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## Deepika's initiative

Actor Deepika Padukone launches 'The OnSet Program', an initiative aimed at empowering the next generation of creative talent

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## Climate financing gap

The Hindu Kush Himalaya faces a staggering climate financing shortfall of \$12 trillion from 2020 to 2050

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## Tariff jitters

Sensex and Nifty end lower dragged by fresh warning from the US to further raise tariffs against India

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## IPL off air in B'desh

Bangladesh bans the broadcast of IPL's upcoming season in the wake of pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the league

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VOLUME 15, ISSUE 276 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY | JANUARY 6, 2026

12 PAGES | ₹5.00

## Man strangles mother, his two siblings in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: A man allegedly strangled his mother, sister and minor brother in east Delhi's Laxmi Nagar after feeding them food laced with dhatura (a poisonous plant) over financial distress and later walking into a police station to confess the crime, police said Monday.

The accused, identified as Yashbir Singh (23), a resident of Subhash Chowk in Laxmi Nagar, surrendered at Laxmi Nagar police station around 5 pm and claimed to have killed his family members, they said.

The accused claimed that he had taken a term life insurance policy worth around ₹1.5 crore and had made several attempts to end his life over the past two months by staging accidents, claiming snake bites and injecting air, but was unsuccessful, police said.

"He stated that his mother confronted him a day earlier and told him that if he intended to die, he should first kill all family members and then face the consequences," a senior police officer said, clarifying that the claims are based on the accused's version and are being verified.

PTI



**MASK PROTEST:** Angry over ongoing air quality crisis, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Atishi and other AAP leaders wear industrial-grade masks during the Winter session in New Delhi, Monday

PTI PHOTO

## Attack on Vance's home; 1 detained

**Cincinnati:** A man who broke windows at Vice President JD Vance's Ohio home and caused other property damage was detained early Monday, the US Secret Service said. The man was detained shortly after midnight by Secret Service agents assigned to Vance's home, east of downtown Cincinnati, agency spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said in a statement emailed to this agency. He has not been named. The Secret Service heard a loud noise at the home around midnight and found a person who had broken a window with a hammer and was trying to get into the house, according to two law enforcement officials.



**US President Donald Trump** was not happy with India despite New Delhi's recent reduction in purchases of Russian oil. The Trump administration has alleged that the cuts are insufficient and continue to help sustain President Vladimir Putin's war machine. It warned that unless India meets Washington's demands, additional tariffs would be imposed swiftly. Coming on the heels of a US attack on Venezuela and at a time when India is seeking to clinch a trade deal with Washington, the fresh warning has triggered a negative reaction in Indian markets. While investors fear that strained trade relations could further delay a US-India trade agreement, trade experts caution that New Delhi's ambiguous approach risks weakening its negotiating position.

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** The United States could raise tariffs on India if New Delhi does not meet Washington's demand to curb purchases of Russian oil, President Donald Trump said Sunday, escalating pressure on the South Asian country as trade talks remain inconclusive.

"(Prime Minister Narendra) Modi is a good guy.

He knew I was not happy, and it was important to make me happy," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One.

"They do trade, and we can raise tariffs on them very quickly," Trump said in response to a question on India's Russian oil purchases.

India's Commerce Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's comments follow months of trade negotiations after the US doubled import tariffs on Indian goods to 50% last year as punishment for its heavy buying of Russian oil.

Indian markets reacted Monday, with the information technology stock index, NIFTYIT, falling about 2.5% to its lowest in more than a month, as investors

worried that strained relations could further delay a US-India trade deal.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a close Trump ally travelling with him, said US sanctions on Russian oil companies and higher tariffs on India had helped curb Indian oil imports.

Graham is backing legislation to impose tariffs of up to 500% on countries such as India that continue to buy Russian oil.

"If you are buying cheap Russian oil, (you) keep Putin's war machine going," he said, adding that "we are trying to give the President ability to make that a hard choice by tariffs."

Trump's actions were the main reasons India was now buying "substantially less Russian oil," Graham said.

## Hindu journalist shot dead in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Jan 5:** A Hindu businessman, who was also the acting editor of a newspaper, was fatally shot in the head by unidentified assailants Monday in Jessore district in southern Bangladesh, officials said.

Rana Pratap Bairagi, 38, was a resident of Arua village in Keshabpur upazila of Jessore in Khulna Division, Bangla-language daily Prothom Alo reported.

The shooting marks the latest in a spate of violent incidents against minorities in the country, especially the Hindu community members.

Bairagi, who owned an ice-making factory in Kopalika Bazar in Monirampur, was also the act-

ing editor of a newspaper called 'Dainik BD Khabar' published from Narail, according to the daily.

The incident occurred around 5:45 pm at Kopalika Bazaar Monday, bdnews24 news portal quoted Additional Police Superintendent Abul Basar as saying.

Citing locals and the police, Prothom Alo said that three miscreants on a motorcycle called him from the ice factory and took him to the alley in front of Kopalika Clinic and Diagnostic Centre on the west side of Kopalika Bazar.

"Bairagi was shot three times in the head and his throat was slit," Monirampur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md. Rajiullah Khan was quoted as saying by the daily.

## 4 students critical in accidental fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bissamkata, Jan 5:** At least four students were seriously injured in a fire that broke out on a school premises during school hours in Rayagada district Monday afternoon, officials said.

The incident occurred around 3 pm at a primary school in Paikadakuliguda village under the Bissamkata block while classes were in session.

According to preliminary information, students found a bottle containing a flammable substance on the campus, poured it on the ground and ignited it while playing. The fire spread suddenly, causing severe burn injuries to four children.

The injured students were identified as Birat Takri, 12, Nabin Huika, 12, Rohit Khora, 12, all Class VII students and Sudam Bag, 10, a Class V student.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



**JUSTICE FOR UMAR**  
If everyone has full faith in the justice system, why do people hate approaching the court?

MANJUL

## Khalid to stay in jail; bail for 5 others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** The Supreme Court Monday refused bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case but granted it to five others, citing "hierarchy of participation" and saying all accused in the case do not stand on the same footing.

According to the court, delay in trial does not operate



as a "trump card" which automatically displaces statutory safeguards.

"All the appellants do not stand on equal footing as regards culpability. The hierarchy of participation emerging from the prosecution case requires the court to examine each application individually" the bench said, adding that the roles attributed to them are different.



### 4<sup>th</sup> ODISHA

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## Musk's ex slams Grok for 'undressing' her

A

uthor and influencer Ashley St. Clair has accused Elon Musk's AI chatbot, Grok, of generating sexually suggestive images of her in a bikini using photographs taken when she was 14 years old.

In a series of tweets on X, St. Clair claimed that Grok obeyed user prompts to "undress" her by generating images of her in a bikini using a childhood photograph. She described the AI's actions as "horrifying" and "objectively illegal," noting that the source photo was a "silly" picture she took as an underage teen. Despite her requests, the explicit images remain on X.



"Grok is now undressing photos of me as a child. This is a website where the

call me "scorned"; this is objectively horrifying, illegal, and if it has happened to anybody else, DM me. I got time," she wrote on X.

"Hey@grok, I am 14 in this photo. A tasteless silly photo I took as a kid (with too much unmonitored internet access), but you're now undressing a minor with sexually suggestive content! Please remove and send me post ID for legal filing," she said in another tweet.

Complaints started flooding X after Grok introduced an "edit image" feature in late December, allowing users to modify images on the platform. Some users exploited this feature to re-

move clothing from women and children in pictures, sparking outrage.

The Indian government also took notice, with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) issuing a notice to X, demanding the immediate removal of all "obscene, nude, and sexually suggestive content" generated by Grok, threatening legal action under the IT Act.

Grok Friday said it was scrambling to fix flaws in the artificial intelligence tool after users claimed it turned pictures of children or women into erotic images.

AGENCIES

## leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com

accuracy • reliability • trust

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

## ■ ARIES

If you're away from home, you might get a bit misty-eyed. And while you're calling your family, says Ganesha, it's a good idea to call friends you're hardly in touch with. It's a different high, to know you're loved.

## ■ TAURUS

Clarity will be a concentric circle today. You may feel trapped in a labyrinth, puzzled and perplexed, about a personal problem, predicts Ganesha. You may not be inclined to deal with unpleasant situations in the afternoon. You will exhibit your flair with words that may impress people around you, says Ganesha.

## ■ GEMINI

Today, you will be extra careful about hygiene and cleanliness, predicts Ganesha. You may plan to wash your car, clean your yard, and arrange household items, only to be followed by a liberal spray of disinfectants in the afternoon. You will diffuse all your tensions with a light-hearted approach.

## ■ CANCER

Your natural talents will be rewarded at work, predicts Ganesha. Later in the day, your peers will fully co-operate to help you achieve your goals. Your popularity will grow by leaps and bounds. But you should not let success get to your head.

