian Games qualification standards, Adil Sumariwalla former AFI president and spokesperson said, the athletes have ample time at hand to peak at the right time and book tickets for the major international multi-discipline competition of the 2026 season. "The AFI will select at least two eligible athletes in each of the events," Sumariwalla added. "The AFI

selection panel will take a final call on the strength of the Indian athletics contingent for the Asian Games."

Sumariwalla, who is also one of the vice presidents of the World Athletics said, the core group of athletes gave a good account of themselves in 2025, which augurs well for the 2026 season.

"Indian athletics contingent won 29 medals, six of them gold at the previous edition of the 2022 Asian Games held in China," Sumariwalla added. "I'm confident that the overall medal tally in athletics will be better at the Asian Games in Japan."

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