



## Diana's perspective

Professionalism requires actors to set aside personal relationships and fully commit to their roles, says Diana Penty

LEISURE | P2



## NK fires missiles

North Korea launches ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters, just hours before South Korea's President left for China

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## India may benefit

Restructuring of Venezuela's oil sector could deliver a direct benefit to India, unlocking close to \$1bn in long-pending dues

BUSINESS | P11



## B'desh snubs India

BCB decides against sending its national team to India for the T20 World Cup next month citing security concerns

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BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | JANUARY 5, 2026

## 7 dead, 15 injured in road accidents

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 4:** Seven persons were killed and over 15 injured in three separate accidents across the state Sunday, officials said.

Three persons were killed on National Highway-55 within Dhanupali police limits in Sambalpur district after the car in which they were travelling rammed into a stationary truck, police said.

Locals, along with police, rushed to the spot and rescued the injured trapped inside the car. The driver died on spot while two others succumbed to injuries at VIMSAR, Burla.

In the second incident, two persons died after a car-truck lorry van collided head-on with a motorcycle on Anga river bridge on NH-26 near Cherupali in Subarnapur district Sunday. The victims were identified as Partha Bag, 15, and his uncle Bhajan Bag, 30, both residents of Charda village under Binika police limits in Subarnapur district.

In the third incident, two friends riding a motorcycle were killed in an accident in Banarpal police station area in Angul district.

Meanwhile, more than 15 people were injured in a head-on collision between a minibus and a van at Jhatipitia in Ganjam district Sunday.

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK



**STREET SHOW:** The New Year's first 'Patha Ustav' held on Master Canteen-Rama Mandir stretch in Bhubaneswar saw huge footfall, Sunday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

P3

## Red Fort blast accused used 'ghost' SIM cards



**Srinagar/New Delhi:** Investigations into the "white-collar" terror module linked to the blast near Delhi's Red Fort November 10 last year show that highly educated doctors used a sophisticated web of 'ghost' SIM cards and encrypted apps to coordinate with Pakistani handlers, officials claimed Sunday. Each accused, including Dr Umar-un-Nabi, who was killed while driving the explosives-laden vehicle near the Red Fort, carried two to three mobile handsets, they said. The accused carried one "clean" phone registered in their own names for routine personal and professional use to avoid suspicion and one was the "terror phone" used exclusively for WhatsApp and Telegram communication with their handlers in Pakistan.

**At least 30 killed in Nigeria shooting**

**Minna:** At least 30 villagers have been killed and several others are missing after gunmen raided a village in northern Nigeria's Niger state, police said Sunday, the latest in a cycle of deadly violence in the conflict-hit region. The gunmen stormed the Kasuwan-Daji village in Borgu local government area Saturday evening and opened fire on residents. They also razed down the local market and several houses, state police spokesman Wasiu Abiodun said in a statement. At least two residents put the death toll at 37 and said it could be much higher as some people remained missing as of Sunday.

P10

## Despite SC nod, no ad-hoc judges appointed in HCs

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** No ad-hoc judges have been appointed in high courts so far to tackle pending criminal cases, nearly a year after the Supreme Court cleared the decks for it, as the high courts have not evinced interest.

According to people aware of the procedure to appoint Supreme Court and high court judges, none of the 25 high courts have recommended names for appointment as ad-hoc judges.

Concerned over the pendency of over 18 lakh criminal cases, the Supreme Court had January 30, 2025, allowed the high courts to appoint ad-hoc judges, not exceeding 10 per cent of the court's total sanctioned strength.

However, the Union Law Ministry is yet to get any recommendation from any of the high court collegiums to appoint retired judges on an ad-hoc basis.

Article 224A of the Constitution allows the appointment of



retired judges as ad-hoc judges in high courts to help manage case backlog.

According to the laid-down procedure, the respective high court collegiums send recommendations or names of candidates to be appointed as HC judges to the Department of Justice in the Law Ministry. The department then adds inputs and details on the candidates before forwarding them to the Supreme Court Collegium.

The SC Collegium then takes a final call and recommends to the government the appointment of the selected persons as judges.

The President signs the 'warrant of appointment' of the newly-appointed judge.

The procedure to appoint ad-hoc judges will be the same except that the President will not sign the warrant of appointment. But the assent of the President will be sought for appointing ad-hoc judges.

Except in one case, there is no precedent of appointing retired judges as ad-hoc HC judges, officials said.

In a judgement April 20, 2021, on the appointment of ad-hoc judges in the high courts, the top court had imposed certain conditions. However, later a special Supreme Court bench comprising then Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices BR Gavai (another former CJI) and Surya Kant (incumbent CJI) had relaxed certain conditions and kept some in abeyance.

The verdict, which was authored by former Chief Justice SA Bobde, directed retired high court judges to be appointed as ad-hoc ones for a period of two to three years to clear the backlog.

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## Two bodies recovered from Dhenkanal quarry

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 4:** A day after at least four people were feared dead at an unauthorised stone quarry near Gopalpur under Motanga police limits in Dhenkanal district, bodies of two workers were recovered Sunday, said officials.

Though the exact cause behind the incident is unclear yet, teams of local fire service, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), along with dog squad, were engaged in rescue operations, an officer said.

Dhenkanal Collector Ashish Ishwar Patil and SP Abhinav Sonkar have reached the spot to supervise the rescue operation.

"As per available information, only two persons were there, and two bodies were recovered. One person belonged to Balasore district, while another deceased was from either Keonjhar or Mayurbhanj district. Their identities have not yet been established," Patil told reporters.

Blasting permission at the stone quarry expired in September while its lease period ended in December 2025, he said.

"We will take legal action against the mine lease holder as blasting and mining continued at the quarry after expiry of the lease period," Patil said.

## Pitabas murder: Cops name 16 in chargesheet



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 4:** Nearly three months after BJP leader and lawyer Pitabas Panda was shot dead outside his residence, police submitted a preliminary chargesheet in the high-profile murder case in a court here Sunday. The 1,667-page chargesheet was filed in 18 copies, while CCTV footage and other evidence were also attached.

Led by investigating officer (IO) and Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Priyash Ranjan Chhotray, a team of police officials submitted the documents at the district court, marking a major procedural milestone in the case. The chargesheet, filed in the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) court, names 16 accused, including former Berhampur MLA and BJD Ganjam district president Bikram Kumar Panda, and former Berhampur mayor Siva Shankar Das, they said.

Pitabas Panda, a member of the Odisha State Bar Council and former BJP leader, was shot dead October 6, 2025 night near his residence in Baikunthanagar under Baidyanathpur police station.

The police had registered the case (518/25) and began an investigation immediately.

They also arrested Panda, Das, corporator Malaya Bisoyi, and BJD leader Madan Lalai. Some accused had previously secured bail from lower courts but have now approached the High Court.

## Trump's Venezuela oil plan may not be a cakewalk

ASSOCIATED PRESS

a day to return to historic levels fairly quickly.

"While many are reporting Venezuela's oil infrastructure was unharmed by US military actions, it has been decaying for many, many years and will take time to rebuild," said Patrick De Haan, who is the lead petroleum analyst at gasoline price tracker GasBuddy.

American oil companies will want a stable regime in the country before they are willing to invest heavily, and the political picture remained uncertain Saturday with Trump saying that the United States is in charge, while the current Venezuelan vice president argued, before Venezuela's high court



ordered her to assume the role of interim president, that Maduro should be restored to power.

"But if it seems like the US is successful in running the country for the next 24 hours,

I would say there would be a lot of optimism that US energy companies could come in and revitalise the Venezuelan oil industry fairly quickly," said Phil Flynn, a senior market analyst

at the Price Futures Group.

And if Venezuela can grow into an oil production powerhouse, Flynn said, "that could cement lower prices for the long

term" and put more pressure on Russia.

Oil isn't traded over the weekend, so there wasn't an immediate impact on prices. But a major shift in prices isn't expected when the market does reopen. Venezuela is a member of OPEC, so its production is already accounted for there. And there is currently a surplus of oil on the global market.

Venezuela is known to have the world's largest proven crude oil reserves of approximately 303 billion barrels, according to the US Energy Information Administration. That accounts for roughly 17 per cent of all global oil reserves.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Why do Indians visiting Venezuela need an advisory? They already have undergone training

## leisure

**DICAPRIO QUESTIONS FUTURE OF THEATRE**

Leonardo DiCaprio has expressed uncertainty over whether audiences still share the same enthusiasm for cinema halls amid the rapid rise of streaming platforms. Reflecting on the film industry's transformation, the actor questioned if traditional theatres could eventually turn into niche cultural spaces, comparing them to jazz bars.

**JOHNSON TALKS ABOUT HIS CHILDHOOD HARSHIPS**

Dwayne Johnson recently reflected on his challenging childhood, opening up about growing up in a dysfunctional family. In an interview with *Variety*, the actor revealed his parents shared an "explosive, volcanic" relationship. He spoke about his father's struggles with addiction and instability, while his mother held the family together as she raised him.

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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**ARIES**

You may pick up the hammer and chisel today. No, you're not taking up sculpture; you're finally giving in to your spouse's demands to take some home improvement measures. It's in your interest to be speedy and focused, as you are the guilty party, says Ganesha.

**TAURUS**

You will find comfort, perched on a branch in the family tree, today. Your maturity will help you deal with emotional issues with ease. Energy and exuberance will be an investment you make today, the results of which you will reap in the days to come, hopes Ganesha.

**GEMINI**

Your desire for a clean house will reach the level of obsession, predicts Ganesha. You may plan to wash your car, clean your yard and arrange your wardrobe. And you don't trust the housemaid with any of the chores, because no one can clean the house better than you. Personal hygiene will also get your full attention, feels Ganesha.

**CANCER**

Today is a crucial and fascinating day for you, predicts Ganesha. You will learn and gain from your bosses and elders. Peers and siblings may extend their full support to you. Your chances of winning legal battles are remote, so an out-of-court settlement may be your best bet.

**LEO**

This day brings good tidings for jobs and businesses. Those in business can look forward to a highly profitable day. Long-term business deals may be in the offing as well if you happen to be in the services, rest assured, you may look forward to extra perks, pay hike and promotions. Just make sure that you hone your skills to reach where you want to be, advises Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

Today finds you ambitious and meticulous. Actions will not speak - they'll roar! Your planning and scruples will set the pace at work. Expect pats on the back from your bosses and a round of cheers from your peers.

**LIBRA**

Of late, you have been very concerned about the health of one of your close friends. Take this day to lay your fears to rest by spending time with that friend. Work can wait, as today you must prove to yourself, if not to others, that a friend in need is a friend indeed! Ganesha wishes you the very best.

**SCORPIO**

Your mind shall take over the proceedings today. And it shall, in all likelihood, draw you to the work bench and keep your nose to the grindstone. But your heart will flutter like a butterfly, and if you manage to strike the right balance, you may win over your special one and your boss too, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Chances of you hitting a roadblock today are high. But remember the saying, 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going.' So don't succumb to pressure, advises Ganesha, but rise up to the occasion and show who's the boss.

**CAPRICORN**

Today, you will remain unruffled by the commotion around you, says Ganesha. However, the emotions locked up inside you will probably cloud your power of reasoning and may leave you feeling a little lost. But this will only be a passing phase, and you will come out of the bewilderment in no time. You will promptly get back to pursuing your goals and your reputation with seniors will play a crucial role in bagging you tangible rewards.

**AQUARIUS**

Today, you will experience the harmonious balance between logic and emotion. You will consequently know how to mix business with pleasure. Money wise, you are content, but trivial issues may bother you today, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**

An action-packed day awaits you, busy as you will be corresponding with old contacts, telephonic interviews, organising meetings and scheduling tasks, says Ganesha. Do not forget to breathe!

# Diana on professionalism



**Mumbai:** Actress Diana Penty, who was recently seen in the streaming show *Do You Wanna Partner*, spoke about how it's imperative for a good actor to look beyond personal relationships with their co-actors, and deliver what's required from them.

The actress spoke with this news agency during the promotions of *Do You Wanna Partner*, and said that though she had a great camaraderie with her co-star Tamannaah Bhatia while working on the show, she is quite clear in her head about her process which is detached from personal relationships.

The actress told, "As a good actor, you're supposed to either way, whether you get along with somebody, you don't get along with what you bring to the screen and to the character should be independent of your personal equation. So, that is a basis of how good an actor or not you are. But in this case, I feel like we were also lucky that we got along and that it was just effortless off screen as well. So, it was much easier to bring that energy on screen and into all the scenes".

Talking about her camaraderie with Tamannaah, she said, "So, I don't think we struggled with that at all".

IANS



**Mumbai: Actress**  
Sara Arjun, who made her debut as the leading lady in Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar* opposite Ranveer Singh, posted a heartfelt note on social media showing her gratitude to the audience for showing love and support to the film.

Calling the audience, her 'strongest Dhurandhars', Sara pointed out that this movie is proof that cinema has not lost its place in the growing era of short content.

Thanking the viewers for dismissing the assertion, she wrote on her Instagram, "For a long time, there has been a narrative that audiences no longer have the patience for long-form storytelling, that attention spans have shortened, that cinema no longer finds its place. But you proved otherwise. You reminded everyone of the true strength of an audience and what happens when people come together to support something they genuinely believe in. (sic.)"

Sara expressed her delight that they were able to connect with the audience. She revealed, "As artists and makers, we can control every part of the process, but we have no control over the audience, and that's beautiful. We give our everything and trust that someone, somewhere, will connect. When that connection happens, it is one of the most fulfilling feelings in the world."

IANS

**Sara's heartfelt note**

**PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****NATYA MAHOTSAV-2026 - DAY I**

The 4th Natya Mahotsav, organised by Kalinga Natya Sangha, commenced Sunday at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Bhubaneswar. Marking the opening day of the festival, Bambanda Kalakar Sangha from Deogarh staged Odia play *Antardwanda*. Written by Kumud Chandra Satpathy, the drama was directed by Romeo Mohapatra.

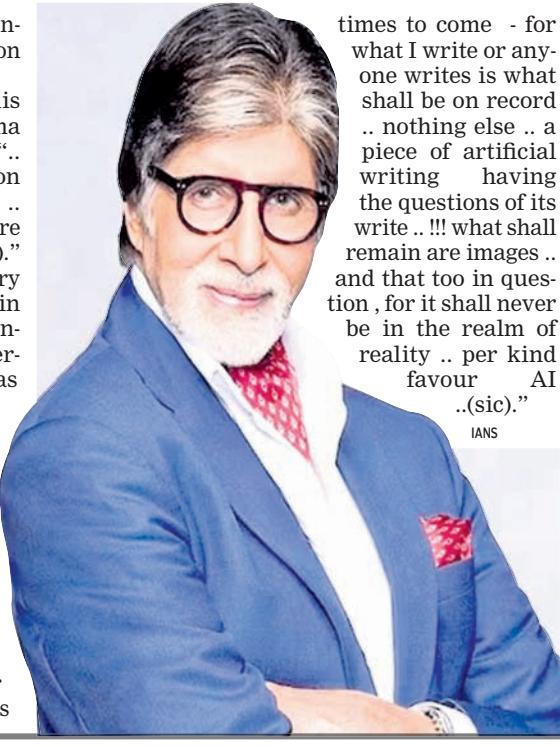
**Mumbai:** Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has yet again shared a thought-provoking reflection, delving into the shifting meanings of history, truth and storytelling in

STORY ..(sic.)

The icon reflected on the absence of definiteness in the times ahead, suggesting that what remains on record will largely be what is written, interpreted and preserved.

"There shall never ever be definiteness in the

## Big B talks about shifting meanings of truth



an era dominated by information cycles.