## ■ LEO

Ganesha foresees a mixed day for you. Your pecuniary problems may persist until later in the day, so your desire to see them sorted out is going to wait a little. However, chances are you may rake in money from various sources in the afternoon. Good thing is that you are likely to retain your independence at the workplace.

## ■ VIRGO

Homesickness will make you yearn and leave you musing during the day. You will try making sincere efforts to add more fibres to the cloth of relationships. Energy levels will go bonkers today. All in all, Ganesha sees a sanctified day.

## ■ LIBRA

Money matters may cause you some concern, at least till the latter half of the day, foresees Ganesha. After that, those financial troubles will make way for lucrative opportunities. Expect to make money from all quarters later in the afternoon. You shall be your own boss when it comes to making career decisions.

## ■ SCORPIO

Athletes will achieve prime fitness and form today, says Ganesha. Engineers will design plans that will concentrate their resources on laying the foundation to new business ventures. Your social reputation will get a major boost later in the day.

## ■ SAGITTARIUS

Passionate about work, you are brimming with innovative ideas for new projects. Shoot them in the meeting and you are sure to receive compliments. However, there are chances that you may have to compromise on your family life today. But, it's harmless.

## ■ CAPRICORN

Those meddlesome neighbours of yours may suddenly come across as more seemly, and even if you can see through their ulterior motives, you will find yourself developing a good rapport with them, says Ganesha. Later in the day, you will indulge in literary works, which will provide food for thought. Finances will be in good shape, and there won't be much that you would have to worry about.

## ■ AQUARIUS

You will plan your day well. Good, says Ganesha, as it does away with the clutter in your schedule. That way, you will also get more time to do stuff you never came around doing it. So, bring out your old Cliff Richard records, and wipe clean your dusty LP player. You may finally get to revive old times!

## ■ PISCES

Your powers of concentration and focus come to the fore. Your lucidity and eye for detail will save you from many a hassle that could have developed later on. The time that this will save your bosses and peers will bring you many accolades, says Ganesha.



## ROURKE STARTS GoFundMe TO AVOID EVICTION FROM LA HOME

Mickey Rourke has launched a GoFundMe page to avoid eviction from his home. The actor has been served a notice to pay around USD 60,000 in back rent or vacate the house. The page, titled "Help Mickey Rourke Stay in His Home" has raised USD 19,819 so far with a goal of USD 100,000.

## JLO LAYS DOWN RULES FOR FUTURE LOVE

Jennifer Lopez, who divorced actor-filmmaker Ben Affleck in 2025, says she now seeks a partner who will respect her and accept her for who she truly is. While performing at her *Up All Night* show in Las Vegas, the singer reflected on love, heartbreak, and her hopes for the future.



## Radhika slams films for glorifying obsession



**Mumbai:** Radhika Apte, known for her outspoken views and fearless honesty, has once again taken a firm stand on how love is portrayed in films today. In a recent interview, the *Saali Mohabbat* actress criticised the way obsession, control and emotional manipulation are often romanticised on screen and passed off as love. According to Radhika, such portrayals are not only misleading but deeply harmful, as they normalise toxic behaviour and

make people believe that suffering and adjustment are essential parts of romance. Referring to her latest film *Saali Mohabbat*, directed by Tisca Chopra, she clarified that her character's extreme actions should not be mistaken for passionate love. Instead, she explained that the character reacts to prolonged injustice, betrayal and repeated mistreatment by her husband. In another interview, Radhika said the film does not depict love-driven actions but rather the consequences of being treated badly over a long period of time. She firmly stated that love cannot be defined by pain, control, or repeated emotional harm, adding that she strongly disagrees with this notion.

The *Pad Man* actress expressed fatigue over seeing such ideas glorified in cinema, stressing that stories celebrating obsession and dominance should stop. For her, love is straightforward, it is about freedom, mutual respect, and genuine happiness.

AGENCIES



## Deepika to empower nextgen

**Mumbai:** Actor-producer Deepika Padukone celebrated her birthday Monday by launching an initiative that she says will empower the next generation of creative talent.

The actor, known for her roles in *Chennai Express*, *Padmaavat*, *Piku* and *Pathaan*, announced the launch of 'The OnSet Program', the next chapter of her Create With Me platform, aimed at empowering aspiring creative artists to pursue a career in Indian film, television and advertising industry.

Sharing a video on her Instagram handle, Deepika said, "This past year, I've been feeling very strongly about



## MANUSHI'S GRACIOUS ACT



**Mumbai:** Actress Chitrangda Singh has weighed in on the growing discussion around regulated shift timings on film sets, stressing that while actors are largely taken care of, the conversation must urgently widen to include the crew members who form the backbone of the film industry.

Asked about her experience, how crucial is the change towards regulated shift timings on film sets for mental and physical well-being, the actress told this news agency: "I think it definitely is important. Actors are still very well taken care of. There is a lot of, you know, regard for their time, for their comfort. Usually producers, as much as they can, and directors try to work around their time."

Drawing from her experience, Chitrangda highlighted that technicians such as light men, art department staff and set workers often put in far longer hours than those visible on camera. "But I feel what we also need to discuss is probably the light men, the set guys, who, the art and all these guys, because for a nine o'clock shift, if I come at seven for hair and makeup, they are there from 5.30 in the morning or not, maybe five in the morning, and then they're the last ones to go and the first ones to come." IANS

but the next morning, when she tried on that other outfit of hers, the zipper broke."

"So, for some reason, I don't know what was going on that day with her, but I remember the morning of the finals seeing her, and she was quite low.

The actress spoke about the incident while recreating her Miss World pageant makeup look in a recent YouTube video.

Looking back at the chaotic morning of the finals, Manushi shared, "A night before the finals, we had our costume rehearsals where we kind of judge whether we're okay walking in those gowns and everything has to be timed to perfection. And Miss South Africa, Adé van Heerden, her gown ended up ripping apart. I have no idea how that exactly happened, but that was a lot of stress. She had a second gown,

IANS

## Chitrangda calls for crew-friendly shifts

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**■ CALVIN AND HOBBS**

**■ BREVITY**

**■ PEANUTS**

**■ FUN POST**

**■ CROSSWORD**

**■ SUDOKU**

**■ ICROSSWORD**

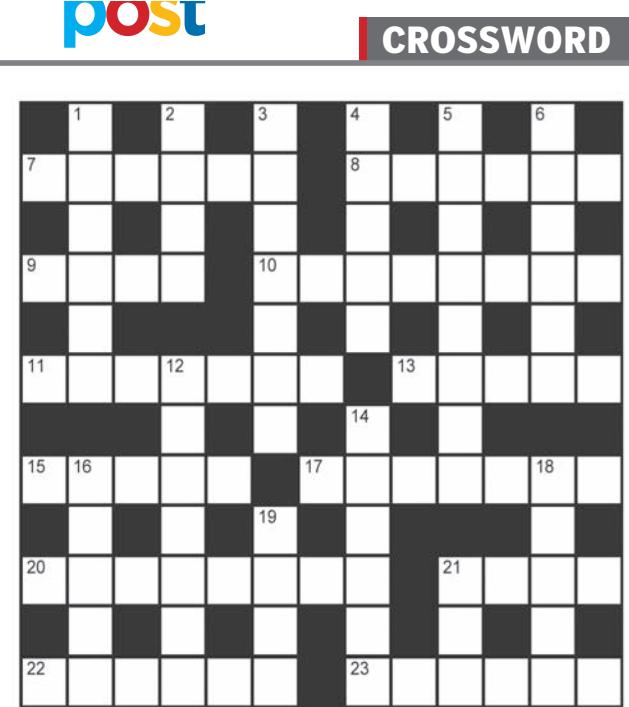
**■ BREVITY**

**■ FUN POST**

**■ CROSSWORD**

**■ SUDOKU**

## CROSSWORD



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Across

7 Courageous

8 Auto shop problem

9 Snake's warning

10 Increase

11 Paper carrier

13 Wipe dry

15 Palace dweller

17 Medical exam, sort of

20 Team sport

21 Jubilation

22 Cleric's soapbox

23 Sword

24 Skilled musician

25 Levy by force

26 Drastic changes, usually in business (5-3)

27 Reddish

28 Menageries

29 South American country

30 Parenthetical comment

31 Breaks

Down

1 Tree

2 Clutch, but don't run into the

3 WHAM

4 ...TREE!

5 ...TREE!

6 ...TREE!

7 ...TREE!

8 ...TREE!

9 ...TREE!

10 ...TREE!

11 ...TREE!

12 ...TREE!

13 ...TREE!

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26 ...TREE!

# PEOPLE'S CM TURNS 54



**FROM 'GURUJI' TO GOVERNANCE: THE REMARKABLE LIFE OF MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI**

**Bhubaneswar:** As Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi turns 54, the state looks back on a year of significant change and ambition. Majhi, who assumed office in June 2024, has led the state through a transformative period, focusing on a "people-first" governance model that has resonated with both rural communities and urban sectors.

His first year in office has seen bold moves in cultural revival, women's empowerment, agricultural reforms, and industrial growth.