Taking to his blog, the cinema icon wrote: "... the information cycle attracts .. attracts all that there ever is or is not ..(sic.)"

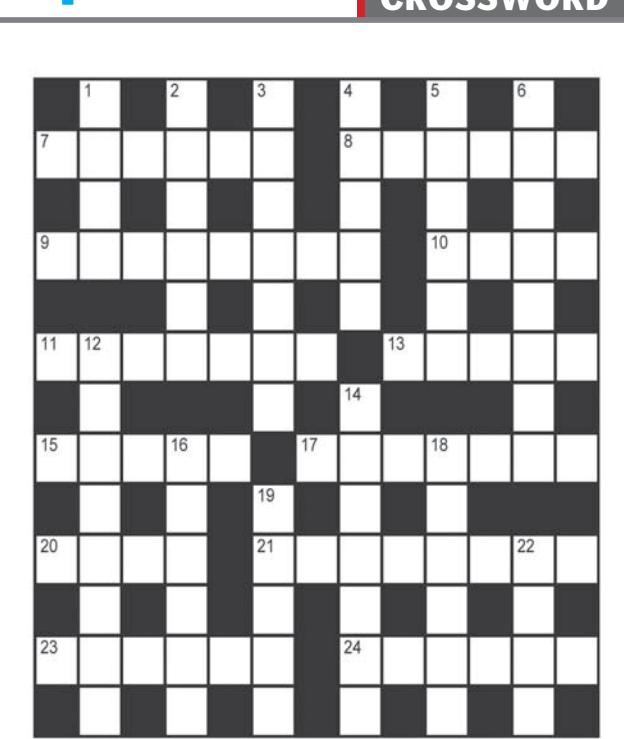
He noted that history may no longer remain just "history," but instead fragment into personal narratives such as "his story," "my story," or someone else's version altogether.

"And History - if ever it can have the same meaning after a few years - shall ever be referred to as HIS STORY .. or MY STORY .. or the OTHERS STORY .. or SOMEONE ELSE's

**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.

2			8	1	4			
						7		
6						7	2	
7		1				9	5	
	3			5				
3	2	6	9					
4	2							
6	5	9	4					

**CROSSWORD**

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**Across**

- 7 Mooring item
- 8 Decanted
- 9 Budgie
- 10 Swerve
- 11 Wetlands
- 13 Durable cotton fabric
- 15 Long-legged wading bird
- 17 Excoriate
- 20 Bland
- 21 Mitre or fez, e.g.
- 23 Intertwine
- 24 Universe
- 21 Old Peruvian
- 22 Clippers
- 23 Vine
- 24 Markings
- 25 Military vehicle
- 6 Health food store stock
- 12 Addax, for one
- 14 Crowned head
- 16 Don't give it away
- 18 Small magazine
- 19 Headman
- 22 Sailor's greeting

**Down**

- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24

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**CROSSWORD**

C	O	N	C	O	R	D	L	E	A	K
A	O	R	O	A	N	G				
C	A	R	D	A	T	T	O	A	L	
A	M	O	I	E	I	A				
O	U	S	E	L	L	O	G	I	N	C
H	O	A	R	S	E	S	C	R	A	P
U	L									
M	A									
B	O									
U	S									
G	O									
P	L									

2	4	1	9	8	5	6	7	3
3	6	9	2	7	4	8	1	5
8	5	7	3	6	1	2	9	4
7	2	4	8	1	3	9	5	6
9	8	5	7	2	6	4	3	1
6	1	3	4	5	9	7	2	8
4	7	2	5	3	8	1	6	9
5	9	6	1	4	7	3	8	2
1	3	8	6	9	2	5	4	7



## CS REVIEWS FOOD SUPPLY DEPT FUNCTIONING

## Ensure hassle-free payment to protect farmers' interests: Garg



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Chief Secretary Anu Garg Sunday reviewed the functioning of the Food Supply and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW) department, focused on Kharif paddy procurement, market management and the Public Distribution System (PDS). Stressing the need to safeguard farmers' interests, Garg advised officials to ensure smooth procurement operations and timely payments.

The review meeting at Lok Seva Bhawan was attended by FS&CW department Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh, Cooperative department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Rajesh Prabhakar Patil and Odisha State Supply Corporation Limited MD K Sudarshan Chakravarthy, along with senior officers of the departments.

Officials informed Garg that technology is being extensively used to streamline procurement process in all districts. Satellite imagery is aiding accurate assessment of paddy cultivation, while digital systems are improving transparency and efficiency, the officials said. Garg reviewed key aspects such as farmer linkage with societies, token system, quality control, lifting of paddy by millers, and direct transfer of payments to farmers' bank accounts within 48 hours of sale. She also stressed strict monitoring to ensure millers return the prescribed quantity of rice to the state.

The meeting also reviewed the deployment of CCTV surveillance at mandis, mobile applications for mandi nodal

19.18 lakh metric tonne of Rabi paddy.

As of January 3, paddy harvesting has commenced in 18 districts, with around 11.84 lakh metric tonne already harvested. So far, 2,71,318 farmers have sold 12.05 lakh metric tonne of paddy. Preparations are underway to begin harvesting in other districts based on crop maturity, the officials said.

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The meeting also reviewed the deployment of CCTV surveillance at mandis, mobile applications for mandi nodal

officers, and online tracking of vehicles transporting paddy from mandis to millers' depots. To address grievances and delays, a 24-hour call centre (help centre) has been set up for urgent action and feedback. At present, 1,418 millers are engaged across districts for paddy procurement, Garg was informed.

With procurement volumes rising, discussions were held on the need for additional smart warehouses to address storage constraints. Currently, about 4,000 paddy procurement centres are operating with the involvement of 2,600 primary agricultural cooperative societies, over 400 women self-help groups, and various Pani Panchayats. The state is utilising 162 government warehouses with a total storage capacity of 6.5 lakh metric tonne.

On the public distribution front, officials said that more than 11,700 fair price shops are functioning across Odisha. Under the National Food Security Act and the State Food Security Scheme, ration rice is being distributed to 3,27,83,673 beneficiaries, with 96 per cent e-KYC coverage already completed.

Expressing satisfaction over the modernisation of procurement and PDS operations, Chief Secretary reiterated the importance of timely lifting of paddy from mandis, adequate facilities for farmers, hassle-free payment of dues and robust system management and directed officials to regularly monitor the call centre and control room to ensure swift grievance redressal and smooth implementation of welfare measures.



IN MOVE: Artistes perform Odissi at 7th Natya Shastra Nrutyotsav at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar Sunday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## Swachh Sathis to get special incentive: BMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Swachh Sathis who achieve 90 per cent collection of user fees will receive special incentive of ₹5,000, announced Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Mayor Sulochana Das recently.

While extending New Year greetings to the Swachh Sathis at a meeting, the Mayor advised them to ensure the collection of user fees from permanent residents, traders, commercial establishments, educational institutions, various organisations and indus-



tries fixed by BMC in 2018.

After the meeting concluded, Swachh Sathis attended a training session on the same

Committee chairman Biranchi Narayan Mahasupakar, Taxation Standing Committee Chairman Rajkishore Das, Grievance Standing Committee chairperson Binayini Jena, Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahu and Deputy Commissioner (Sanitation) N Ganesh Babu among others. At the meeting, Swachh Sathis were also made aware about Swachh Survekshan 2026. "Work diligently so that in the current year, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation secures a place among the top three cleanest cities in the country," Das advised.

## Ban firecrackers to check air pollution: Maneka Gandhi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

wide ban on firecrackers," she said.

Those who burst firecrackers should be branded as "anti-national" because everyone is suffering from their activities.

Instead of expecting everything from the government, people should also initiate a movement to check air pollution, she said.

Commenting on cow smuggling, Gandhi said, "Lakhs of cows are being smuggled from Odisha and Bihar to Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. It is our responsibility to stop it. Not a single cow should go to a slaughterhouse."

Criticising the BJP-led central government, she said, "When the BJP came to power, I was hopeful that it would stop beef export because it was there in their manifesto. But, unfortunately, it has not yet stopped. We cannot allow things to happen just for the sake of employment."

On the Supreme Court's recent order on stray dogs, the animal rights activist said, "I feel very sad because the apex court is meant to be the last institution we respect and if they lose the respect of the people, we hurt ourselves."

"If you will burst firecrackers worth ₹800 crore in two nights, then what will happen to the air? There should be a nation-

## DAV Unit VIII hosts SIP AGC state finals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: The state finals of 10th edition of the SIP Arithmetic Genius Contest (AGC) was held at Unit VIII DAV Public School here Sunday, marking a significant milestone with participation of more than 800 children from 34 schools across Odisha.

Odisha POST and Dharitri Sales and Marketing head Baroda Mohanty and SIP Abacus state head Sunil Nayak attended the event as guest of honours and felicitated the winners.

In the preliminary round, 20,000 students attended the competition across the state, among which, 10,000 students were selected for second round. After completion of second round, 800 students were selected to compete in the state round.

SIP AGC is an annual competition designed to inspire a love for arithmetics among young learners and to create awareness about the importance of skill development.

Divyanshi Sarangi of Class I, DAV Kalinga Nagar was selected as champion, whereas Roman Khan from ODM Kids World was selected as champion from Class II. Similarly, Shoolin Sekhar Routray from DAV Chandrasekharpur in Class III, Ayushman Behera from DAV Pokhariput in Class



**SIP AGC is an annual competition designed to inspire love for arithmetics among young learners and to create awareness about the importance of skill development**

IV and Priyanshi Subudhi from DAV Kalinga Nagar in Class V received the first positions, entering into national finals.

SIP Abacus India is a leading skill development programme for children aged 6 to 12 years, designed to enhance arithmetic ability, concentration, memory, and overall intelligence. With over 1050 franchisee centres in India and presence in 11 countries globally, SIP Abacus has empowered over a million children to excel academically and personally.

## AAPI to host GHS 2026 in KIMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) will host the Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) 2026 at Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) here from January 9 to 11, bringing together eminent physicians, researchers, healthcare leaders, and innovators from India and the United States to a single platform.

The summit underscores AAPI's continued mission to advance global health, strengthen India-US healthcare collaborations, and promote excellence in medical education, research and clinical care.

GHS 2026 will be organised around a forward-looking theme, centered on technology, innovation, and global health capacity building. The comprehensive academic agenda will feature cutting-edge Continuing Medical Education (CME) sessions, AI-driven clinical insights, advanced surgical demonstrations, hands-on workshops, public health initiatives, and dedicated platforms for medical students and residents,

informed AAPI GHS president Dr Amit Chakrabarty and Odisha Physicians of America President Dr Atasu Nayak in a press conference here Sunday.

Major highlights of the summit includes state-of-the-art robotic surgery presentations, a high-impact plenary session on the role of AI in global medical practice, and emergency and resuscitation workshops using advanced SimMan3G+ simulation technology.

Specialty-focused forums will cover critical areas such as diabetes and obesity, tuberculosis, critical care medicine, and metabolic syndrome. In line with its commitment to holistic and evidence-based healthcare, the summit will also feature dedicated tracks on Ayurveda, integrative medicine, yoga, and meditation.

Extending its impact beyond academic discourse, AAPI GHS 2026 will place strong emphasis on community health initiatives. These include a mass hands-only CPR programme, aiming to train 1,200-1,500 participants, HPV awareness and vaccination drives, and the AAPI stem cell registry drive.

The summit will also host a special CME on 'Women in Healthcare: Challenges', highlighting leadership development, professional growth, and gender equity in medicine.

## Waltair Division to undergo safety modernisation work

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: East Coast Railway (ECoR) announced temporary regulation of train services in the Waltair Division during January 2026 to facilitate safety-related modernisation and maintenance work. The move is aimed at enhancing passenger safety and ensuring the long-term reliability of railway infrastructure. Owing to this work, several passenger and express trains will be affected through cancellations, rescheduling and short-termination or short-origin on different dates.

According to the railway authorities, Visakhapatnam-Raipur-Visakhapatnam Passenger (58528/58527), Visakhapatnam-Koraput-Visakhapatnam Passenger (58537/58538) and Visakhapatnam-Koraput Inter-



city Express (18512) will remain cancelled January 5, 12 and 19. Similarly, Koraput-Visakhapatnam Intercity Express (18511) will remain cancelled January 6, 13 and 20. In addition, Jagdalpur-Howrah Samaylal Express (18006) will be rescheduled and depart Jagdalpur two hours later than its normal schedule January 19. The regulation will also involve short-termination of certain trains. Guntur-Rayagada Express (17243) will be short-terminated at Visianagaram January 4, 11 and 18. Durg-Visakhapatnam Vande Bharat Express (20829) will be short-terminated at Rayagada January 5,

12 and 19, while Sambalpur-Rayagada Intercity Express (18301) will be short-terminated at Muniguda January 19.

Few trains under ECoR will short-originate from intermediate stations. Rayagada-Guntur Express (17244) will originate from Rayagada January 5, 12 and 19. Visakhapatnam-Durg Vande Bharat Express (20830) will originate from Rayagada on the same dates, and Rayagada-Sambalpur Intercity Express (18302) will originate from Muniguda January 19.

Passengers have been advised to take note of these temporary changes and plan their journeys accordingly. Updated information regarding train services will be available through official railway enquiry systems and other authorised communication channels of the Railways.

business to run smoothly. Vigilance officials seized the amount from his possession at Rajmahal Square here.

Following the confiscation, the Vigilance team subsequently conducted simultaneous searches at two locations linked to the accused. At his Unit-I government quarter here, Vigilance officials recovered ₹4,96,120 in cash.

Besides, the investigating team has located a triple storeyed building at Sisupalgarh and a newly constructed double storeyed building at Barik's native place in Kendrapara. During the search, officials also recovered costly watches from his possession.

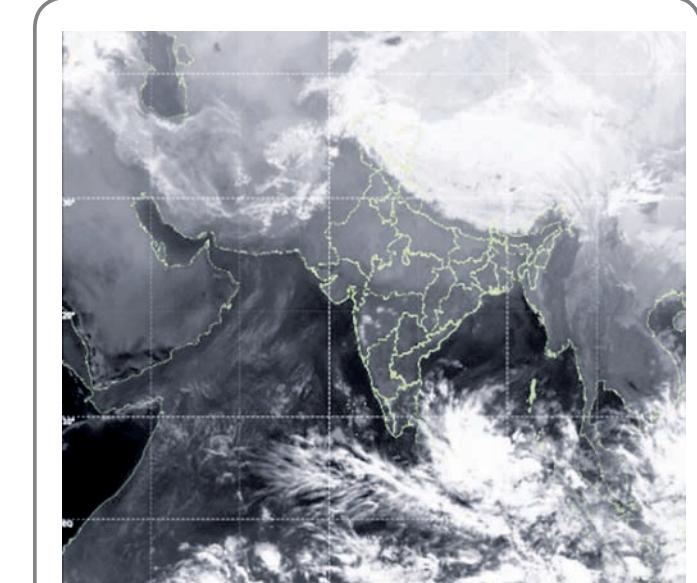
Barik was booked under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018 and forwarded to the court Sunday.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 4: Odisha Vigilance Sunday arrested CRRI Police Station, Cuttack Inspector In-Charge (IIC) Bijay Kumar Barik while accepting ₹40,000 as bribe from a licensed liquor vendor.

According to sources, Barik was taking the bribe in exchange for allowing the liquor



## WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	29.0°	25.8°	
Min Temp	14.8°	13.4°	
Humidity	96%	96%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



# Encroachment alters river courses, blocks drainage in Paradip



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paradip, Jan 4:** Rampant encroachment on government land has altered natural river courses and obstructed drainage systems in parts of Paradip, triggering public concern and calls for immediate action.