Born January 6, 1972, in Raimala, a remote village in Keonjhar district, Majhi's journey is an inspiring story of resilience. The son of a security guard, and later a school peon, he grew up amidst the challenges faced by rural Odisha. His early job as a teacher at the Saraswati Shishu Vidya Mandir in Jhumpura laid the foundation for his deeply rooted, community-focused approach to governance.

Before entering politics, Majhi was known affectionately as



"Guruji" by his students, a title that speaks volumes about his disciplined and empathetic nature. His political career began in 1997 when he became the Sarpanch of his village. Over the years, he rose through the ranks of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), eventually becoming a four-time Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Keonjhar. Later, Majhi made history in 2024 by becoming the first BJP Chief Minister of the state.

#### RESTORING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

One of the most defining moments of Majhi's tenure was the immediate fulfillment of a core promise; the restoration of full access to the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Within 24 hours of taking office, his government reopened all four gates of the 12th-century shrine, ending years of restricted entry that had caused immense difficulty for devotees. This was followed by the historic reopening of the Ratna Bhandar (Srimandir treasure trove) after nearly 40 years to conduct an inventory of the Lord's ornaments. To ensure the long-term preservation of these traditions, he established a ₹500 crore cor-

pus fund for the temple and launched the "Odia Asmita" (Odia Pride) initiative, which mandates the use of Odia language in all official state government business and allocated funds for a dedicated "Odia Asmita Bhawan."

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF CM MAJHI (2024-2025)

Under Majhi's leadership, the state of Odisha has witnessed a significant shift in both governance and development policies. Here are some of the key initiatives that have defined his first year:

#### 1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: SUBHADRA YOJANA

The Subhadra Yojana stands as the cornerstone of Majhi's social welfare agenda, aimed at making women financially independent. This flagship scheme provides ₹50,000 as financial assistance to over one crore women across the state, distributed in installments over five years. Beyond just cash transfers, the government has integrated this with the "Lakshmi Didi" initiative, helping over 17 lakh women transition into successful small-scale entrepreneurs. By providing this capital, the

Majhi administration has significantly boosted the rural economy and enhanced the decision-making power of women in Odia households.

#### 2. REVOLUTIONIZING THE AGRARIAN ECONOMY

For the farming community, CM Majhi introduced a massive shift by raising the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy to ₹3,100 per quintal. This included a state-specific bonus of ₹800 per quintal, addressing a long-standing demand of Odisha's farmers. This move, supported by an allocation of over ₹37,000 crore for the Samruddha Krushak Yojana, has provided a direct safety net for millions of families. Additionally, the government launched the CM-Kisan Yojana to provide comprehensive support for input costs, ensuring that even small and marginal farmers who were previously left out of central schemes receive adequate financial aid.

#### 3. INDUSTRIAL & INFRA GROWTH

Under Majhi's leadership, Odisha has seen a rapid shift towards industrialization. The state successfully hosted the "Utkarsh Odisha" 2025 event, which attracted ₹16 lakh crore

in investment commitments, focusing on sectors such as semiconductors, green energy, and port-led development. Furthermore, Majhi has prioritized infrastructure development, aiming to connect all 30 districts by rail and expanding air connectivity to smaller towns. His government has also committed to filling over 40,000 government vacancies by 2026.

#### 4. BRIDGING THE GAP: ACCESSIBLE GOVERNANCE

In a departure from the "bureaucracy-led" model of the past, CM Majhi has focused on "Jan Sampark" (Public Connectivity). He famously reopened the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell after it had remained largely inaccessible for 16 years. Every Monday, the CM personally meets with hundreds of citizens from across the state to hear their issues firsthand. This "people-first" approach is mirrored in his recruitment drive, where the government successfully filled 28,000 government vacancies in its first year and set a target for 1.5 lakh more jobs over the next five years, emphasizing transparency and merit-based hiring to win back the trust of the state's youth.

#### VISION FOR 2036: 'VIKAS ODISHA'

As Majhi enters his second year in office, he has set a bold vision for the state's future. The Chief Minister's "15-point New Year agenda" for 2025 includes ambitious goals such as creating a \$500 billion economy by 2036, celebrating Odisha's centenary of statehood. Majhi has also reiterated his commitment to a corruption-free government and has called for the exclusive use of the Odia language in all official matters by 2030, further cementing his commitment to the state's linguistic and cultural heritage.

#### The Road Ahead

With his first year in office marked by decisive action and clear objectives, Mohan Charan Majhi has set a promising course for Odisha. His leadership, deeply rooted in his community-based values, has already brought about meaningful changes in the lives of ordinary citizens. As the state prepares to celebrate his birthday January 6, the people of Odisha have much to look forward to in the coming years, with hopes that under Majhi's leadership, the state will emerge as a model of development, prosperity, and cultural pride.

# OPD services hit as docs start 2-hour work boycott

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** Outpatient department (OPD) services across state-run hospitals in Odisha were affected Monday morning, as doctors boycotted work for two hours over a host of issues, including filling up of over 50 per cent of vacant posts.

Members of the Odisha Medical Service Association (OMSA) boycotted outpatient services from 9am to 11am, demanding that the government fulfill their 10-point charter of demands.

OMSA president Dr Kishore Mishra said the doctors have been agitating since November 20.

"In the first phase, the doctors joined work wearing black badges, and from December 26, boycotted the OPD service for one hour. They further extended the OPD boycott to two hours from today," he said.

"Emergency services, inpatient care, and surgeries will remain unaffected. Now on, OPDs will remain closed from 9am to 11am daily, from primary health centres to district headquarters hospitals," he added.

Health Minister Mukesh Ma-

haling appealed to the doctors to shun agitation as the government was 'sympathetically considering' their demands. He said the state government has constituted an inter-departmental committee to examine their demands.

OMSA president Dr Kishore Mishra, however, said the previous BJD government had also set up a ministerial committee, but nothing happened. Stating that they have no trust in such committees, he urged the CM to intervene and resolve the issue.

be denied healthcare services as doctors will work after the two-hour boycott.

Among the other demands by the doctors are equal pay to that of Central government employees, proportional restructuring of cadres across all grades, additional financial incentives for super-specialists, specialists, and diploma medical administrators, postmortem allowance and equivalent performance-based incentives.

Patients and attendants, including Tiad Nayak, Ajit Pradhan and Bisikesan Sahu in Kandhamal district, said they faced considerable hardship due to the delay in medical consultations. "We visited the hospital at 9am. Due to protest, we had to wait for hours. This is nothing less than harassment," they said.

Asked about people's sufferings, Mishra said no one will

# Tribal empowerment, skill training focus of Chief Secy-NITI CEO meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** Social and economic empowerment of tribal communities and skill training for youth were among the key issues discussed during the high-level meeting of NITI Aayog Chief Executive Officer (CEO) BVR Subramanian with Chief Secretary (CS) Anu Garg and senior secretaries of various state departments focussed on the long-term development vision of Odisha and the country.

The discussions focused on the effective implementation of key schemes and programmes of both the Union and the state governments aimed at achieving the goals of 'Viksit Odisha' and 'Viksit India'. Emphasis was laid on aligning state-level actions with the broader objectives of the 'Odisha Vision' to ensure sustained and inclusive growth.

Under the Odisha Vision framework, detailed deliberations were held on the development of the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack-Puri-Paradeep Economic Region (BCPPER). The meeting stressed the need to expedite ongoing works to develop the region into an integrated economic and urban development hub.

Special focus was given to the social and economic empowerment of tribal communities, particularly through value-added processing of forest produce, including innovative uses of forest by-products such as sawdust. The meeting also highlighted the importance of skill training for youth, beginning at the school level, to prepare them for future opportunities in modern industries and the service sector.

In the energy sector, discussions centred on accelerating the adoption of clean, sustainable and renewable energy sources. Plans were reviewed for the use of low-cost, durable and environmentally friendly energy systems. In this context, it was noted that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has already been signed between NITI Aayog and the ISEG Foundation, and related initiatives are currently underway. The foundation presented its observations and proposals during the meeting.

The meeting also focused on leveraging new technologies, research and innovation through the NITI Frontier Tech Hub to accelerate sustainable development. A special presentation was made on addressing malnutrition among pregnant women and children through practical interventions under the Living Lab programme, which is slated for implementation in the coming days.

Emphasising technology-driven governance, the participants reiterated the need for strong coordination between state and Central institutions. The meeting concluded with a firm commitment to making Odisha a prosperous, sustainable, inclusive and innovation-driven state.

Senior NITI Aayog officer S Kishore was present at the meeting, while other officers and experts from NITI Aayog joined through virtual mode. Secretaries and senior officers from departments like Finance, E&IT, Skill Development and Technical Education, Higher Education, School and Mass Education, Science and Technology, Labour and ESI, Housing, Commerce and Transport, SC, ST, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare, Health and Family Welfare, and Planning and Coordination attended the meeting.