The state government has reiterated its resolve to remove illegal encroachment from public land. Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari recently warned that people who have constructed houses or other structures on government land must dismantle them immediately. Failing that, he said, the administration will carry out eviction drives and recover the entire cost from the encroachers.

However, residents allege that the local administration has remained largely inactive despite the government's directive. Encroachment continues unchecked, they said, severely obstructing natural water flow and drainage, particularly during the monsoon.

People have demanded that the revenue minister personally intervene to ensure the immediate eviction of illegal structures from encroached government land to restore drainage channels.

Paradip Port construction began in 1962. At the time, the region stretching from Paradip to Kujang had around 57 rivers, streams and natural water channels. Over the years, rapid industrial growth and expanding human settlements have led to large-scale encroachment, significantly altering the area's hydrology, locals said.

Several rivers have disappeared over the past 50 years, and many of those still visible are gradually being buried owing to encroachment, residents alleged. As a result, rainwater drainage has been severely disrupted in seven panchayats, in-

cluding Paradipgarh.

Traditional fishermen's associations, villagers and other organisations have repeatedly complained to the Jagatsinghpur district administration, alleging large-scale encroachment on river channels. The latest complaint relates to the filling up of a creek at Udayabat mouza on the outskirts of Paradip, where house construction has led to the emergence of a colony. Hundreds of farmers have submitted complaints over the issue.

Farmers Surendra Barik and Padana Mangaraj stated in their petitions that plot nos 1307 and 1309 of Udayabat mouza are part of the creek. Tehsil records identify the land as a natural drain since the 1930 settlement. However, for the past six months, several people have allegedly been carrying out construction activities on the channel land.

They further alleged that some individuals have changed the land classification of river areas and sold them after registering cases at the Kujang tehsil office, including case numbers 7/99 and 174/2008. Similar alterations of river courses have taken place at multiple locations, leading to settlements and aggravating drainage woes.

Residents said land prices along the national and state highways between Paradip and Kujang have surged sharply. Land is now being traded at over Rs 2 crore per acre. Udayabat resident Harekrushna Sahu said that taking advantage of the price rise, influential persons allegedly acquired such land through manipulative methods and administrative loopholes.

Kujang tehsildar Swarup Nandan Behera said an administrative inquiry is underway into the complaints and assured that encroachments on government land would be cleared.

# Affected villagers seek 0.01 pc equity at Aditya Alumina meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, Jan 4:** Residents displaced for Aditya Alumina Refinery demanded a 0.01 per cent equity stake in the company and compensation at four times the prevailing market rate during a meeting held Saturday at the Rayagada Sub-Collector's conference hall.

The meeting, chaired by Sub-Collector Ramesh Jena, was attended by company officials and villagers from Podapadi, Puhundi, Anthuguda and Kadapadar villages in Kashipur block. The affected residents presented a charter of demands and sought immediate convening of a Rehabilitation and Periphery Development Advisory Committee (RPDAC) meeting.

The key demands included

DP (displaced persons) status for 34 families of Puhundi mouza and for Nuasahi, compensation at four times the land's market value as per the 2013 Industrial Policy to original landowners, and permanent jobs for local youth, which is 90 per cent in unskilled categories and 75 per cent in skilled categories.

They also sought allocation of 30 per cent of company work to local contractors, assignment of transportation work to DP and PAP (Project Affected Persons) beneficiaries, establishment of an engineering college for higher education, and a 100-bed medical facility to provide quality health care in the area.

Residents also demanded that Kadampada village be granted full DP status, citing the min-

# Cong leader Adhir meets Bengali migrant workers

Expressing concern over 'parallel policing', Chowdhury assured the migrant workers that the Congress was with them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Sambalpur, Jan 4:** Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury Sunday met migrant workers from West Bengal in Sambalpur and expressed concern over 'parallel policing' in some states where Bengali labourers were allegedly being asked by private persons to provide their identity proof, urging law enforcement agencies to stop the practice.

Chowdhury, a five-time former MP from Baharampur Lok Sabha constituency in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, also assured the migrant workers that the Congress was with them.

"I met some Bengali migrant workers here and told them that Congress is with them. I also informed them that the matter has been taken up with Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Chowdhury told reporters.

He expressed concern over the killing of 30-year-old Jewel Rana, a Bengali-speaking migrant worker from Murshidabad's Jangipur, in Sambal-

pur last month following an altercation over a 'bidi'. It was also alleged that the assailants had asked Rana to show his Aadhaar card suspecting him to be a Bangladeshi infiltrator, a charge denied by the local police.

"There is a parallel policing system in some states, as private persons are asking migrant workers to show their identity proof. This must be stopped, and the police should ensure that no one is harassed by the goons because of their suspicion that a migrant worker might be a Bangladeshi infiltrator," Chowdhury said.

The former Congress leader in the Lok Sabha said that he has raised the issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chowdhury also said that he was planning to bring the matter to the notice of President Droupadi Murmu, who hails from Odisha, Sambalpur MP and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

"I will fight for the safety of Bengali migrant workers working in different states," the Congress leader said.

He also met local Congress leaders and urged them to remain alert to prevent such in-

cidents in future.

Chowdhury also met Northem Range Inspector General Himanshu Kumar Lal and Sambalpur Superintendent of Police Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo during his one-day visit to Sambalpur.

The local police have taken prompt action and arrested the accused persons within six hours of the incident. The police will also file a chargesheet very soon and ensure that the accused are punished, Lal told reporters after meeting Chowdhury.

Lal said that the police have been working with the policy of 'zero tolerance' for such incidents and conducting regular patrolling in vulnerable areas.

The police have also launched an awareness campaign, urging them not to take the law into their hands, he said.

Accompanied by some Congress leaders from neighbouring West Bengal, where Assembly elections are due this year, Chowdhury visited Dhanipali in Ainthapali police station area and met some Ben-

gali-speaking migrant workers.

They also visited the place where Rana was hacked to death December 24 last year.

During his interaction with the migrant workers, Chowdhury enquired about their well-being and asked them not to worry about their safety in Odisha. Chowdhury said that the people of West Bengal and Odisha have centuries-old cordial relations.

Thousands of workers from West Bengal work in Odisha and vice-versa, he said.

However, now the situation is taking a negative turn in the name of Bangladeshi infiltration. Migrant workers from West Bengal are being subjected to atrocities, violence, and murders. This is not acceptable to both states, he said.

The Congress leader said that migrant workers move to other states seeking livelihood and their intention should not be suspected.

Please do not consider all Bengali-speaking people as Bangladeshi, he added.

## Newlywed woman found hanging, kin allege dowry killing

**Umerkote:** A 25-year-old newly married woman was found hanging at her in-laws' house in Nabarangpur district Sunday morning, with her family alleging that she was killed over dowry. The deceased, Sanjana Mistri, was married to Anupam Chand of the DNK area under Umerkote police limits. Police recovered her body early Sunday. While her in-laws claimed she died by suicide, Sanjana's father, Prabhas Kumar Mistri, lodged a complaint accusing her husband and in-laws of murder for dowry. According to the complaint, Sanjana married Anupam July 15, 2024, as per Bengali customs. She hailed from Chhatabeda village near Raighar and was employed as a schoolteacher. Prabhas alleged that within days of their marriage, Sanjana was subjected to mental harassment over a demand for a car. He further claimed that Sanjana was threatened with death if the demand was not met. She reportedly called a relative Saturday night saying she was being harassed and asked to be taken back to her parental home. The family members planned to visit her Sunday, but were informed early in the morning that she committed suicide. Police detained Sanjana's husband for questioning and registered a case (2/26) at Umerkote police station. A forensic team from Nabarangpur district examined the scene. The father-in-law denied the allegations, claiming the couple shared a good relationship. Police said further investigation is underway.

## 2 men arrested for series of burglaries

**Bhanjanagar:** Police arrested two men in connection with a series of thefts from locked houses in Bhanjanagar and recovered stolen property, including foreign currency, gold ornaments and household items worth several lakhs of rupees. The arrested accused have been identified as Balia Nayak of Baunsalundi village and Gobinda Pradhan of Khurda area. Bhanjanagar SDPO Deepak Kumar Mishra said at a press conference Sunday that police recovered jewellery, foreign currency, two LPG cylinders, a television set and other stolen articles, which were later returned to their owners. IIC Jibananda Jena was present during the presser. The case came to light after S Rahul Patra of Satyayasi Temple Fourth Lane lodged a complaint. Patra and his family members had gone to their native village after locking their house. On their return December 29, they found the house broken into and valuable items stolen. Police registered a case and launched an investigation.



**CULTURE FEST:** Artistes perform traditional Ghudka dance at a procession ahead of the start of Lok Mahotsav-2026 in Sambalpur Sunday. The Lok Mahotsav is jointly organised by Odia Language, Literature and Culture department and Zilla Sanskrutik Parishad of Sambalpur

OP PHOTO

### 30 injured as minibus, pickup van collide

**Digapahandi:** As many as 30 passengers were injured, seven of them critically, after a passenger minibus collided head-on with a dry-fish laden pickup van near Jhatipitia village on the Digapahandi-Chikiti main road in Ganjam district Sunday morning. The injured include two children aged four and seven years. The seven critically injured were shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur after administration of first aid at Digapahandi. Sources said that the minibus, carrying about 40 passengers from Digapahandi to Chikiti, collided with the pickup van coming from Chikiti. The impact caused the pickup van to overturn on the road. Fire services personnel and police rushed to the spot, rescued the injured persons and admitted them to the Digapahandi Community Health Centre. After preliminary treatment, they were referred to Berhampur for advanced care.

### RTO holds breathalyser tests on 'Ama Bus' drivers

**Berhampur:** Ganjam transport department jumped into action mode and conducted breathalyser tests on the drivers of 'Ama Bus' service run by CRUT (Capital Region Urban Transport) in Berhampur Sunday. Documents related to the buses were also verified by the authorities. Ganjam RTO Debasis Swain informed. Acting on the orders of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and the State Transport Authority, an enforcement squad, led by Swain along with Junior MVI Tarakanta Nanda and other officials, cracked down on drunken driving through breathalyser tests in Halidapada bus terminal near Berhampur. The inspection was conducted in the wake of death of a person in an accident involving 'Ama Bus' at Rupali Square in Bhubaneswar Saturday. RTO Swain further informed that the checking of drunken driving, vehicle fitness and other parameters for all the vehicles including the CRUT buses and drivers shall be intensified in the coming days.

ing road and mining belt that pass through the village. They further called for the inclusion of local residents Akhil Jhodia, Gangadaraj, Rabi Majhi and Lalita Naik as members of the RPDAC committee, and demanded the appointment of an Odia CEO in the company.

To ensure the economic security of both the present and future generations, the villagers demanded allocation of a 0.01 per cent equity stake

in the company. It was stated that some local residents have already been provided employment and company authorities have been directed to continue offering jobs in the coming days.

The Sub-Collector said all necessary assistance would be provided to displaced families. Officials from Aditya Alumina, including HR Head Deepak Mohanty and CSR and R&R Head Tanmay Mohanty, attended the meeting.

Sources said that land was acquired in 2006 from the villages of Kansariguda, Podapadi, Puhundi, Anthuguda and Kadapadar villages in Kashipur block of Rayagada district for setting up the Aditya Alumina Refinery of the Aditya Birla Group. Landown-

ers were paid compensation based on the prevailing land value at the time.

At a meeting of the state-level RPDC, November 4, 2014, the then revenue divisional commissioner, the minister for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, and the then Laxmipur MLA directed the Aditya Alumina management to expedite work and make the project operational. However, the refinery remained non-functional until 2023.

Under the state's 2006 and 2013 industrial policies, if a company fails to become operational within five years of land acquisition, the land is to be returned to the original owners and reacquired afresh. Instead of returning the land,

the company began construction work at the site in 2023, residents alleged.

Citing lack of employment, prolonged economic losses and inactivity after giving up their land, local residents opposed the project and demanded compensation in line with current norms. They have also been pressing for another RPDAC meeting. Villagers alleged that both the district administration and company authorities ignored their repeated demands.

In December, landowners staged a sit-in protest in front of the company. During the protest, Sub-Collector Ramesh Chandra Jena had assured them that a meeting would be convened to address their grievances, residents said.

### Khariar King Jitamitra Prasad Singh Deo passes away

**Khariar, Jan 4:** Khariar King Dr Jitamitra Prasad Singh Deo, a noted historian, archaeologist and researcher, passed away Sunday in his palace at Khariar town under Nuapada district. He was 80.

Singh Deo complained of chest pain shortly after lunch around 1pm Sunday and died a while later at the royal residence. His wife, Queen Rajashree Devi, was by his side.

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo expressed his deep condolences on the sad demise of the Khariar King.

Born August 29, 1946 in Khariar, Singh Deo completed



higher education at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack. He was widely respected as a historian and lover of literature. Through extensive research, he brought several historical sites of Nuapada district to public attention.

Singh Deo authored 19 books on history and archaeology, contributing significantly to the documentation and preservation of the region's heritage.

He authored several notable works, including Prehistoric Rock Art of Yogi Math, Cultural Profile of South Kosala, History of the Chauhan Dynasty Rule of Patna State (Odisha), Jagannath Culture from Upper Mahanadi to Lower Mahanadi, Ghatghumra Rock Art Copper

tributes, Sambalpur University and Sri Venkateswara Vedic University, Tirupati, conferred honorary doctorates on him. He also served as president of the Khadi Sahitya Samiti.

Following the death of Khariar King Anup Singh Deo, Jitamitra was formally crowned in 2004. He is survived by two sons Crown Prince Devdev Singh Deo, Prince Ambarish Singh Deo and a daughter, Princess Srikala Devi. According to a statement issued by the royal palace, the coronation of Crown Prince Devdev Singh Deo will be held at 10am Monday. The last rites of Jitamitra Singh Deo will be performed afterward at the Nehena ghat riverbank.

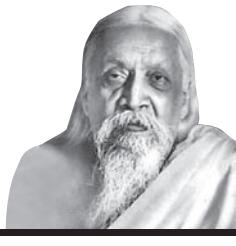
### PUBLIC NOTICE

The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha has awarded Environment Clearance to M/S. Tolarapasi Road Metal Quarry (Auctioneer-Ajit Sahoo) annual lifting capacity 20,030 CUM, environment clearance for mining excavation located in Mouza Tolarapasi, Tahsil-Gondia, Dist-Dhenkanal, Odisha. Environment clearance Identification No- EC25CO108OR53883N, vide File No- 54688/425-MINB2/08-2025, dtd. 29.12.2025 are available for reference with SEIAA, Odisha and the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) and may also be accessed on the official website of the board and on the Parivesh Portal ([www.parivesh.nic.in](http://www.parivesh.nic.in)).



To hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Only Energy

**I**t was a moment of geopolitical déjà vu. On the same calendar day, separated by thirty-six years, United States forces once again seized a Latin American leader and transported him to American soil to face criminal charges. In 1989-90, troops sent by then President George HW Bush, detained Panamanian military dictator General Manuel Noriega, a one-time US ally and CIA informant. Now again on 3 January 2026, US forces ordered by President Donald Trump literally abducted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro along with his wife Cilia Flores. Maduro was voted as President and has been in power since 2013.

In both cases, Washington used military force to secure strategic assets in the Western Hemisphere — the Panama Canal then, and Venezuela's vast oil reserves now. In fact, hours after Maduro's capture, Trump, dropping all pretence, said that the US will "tap" Venezuela's vast oil reserves and sell "large amounts" to other countries. Maduro and his wife were flown from Caracas to New York and transferred to the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, where they are to face drug trafficking-related charges.

However, the real intent behind the invasion seems to be the country's oil reserves and Maduro's open criticism of the dollar's dominance. Maduro, following the direction set by his Leftist predecessor Hugo Chávez, openly opposed the dominance of the US dollar and framed it as a tool of American political and economic power. Before Maduro, several other leaders and countries which tried to challenge the supremacy of the dollar in the global marketing of crude petroleum met almost a similar fate when they were forcibly thrown out of power by the US. In 2000, Saddam Hussein announced Iraq would start selling oil in Euros, not US dollars. Three years later, the US invaded Iraq. The alibi put out for the invasion that he was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMD) later turned out to be a ruse as no such weapons of mass destruction were ever found in Iraq. Eventually Iraqi oil went right back to being priced in dollars. In 2009, Muammar Gaddafi proposed something even more dangerous — a gold-backed African currency — the gold dinar. It would have allowed African nations to buy oil without using dollars. In 2011, NATO, primarily the UK and France, intervened in Libya for "humanitarian reasons" and Gaddafi was killed. Libyan oil could thereafter be bought and sold in dollars. The affected countries however have since been ruined economically, socially and their governance systems have broken down.

With Maduro's arrest, the US appears to have returned decisively to its old business of regime change. Yet in key respects, the operation against Maduro breaks new ground. Never before has the US military directly intervened in South America to depose a sitting head of state. Previous American interventions were confined largely to Central America and the Caribbean. Even in Mexico, where Washington intervened repeatedly, the US never directly removed national leadership or occupied the entire country. The Maduro operation signals a sharp pivot in US foreign policy also. Trump's rhetoric, including the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America" early in his second term, reflects a broader assertion of American dominance in the hemisphere. Speaking after Maduro's capture, Trump declared that "American dominance in the western hemisphere will never be questioned again."

Critics argue that such confidence ignores hard-earned lessons. For effecting regime-change, wars are easy to launch but extraordinarily difficult to conclude successfully. The operation also appears to confirm a broader strategic shift. As the global "war on terror" winds down, Washington is recasting its focus toward what the administration calls "narco-terror." Threats once associated with militant groups in the Middle East are being replaced by cross-border criminal networks in the Americas. Caracas was the target today, but what might fall next has left everyone guessing. Trump has already floated dramatic territorial ambitions, including re-claiming the Panama Canal, annexation of Greenland and calling Canada the 51st American state. He has repeatedly claimed that "the cartels are running Mexico," language that some see as laying the groundwork for future military action. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has also issued warnings to Cuba, further heightening regional anxiety.

History bears testimony that US interventions in Latin America, or for that matter in any part of the world from Iraq to Libya, have rarely produced lasting peace, stability, or democratic renewal. More often, they have left behind economic disaster for the general populace, unresolved power vacuums and long-term political instability — a legacy Venezuela may now be forced to confront. In the wake of the US strikes on Caracas, the Constitutional Chamber of Venezuela's Supreme Court ordered, on 3 January, that Vice-President Delcy Rodriguez assume the role of acting President of the country in the absence of Maduro. Speaking live on television soon after, Rodriguez demanded that the US free Maduro and called him the country's "only President."

This operation in Caracas is not to be mistaken as some effort at democracy building in a troubled South American country. It was always about oil and was made amply clear by Trump's assertion that he intends to "run" Venezuela, at least temporarily, financing the effort through the country's oil revenues. American energy companies would be welcomed back after nearly two decades, with promises of compensation for seized assets. The term that best captures this approach is resource exploitation. In other words, the insatiable hunger for energy is driving the US to a point of imbalance.

## WISDOM CORNER

**R**eligious faith, like political belief, should be based on reasoning, on the development of thought and feelings. The two things are inseparable.

FIDEL CASTRO

**C**he GUEVARA  
The true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality.

CHE GUEVARA

**C**he GUEVARA  
You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness.

THOMAS SANKARA

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1709:** The arrival of the Great Frost. Europe's coldest winter in 500 years began to take hold on this day in 1709. It would kill hundreds of thousands of people, make travel and trade nearly impossible, and disrupt two wars. Climatologists are still trying to understand the cause of what became known as the Great Frost.

**1914:** Following the great success of the Model T, American automobile maker Henry Ford raised his workers' pay from \$2.40 to \$5.00 a day and reduced the hours of the workday.

**1919:** A locksmith named Anton Drexler founded the German Workers' Party, the forerunner of the Nazi Party, in Munich, Germany.

# power post

## FOCUS SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV

# A 1000 YEARS OF UNBROKEN FAITH

**S**omnath...hearing this word instils a sense of pride in our hearts and minds. It is the eternal proclamation of India's soul. This majestic temple is situated on the Western coast of India in Gujarat, at a place called Prabhas Patan. The Dwadash Jyotirling Stotram mentions the 12 Jyotirlings across India. The Stotram begins with "सोमनाथं सोमनाथं", symbolising the civilisational and spiritual importance of Somnath as the first Jyotirling.

It is also said:

सोमनाथं नरो दद्धुं सर्वपापे प्रमुच्यते।  
तर्वां फलं मनोवाच्चेत् मृकं रुद्धं समाश्रयेत्॥

It means: Just the sight of Somnath Shivling ensures that a person is freed of sins, achieves their righteous desires and attains heaven after death.

Tragically, this very Somnath, which drew the reverence and prayers of millions, was attacked by foreign invaders, whose agenda was demolition, not devotion.

The year 2026 is significant for Somnath Temple. It has been 1,000 years since the first attack on this great shrine. It was in January of 1026 that Mahmud of Ghazni attacked this Temple, seeking to destroy a great symbol of faith and civilisation, through a violent and barbaric invasion. Yet, one thousand years later, the Temple stands as glorious as ever because of numerous efforts to restore Somnath to its grandeur. One such milestone completes 75 years in 2026. It was during a ceremony on 11 May, 1951, in the presence of then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, that the restored Temple opened its doors to devotees.

The first invasion of Somnath in 1026, the cruelty that was unleashed upon the people of the town and the devastation that was inflicted upon the shrine have been documented in great detail in various historical accounts. When you read them, the heart trembles. Each line carries the weight of grief, cruelty and a sorrow that refuses to fade with time. Imagine the impact it had on Bharat and the morale of the people. After all, Somnath had great spiritual significance. It was also on the coast, giving strength to a society with great economic prowess, whose sea traders and seafarers carried tales of its grandeur far and wide.

Yet, I am proud to state un-



**The waves that wash the shores of Somnath tell a story. No matter what, just like the waves, it kept rising again and again**

equivocally that the story of Somnath, a thousand years after the first attack, is not defined by destruction. It is defined by the unbreakable courage of crores of children of Bharat Mata. The medieval barbarism that began a thousand years ago went on to 'inspire' others to repeatedly attack Somnath. It was the start of an attempt to enslave our people and culture. But, each time the Temple was attacked, we also had great men and women who stood up to defend it and even made the ultimate sacrifice.

And every single time, generation after generation, the people of our great civilisation picked themselves up, rebuilt and rejuvenated the Temple. It is our privilege to have been nurtured by the same soil that has nurtured greats like Ahilyabai Holkar, who made a noble attempt to ensure devotees can pray at Somnath.

In the 1890s, Swami Vivekananda visited Somnath and that experience moved him. He expressed his feelings during a lecture in Chennai in 1897 when he said, "Some of these old temples of Southern India and those like Somnath of Gujarat will teach you volumes of wisdom, will give you a keener insight into the history of the race than any amount of books. Mark how these temples bear the marks of a hundred attacks and a hundred regenerations, continually destroyed and continually springing up out of the ruins, rejuvenated and strong as ever! That is the national mind, that is the national life-current. Follow it and it leads to glory. Give it up and you die; death will be the only result, annihilation, the only effect, the moment you step beyond that life current."

The sacred duty of rebuilding the Somnath Temple after Independence came to the able

hands of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. A visit during Diwali time in 1947 moved him so much that he announced that the Temple will be rebuilt there. Finally, on 11 May 1951, a grand Temple in Somnath opened its doors to devotees and Dr. Rajendra Prasad was present there. The great Sardar Sahib was not alive to see this historic day, but the fulfilment of his dream stood tall before the nation. Then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was not too enthused with this development. He did not want the Honourable President as well as Ministers to associate with this special event. He said that this event created a bad impression of India. But Dr. Rajendra Prasad stood firm and the rest is history. No mention of Somnath is complete without recalling the efforts of KM Munshi, who supported Sardar Patel very effectively.

Indeed, as the title of Munshi Ji's book conveys, we are a civilisation that carries a sense of conviction about the eternity of spirit and of ideas. We firmly believe that that which is eternal is indestructible, as outlined in the famous Gita verse "न ते विद्यन्ते शस्त्राणां...". There can be no better example of our civilisation's indomitable spirit than Somnath, which stands gloriously, overcoming odds and struggles.

It is this same spirit that is visible in our nation, one of the brightest spots of global growth, having overcome centuries of invasions and colonial loot. It is our value systems and the determination of our people that have made India the centre of global attention today. The world is seeing India with

hope and optimism. They want to invest in our innovative youngsters. Our art, culture, music and several festivals are going global. Yoga and Ayurveda are making a worldwide impact, boosting healthy living. Solutions to some of the most pressing global challenges are coming from India.

Since time immemorial, Somnath has brought together people from different walks of life. Centuries ago, Kalikal Sarvagna Hemachandracharya, a respected Jain monk, came to Somnath. It is said that after

praying there, he recited a verse, "मन्त्रीजाग्रकुरुन्नाम रागाम क्षम्यमाप्नुया".

It means - Salutations to That One in whom the seeds of worldly becoming are destroyed, in whom passion and all afflictions have withered away." Today, Somnath holds the same ability to awaken something profound within the mind and soul.

A thousand years after the first attack in 1026, the sea at Somnath still roars with the same intensity as it did back then. The waves that wash the shores of Somnath tell a story. No matter what, just like the waves, it kept rising again and again.

The aggressors of the past are now dust in the wind, their names synonymous with destruction. They are footnotes in the annals of history, while Somnath stands bright, radiating far beyond the horizon, reminding us of the eternal spirit that remained undiminished. Somnath is a song of hope that tells us that while hate and fanaticism may have the power to destroy for a moment, faith and conviction in the power of goodness have the power to create for eternity.

If the Somnath Temple, which was attacked a thousand years ago and faced continuous attacks thereon, could rise again and again, then we can surely restore our great nation to the glory it embodied a thousand years ago before the invasions. With the blessings of Shree Somnath Mahadev, we move forward with a renewed resolve to build a Viksit Bharat, where civilisational wisdom guides us to work for the welfare of the whole world.

Jai Somnath!

**The writer is the Prime Minister of India and is also the Chairman of the Shree Somnath Trust.**

## SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE

# Global glut: Can India protect its farmers?



Shivaji Sarkar

## THIS GLOBAL EASING CREATES AN INDIAN PARADOX: WHAT COMFORTS CONSUMERS STRAINS FARMERS

**I**ndia's food economy in 2026 looks comfortable. Granaries overflowing, vegetable prices slipping, sugar in surplus, and global food markets cooling—even as wars rage in Ukraine and West Asia and climate shocks persist. The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Food Price Index has retreated steadily from its pandemic and war-era highs, and the World Bank (WB) confirms easing pressure across cereals, sugar, dairy and vegetable oils.

This global easing creates an Indian paradox: what comforts consumers strains farmers. Prices are falling not because of rural prosperity, but because of surplus—global and domestic—long a mixed blessing in Indian agriculture. The reasons are structural. Bumper harvests of wheat, maize and rice in the US, Canada, Russia and Brazil, sustained Black Sea exports despite the war, lower en-

ergy and fertiliser costs, weakened demand for oils and dairy, falling freight rates, and gluts in sugar and dairy have together pushed global food prices down.

The WB broadly concurs—but adds a crucial caveat: global price averages hide local distress. Even as international prices soften, domestic food inflation and food insecurity persist in many low- and middle-income countries due to conflict, currency weakness and climate shocks. Hunger does not automatically recede when global prices fall. India sits squarely inside this contradiction.

For Indian consumers, softer prices offer welcome relief after years of food inflation. For Indian farmers—86% of whom are small and marginal landholders—the picture is far less benign. When global prices fall, Indian exports lose competitiveness. Sugar, rice and dairy producers face weaker

external demand just as domestic supply peaks. Price realisation drops, often below cost of production. The FAO has repeatedly warned that price volatility can push smallholders into poverty traps; even short spells of low prices can force distress sales of assets or higher borrowing.

The problem is compounded by sticky input costs. Fertilisers, pesticides, diesel and electricity prices do not fall in tandem with output prices. Margins are squeezed from both ends. Market access remains another choke point. Lacking storage and transport, farmers are forced to sell immediately after harvest, precisely when prices are at their weakest.

India differs from many low-income economies in one crucial respect: policy buffers. The MSP and government procurement—particularly for rice and wheat—continue to anchor farm incomes

for key staples. The Food Corporation of India's assured buying absorbs a large share of output, insulating these crops from global price swings. India's vast domestic market also matters. Internal demand absorbs much of what is produced, softening the transmission of global volatility.

India's challenge is to ensure that surplus does not translate into rural insolvency. That means resisting the temptation to view low food inflation as an unqualified success. The world may be awash in food. For India, the task is to ensure that plenty does not become punishment—and that consumers' relief does not come at the cost of farmers' survival with their ₹6000 Kisan Samman Nidhi and MSP back-up.

India differs from many low-income economies in one crucial respect: policy buffers. The MSP and government procurement—particularly for rice and wheat—continue to anchor farm incomes

## Every bird counts

**S**ir, Animals and birds are extremely dear to a man's heart. About 10,000 bird or avian species are said to be existent on this planet. No doubt pet birds like parakeets, budgies and parrots are protected by their owners. But the same cannot be said of the birds in the wild. Unfortunately, birds are vulnerable to various factors. Climate change and habitat destruction top the list. That said, illegal pet trading by criminals has to be controlled with an iron hand. As demand for exotic pets has become a lucrative trade, flow of easy money has become the rule for unruly elements. National Bird Day is observed on 5 January in India as elsewhere in the world. This year's "Every bird counts, your observation matters" theme has hit the nail right on the hand. Inculcating, and spreading, awareness on securing birds, adopting shelter-less birds and rescuing captured birds should be the agenda.

**Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

## World at war

**S**ir, According to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project, more than 240,000 people were killed in conflict-related violence worldwide last year. Rather than isolated crises, multiple wars unfolding simultaneously have become the new normal, with long-simmering conflicts spreading across regions and peace-making efforts proving fragile and elusive. Europe recorded the sharpest rise in violence, driven primarily by Russia's war in Ukraine, while the Middle East remained locked in persistent turmoil despite intermittent ceasefires. Ukraine emerged as the deadliest conflict zone of 2025, as Russia intensified territorial offensives and drone attacks on cities and infrastructure, exacting enormous human and material costs for minimal gains. Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar and parts of South Asia also witnessed extreme violence, underscoring how global instability now spans continents rather than remaining regionally contained. Analysts point to deeper structural shifts behind this escalation. The retreat of the United States from its traditional role as a guarantor of the rules-based international order has, according to political risk experts, created a power vacuum. This has emboldened rogue states, armed groups and non-state actors to act with greater impunity.

**Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH**

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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### TO THE EDITOR

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# Delhi: Human rabies to be declared notifiable disease



The move comes amid a row over the Supreme Court's order on handling stray dogs after it took cognisance of reports on stray dog attacks on people and rabies-related deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** The Delhi Government is all set to declare Human Rabies as a Notifiable Disease in the national capital under the Epidemic Diseases Act in an effort to strengthen surveillance and ensure timely treatment.