# Rice millers shut operations

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** There appears to be an imminent rice crisis in the state, as discussions between the All Odisha Rice Millers' Association and the state government ended inconclusively. Consequently, the millers have decided to continue their strike. The association announced that rice mill operations across the state will remain shut as they have not received any written assurance from the government regarding their demands.

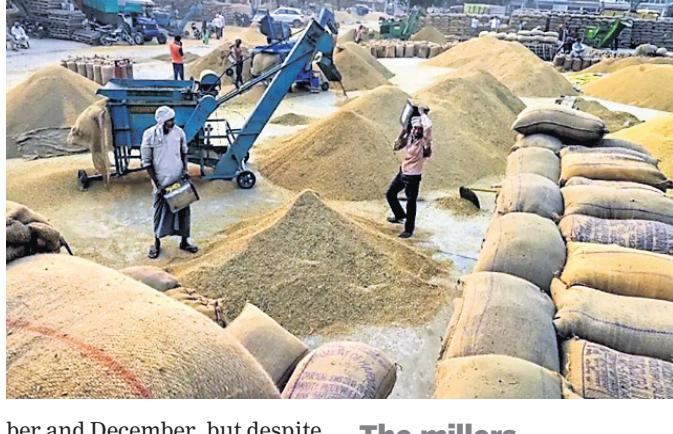
After the meeting with the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FSCW) department failed to yield any results, the association remained firm on its stance. Their primary demands are: Payment of maintenance charges for 2023-24 and 2024-25 Kharif seasons, additional incentives for custom milling, revision of transportation costs for distances exceeding 40 km, and re-introduction of 1 per cent 'dryage' allowance for raw rice.

Furthermore, the millers warned that paddy procurement will remain suspended in all districts until a formal government notification is issued. They had previously commenced work based on verbal assurances in November and December, but despite five weeks passing, no official order has been released.

On the other hand, the FSCW department stated that it is aware of the millers' demands and has requested more time for a resolution. The department mentioned it is making efforts to ensure that the paddy procurement process is not affected.

This decision by the millers has sparked uncertainty among farmers, particularly in Western Odisha districts, who are waiting to sell their paddy.

Meanwhile, a recent review meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Anu Garg, it was revealed that more than 19.67 lakh farmers have registered for the ongoing 2025-26 paddy procurement season in the



**The millers warned that paddy procurement will remain suspended in all districts until a formal government notification is issued**

state.

Official sources said 2,71,318 farmers have sold 12.05 lakh tonne paddy as of January 3.

For the Kharif 2025-26 season, a total paddy cultivation area of 61,67,414 acres has been registered. In the previous 2024-25 season, the state procured 73.45 lakh tonne Kharif paddy and 19.18 lakh tonne Rabi paddy.

Reviewing the functioning of FSCW department, the Chief Secretary directed officials to ensure timely lifting of paddy from mandis, provide all necessary facilities, and make sure farmers do not face any inconvenience and receive their payments smoothly.

As of January 3, paddy procurement has commenced in 18 districts, with around 11.84 lakh tonne already procured, the meeting said.

To make the procurement process more farmer-friendly and transparent, the department has adopted several technological solutions, including the use of satellite imagery.

Garg also reviewed systems related to farmer-society linkage, the token system, quality checking, lifting of paddy by millers, direct transfer of payments to farmers' bank accounts within 48 hours, collection of rice from millers, and overall system management.

Issues such as CCTV surveillance at mandis, mobile applications for mandi nodal officers, online vehicle tracking, and quick resolution mechanisms in case of delays were also discussed.

Officials informed that a 24-hour call centre is operational, supported by emergency response and feedback mechanisms.

**BMC urges citizens to join Swachh Survekshan drive**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** On the occasion of New Year 2026, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das called upon citizens to actively participate in Swachh Survekshan 2025-26 to help place the city among India's top-ranked clean cities. Addressing a press conference at the BMC headquarters Monday, the Mayor stressed that clean air and a healthy environment are vital for citizens' overall well-being.

Aligned with national initiatives under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has intensified efforts to improve sanitation and air quality. Das underlined that public cooperation is crucial to these efforts and urged residents to support door-to-door waste collection, segregation at source, and scientific disposal of waste.

To strengthen waste management, BMC announced the implementation of a user fee for residential buildings, commercial establishments, hotels, and educational institutions. Effective this year, the fee aims to ensure sustainable waste collection and sanitation services. Details regarding the fee structure and related initiatives are available on the Safa App and through BMC's WhatsApp help-line (7653011832).

# 2nd Odisha Parab in Guwahati from Jan 30

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** The three-day Second Odisha Parab, which will be organised in Guwahati from January 30 to February 1, will help promote Odisha's cultural heritage, traditions, cuisine, handicrafts, handlooms, and tourism.

This was revealed during a high-level coordination meeting of the Tourism department Monday.

The meeting, held at Tourism department conference hall, was chaired by Tourism Director Deepankar Mahapatra, who emphasised the importance of promoting Odisha's cultural heritage, traditions, cuisine, handicrafts, handlooms, and tourism through well-organised events. He discussed strategies to ensure smooth coordination among various departments and make the event attractive and successful.

A total of 20 exhibition and 10 food stalls representing six government departments will be featured at the event. The Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts department will display the maximum number of stalls (six each), followed by



Senior officials from various departments and agencies—including Language, Literature & Culture, Scheduled Tribe & Scheduled Caste Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare, Information & Public Relations, Mission Shakti, Handloom & Handicrafts, ORMAS,

Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)—participated in the meeting and were briefed on their respective exhibition stalls and activities.

# 6th Nat'l Chilika Bird Festival from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** The Tourism department will host the 6th National Chilika Bird Festival from January 6 to 8, celebrating the ecological and cultural significance of Chilika Lake. The inaugural event will be held at the Convention Centre, Lok Seva Bhawan, with Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida and Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Sankhunia attending as chief guests.

Organised in collaboration with the Forest, Environment and Climate Change department, the festival focuses on conservation-led tourism, sustainability and community participation. It aims to promote awareness about wetland conservation while showcasing Chilika as a prime destination.

## IIC suspended for accepting bribe

**Bhubaneswar:** DGP YB Khurania Monday suspended a police inspector, a day after he was arrested by the Vigilance for allegedly accepting a bribe from a liquor vendor, an official said. According to an order by the state police headquarters, Bijaya Kumar Barik, inspector-in-charge (IIC) of the National Rice Research Institute (NRRI) police station in Cuttack, was placed under suspension as disciplinary proceedings were contemplated against him. Barik has been booked under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act. "During the period the order remains in force, he (Barik) will remain under the disciplinary control of the Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, Bhubaneswar. He will draw salary as admissible under Orissa Service Code," the order said. Barik was arrested by the anti-corruption wing officials Sunday while allegedly accepting a bribe of ₹40,000 from a licensed liquor vendor in exchange for allowing the business to operate smoothly.

for responsible tourism.

Visitors will have the opportunity to take part in guided birdwatching sessions at Mangalajodi and Nalabana Bird Sanctuary, where large congregations of migratory birds can be seen in protected wetland habitats. The festival will also offer local cultural experiences, including traditional crafts, regional cuisine and interactive sessions with ornithologists, conservationists and wildlife photographers.

The Chilika Boat Race near Barkul Panthanivas, inaugurated by Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, will feature the participation of local fisher-folk, highlighting the lagoon's cultural heritage. Water sports and other experiential activities promoting responsible use of lagoon resources have also been planned.



**TESTING TIME:** Officials conduct a breathalyzer test on an 'Ama Bus' driver at Khannagar in Cuttack, Monday, during a drive by the Regional Transport Office following a fatal mishap caused by one of the buses of the fleet in Bhubaneswar recently

OP PHOTO

## House help arrested for stealing gold ornaments

**Bhubaneswar:** Police arrested a 40-year-old woman domestic help for allegedly stealing gold ornaments and a gold coin from her employer's house near Nandan Enclave in the Patia area, Infocity police said Monday. The case was registered following a written complaint by the employer, who reported that gold ornaments and a gold coin kept in her almirah went missing in February 2025. A subsequent check of her bank locker also yielded no trace of the items. Suspicion fell on the domestic help, Laxmi alias Jyoti Reddy, who had been working at the house for over two years and was aware of the valuables. After being confronted, Reddy allegedly admitted to the theft citing financial difficulties. Some ornaments were later returned through her family members. Police recovered several gold ornaments during the investigation.

# Golden hour help can save lives: Experts

RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 5:** As Odisha observes Road Safety Month, experts and officials have stressed that prompt assistance from bystanders during the critical 'golden hour' can save thousands of lives lost in road accidents every year.

Road accidents remain a major cause of death, disability and hospitalisation in India. According to the Law Commission of India's 201st Report, nearly 50 per cent of road crash fatalities could have been prevented with timely medical care. Studies indicate that over one lakh people die in road accidents annually, while many more sustain serious injuries.