"This is an important step toward our goal of zero human deaths from rabies in Delhi," said Delhi Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh. On notification, all government and private health facilities, including medical colleges and individual practitioners, will be required to report suspected, probable, and confirmed cases of human rabies to the concerned health authorities, said an official statement. The move aims to

strengthen disease surveillance, ensure timely reporting of cases, and enable swift public health action to prevent the spread of rabies, it said, adding the government is also further strengthening rabies vaccination facilities for humans as well as dogs and other animals," the official statement said.

However, dog lovers, experts and activists are opposing it, saying the "unscientific" approach will weaken rabies-control efforts, destabilise urban ecosystems and disproportionately affect low-income and underserved communities.

"Declaring rabies as a notifiable disease is a key step toward achieving the goal of zero human deaths due to dog-mediated rabies. The government is also further strengthening Rabies vaccination facilities for humans as well as dogs and other animals," the official statement said.

To ensure accessible treatment across the city, anti-rabies vaccine (ARV) is currently being provided at 59 health facilities across all 11 districts of Delhi, while anti-rabies serum (RIG) is available at 33 designated health facilities and hospitals in the national capital.

Mandatory notification will help authorities track disease trends, improve coordination between human and animal health systems, and implement targeted preventive measures in high-risk areas. The proposed notification will come into force immediately after issuance and will remain applicable until further orders.

Detailed guidelines for reporting and coordination will be shared with all concerned departments and health institutions.



People carry a boat on a horse cart on a cold winter morning, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

## Cold conditions intensify across UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 4:** Cold conditions intensified across Uttar Pradesh over the past 24 hours following a sharp fall of 3-6 degrees Celsius in minimum temperatures, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday.

The significant drop in night temperatures has been attributed to the passage of an active western disturbance affecting western India, after which cold and dry north-westerly winds from hill regions swept across the state. As a result, minimum temperatures in the central parts of Uttar Pradesh fell by 3-6 degrees Celsius, leading to a marked increase in cold conditions.

The IMD said minimum temperatures may fall slightly further in other parts of the state during the next 24-48 hours, after which the decline is expected to halt and a gradual rise may begin under the influence of the next western disturbance.

Daytime conditions also remained harsh in several areas due to strong cold winds blowing at speeds of 15-20 kmph, persistent fog and lack of clear skies, leading to cold day con-

ditions at isolated places. Dense to very dense fog is likely at a few places over eastern Uttar Pradesh, while dense fog is expected at isolated locations in western parts of the state.

Temperatures are expected to remain below normal for the next few days due to fog and cold winds.

The IMD noted that the fall in minimum temperatures was most pronounced over central Uttar Pradesh, where the dissipation of an elevated layer of fog on Saturday afternoon led to enhanced radiational cooling.

In Lucknow, the minimum temperature settled at 6.0 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees below normal, while the maximum temperature was recorded at 16.9 degrees Celsius, 3.2 degrees below normal. Relative humidity ranged between 55 and 91 per cent, and no rainfall was recorded.

According to the forecast, Lucknow and adjoining areas are likely to witness moderate fog during late night and morning hours, with mainly clear skies later in the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to hover around 17 and 8 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Simultaneously demonstrations took place in over 50 cities across the country, including in Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Trivandrum, the statement read. On November 7, 2025, the Supreme Court ordered to remove all stray dogs from

railway stations, schools, hospitals, bus stops and other public areas, and relocate them to a "designated shelter" after due sterilisation and vaccination in accordance with the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules.

The protesters, in a statement, asserted that public-health experts, veterinarians and scientists have expressed concern over the unscientific approach to mass removal and confinement of community dogs.

The demonstrators held placards saying 'Pollution hatao, pushu nahi', 'Jeev nahi toh jeevan nahi, and 'Stop the massacre, every life matters'.

These actions will weaken rabies-control efforts, destabilise urban ecosystems, and disproportionately affect low-income and underserved communities, they said.

## STRAY DOGS ISSUE

### Protest at Jantar Mantar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Dog lovers, experts and activists gathered for a demonstration at the Jantar Mantar here over the Supreme Court's recent order to remove street dogs from public spaces, demanding an evidence-based, lawful and humane policy on stray dogs.

Ahead of the apex court's next hearing on the matter January 7, the protesters, gathered under the banner 'Do or Die', called for an immediate stay on the mass removal and confinement orders of community dogs.

The protesters, in a statement, asserted that public-health experts, veterinarians and scientists have expressed concern over the unscientific approach to mass removal and confinement of stray dogs.

These actions will weaken rabies-control efforts, destabilise urban ecosystems, and disproportionately affect low-income and underserved communities, they said.



The mobilisation follows weeks of misinformation and

alarmist media reporting that influenced public narrative and policy response before verified facts were examined, the statement read.

According to experts, Animal Birth Control with Anti-Rabies Vaccination (ABC-ARV/CNVR) has never been implemented at the scale required for epidemiological impact in most states.

Affidavits submitted by state governments show coverage levels far below global benchmarks. Characterising this as "failure of ABC" is therefore misleading; what has failed is implementation, not the policy or the science behind it, the experts said in the statement.

Meanwhile, over 2,000 citizens from across India, including prominent figures such as Mira Nair, Swara Bhaskar, Mark Tully, and Dadi Padamjee, signed an open letter along with doctors, public-health experts, veterinarians, scientists, animal-behaviour specialists, environmentalists, journalists and caregivers, flagging urgent concerns about the proposed mega-shelter model, it read.

## NGOs intensify rescue drives for the homeless



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** From late-night rescue drives and distribution of sleeping bags to the homeless, to medical care for elderly people enduring joint ache, NGOs in Delhi have stepped up coordinated efforts to protect vulnerable residents as severe cold conditions persist in the capital.

Several Delhi-based NGOs are working round-the-clock to rescue people sleeping in the open, coordinating with government rescue vans and arranging shelter, warm clothing and medical support for the vulnerable population.

According to the Centre for Holistic Development (CHD), one such organisation, more than 2,000 homeless persons have been rescued so far this winter.

"We have rescued over 2,000 people, distributed sleeping bags and coordinated closely with government vans to bring people to safer locations. We are also strengthening the infrastructure of existing shelters and identifying abandoned buildings where people can be temporarily housed," said Sunil Kumar Adelia, Executive Director, CHD.

Apart from rescue and shelter, NGOs have also expanded health-related interventions, particularly for the elderly who suffer increased joint pain and mobility issues during winter.

Delhi-based NGO Sewa Bhawan said it is providing physiotherapy support and

medicines to senior citizens living on the streets and in temporary shelters.

Another Delhi-based NGO, Wishes and Blessings, has launched its annual winter relief initiative, '6 Weeks of Warmth', aimed at providing sustained assistance to vulnerable groups across the city. The programme, which began December 15, focuses on homeless individuals, daily wage workers, elderly persons and families living in unsafe conditions, it said.

Under the initiative, volunteers are distributing blankets, shawls, sweaters, caps, socks and other winter essentials at multiple locations in Delhi, particularly during night hours when temperatures drop sharply.

Other organisations have also increased outreach in vulnerable areas such as footpaths, flyovers and construction sites.

Delhi-based Raahgiri Foundation said it has intensified night patrols to identify people sleeping in the open and persuade them to move to shelters.

The capital Sunday recorded a minimum temperature of 7.4 degrees Celsius, 0.5 notches above the season's average, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

A cold wave is expected to affect isolated places in the city till January 6, it said.

A cold wave is declared when the minimum temperature drops by 4.5 degrees Celsius to 6.5 degrees Celsius below the average temperature.

## Pilgrims gather at Sangam for holy dip in icy Ganga

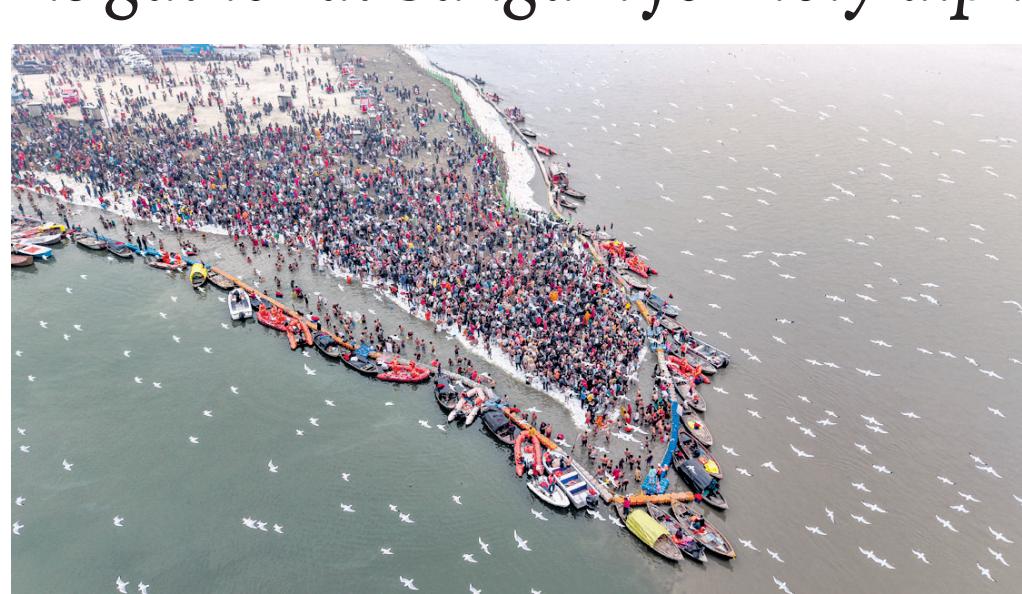
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Prayagraj (UP), Jan 4:** Braving the bitter cold, devotees thronged the Sangam Sunday for a holy dip in the Ganga during the ongoing Magh Mela.

Amid rows of tents, fluttering saffron pennants, and devotional music emanating from loudspeakers, devotees streamed into the Mela ground. Some arrived on two-wheelers, taking their vehicles up to the waterfront before they descended into the river for a dip. Others arrived from far and wide, lugging their bags with one hand while they clutched their children with the other.

The Akshayavat Marg on the Mela premises, one of the major thoroughfares leading to the holy river, saw a steady stream of pilgrims. Ashutosh Varshney, who had set up his camp near the Sangam, said there has been a rush of devotees since early morning.

While the devotees took a dip in frigid Ganga waters and



offered prayer, security personnel and divers kept a close watch. Safety announcements constantly emanated from the public address system.

'Kalpavasis' also took the ritual dips Sunday. During the month-long 'kalpavas', devotees bathe in the Ganga twice

daily and eat one meal a day, spending their time in meditation and worship of their chosen deity. 'Kalpavas', believed to absolve people of their sins, began on 'Paush Purnima' (Saturday).

Acharya Rajendra Mishra, president of the Triveni San-

tent where they were put up.

Additional District Magistrate (Magh Mela) Dayanand Prasad said for the first time, a separate township has been established for the pilgrims and 'kalpavasis' in the Magh Mela area. This township, spread over 950 bighas, has been named Prayagwal, and is located opposite the Nagasuki Temple.

Ten bathing ghats have been constructed over an area of 10,000 square feet at the Magh Mela, and nine pontoon bridges have been built, the official added.

The Magh Mela began at the Sangam on Saturday with lakhs of devotees converging on the riverbanks in the early hours to take a holy dip on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima'.

Besides 'Paush Purnima', the auspicious bathing occasions include Makar Sankranti (January 14), Mauni Amavasya (January 18), Basant Panchami (January 23), Maghi Purnima (February 1) and Mahashivratri (February 15).

## WINTER IN DELHI

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# national

of the day quote

**US STRIKES VENEZUELA**

Congress has announced a 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram'. It is actually a save corruption campaign

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUDHARI | RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

**WOMAN DELIVERS BABY INSIDE CAR**

A 21-year-old woman delivered a baby boy inside a car after doctors attended to her at the emergency entrance of a private hospital Sunday morning, hospital authorities said. According to doctors at VPS Lakeshore Hospital, the woman went into advanced labour moments after reaching the emergency department premises

**GAME OVER**

for illegal encroachment at Jamuna-Moudanga RF. Mission completed as 5,250 bighas reclaimed through peaceful, lawful & decisive action



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

Several new initiatives are in the pipeline, including plans to use blockchain technology to further secure land transactions and adopt scientific methods to eliminate fake documents and duplicate registrations



We will work to bring investment in the IT sector here. The textile park has given employment opportunities, and we have taken efforts to develop water supply and roads in the city

PINEARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

The United States brought Maduro and his wife, Lady Cilia Flores, to New York to face drug trafficking-related charges. Venezuela, denouncing the US action, has announced a state of national emergency.

"Recent developments in Venezuela are a matter of deep concern. We are closely monitoring the evolving situation," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"India reaffirms its support to the well-being and safety of the people of Venezuela," it said. New Delhi also called upon "all

concerned to address issues peacefully through dialogue, ensuring peace and stability of the region".

The US carried out the military assault on Caracas after consistently accusing Maduro of being involved in drug trafficking. The Venezuelan leader had stridently denied the charges.

In its brief statement, the MEA said the Indian embassy



to avoid all non-essential travel to Venezuela," the MEA said.

There are around 50 NRIs (non-resident Indians) and 30 PIOs (persons of Indian origin) in Venezuela, according to the embassy in Caracas.

After Maduro and his wife were flown out of Caracas, US President Donald Trump told a news conference that his country will run Venezuela until a transition of power can take place.

The US president said the "extremely successful" operation should serve as a warning to anyone who would threaten American sovereignty or endanger American lives.

India and Venezuela share a history of warm relations. A major thrust to the bilateral relationship was imparted by former president Hugo Chavez's State Visit to India in March 2005.

The two countries have robust cooperation in the energy sector. India's ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) has a joint venture with Corporacion Venezolana del Petroleo (CVP). The joint venture is known as "PetroleraIndovenezolana SA" for the production and exploration of oil in the San Cristobal field, in which the OVL has a 40-per cent stake.

The OVL's investment in the project is approximately USD 200 million, according to the Indian embassy.

## India voices 'deep concern'

**Violation of UN charter: Left parties**

**New Delhi:** The US attack on Venezuela is a blatant violation of the UN Charter, the Left parties said Sunday, while raising concerns over statements from President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The Left parties also held a protest at the Jantar Mantar here against the US action. In a statement, the parties said they "strongly denounce and condemn the US aggression against Venezuela and the kidnapping of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores". The statement, jointly issued by the CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, AIFB and RSP, said it was an attack carried out against a sovereign country in blatant violation of the United Nations Charter. The Left parties also called for nationwide protests against US aggression and in solidarity with the people of Latin America.

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## Uddhav seeks to scrap 'unopposed' civic wins



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 4:** Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray Sunday urged the State Election Commission to cancel results in 68 civic wards where ruling Mahayati nominees were declared winners unopposed, saying uncontested victories effectively rob 'Gen Z' and first-time voters of their voting right.

Sharing the stage with MNS chief Raj Thackeray to unveil their joint manifesto for the upcoming polls to the Mumbai civic body, Uddhav warned that democracy must not be overrun by "mobocracy."

The former chief minister launched a scathing attack on the Mahayati government, saying that since his government was dislodged and Eknath Shinde helmed the state (in June 2022), the wealth of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation is being splurged on contractors.

He claimed that after vote-stealing, the ruling parties are now stealing candidates.

Accusing the BJP of double standards, Raj Thackeray said the BJP had approached the Supreme Court in similar instances in West Bengal, where ruling party candidates were chosen unopposed in local body polls, and asked the ruling party to clarify this issue. Incidentally, the BJP has gone on the offensive on the issue of unopposed victories as 68 candidates from the Mahayati, including 44 from the BJP, have won without contest in Maharashtra, mainly due to the withdrawal of contestants from other parties or rebels.

Uddhav demanded the suspension of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar, who has been accused of interfering in the nomination process and tampering with CCTV footage linked to the exercise.

"He is a Speaker. He doesn't belong to any party and has the responsibility to conduct work without any allegiance. He should be booked for violating the poll code," Uddhav said. Narwekar, a BJP MLA from Colaba in south Mumbai, has dismissed the charges as baseless and politically motivated.

## MBBS student remains in 1st yr for over a decade at Gorakhpur college

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gorakhpur (UP), Jan 4:** An unusual case has come to light at the BRD Medical College in Gorakhpur where an MBBS student of the 2014 batch has remained in the first year for more than a decade after failing to clear the first-year examination.

Grappling with regulatory hurdles, the college administration has now approached the National Medical Commission (NMC) seeking its guidance to resolve the issue.

According to college authorities, the student, who could not clear the first-year MBBS examination in 2015, has been residing in the UG hostel since 2014.

The student has neither filled the examination form nor appeared for any subsequent attempts in the last 11 years. He is also not engaged in regular academic activities, officials said.

Under existing medical education rules, a student who fails the first-year MBBS examination is not required to seek fresh admission and can reappear by simply filling the examination form. Due to this provision, the student's enrolment continues to remain technically valid, preventing the college from canceling his admission.

Repeated counselling sessions by the college authorities failed to yield any result, following which the administration contacted the student's father.

However, despite three phone calls from the principal's office asking him to visit the college, the student's father has not turned up so far, the officials said, adding that the father has shown little concern for his son's academic future.

## EAM begins 6-day visit to France, Luxembourg

**New Delhi:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Sunday began a six-day visit to France and Luxembourg to hold talks on bilateral and global issues of mutual interests. In Paris, he will be meeting the French leadership and will hold talks with Foreign Minister Jean Noel Barrot, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Jaishankar's visit to France comes against the backdrop of growing global concerns over the US capturing Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro and his wife in a military operation. The MEA said Jaishankar and Barrot will discuss the progress made under the India-France strategic partnership and matters of global importance. The two ministers are also expected to prepare ground for French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India next month to participate in the AI Summit.

Similarly, he was allowed a 20-day parole October 1, 2024, days before the October 5 Haryana Assembly polls. In August 2024, Singh was granted a 21-day furlough. He was also permitted a three-week furlough from February 7, 2022, barely two weeks before the Punjab Assembly polls.

Prior to his latest parole, Singh has come out of prison 14 times since being convicted in 2017. Sikh organisations, such as Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, have in the past criticised the grant of relief to Singh.

**Army Chief embarks on visit to UAE, Sri Lanka**

**New Delhi:** Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi Sunday embarked on a four-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Sri Lanka to explore ways to shore up bilateral military cooperation. In the first leg of his two-nation tour, Gen Dwivedi is visiting the UAE to hold wide-ranging talks with the top military brass of the influential Gulf nation. He will also visit key military establishments including the UAE National Defence College and interact with officers and troops. "These engagements are aimed at further enhancing bilateral defence cooperation, professional military exchanges and strategic understanding between the two armed forces," the Army said. It said Gen Dwivedi's January 5-6 visit to the Gulf nation underscores a shared commitment to deepen mutual understanding and enhance cooperation in areas of common interest.

**Jharkhand govt diluted core spirit of PESA Act, claims BJP**

**Ranchi:** The BJP Sunday alleged that the JMM-led government in Jharkhand has diluted the core spirit of the PESA Act, 1996, as the exact definition of 'gram sabhas' in the legislation has been "sidelined" in the notified rules. Leader of Opposition (LoP) Babulal Marandi accused the Hemant Soren government of "tampering" with the core spirit of the PESA Act to "benefit mining mafia and conversion syndicates". BJP leader Arjun Munda said that the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act specifies that the self-governing system - based on customary laws, religious practices, and traditions that have existed since ancient times -- shall be called the 'gram sabha', whereas the PESA rules notified by the Jharkhand government mention only "traditions" while defining 'gram sabhas'.

## SNIPPETS

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## Over 80% with mental illness miss timely care: IPS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi:** The Indian Psychiatric Society (IPS) has expressed deep concern over the persistently high mental health treatment gap in India, noting that nearly 80-85 per cent of individuals suffering from psychiatric disorders do not receive timely or appropriate care.

This stark reality, which is supported by national and global evidence, was highlighted during the curtain raiser event of the 77th Annual National Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society, ANCIPS 2026, to be held from January 28-31 at Yashashobhoomi in Delhi. Mental health experts warned that despite advances in treatment and increasing awareness, the majority of people with mental illness continue to remain outside the formal healthcare system.

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**Several interlinked reasons behind the long delays in seeking psychiatric care, which often range from several months to even years. Social stigma and discrimination remain major barriers, as individuals fear being labelled, judged, or marginalised by family, workplace**

and society. Lack of awareness further compounds the problem, with many people failing to recognise early symptoms of mental illness as medical conditions requiring professional help. Another significant contributor to the treatment gap is the acute shortage of mental health professionals in India.

Dr Nimesh G Desai highlighted the serious consequences of delayed or absent treatment. Highlighting the role of the upcoming national conference, Dr Deepak Raheja, Organising Secretary of ANCIPS Delhi and Director, Hope Care India, said that that integration of mental health services into primary healthcare, increased budgetary allocation, expansion of the mental health workforce and sustained nationwide awareness campaigns are urgently needed to reduce stigma and improve access.

However, despite three phone calls from the principal's office asking him to visit the college, the student's father has not turned up so far, the officials said, adding that the father has shown little concern for his son's academic future.

# national

of the day quote

Daily wages of Rs 250 are not enough to run a household given the rise in prices. I give you my word -- within 30 days of the next government being formed, a tripartite meeting will be held, and within seven days of that, the process to ensure Rs 300 daily wages will begin

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TMC NATIONAL GENERAL SECY

Instructions have been given that people should get a safe, clean, and better experience -- so that these spots become even more convenient for spending time with families

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

The collective body of literature reflects the conscience, creativity and imagination of a society, and plays a vital role in building an intellectually progressive nation

SARBANANDA SONOWAL | UNION SHIPPING MINISTER

POST OF THE DAY

PARLIAMENT - A FRAUD  
Working Days : 60  
Holidays : 305  
Days  
Budget : 30,000 Cr  
- 10 yrs

Free Housing, Travel & Medical  
New Parliament Cost : 970 Cr  
At Taxpayers' Cost.

PS : Mutton Biryani - Rs. 150  
Mutton Curry - Rs. 125

For Policies that ruin our Lives.

@grok ?

@Polytikles

SHORT TAKES

Kerala: Hundreds of

two-wheelers gutted

Thirissur: Hundreds of two-wheelers were gutted after a fire broke out at the parking area of the railway station here Sunday, Fire and Rescue Service officials said. The police FIR stated that around 500 two-wheelers were gutted, but Southern Railway, in its statement, said around 250 vehicles were damaged. The blaze erupted at the paid-parking shed at around 6.20 am, and a distress call was received at about 6.40 am, the official added. Initially, police and fire personnel suspected that a spark from an electric line that fell onto a two-wheeler parked with a cover on it was the cause of the fire.

Dalit woman stabbed to death

Karwar (Karnataka): A

30-year-old Dalit woman was

stabbed to death on a road in

Uttara Kannada, allegedly by

a man known to her, police

said. The accused, identified

as Rafique Imamsab, was later

found dead, hanging from a

tree in a forest near Yellapur

Sunday, Superintendent of

Police Deepan M N told PTI.

The incident triggered tension

in the town, with several

Hindu outfits calling for a

bandh and terming the killing

a case of 'love jihad'.

AAP leader shot dead

Amritsar: Aam Aadmi Party

leader and village sarpanch

Jharmal Singh was allegedly

shot dead by unidentified

assailants at a wedding venue

here Sunday, police said.

According to the police, Singh,

a resident of Valthoa village

in Tarn Taran district, was

attending a marriage ceremony

in Amritsar when some

unidentified assailants shot him

from point-blank range. After a

gunshot hit Singh's forehead, he

fell and was taken to a nearby

hospital, where he succumbed

to his injuries, police said.



Democracy is impossible without the right to question. Citizens have the right to know what kind of work the government is doing in the fields of health, education and infrastructure. But this government does not want to empower the public. Their political ideology is like that of old kings. A maharaja is sitting in Delhi, and in every state where they are in power, they have installed a raja

GAURAV GOGOI | ASSAM CONG PRESIDENT

## INDORE WATER CONTAMINATION

# 'Disaster by corrupt system'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indore, Jan 4:** Renowned water conservationist Rajendra Singh Sunday termed the recent death of several residents due to contaminated drinking water in Indore a "system-created disaster," alleging that deep-rooted corruption is to blame for the tragedy.

The Magsaysay Award winner, popularly known as the "Waterman of India," expressed alarm that such a crisis could unfold in Indore, which has been consistently ranked as India's cleanest city.

"If such a tragedy can occur in the country's cleanest city, it shows how serious the condition of drinking water supply systems must be in other cities," Singh told PTI.

The crisis began in the area of Bhagirathpura, where local government officials discovered a huge leak within the major water pipeline carrying drinking water. It was found that water contamination occurred in an area where a toilet was constructed over the water mains in a police outpost.

Government officials admitted the sewage overflow from the toilet spilled over into the water mains, causing the outbreak of severe episodes of vomiting and diarrhea.

Officially, the death toll was put at six so far. Locals, however, claim the fatality count could be anywhere between 10 and 14, with another 200 people still in hospital. Over 30 patients were still in the intensive care units.

"Indore's contaminated drinking water crisis is a system-created disaster. To save money, contractors lay drinking water pipelines in close proximity to drainage lines," Singh claimed.

He alleged "corruption" has ruined the entire system. The



A person shows a sample of the drinking water that is being collected following a diarrhoea outbreak caused by contaminated water, at Bhagirathpura area, in Indore, Madhya Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

## CONG SEEKS JUDICIAL PROBE

**T**he Congress Sunday sought a judicial inquiry into the Indore water contamination incident and threatened to launch an agitation January 11 if the party's demands for rectification measures were not met. MP Congress chief Jitu Patwari said Kailash Vijayvargiya must be sacked as state urban development and housing minister since Bhagirathpura, where the tragedy unfolded, is part of the latter's Indore-1 assembly constituency. A case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder must be registered against Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava and concerned civic officials, he said after attending a meeting with party leaders here over the drinking water tragedy.

## 20 new diarrhoea cases detected

**T**wenty new patients were detected in Indore Sunday after health teams screened over 9,000 persons amid a diarrhoea outbreak caused by contaminated drinking water in the country's cleanest city, officials said. Officials said health teams examined 9,416 individuals from 2,354 households during an ongoing survey in the city's Bhagirathpura area, where six persons have lost their lives due to contaminated water, and identified 20 fresh cases.

Indore tragedy is the direct result of this corrupt system, he added. "The year-on-year decline in groundwater levels in Indore is the most worrying. I visited Indore for the first time in 1992. Even then, I had asked how long the city would depend on water from the Narmada river?" Singh said. If the city has continued to rely

on the Narmada water even after so many years, it means that people in the government system did not want to create a responsible water management mechanism, he claimed.

A large amount of money is lost to corruption in the project to bring Narmada water to Indore from 80 kilometres away, the water conservationist charged.

Indore depends on the Narmada River for its water needs. Through pipelines laid by the municipal corporation, water from the Narmada river is brought to Indore from Jalud in neighbouring Khargone district, located 80 km away, and supplied to households on alternate days.

According to civic officials, around Rs 25 crore is spent every month from the municipal corporation's treasury only on electricity bills for this project.

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## Two illegal mosques, madrassa demolished

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**S**ambhal (UP), Jan 4: A mosque and a madrassa in Sambhal district that were facing action for encroaching on government land were demolished by members of the mosque committee just before the notice period expired, and the cleared land was allotted on lease to 20 people from the economically weaker section, officials said Sunday.

In another action, the district administration also carried out the demolition of an illegal mosque in Raya Buzurg village, as the encroachment had not been fully removed despite prior notices, they said.

District Magistrate Rajender Pensya told reporters that the 'Madina mosque' and the madrassa were illegally constructed around 20-25 years ago on 1,339 square metres of government land in Salempur Salar alias Hajipur village.

A four-month notice, issued to the parties concerned for the removal of the illegal encroachment, was set to expire Sunday, January 4, but before the administration could take action, members of the Muslim community and the mosque committee were seen using hammers to demolish the illegal structure themselves Saturday, the officials said.

The district magistrate said that the illegally constructed mosque and madrassa "were removed by the members of the Muslim community themselves".

Tehsildar Sadar (Sambhal) Dharendra Pratap Singh said that a team was formed for the action against the illegal mosque.

When asked why the Muslim community members were demolishing the mosque themselves, he said, "This is a good thing. It's always good when people realise their mistake."

## BANK STRIKE: UNIONS THREATEN NATIONWIDE ACTION JAN 27

Bank employees' unions under the aegis of the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) have threatened to go on a nationwide strike January 27, demanding implementation of a 5-day week



# Mamata urges CEC to halt SIR in Bengal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

## 68-year-old man dies post SIR hearing

**K**olkata, Jan 4: Sharpening her attack on the Election Commission, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urged CEC Gyanesh Kumar to halt the "arbitrary and flawed" SIR in the state, warning that its continuation in the present form could trigger "mass disenfranchisement" and "strike at the foundations of democracy".

In a strongly worded letter dated January 3, Banerjee accused the commission of presiding over what she described as an "unplanned, ill-prepared and ad hoc" process marked by "serious irregularities, procedural violations, and administrative lapses". She asserted that the situation on the ground had worsened despite her two earlier communications to the chief election commissioner (CEC).

"I am once again constrained to write to you in order to place on record my grave concern," Banerjee wrote, recalling that she had flagged similar issues in letters dated November 20 and December 2. "Regrettably, instead of any corrective course being adopted, the situation on the ground has only deteriorated further." The chief minister said the "undue haste" with which the SIR was being carried out, "without adequate groundwork or preparation",

had rendered the process "fundamentally flawed". Calling the issues "illustrative and by no means exhaustive", the chief minister concluded that the SIR, as presently conducted, is "compromised" and strikes at the basics of democracy.

"Taken together, these deficiencies demonstrate that the SIR process, as presently conducted, stands deeply compromised and strikes at the basic structural framework of our democracy," the chief minister wrote, warning that if corrective steps were not taken immediately, the "exercise must be halted" to prevent "irreparable damage" and "large-scale disenfranchisement".

Centre relaxes norms for startups to avail funds from DSIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**N**ew Delhi, Jan 4: The Centre Sunday relaxed the norms for deep-tech startups to avail financial assistance from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

At the 42nd foundation day celebrations of the DSIR, the Union Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh announced the removal of the three-year viability criteria for deep-tech startups to avail financial assistance of up to Rs 1 crore under the Industrial Research and Development Promotion Program (IRDP).

The DSIR extends financial assistance up to Rs 1 crore to startups under its IRDP only if they prove to be sustainable and viable for a minimum period of three years.

Describing the move as an incentive to accelerate and sustain startups, Singh said, "The removal of the three-year existence requirement is a significant incentive to help deep-tech startups scale faster, even before they are fully on their own."

However, the startups will have to maintain appropriate evaluation standards linked to technological maturity, he said. The move is expected to provide early momentum to projects as well as promising innovators and entrepreneurs.

Addressing the gathering, the minister said that while the Rs 1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) fund has generated unprecedented enthusiasm across the country, it is designed to support startups that have achieved a certain level of technological maturity.

"For early-stage innovators or startups, a wide basket of schemes already exists across departments such as DST, CSIR, TDB (Technology Development Board) and others."