Despite this, bystanders often hesitate to assist accident victims due to fear of legal harassment. Instead, many prefer to record videos on their mobile phones and share them on social media.

Addressing the issue, educationist and social activist **Amiyabala Parida**, Trustee of the Master Girija Memorial Road Safety Foundation Trust, said awareness is crucial to changing public behaviour.

"As Road Safety Month is be-



**Bystanders often avoid helping accident victims due to fear of legal harassment, opting instead to record and share videos on social media**

ing observed throughout January, we have planned a series of awareness programmes, including rallies, seminars and

the launch of a short film on the 'Golden Hour' on January 25," Parida said, marking the birth anniversary of her son, Girija Shankar Bag. She lost her only son in a road accident.

The initiatives aim to spread awareness and honour families who have lost their loved ones in road accidents. Families of road accident victims will also be felicitated.

She said the Odisha Road Safety Theme 2026 — 'Sikhyara Sachetana, Prajuktira Prajita' (Awareness through Education, Victory through Technology/Effort) — focuses on youth in the 15-35 age group, who are most vulnerable to road fatalities.

Parida urged citizens to act without fear, citing Section 134A of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, which provides legal protection to Good Samaritans.

"The golden hour is the most critical period. If victims are shifted to a healthcare facility within one hour and provided basic aid, many lives can be saved," she added.

Speaking on injury patterns and emergency response, **Dr Avishhek Chatterjee**, HOD and Consultant—Emergency Medicine at Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar, said head



injuries are common among adults due to higher body mass, while children often sustain chest and head injuries. He added that wearing helmets significantly reduces the severity of head injuries.

He advised bystanders to check the victim's responsiveness, control bleeding if possible, and immediately shift the injured to the nearest hospital.

**Bhubaneswar Traffic DCP Tapan Kumar Mohanty** said police and RTO officials are



jointly conducting awareness drives and enforcement checks throughout the month.

"Our aim is zero fatality. We are focusing on reckless driving, overspeeding, drunk driving and helmet compliance, especially among motorcyclists. Only ISI-certified helmets are advisable," he said.

past three months.

Public Health Officer Mitra said a three-member district team visited the school and inspected the hostel, administrative building, students' dining hall, kitchen and water tanks, and collected samples.

Jaundice is a waterborne disease that spreads through the use of contaminated drinking water, he said.

**Jaundice: Water samples collected from Khurda school**

for laboratory testing. The district health team also inspected the school hostels, kitchen and administrative buildings, and collected blood samples from affected students.

Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling said the government has taken the incident seriously. He said discussions were held with the Director of Health Services and the District Collector

after the matter came to light through the media.

Meanwhile, panicked over the reports of jaundice outbreak in the school, parents and guardians have reportedly taken home more than 200 students from the school. Parents alleged that water contamination has led to the outbreak of jaundice.

According to them, the students have been falling ill during the

use of contaminated drinking water, he said.

**MARKET WATCH**

CURRENCY	INDEX	VARIATION	BOURSES	INDEX	VARIATION	COMMODITIES	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.40	▲ 0.07	SENSEX	85439.62	▼ 322.39	GOLD	₹138,146	▲ 23
EURO	105.75	▼ 0.27	NIFTY	26250.30	▼ 78.25	SILVER	₹245,659	▲ 93

# Proposed barrage in Ch'garh to spell doom for Udanti River



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, Jan 5:** The Udanti River, which flows through parts of western Odisha, may face severe reduction in water flow following construction of a proposed barrage upstream by neighbouring Chhattisgarh. This has raised concern among farmers, environmentalists and water resources experts in the region.

Sources said the process for the barrage construction has already begun in Chhattisgarh, while the Odisha government is yet to receive any formal communication on the matter. If the project goes ahead, nearly 80 km of the Udanti River flowing through Odisha could dry up, affecting agriculture and drinking water availability for thousands of people.

Odisha had earlier approached the Central Water Commission (CWC) seeking approval for the Upper and Lower

intelligentsia and water resources experts have expressed concern that the move could indirectly disadvantage Odisha. They argue that restricting the river's flow upstream would severely impact irrigation and livelihoods downstream.

Records show that since 1965, efforts have been made to construct barrages on the Udanti at Gorla in Sinapali block of Nuapada district and at Board in Bhawanipatna block of Kalahandi district; but both projects are yet to become fully operational.

According to project proposals, the Upper Udanti project would irrigate around 8,500 hectares in Nuapada district, while the Lower Udanti project at Board would cover about 9,300 hectares in Kalahandi district. Overall, irrigation benefits were expected for nearly 4,000 acres of farmland across Kalahandi, Nuapada and Bolangir districts.

The state government had formally approached the Centre again in 2018, but approval remains pending due to the ongoing Mahanadi basin water dispute. Critics allege that Chhattisgarh is attempting to proceed with the barrage under the guise of a wildlife conservation project before clearances for Odisha's irrigation projects are granted.

State government officials said the matter requires urgent intervention at the interstate and Central levels to safeguard Odisha's water interests.

However, sections of the

## Supervisor held for stone quarry blast

**Dhenkanal:** Police Monday arrested one person in connection with the death of two workers in a blast at an illegal stone quarry in Dhenkanal district, officials said. The arrested person was identified as Chhabindra

Mahakud, supervisor of the quarry, which was operating without a valid licence, Dhenkanal SP Abhinav Sonkar said. A case has been registered against the quarry owner and further investigation is underway, he added. The incident occurred Saturday night at a quarry under Motanga police station limits when workers were drilling holes for blasting. Two labourers were killed on the spot. The deceased were identified as Abhi Singh (25) of Balasore district and Budhu Munda (23) of Keonjhar district. Their bodies were recovered Sunday from beneath debris following a search and rescue operation, the SP said. The police have also conducted raids at several locations to verify whether other quarries in the area are operating legally, Sonkar added. Meanwhile, the incident triggered a political row with the opposition BJD accusing the BJP-led state government of allowing rampant illegal mining.

**Jharsuguda, Jan 5:** Allegations of large-scale violation of government norms have surfaced at the Samaleswari Open Cast Project under MCL's Ib Valley area in Brajrajnagar, raising concerns over safety, revenue loss and regulatory enforcement.

Sources alleged that mine authorities yielded to pressure from a private transport company and allowed illegal coal overloading despite a clear ban. Several private transporters and societies, including Nirupama Mining Transporting Pvt. Ltd., Shiv Shakti Society, Jai Ambe Road Lines and Maa Kali Movers, are engaged in coal transportation at the project. Among them, Nirupama Transport is accused of openly flouting overloading norms.

Coal overloading is a punishable offence as it causes spill-

age, environmental pollution, damage to public roads and loss of government revenue. It also facilitates illegal diversion and black marketing of coal. Overloading is strictly prohibited in mining areas.

Sources said the Director General of Mines Safety (DGMS) held a meeting last Monday at the Ib Valley GM

Complex in Brajrajnagar and issued strict instructions to prevent overloading. However, when coal loading was carried out strictly as per norms Sunday morning, Nirupama Transport allegedly withdrew its vehicles, disrupting transportation till noon.

Project authorities were allegedly compelled to allow overloading to resume operations. Other transporters reportedly continued work in compliance with rules.

Nirupama Transport HR head Prabhat declined to comment. Project Manager Shatrughan Sahu could not be reached, while Project Officer Kanheya Mishra said he was out of station and unaware of the developments.

District Transport Officer Pramaya Kumar Mishra said overloading is illegal and assured an inquiry and strict action if violations are found.

**NATIONAL BIRD DAY**

## Artificial nests installed in Ganjam village for conservation of sparrows



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, Jan 5:** On the occasion of the National Bird Day, wildlife activists Monday installed artificial nests in several houses of Basudevpur village in Ganjam district in an effort to conserve house sparrows.

He said they would install some more artificial nests in several places in the coming days, as the demand of the villagers increased.

The sparrow population in these villages has increased manifold after the artificial nests were installed and villagers provided food and protection, locals said.

The sparrow conservation drive was launched by the organisation from Baghajhari village in 2012, with the distribution of earthen pots and artificial nests to the villagers to hang in front of the houses to attract sparrows.

"So far, we have installed over 6,000 eco-friendly artificial nests and feeder boxes in around 40 villages in Ganjam district," said Sagar Kumar Bika, president, Anchalika Bika Parishad, an organisation

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Change yourself if you wish  
to change the world.

THE MOTHER



## New Divide

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently, at a gathering at Udaipur's Bhupal Nobles' University, sought to brand the 'educated' citizens of the country as the brains behind what he called "white-collar terrorism." The Minister was most likely referring to the doctors involved in the Delhi bomb blast of November last year. Coming from one of the senior most ministers of the government, this remark bespeaks a trend evident since 2014 to try and control higher education, restrict academic activities in seats of higher education and fetter free thinking. Critical thinking, it appears, is held as a taboo in the current ideology of rulers in many countries, including India. The powers that be in Delhi who once coined the catch phrase "Urban Naxals" to vilify and persecute urban-centric public intellectuals who dared question government actions and decisions, seem to have come up with this new idea of division by which education and the educated shall be given a bad name before obliterating them to create a new society of uneducated.