Artists perform at the 'Veedhi Virudhu Vizha' festival, which showcases traditional art forms as part of Pongal celebrations, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu

PTI PHOTO

# Jammu bans courier transport of narcotics without permit

Courier and parcel service operators have been asked to ensure that all their employees, including delivery staff, loaders, booking clerks and franchise workers, are duly verified through local police and that an updated register of such verified employees is maintained

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**J**ammu, Jan 4: Authorities here have barred courier companies and parcel services from transporting narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and other contraband without a valid permit, and directed them to ensure police verification of all their employees.

The directives were issued by Jammu District Magistrate Rakesh Minhas Saturday.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Sanhita (BNS) read with the relevant provisions of the NDPS Act, District Magistrate Jammu has ordered that no courier company, parcel service, or logistics operator functioning within the district shall accept, book or transport any narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, or other contraband items



unless it holds a valid transport permit under NDPS Rules and as per regulations under the Drugs and Cosmetic Act 1940," the order stated.

"All courier companies/parcel services shall strictly verify the identity and credentials of consignors and consignees, including valid government-issued identity proof, maintain complete records of consignments, including sender and receiver details, parcel description, weight, booking receipt and date of booking, mode of payment received against each consignment along with transaction details wherever applicable," it said.

Courier and parcel service operators have also been asked to ensure that all their employees, including delivery staff, loaders, booking clerks and franchise workers, are duly verified through local police and that an updated register of such verified employees is maintained.

They have been instructed to provide training to staff to help them identify suspicious consign

## international



We urge everyone to exercise restraint and fully respect the UN Charter and international human rights law. The protection of people in Venezuela is paramount and must guide any further action

VOLKER TÜRK | HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF, UN

**MYANMAR JUNTA FREES PRISONERS**

Myanmar's military government granted amnesty to more than 6,100 prisoners and reduced other inmates' sentences Sunday to mark the 78th anniversary of the country's independence from Britain. The amnesty comes as the military government proceeds with a monthlong, three-stage election process that critics say is designed to add a facade of legitimacy to the status quo



of the day quote



Our government lodged a strong protest with North Korea and strongly condemned it

SHINJIRO KOIZUMI | DEFENSE MINISTER, JAPAN



This action shows our UK leadership, and determination to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies, to stamp out any resurgence of IS and its violent ideologies in the Middle East

JOHN HEALEY | DEFENSE SECRETARY, UK



I'm not thrilled with Putin. He's killing too many people

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, USA

**SHORT TAKES****Britain, France strike Syria ISIS arms bunker**

**Damascus:** British and French warplanes carried out an airstrike in central Syria on an underground facility where members of the Islamic State group are suspected to have stored weapons and explosives, the British defence ministry said Sunday. The strikes occurred Saturday evening on the structure in the mountains just north of the historic town of Palmyra in the country's Homs province, the ministry's statement said. Britain and France are part of the US-led coalition that has been fighting IS militants for more than a decade. The ministry said the British military used Typhoon FGR4 fighter jets supported by a Voyager refuelling tanker and were joined by French aircraft in the joint strike. The British air force used Paveway IV guided bombs to target a number of access tunnels down to the facility, the statement said, adding that while a detailed assessment is now underway, initial indications are "that the target was engaged successfully."

**Italy's airport chaos strands thousands**

**Milan:** The Italian airport of Bergamo Orio-al-Serio, a Ryanair hub for flights to Milan, halted flights Saturday evening due to technical issues with the landing guidance system and poor visibility, leaving thousands stranded overnight. SACBO, the company that operates the airport, said in a statement the technical problem was solved around midnight, but a warning on the airport's website said "flights may be delayed or cancelled". The incident led to the cancellation of 26 departing flights with 6 diverted to other airports and 7 rescheduled for Sunday, local media said. Thousands spent the night at the airport, with images showing people sleeping on the floor and baggage check-in belts.

**Boat capsizes kills 25; 14 missing**

**Maiduguri:** At least 25 people have died and 14 others remain missing after a boat carrying dozens of passengers capsized in Yobe State, northeastern Nigeria, officials said Sunday. The accident occurred just before 8 p.m. local time (1900 GMT) Saturday when the large canoe, which had departed Adiyani village in northwestern Jigawa State, overturned en route to Garbi in Yobe State. The vessel was carrying 52 passengers, according to Mohammed Gaje, head of the Yobe State Emergency Management Agency. "It was a market day, and the victims were returning home after trading. If the driver survives, he will be prosecuted for negligence," said Lawan Adam, the state police spokesperson.

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Dubai, Jan 4:** Widening protests in Iran sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy are putting new pressure on its theocracy.

Tehran is still reeling from a 12-day war launched by Israel in June that saw the United States bomb nuclear sites in Iran. Economic pressure, intensified in September by the return of United Nations sanctions on the country over its atomic programme, has put Iran's rial currency into a free fall, now trading at some 1.4 million to \$1.

Meanwhile, Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" — a coalition of countries and militant groups backed by Tehran — has been decimated in the years since the start of the

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**



While many Western nations oppose Maduro and say he stole the 2024 election, there were many calls for the US to respect international law and resolve the crisis diplomatically

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**Caracas (Venezuela), Jan 4:** A tense calm hangs over Venezuela after the US military operation that deposed President Nicolas Maduro, who was brought to New York to face criminal charges.

President Donald Trump said the US would "run" the South American country and tap its vast oil reserves to sell to other nations.

Maduro and his wife landed late Saturday afternoon at a small airport in New York. The couple face US charges of participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy. Legal experts raised questions about the lawfulness of the operation, which was done without congressional approval.

The image of the 63-year-old Maduro blindfolded and handcuffed en route to the US has stunned Venezuelans and was Washington's most controversial intervention in Latin America since the invasion of Panama 37 years ago.

Maduro, who wished his captors a "Happy New Year" on arrival, is due to appear in a Manhattan court Monday.

**'THERE IS FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY'**

At home, his allies were still in charge and have denounced

- US plucks Maduro from Caracas in extraordinary raid
- Trump says US to control Venezuela until transition
- Maduro allies say he has been kidnapped, demand his release
- 'Happy New Year,' says detained Maduro in New York
- Venezuelans fret over future as Maduro loyalists stay in charge

Afghanistan and elsewhere, many world leaders were staggered at Trump's move, even though Maduro's standing was low given his autocratic rule and substantial evidence of vote-rigging.

Trump said the US would for now manage the South American nation of about 30 million people plus its oil reserves, the largest in the world. But he gave few details of how.

"We will run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition," he told a press conference at his Mar-a-Lago resort, hailing the extraordinary extraction of Maduro just as he was at the door of a safe room.

To the disappointment of Venezuela's opposition and diaspora, Trump has given short shrift to the idea of 58-year-old opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado taking over, saying she lacked support.

Machado was banned from standing in Venezuela's 2024 election and has said her ally Edmundo Gonzalez, 76, who

overwhelmingly won that vote according to the opposition and some international observers,

should now take the presidency.

Once one of the most prosperous nations in Latin America, Venezuela's economy nosedived further under Maduro, sending about one in five Venezuelans abroad in one of the world's biggest exodes.

"We are outraged because in the end everything was revealed — it was revealed that they only want our oil," Cabello said in audio shared by the ruling Socialist Party.

US Special Forces swooped in on helicopters to seize Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, under darkness in the early hours of Saturday after strikes on military installations in Caracas and elsewhere.

There were also questions over the legality of seizing a foreign head of state. Democrats said they were misled at recent Congress briefings and demanded a plan for what is to follow.

"We will never again be a colony of any empire."

**LONG RECORD OF US-LED REGIME CHANGES AND THEIR FALLOUT**

**T**he United States is not new to the practice of interfering in the domestic politics of independent and sovereign nations. Washington has been responsible for the forced removal of roughly 35 foreign leaders over the past 120 years—nearly a third of all such interventions globally in that period. Around one-third of all forced regime changes worldwide are followed by civil war within a decade. For a president who has consistently contrasted himself with the Republican "neoconservatives" of the late 20th century, Donald Trump's foreign policy has developed striking similarities with that of his predecessors. In 1983, under former President Ronald Reagan, the US invaded Grenada, claiming that the government at that time was illegitimate, a claim Trump has also made with respect to Maduro. In 1989, former President George HW Bush invaded Panama to depose dictator Manuel Noriega who, like Maduro, was wanted on US drug-trafficking charges. In that case, the US installed Noriega's replacement. In Guatemala alone, Washington helped oust three leaders in a single year, triggering decades of instability and violence. In Iraq, US troops toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003 with similar speed. Washington promised a democratic transformation, but a prolonged insurgency, sectarian civil war, regional destabilisation, and the rise of the so-called Islamic State—outcomes that continue to shape the Middle East today. In late 2001, US-backed forces swept into Kabul, ending the Taliban's rule in a matter of weeks. A new Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, was installed with American backing. President George W Bush spoke confidently of democracy taking root in Central Asia. Two decades later, the Taliban returned to power almost as swiftly as they had been removed.

**Gunmen kill over 30 in Nigeria**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Minna, Jan 4:** At least 30 villagers have been killed while several others were abducted by gunmen who raided a village in northern Nigeria's Niger state, police said Sunday, the latest in a cycle of deadly violence in the conflict-hit region.



The gunmen stormed the Kasuwan-Daji village in Niger state's Borgu local government area Saturday evening and opened fire on residents. They also razed down the local market and several houses, Niger state police spokesman Wasiu Abiodun said in a statement.

The attackers who raided Kasuwan-Daji arrived from the National Park Forest along Kabe district, according to the police, pointing to a usual trend where abandoned expansive forest reserves act as hideouts for armed gangs.

South Korea's Defence Ministry noted the launches violated UN Security Council resolutions that ban any ballistic activities by North Korea. It urged North Korea to cease

provocative actions immediately and respond to South Korea's push to restart talks and restore peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said that at least two missile launches by North Korea have been confirmed. "They are a serious problem, threatening the peace and security of our nation, the region and the world," Koizumi told reporters.

The launches were the latest weapons demonstration by North Korea in recent weeks.

North Korea hasn't announced when it will hold the congress, but South Korea's spy service said it will likely occur in January or February.

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Dubai, Jan 4:** Widening protests in Iran sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy are putting new pressure on its theocracy.

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Meanwhile, Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" — a coalition of countries and militant groups backed by Tehran — has been decimated in the years since the start of the

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Israel-Hamas war in 2023.**

A new threat by US President Donald Trump warning Iran that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters," the US "will come to their rescue" has taken on new meaning after American troops captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, a longtime ally of Tehran.

**How widespread the protests are**

Demonstrations have reached over 170 locations in 25 of Iran's 31 provinces, the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported early Sunday. The death toll had reached at least 15 killed, it added, with more than 580 arrests. The group, which relies on an activist network inside of Iran for its reporting, has been accurate in past unrest.

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India faces negligible impact, as trade with Venezuela has collapsed under sanctions, with crude imports down 81.3 per cent in FY2025 and overall bilateral trade remaining marginal

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

**ONGC BEGINS CCS PILOT**

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) plans to store captured carbon dioxide in depleted wells at Gujarat's Gandhar oilfield, marking the company's first full-scale Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) pilot and a major step in its decarbonisation strategy. The pilot will use two abandoned onshore wells to inject around 100 tonnes of CO2 per day into subsurface hydrocarbon reservoirs, officials said

**OPEC+ keeps output steady amid turmoil among members**

REUTERS

**Dubai, Jan 4:** OPEC+ kept oil output unchanged Sunday after avoiding discussions of the multiple political crises affecting the producer group's members, from the Middle East as well as Russia, Iran and Venezuela.

Sunday's meeting of eight members of OPEC+, which pumps about half the world's oil, came after oil prices fell more than 18% in 2025 — their steepest yearly drop since 2020 — amid growing oversupply concerns.

Tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE flared last month over a decade-long conflict in Yemen, when a UAE-aligned group seized territory from the Saudi-backed government. The crisis triggered the biggest split in decades between the former close allies.

And Saturday, the United States captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, and US President Donald Trump said Washington would take control of the country until a transition to a new administration becomes possible, without saying how this would be achieved.

"Right now, oil markets are being driven less by supply-demand fundamentals and more by political uncertainty," said Jorge Leon, head of geopolitical analysis at Rystad Energy and a former OPEC official. "And OPEC+ is clearly prioritising stability over action."

The eight OPEC+ members — Saudi Arabia, Russia, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Iraq, Algeria and Oman — raised oil output targets by around 2.9 million barrels per day in 2025, equal to almost 3% of world oil demand, to regain market share.

The eight members agreed in November to pause output hikes for January, February and March due to relatively low demand in the northern hemisphere winter. Sunday's brief online meeting affirmed that policy and did not discuss Venezuela, one OPEC+ delegate said.

The eight countries will meet February 1, OPEC+ said.

OPEC has in the past managed to overcome many internal rifts, such as over the Iran-Iraq War, by prioritising market management over political disputes. Yet the group is facing other crises, with Russian oil exports falling due to US sanctions over its war in Ukraine, and Iran facing protests and US threats of intervention.

Denmark's Orsted said Friday it was challenging the US government's suspension of the lease for its Revolution Wind joint venture.

Analysts said it is unlikely to see any meaningful boost to crude output for years, even if US oil majors do invest the billions of dollars in the country that Trump promised.

**Venezuela oil reset may aid India**

**US control of Venezuelan oil may unlock \$1bn stuck dues for India, lift output**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** A US-led takeover or restructuring of Venezuela's oil sector could deliver a direct benefit to India, potentially unlocking close to \$1 billion in long-pending dues while accelerating the revival of crude production from fields it operates in the sanctions-hit Latin American nation, analysts and industry sources said.

India was once a major processor of Venezuelan heavy crude, importing more than 4,00,000 barrels per day at peak levels, until sweeping US sanctions and rising compliance risks forcedly shut down purchases in 2020.

Its flagship overseas producer, ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL), jointly operates the San Cristobal oilfield in eastern Venezuela, but output has been severely curtailed as US restrictions blocked access to critical technology, equipment, and services — leaving commercially viable reserves effectively stranded.

Venezuela has failed to pay OVL \$536 million in dividends due on its 40 per cent stake in the field up to 2014, and a near-equivalent amount for the subsequent period for which Caracas has refused to permit audits, effectively freezing settlement of the claims.

Sanctions could be eased after a dramatic US operation removed President Nicolas Maduro and placed the country's vast

US control of the Venezuelan

**Venezuela is known to have the world's largest proven crude oil reserves of approximately 303 billion barrels. That accounts for roughly 17% of all global oil reserves**

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oil reserves under American oversight, analysts and energy executives said.

Once sanctions are eased, OVL can move rigs and other equipment from places, such as its parent ONGC's oil fields in Gujarat, to San Cristobal to revive output that has plummeted to 5,000-10,000 barrels per day, officials in the know of the matter said.

The onshore field can produce 80,000-1,00,000 bpd with more wells and better equipment, they said, adding that San Cristobal needs rigs similar to those operating in Gujarat, and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) owns many such rigs.

US control of the Venezuelan

oil sector also means exports to the world would start soon, and OVL can recoup its past \$1 billion dues from San Cristobal from such revenues, they said.

In fact, OVL had sought a 'specific licence' sanctions waiver, similar to one Office of the Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) had granted to Chevron to operate the oilfield and export oil from it. OVL and other Indian firms can also take more fields in Venezuela and revive production from the Carabobo-1 Area — another Venezuelan heavy oilfield with Indian interest. OVL holds 11 per cent interest in Carabobo-1, while Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL)

hold 3.5 per cent stake each.

Venezuelan national oil company Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PdVSA) is the majority stakeholder in both San Cristobal and Carabobo-1.

Post the US action, PdVSA may undergo restructuring, analysts said. In the worst-case scenario, its stake can be taken over by a US company or any new entity that Washington may erect.

OVL and other international companies — Repsol of Spain has 11 per cent stake in Carabobo-1 — are most certainly likely to continue in the projects with their holdings, analysts said.

US President Donald Trump has already stated that, as part of the takeover, major US oil companies would return to Venezuela, which has the world's third-largest oil importer, renewed Venezuelan exports would offer a strategic alternative to Middle Eastern crude, reduce exposure to geopolitical shocks, and strengthen its hand in price negotiations.

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**GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY****Gold, silver brace for swings**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Gold and silver prices are likely to witness sharp swings next week as traders weigh key economic data and brace for heightened geopolitical uncertainty after US forces captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, analysts said.

Investors will focus on key US data points, including ISM Manufacturing, December ADP employment numbers, and the unemployment rate, along with comments from a slew of Federal Reserve officials that could provide cues on the central bank's monetary policy outlook and near-term direction for bullion prices, they added.

"Gold prices are likely to remain volatile in the week ahead as there are bullish as well as bearish factors at play,"

**ezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife in a military operation Saturday, accusing them of drug trafficking.**

After hitting record highs in late December, gold prices retreated in the past week. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the yellow metal futures slumped by ₹4,112, or 2.94 per cent.

The metal had surged to hit a record high of ₹1,40,444 per 10 grams before slipping more than 3 per cent to settle at ₹1,35,761 per 10 grams Friday.

Silver prices, too, mirrored the precious metal's volatility. On the MCX, the white metal depreciated by ₹3,471, or 1.45 per cent, during the week.

Prathamesh Mallya, DVP - Research, Non - Agri Commodities and Currencies, Angel One, said.

According to experts, commodities markets are expected to see aggressive trading Monday, reflecting volatile geopolitics after the US captured Ven-

ezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife in a military operation Saturday, accusing them of drug trafficking.

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**Cautious FPIs pull out ₹7,608cr from equities in two days of Jan**

**The withdrawal of funds followed the largest outflow of ₹1.66 lakh crore (\$18.9 billion) recorded in 2025**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 4:** Foreign portfolio investors have started 2026 on a cautious note, extending their selling streak from last year by withdrawing ₹7,608 crore (\$846 million) from Indian equities in the first two trading sessions of January.

The withdrawal of funds followed the largest outflow of ₹1.66 lakh crore (\$18.9 billion) recorded in 2025, triggered by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions and concerns over potential US tariffs, and stretched market valuations.

This sustained selling pres-

sure by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) has significantly contributed to the nearly 5 per cent depreciation of the rupee against the dollar during 2025.

However, market experts believe the tide could turn in 2026.

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, said the year is likely to witness a shift in FPI strategy, as improving domestic fundamentals may start attracting net foreign inflows.

This trend is not unusual, as foreign investors have historically remained guarded in January, having withdrawn funds in eight out of the past ten years, Khan said.

"Gold prices are likely to remain volatile in the week ahead as there are bullish as well as bearish factors at play,"

PRATHAMESH MALLYA | CVP - RESEARCH, NON - AGRI COMMODITIES AND CURRENCIES, ANGEL ONE

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## T20 WORLD CUP

# B'desh snubs India over security

Day after Rahman's release from IPL, BCB wants T20 World Cup games to be shifted out of India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Jan 4: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Sunday decided against sending its national team to India for the T20 World Cup next month citing security concerns and government advice, following IPL franchise KKR's decision to release pacer Mustafizur Rahman on BCCI's instruction.

Although the BCCI did not explicitly cite the current relations between the two countries for its decision to seek Rahman's release Saturday, it did say that the move was triggered by what's been happening all around.

Rahman's dramatic ouster from the IPL prompted the BCB to call an emergency meeting Saturday night and a day later, it announced the Board of Directors met again and decided that the national team will not travel to India for the T20 World Cup beginning February 7.

"The Board reviewed the situation in detail, taking into account developments over the last 24 hours and expressed deep concern over the overall circumstances surrounding the participation of the Bangladesh National Team in matches scheduled to be played in India," said the BCB in a statement.

"Following a thorough assessment of the prevailing situation and the growing concerns regarding the safety and security of the Bangladesh contingent in India and considering the advice from the Bangladesh Government, the Board of Directors



resolved that the Bangladesh National Team will not travel to India for the tournament under the current conditions."

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will need to address the issue as Bangladesh are scheduled to play all four of their leagues games in India.

Like the arrangement with Pakistan, Bangladesh wants all of their matches to be shifted to Sri Lanka, the co-host of the tournament.

"In light of this decision, the BCB has formally requested the International Cricket Council (ICC), as the event authority, to consider relocating all of Bangladesh matches to a venue outside India (co host Sri Lanka)," read the statement further.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board looks forward to the ICC's understanding of the situation and an urgent response on this matter."

Even before the BCB issued a statement, government advisor Asif Nazrul declared in a Facebook post that the board has taken the call not send its team to India.

"Bangladesh will not go to India to play World Cup. Bangladesh Cricket Board has taken this decision today. We welcome this decision taken in the context of the violent communal policy of the Cricket Board of India," read a translated version of his post in Bengali.

Following the BCB emergency meeting, Nazrul instructed the board to ask Jay Shah-led ICC to shift Bangladesh's four league games – three in Kolkata and one in Mumbai – to Sri Lanka.

"As the adviser in charge of the Ministry of Sports, I have instructed the Cricket Control Board to put the entire matter in writing and explain it to the ICC," Nazrul wrote in Bengali on his Facebook page.

"The board must make it clear that if a Bangladeshi cricketer, despite being under contract, cannot play in India, then the Bangladeshi national team cannot feel safe travelling to India to play the World Cup.

"I have also directed the board to formally request that Bangladesh's World Cup matches be held in Sri Lanka instead,"

he further wrote.

The Shah Rukh Khan co-owned IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) released the Bangladesh left-arm pacer, who was bought for Rs 9.20 crore after a bidding war at last month's auctions in Abu Dhabi, following BCCI's dictat.

The Indo-Bangladesh relationship has plunged into chaos after the ouster of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India in August last year following anti-government protests.

She was sentenced to death in absentia by a tribunal for her alleged role in a deadly crackdown during the agitation in which several students were killed. Hindus have been targeted for violent attacks since Hasina's ouster.

## IPL broadcast to be suspended?

Nazrul also said that he has requested the adviser for Bangladesh's Information and Broadcasting Ministry (I&B) to ensure that broadcast of IPL in Bangladesh is suspended.

"I have requested the adviser for Information and Broadcasting to ensure that the broadcast of the IPL in Bangladesh is also suspended.

"Under no circumstances will we tolerate any insult to Bangladeshi cricket, cricketers, or Bangladesh itself. The days of servitude are over," he said.

There is a bit of disbelief in the BCB corridors that things took such a turn after India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar attended former PM Khaleda Zia's funeral in Dhaka.

"The BCB announced the schedule for India's tour of Bangladesh because there was a sense of positivity but now we need to get an official confirmation from the Indian board as to why Mustafizur's contract was cancelled," a BCB source told.

enth minute. Belgian drag-flick specialist Alexander Hendrickx (7) stepped up and delivered the equaliser with a perfect flick past the goalkeeper.

Two minutes later, Ranchi Royals claimed the lead again as Vishnukant Singh played an incisive first-time pass into the circle for Mandeep Singh (9) who did well to win the ball in a tight position and score his goal. In the 13th minute, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers played an interesting variation in search of an equaliser from a penalty corner but Rosan Kujur's attempt narrowly missed the target.

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers began the second quarter strong with a crucial field goal. Craig Marias showed great skill inside the circle as his pass set up Gursahibjit Singh (16) perfectly for a diving finish into the goal.

The Royals won an early penalty corner as Tom Boon (1) made the most of the opportunity, slotting the ball into the net with a powerful dragflick.

Ranchi Royals dominated possession early on, but Vedanta Kalinga Lancers were quick to adapt as they improved and won a penalty corner in the sev-

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Ranchi Royals dominated possession early on, but Vedanta Kalinga Lancers were solid with their defending and hardly made any errors at the back to claim a victory and begin their Men's HIL campaign on a positive note.

## HOCKEY INDIA LEAGUE

# Vedanta Kalinga Lancers start campaign in style



The team secures 4-2 win against Ranchi Royals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 4: Vedanta Kalinga Lancers claimed a 4-2 victory over Ranchi Royals in the Men's Hockey India League (HIL) at the Major Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium Sunday.

Alexander Hendrickx (7, 28) and Gursahibjit Singh (16, 26) scored the goals for Vedanta Kalinga Lancers while Tom Boon (1) and Mandeep Singh (9) were the goalscorers for Ranchi Royals.

The Royals won an early penalty corner as Tom Boon (1) made the most of the opportunity, slotting the ball into the net with a powerful dragflick.

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## LA LIGA

# Barca's Garcia shrugs off hostile Derby

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Barcelona, Jan 4: Goalkeeper Joan Garcia shrugged off the jeers and vitriol in his return to Espanyol and Barcelona teammate Fermín López set up two late goals for a 2-0 victory in a heated Catalan derby.

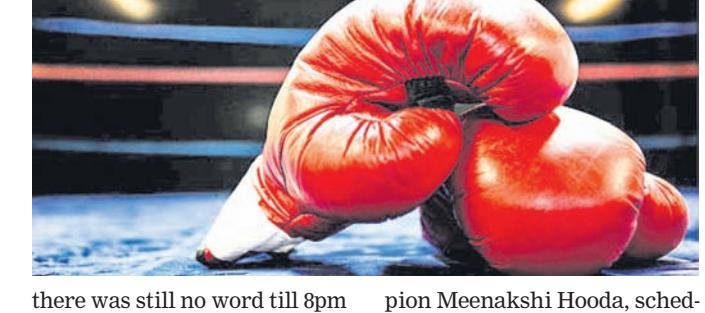
Fermín assisted fellow substitutes Dani Olmo and Robert Lewandowski in the 86th and 90th minutes to tilt the match in favor of the La Liga leaders.

But the credit for the win went to García, who made superb saves to frustrate an Espanyol attack that dominated all but the final period.

The final score hid a superb effort by fifth-placed Espanyol. Pere Milla and Roberto Fernández drew save after save from García, who was playing his first game at Espanyol since he left the "parakeets" last summer for its top rival. His highlight came in the 39th when García used a reflex one-hand save to paw a point-blank header by Milla over his crossbar.

## ELITE BOXING NATIONALS

# Chaos, delays mar opening day



Greater Noida, Jan 4: The country's boxers were left anxiously waiting for hours as chaos marred the opening day of the senior boxing National Championships, which was delayed by more than four hours due to "logistical" issues here Sunday.

The tournament, meant to mark a landmark moment with the men's and women's national championships being staged together for the first time, was scheduled to begin at 2pm at the Gautam Buddh University. Instead, confusion and prolonged waiting defined the day.

The competition rings themselves were not ready. Three rings were scheduled to be in place, but only one was assembled by around 4pm and even that had to be reassembled due to a technical issue.

The first of the 80 bouts – 38 women's and 42 men's – finally got underway at 6:30 pm with the men's competition.

While, the women pugilists were left waiting even longer as

there was still no word till 8pm as to when their bouts would begin and the third ring was yet to be assembled.

"The delay was because of certain logistical issues," Boxing Federation of India secretary general Pramod Kumar told PTI. While the BFI maintained that the delay was due to logistical hurdles, sources familiar with the matter said it was a due to payment related issues.

"The vendor had not been paid. Work only began after the payment finally went through. There were no sponsors for the tournament either," a source said. Reigning 48kg world champion Meenakshi Hooda, scheduled to fight in the opening bout in the women's section, was seen curled up on a yoga mat inside the hall late afternoon, conserving energy while waiting for word on when she would fight.

As the hours dragged on with no communication from organisers, she eventually left the stadium at 7pm. Several other boxers tried to kill time, some plugged on their headphones, others paced the hall as hours ticked by with no announcement.

Coaches warned that the prolonged delay could increase risk of injury as recovery would be hampered.

# 2nd Khelo India Beach Games: Odisha eyes eye title defence



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sydney, Jan 4: Joe Root and Harry Brook shared a 154-run partnership to guide England to 211-3 before bad light stopped play on Day 1 of the final Ashes test, which featured an emotional on-field tribute for the Bondi terror victims and first responders.

Root and Brook joined when the tourists were at a perilous 57-3 Sunday and rallied England through the middle session before bad light and rain stopped play just before tea and prevented the match from resuming after the interval.

At stumps Root was unbeaten on 72 and Brook was 78 not out, sharing England's best partnership of the five-test series. Australia has already retained the Ashes with wins in the first three tests.

The team travelled to Daman and Diu Saturday to participate in the event. A 12-member squad has been selected to represent the Odisha team in the aforementioned championship.

In the inaugural edition of the Khelo India Beach Games, the Odisha women's beach football team made history by winning the championship. In a thrilling final, the team defeated Gujarat 3-2, with captain Jasoda Mun-

day scoring two crucial goals to lead her team to victory.

Odisha is set to become a major hub for beach sports, particularly volleyball, in the coming years. The Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) announced the events that will be hosted in Bhubaneswar in partnership with the KIIT & KISS institutions.

The state will host the prestigious international FIVB Beach Pro Tour for three consecutive years- 2026, 2027, 2028 and will also organize FIVB Beach Volleyball Challenger Trophy, featuring participation from 40 countries, in late February or early March 2026 in Bhubaneswar.

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# Modi reaffirms India's 2036 Olympic vision

## PM INAUGURATES 72ND SENIOR NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Varanasi, Jan 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday asserted that India is preparing with full strength to host the 2036 Olympic Games, and declared his government was committed to providing "more and more players greater opportunities to compete" by hosting mega sporting events in the country.

Addressing the inaugural function of the 72nd Senior National Volleyball Championship, being held here, via video conference, Modi said, the government was making every possible effort to provide exposure to budding athletes to take up Olympic sports, and schemes like Khelo India were proving a game-changer in harnessing talent.

Noting that initiatives like the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPs) were transforming the sports ecosystem

and the country is making strong efforts to host the 2036 Olympics, with the aim of giving more and more players greater opportunities to compete," said Modi.

"Through the Khelo India campaign, hundreds of youth have had the chance to advance to the national level," added Modi.

"India has hosted more than 20 major international events across several cities, including the FIFA Under-17 World Cup, Hockey World Cup, and major

chess tournaments."

Recalling the time when the government and society were indifferent towards sports, he said the past decade had brought about a massive change in the mindset of the country.

"The government has significantly increased the sports budget, and today India's sports model has become athlete-centric, with focus on talent identification, scientific training, nutrition, and transparent selection, ensuring that the interests of players are prioritised at every level," he said. "Today the nation is riding on the 'reform express', with every sector and every development destination connected to it, and sports being one of them," he said.

"India's progress is not limited to the economic front but is also reflected in the confidence seen on the sports field. India's

performance across various sports has consistently improved since 2014," he added.

Elaborating on the reforms his government had undertaken in the sports, the PM said the National Sports Governance Act and the Khelo Bharat Policy 2025 will provide opportunities to the right talent and increase transparency in sports organisations.

He emphasized that these provisions will allow the youth to advance simultaneously in both sports and education.

The PM expressed happiness that Varanasi had come up as a major sporting destination, saying that securing a place on the country's sporting map through the National Volleyball Competition was highly significant for the city.

The tournament, being held from January 4 to 11, will witness the participation of more

than 1,000 players, representing 58 teams, from across the country.

"Hosting the National Volleyball Tournament in Varanasi underscores the growing emphasis on strengthening sports infrastructure and promoting athletic development in the city."

Drawing parallels between volleyball and the country's growth, the PM said "I see so many parallels between India's development story and volleyball."