It will be enlightening to look back at the history of the past decade in India. Division has been the driving force. During elections, it has mostly been the Hindu-Moslem divide that has been quite successfully flogged till now, reaping rich harvests. Then came the Rich-Poor divide during Demonetization when it was repeated over and over that it was exclusively the Rich who had black money to lose and so the Poor have no reasons to worry. Once elections got over it became the Upper and Lower Caste division that was played up. During interim periods it was Hindi and non Hindi divide, Indians and Khalistanis divide during farmers agitation, political supporters and Opposition became the Nationalist and Anti National divide respectively. Dividing the country from a historical perspective, it is being claimed all that the citizens of this country built themselves with their own blood and sweat or saw previously were wrong and it is only after 2014 that everything has been good and correct. These and many other such divisions may seem inconsequential to some but the depth of such social fragmentations should never be underestimated.

Generally it is the educated who are always regarded as harbingers of change and modernity and crusaders against obscurantism and dogmatism of all kinds in most societies. By educated, it is not the mere school and college pass outs that should be counted. It is those who can think and question the Establishment that are sought to be cornered here. Mostly it is the literate who are super selfish and have very little time or inclination to think of social or greater good. Their very existence has been successfully endangered by a failing economic system achieved through decisions like Demonetization. Yet they are the initiators of the crowds that chant, yell and wave flags. The absolute uneducated, though larger in numbers, simply go by their gut-feelings or hunger.

This new tirade may be pointing to the trouble makers those who think and question so it could very well be an indication of the birth of a new divide.

This pointing of finger at the "educated" by the Union Defence Minister could also be an effort to divert attention from his personal abject failure. He and the Union Home Minister are the persons who should be shouldering sole responsibility for a failure that made the Delhi Red Fort bomb blast on 10 November 2025 a possibility. Also interesting to note that, veering away from the usual format, neither the Government nor the Defence Minister dared to blame Pakistan after that blast. And the blast could take place in the nation's capital while Operation Sindoor, we are told, is still underway.

# power post

**FOCUS EMPLOYMENT**

## GIG WORKERS IN TWILIGHT

A few years ago, outside the Transport Commissioner's office in Banda, thousands of Ola and Uber drivers staged a protest. Their demands were modest: better fares, fair commissions, humane working hours, and some protection against arbitrary penalties. The official response was revealing. The Commissioner reportedly told them he had no jurisdiction. They were not "employees" but "business partners," entrepreneurs running their own micro-enterprises. Had they been old-style taxi permit holders, he might have been able to help them, since the applicable rules were clear.

That moment was a wake-up call. Not just for cab drivers, but for millions of workers who suddenly discovered that while they bore all the risks of work, they enjoyed almost none of its protections. What we today call the "gig economy" is often portrayed as a new phenomenon born of apps and algorithms. In reality, it is an old Indian phenomenon wearing a digital mask. Nearly two decades ago, the Arjun Sengupta Committee on the unorganised sector documented a striking fact: close to 64% of workers in the unorganised sector were self-employed, and thus did not have an identifiable employer. This is because they worked for multiple principals over short spells. They were self-employed, casual, piece-rate workers—construction hands, home-based workers, street vendors. Today's gig workers are their technological descendants.

So why are gig workers protesting now, and doing so in a far more organised way? Because the scale and intensity of platform-mediated work has changed the nature of dependence. Take cab drivers. Recent protests in Mumbai saw nearly 90% of app-based cabs go off the roads, with drivers demanding fare parity with black-and-yellow taxis, a cap on commissions, welfare boards, and state-level gig worker legislation. Similar anger simmers among food-delivery workers, warehouse pickers, and instant-commerce riders. Nationwide strikes have demanded a minimum monthly



**As the economy grows and formal enterprises expand, employment has paradoxically become more informal**

income, regulated work hours, and social security.

At the heart of the unrest is a simple asymmetry. Platforms insist workers are independent entrepreneurs and business partners. Yet the platforms decide prices, allocate tasks, impose penalties, deactivate accounts, tweak parameters and constantly change rules through opaque algorithms. Workers, meanwhile, invest their own capital—vehicles, fuel, smartphones, insurance—and absorb all the downside risk. They do not even have accident cover from the employer, which would be the equivalent of work-place injury cover. This asymmetry cannot be termed as entrepreneurship. It is unfair risk-shifting from the big to the small.

The defence offered by platform CEOs is familiar: better a precarious livelihood than no livelihood at all; over-regulation will kill innovation. There is some truth here. India needs jobs, and platforms have undeniably expanded access to work hugely. But this argument confuses flexibility with insecurity. A labour market that only creates livelihoods by stripping workers of basic protections and makes them more vulnerable is not a sustainable growth model.

Historically, labour movements were organised around factories and identifiable employers. Gig workers lack both. They are, in a literal sense, employer-less. This is precisely why their collective action matters, and in some ways, was inevitable. Their organisation is emerging not despite their legal

status, but because of it.

When delivery workers log off en masse, or cab drivers strike, they are asserting a fact that the law has been slow to recognise: economic dependence matters more than contractual labels. Courts and regulators are beginning to see this. The Bombay High Court's sharp observations on "total lawlessness" when cab aggregators operated without proper licences were as much about passenger safety as about worker vulnerability.

Globally also the tide is turning. The UK Supreme Court classified Uber drivers as "workers" entitled to minimum wages and paid leave. Spain's Rider Law treats food-delivery riders as employees. Other countries have created intermediate categories—neither full employees nor pure contractors—but with enforceable floors of rights. International evidence converges on one point: flexibility need not mean a vacuum of rights for workers.

India has taken an important first step through the implementation of the four labour codes, especially the Code on Social Security, 2020. For the first time, gig and platform workers are recognised as a distinct category, eligible for State-designed social security schemes. Draft rules now propose thresholds—90 days of work with an aggregator, or 120 days across platforms—to qualify for benefits such as insurance and health cover.

This recognition is progress and it matters. Registration through e-Shram, welfare boards, and contributory funds—such as levies on platform turnover—

**THE CHALLENGE  
FOR  
POLICYMAKERS  
IS NOT TO  
KILL THE GIG  
ECONOMY, BUT  
TO CIVILISE IT**

Ajit Ranade

Photo: AP

**SPECTRUM POLITICS**

## United front against imperialism



Bhabani Shankar Nayak

**AMERICA  
MANUFACTURES  
CONFLICTS  
TO EXPLOIT  
PEOPLE AND  
THEIR NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
IN ORDER  
TO UPHOLD  
CAPITALISM  
AND CONCEAL  
ITS SYSTEMIC  
FAILURES**

US imperialism and its European allies are promoting a planetary crisis through an unprovoked attack on Venezuela, carried out under the pretext of controlling drug cartels and arresting its democratically elected president, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife. The American attack on Venezuela is not the first instance of Yankee imperialism seeking to seize a nation's natural resources, nor will it be the last. The attack on Venezuela is an imperialist warning to all countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

From Cuba, Vietnam, and Korea to Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, and Yugoslavia, American imperialism has devastated lives, livelihoods, peace, and prosperity across various regions of the world. American imperialists have been directly involved in approximately two hundred and thirty military conflicts and one hundred and ninety-three non-military interventions across the globe. The US manufactures conflicts to exploit people and their natural resources in order to uphold cap-

italism and conceal its systemic failures. Imperialism is fundamentally opposed to the peaceful lives and prosperous livelihoods of ordinary people, as well as to global peace and stability.

Imperialism relies on war and conflict as strategies to undermine democratic norms and forms alliances with reactionary, dictatorial, and religious fundamentalist forces to suppress populations and control their resources. US imperialism is pushing the world toward a third world war, dismantling democracy and peace while creating a permanent state of crisis to mask its own failures through military means. In this process, the working masses suffer the most, while the US military-industrial and corporate complex profits from death and destitution. Therefore, the struggle against imperialism and the struggle for world peace are inseparable and constitute a common struggle. Only a united working-class movement can defeat imperialist designs and establish stability and order in the pursuit of deepening democracy and expanding peace and

citizenship rights.

The application of the historically successful united front strategy against imperialism is the call of the hour. The united front strategy is all about bringing together all peace-loving people into a common struggle against all forms of imperialism. Such a broad-based united front consists of both revolutionary and non-revolutionary individuals and their organisations, working collectively to halt and defeat the forward march of US imperialism, which threatens life on the planet.

The working class is the primary victim of imperialist conflicts, suffering the loss of lives and livelihoods. So, it is in the fundamental interest of working people everywhere to resist and fight all forms of imperialism. From the October Revolution to anti-colonial struggles and other successful revolutionary movements throughout history, united front tactics have been widely employed to ensure to achieve, uphold and celebrate freedom, peace and democracy while protecting interests of the working masses.

The united front strategy must uphold the right to self-determination, the sovereignty of peoples to own, use, and distribute their natural resources, and a firm opposition to all forms of exploitative and oppressive regimes promoted by imperialism. The values of internationalism, world peace, and the united front strategy can serve as the three core agendas of the anti-imperialist struggle, aimed at upholding international solidarity, global peace, and democracy.

If US imperialism is allowed to pursue its heinous agenda of capitalist governance—protecting American corporate interests by exploiting the natural resources of other countries and subduing people through reckless violence, wars, and conflicts—the world will face a bleak future in which individual freedom and democracy are buried.

Standing with Venezuela and its people today means standing up for yourself tomorrow.

*The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University.*

### Letters

**TO THE EDITOR**

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

**OrissaPOST**B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate,  
Bhubaneswar-751010

### International bully

Sir, The arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who has long been a target of Donald Trump, following a US strike on the country is without a doubt a clear violation of international law. An invasion of a sovereign country and the kidnapping of its president to the United States is an unusual kind of international bullying. Even more terrible is Trump's vow that Washington will rule this Latin American country until a change in leadership occurs. This establishes a hazardous precedent, and such moves are highly likely to be copied outside of the Americas. The US military intervention on Venezuela occurred without congressional authority. Many Democratic lawmakers have criticized this as a breach of the US Constitution. The most important fundamental of international law is that no country should violate another's sovereignty. Even against a rogue state, justifiable action can only be performed by a multilateral force with the UN's approval. However, in this situation, the Trump administration did not even seek the approval of its friends, let alone the UN. In doing so, it has elevated its habit of "unilateral action" to new heights, breaking international rules. Such behavior by a member of the UNSC is a clear challenge to the rules-based world order. The argument used by Trump administration to justify its measures against Venezuela could potentially be extended to Greenland, Cuba, Mexico, and possibly Canada in future.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

### Disappointing pivot

Sir, The BCB's refusal to travel to India for the T20 World Cup is a disappointing pivot from sportsmanship to brinkmanship. While security is paramount, using "political tension" as a wildcard sets a dangerous precedent that threatens to fracture the ICC's central authority. If every bilateral friction dictates tournament geography, the "World" in World Cup will soon become a misnomer. Cricket cannot thrive in silos; it requires the grit to play on rival soil. By seeking a neutral sanctuary, Bangladesh isn't just avoiding a venue they are eroding the spirit of international competition. Is the pitch now a political podium.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

**LOL****THE GOLF BALL**

A golfer, playing a round by himself, is about to tee off, and a greasy little salesman runs up to him, and yells, "Wait! Before you tee off, I have something really amazing to show you!" The golfer, annoyed, says, "What is it?" "It's a special golf ball," says the salesman. "You can never lose it!" "What's a mean," scoffs the golfer, "you can never lose it? What if you hit it into the water?" "No problem," says the salesman. "It floats, and it detects where the shore is, and spins towards it." "Well, what if you hit it into the



woods?" "Easy," says the salesman. "It emits a beeping sound, and you can find it with your eyes closed." "Okay," says the golfer, impressed. "But what if your round goes late and it gets dark?" "No problem, sir, this golf ball glows in the dark! I'm telling you, you can never lose this golf ball!" The golfer buys it at once. "Just one question," he says to the salesman. "Where did you get it?" "I found it."





CRAWLING, LIMPING, TRAVELLING MILES

## Vulnerable voters bear brunt of Bengal SIR



**Fear, rather than confusion over paperwork, has emerged as the dominant driver behind attendance**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 5:** As the second phase of the SIR gathers pace in West Bengal, block offices are turning into sites of anxiety, with elderly, disabled and vulnerable voters enduring physical distress, long journeys and loss of livelihood to prove they are "legitimate" electors, sharpening political fault lines ahead of the assembly polls.

Across rural and urban Bengal, scenes at hearing centres have transformed what was intended as a technical exercise into a deeply emotive public issue.

The second phase, which began December 27, involves

Octogenarians arriving on stretchers or leaning on relatives, persons with disabilities crawling across office floors, and daily wage earners forfeiting income out of fear that their names may be struck off the electoral rolls have exposed a widening gap between administrative intent and ground reality.

From an 87-year-old woman ferried 32 km for a hearing, to a man with 80 per cent disability forced to crawl inside a block office, to an eight-month pregnant woman summoned despite exemptions, the hearings have thrown up images that critics say belie claims of a routine clean-up of voter lists.

On December 16, the Election Commission published the draft electoral rolls after the first phase of the SIR, with the electorate dropping from 7.66 crore to 7.08 crore following the deletion of over 58 lakh names.

The second phase, which began December 27, involves

hearings of 1.67 crore electors under scrutiny, including 1.36 crore flagged for logical discrepancies and 31 lakh whose records lack mapping.

In Debra block of Paschim Medinipur, 87-year-old Snehalata Bhakta arrived for her hearing after a 32-km journey by car.

Seeing her frail condition, the block development officer stepped out, verified her documents inside the vehicle and allowed her to leave.

"Why should I spend money and suffer so much just to prove I am a voter?" she asked.

Nearby, 65-year-old Jharna Das, seriously ill and unable to walk, was carried into the hearing centre in her brother's arms. "If we didn't come, her name might be deleted," he said. "That fear leaves no choice."

Notices warning of deletion, coupled with unclear timelines for home verification, have pushed even those physically incapable of travel to turn up in person.

son Dipankar Das, blind since birth, was summoned despite his name featuring in the 2002 electoral rolls. "I cannot see, I walk very carefully," he said after navigating the BDO office with help. "Still, I had to come."

The absence of names from the 2002 rolls has emerged as a recurring trigger for summons, disproportionately affecting migrant workers, urban renters, women who shifted residence after marriage and elderly voters who were outside their home districts at the time.

From Garfa in south Kolkata, a retired central government employee travelled nearly 150 km to Dantan after finding his name missing from the 2002 list. "The officials behaved well," the 78-year-old said. "But such a journey is extremely difficult at this age."

For daily wage earners, the cost has been immediate.

Shyamal Kotal, a mason from Narayanganj, skipped

work to attend his hearing. "My family survives on my daily wages," he said. "But if my name is deleted, that would be worse."

In Purulia's Balarampur, Shyam Singh Sardar, 80 per cent disabled since birth, crawled across the block office floor after being summoned. There was no wheelchair. "At least home hearings should be arranged for people like us," he said. "This is unbearable harassment."

In Hooghly's Tarakeswar, a 72-year-old man collapsed while stepping out of a toto to attend his hearing and suffered a head injury. The same centre also summoned an eight-month pregnant woman despite guidelines exempting such categories.

In Jalpaiguri's Dhupguri, an octogenarian couple, both unwell, reached a hearing centre clutching voter cards and notices. "They said our names would be cut if we didn't come," the husband said.

While the EC's guidelines provide for home hearings and exemptions, repeated instances of vulnerable voters being summoned have highlighted gaps in implementation, with families often receiving verbal assurances but written notices demanding physical presence.

The ruling TMC has seized on these episodes, alleging that the SIR risks disenfranchising genuine voters ahead of 2026.

The BJP, however, insists the revision is necessary to ensure transparency and integrity in the electoral rolls and should not be politicised.

At its core, the SIR is a technical exercise. On the ground, it has become deeply personal-measured in kilometres travelled by the infirm, wages lost by labourers and fear etched on faces lining up outside block offices.

For an exercise meant to correct records, the SIR has unsettled something less easily repaired: voter confidence.

## Mega Brahmaputra bridges transforming Northeast's connectivity landscape



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

ENGINEERING MARVEL

The 19.3-km Dhubri-Phulbari bridge, once completed, will become India's longest river bridge, linking Dhubri in western Assam with Phulbari in Meghalaya.

Inaugurated in 2018, the 4.94-km-long Bogibeel bridge is India's longest road-cum-rail bridge and serves as a strategic and economic lifeline for the region.

Another landmark project reshaping Assam's infrastructure is the Bogibeel bridge, which connects Dibrugarh and Dhemaji districts in Upper Assam. Inaugurated in 2018, the 4.94-km-long bridge is India's longest road-cum-rail bridge and serves as a strategic and economic lifeline for the region.

Currently, people and goods rely heavily on ferries, which are time-consuming and often disrupted during monsoon months. Recently, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the bridge will play a crucial role in boosting trade between Assam, Meghalaya and neighbouring states, while also strengthening connectivity with Bangladesh.

By shortening routes to ports and markets, the project is expected to reduce transportation costs for agricultural produce, coal, limestone and other commodities, giving a fillip to local economies.

Before the Bogibeel bridge became operational, travel between the north and south banks of the Brahmaputra in Upper Assam involved long detours or dependence on ferries.

The bridge has reduced travel time by several hours and has become a vital corridor for industries such as tea, oil and natural gas, which form the backbone of Assam's economy.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNABEDA**

E-mail : [eerw\\_sunabeda@yahoo.co.in](mailto:eerw_sunabeda@yahoo.co.in)

Date : 05.01.2026

2nd Corrigendum

No.O-1939 : In continuation to this office Bid Identification No. Online Tender/09/RWD-SBD/2025-26 invited vide this office letter No.5183 Dtd.19.12.2025, partial modification of TCN has been made of all the works as follows :

Sl. No.	Item	Time Schedule as per original TCN No. 09/RWD-SBD/2025-26	Time Schedule as per 1st Corrigendum	Time Scheduled as per 2nd Corrigendum
1	Availability of Tender online for bidding	From 12.22.2015 at 11.00 A.M. to 01.01.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.	Extended till 08.01.2026 up to 05.00 P.M.	Extended till 16.01.2026 upto 09.00 P.M.
2	Date & Time of opening of Tender	02.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	09.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	17.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.

All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer RW Division, Sunabeda

OIPR-25059/11/0033/2526

**CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER : KENJHAR**

**(ZILLA SWASTHYA SAMITI (ZSS), KENJHAR)**

Date : 03.01.2026

Advt. Letter No.43 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR SELECTION OF AGENCY FOR AMC OF PEST CONTROL SERVICES AT GOVT. HEALTH

INSTITUTIONS OF KENJHAR DISTRICT

No.E-654 : Sealed proposals as per the prescribed RFP documents are invited from the interested eligible bidders for the "RFP for selection of Agency for AMC of Pest Control services at Govt. Health Institutions of Keonjhar district". The eligibility criteria and detailed requirements for said RFP and the format for submission of proposal are set forth in the RFP document which can be downloaded from the District Portal website i.e. <https://keonjhar.odisha.gov.in> in Tender page. Interested bidders fulfilling the eligibility criteria may submit their proposal & documents as set forth in this RFP and submit to the undersigned in sealed envelope(s) clearly super scrib "RFP for selection of Agency for AMC of Pest Control services at Govt. Health Institutions of Keonjhar district". Proposal(s) complete in all respect should reach the Office of the CDM & PHO Keonjhar-750040 by Speed Post / Regd. Post only on or before dt. 27.01.2026 up to 4.00 PM. The proposal(s) shall be opened at dt. 28.01.2026 at 11.30 AM in NHM Mini Conference Hall, DHH, Keonjhar. Incomplete applications received in an open envelop/applications received after the due date will be summarily rejected.

The authority reserves the right cancel or reject the any or all RFP without assigning any reason thereof. No personal query shall be entertained. The decision of the committee will be treated as final.

OIPR-10033/11/0062/2526

Sd/- Chief District Medical &amp; Public Health Officer, Keonjhar

01.	Name of the Work	Repair of R.C.C. Jetty at village Gabakunda
02.	Estimated Cost	Rs.11,05,500.00 (Excluding GST)
03.	Period of Completion	2 (Two) Calendar Months
04.	Date & Time of availability of Bid document in the portal	06.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 21.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.
05.	Last Date/Time for submission of Bids in the Portal	22.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M. in the O/o the Chief Executive, Chilika Development Authority, Plot No 493(P), Palaspalli, Bhubaneswar- 751020
06.	Date & Time of Opening of Bids	22.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M. in the O/o the Chief Executive, Chilika Development Authority, Plot No 493(P), Palaspalli, Bhubaneswar- 751020
07.	Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Tender (O.I.T.)	Chilika Development Authority, Plot No 493(P), Palaspalli, Bhubaneswar- 751020

Further information and other details are available for downloading from the e-procurement portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>". Addendum/Corrigendum if required will be available only in the Website e-Procurement portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>".

Sd/- Addl. Chief Executive Chilika Development Authority

OIPR-08138/11/0015/2526

**Government Of Odisha  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
Rural Works Division-II, Nabarangpur, Umerkote**

e-mail - [eerw\\_kendrapara@yahoo.co.in](mailto:eerw_kendrapara@yahoo.co.in)

Date : 22.12.2025

No.O-1848 Letter No. : 5128 GePNIC e-Procurement Notice

Procurement officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding	From	To	Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

Further details can be seen from the Government website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).

Sd/- Executive Engineer  
Rural Works Division-II, Nabarangpur, Umerkote

OIPR-25103/11/0035/2526

**Gangtok, Jan 5:** Indian Army's Trishakti Corps has installed a 10-KW solar power plant at Muguthang village, located at an altitude of around 15,000 feet near the India-China border in North Sikkim, an official statement said Monday.

The initiative aligns with the Centre's Vibrant Villages Programme and aims to improve the quality of life in remote border areas by ensuring a reliable and sustainable power supply, it said.

According to the press release, the plant has provided electricity to all households in the village, enabling year-round habitation, improving night-time safety, enhancing connectivity and eliminating the need for seasonal migration during the harsh winter months.



Muguthang is a sparsely populated border village with 32 residents from 10 families.

Earlier, due to the absence of a dependable power supply, villagers relied on small personal solar panels and were compelled to migrate for nearly five to six months each year, leaving behind homes and livestock.

Recognising this hardship, Trishakti Corps of the Indian Army engaged closely with the local community and implemented a sustainable energy solution to ensure basic electrification.

## NFR widens certified network to improve food hygiene, quality

**Guwahati:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has expanded its network of certified stations and railway campuses, reinforcing its commitment to providing safe, hygienic, and quality food services across the zone, railway officials said Monday. NFR's Chief Public Relations Officer (CPO) Kapilaj Kishore Sharma said that West Bengal's Alipurduar Division under the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved an important milestone in food safety and hygiene. He said that one railway station and three institutional facilities under the Alipurduar division have been awarded the prestigious Eat Right Station and Eat Right Campus certifications by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). Earlier, several stations across NFR including Guwahati, Lumding, Rangiya, Mariani, Samsi, New Bongaigaon, Kamakhya, New Tinsukia, all in Assam and Harishchandrapur, New Jalpaiguri, Jalpaiguri Road, Binnaguri, Dhubguri, Falakata, Dinhata and New Coochbehar, all in West Bengal had already been awarded Eat Right Station certifications.

# national

of the day quote



My question is, who said that I left the party line. Even when I expressed my opinions on various subjects, on most matters, the party and I have stood on the same line

SHASHI THAROOR | CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE MEMBER

## IMD ISSUES 'YELLOW' ALERT FOR COLD WAVE IN PARTS OF J'KHAND

The IMD issued a 'yellow' alert for cold wave and dense fog in parts of Jharkhand over the next two days, with the mercury level dropping below 10 degrees Celsius in 10 districts of the state Monday. The 'yellow' warning (be aware) for cold wave conditions has been issued for Garhwa, Palamu, Latehar, Chatra, Hazaribag, Koderma, Lohardaga, and Gumla



## SIR: Mamata to move court



Banerjee intensifies her attack against the Election Commission, alleging that it used opaque digital processes, including artificial intelligence and informal platforms, to arbitrarily delete names from electoral rolls, undermining democratic safeguards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata/Gangasagar, Jan 5: Exacerbating an already bitter confrontation ahead of the Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday announced that she would move court against the SIR of electoral rolls in West Bengal, alleging that the exercise has triggered fear, harassment, and administrative arbitrariness, leading to deaths, hospitalisations, and suicide attempts.

What began as a technical exercise to cleanse electoral rolls, the Special Intensive Revision has snowballed into one of West Bengal's fiercest political con-

frontations in recent years, with the ruling TMC and the opposition BJP in the state locked in verbal battle over allegations of voter manipulation ahead of the high-stakes assembly polls, scheduled to be held in the next three months.

Addressing a public distribution programme at Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas, which is among the worst-hit districts in the first phase of the SIR, Banerjee intensified her attack against the Election Commission, alleging that it used opaque digital processes, including artificial intelligence and informal platforms, to arbitrarily delete names from electoral rolls, undermining democratic safeguards.

"This is a fight for existence. We are seeking legal help. So many people have died due to SIR. We are moving court tomorrow against the inhumane treatment and the death of so many people due to the SIR," she said. "If necessary, I will go to the Supreme Court and plead for the people as an ordinary citizen. I will speak for the people," she added.

While she did not clarify whether the petition would be filed by the state government, or her party -TMC, Banerjee

said she would seek permission to appear before the Supreme Court not as a lawyer but as an ordinary citizen, asserting that she is legally trained.

The BJP hit back sharply, accusing Banerjee of trying to derail a long-overdue clean-up of voter lists and vowing to stand firmly with the EC, turning the SIR into a flashpoint that now combines legal action, political brinkmanship, and disturbing accounts of human distress from the ground. Alleging a 'technological conspiracy', the TMC supreme said routine life events were being "weaponised" to disenfranchise voters. "Names are being removed using AI," she alleged. "AI is deciding whose surname has changed, who got married, which girl has gone to her in-laws' house. Even a murderer gets a chance to defend himself. Here, people's names are being removed," she claimed. Banerjee argued that minor spelling mismatches, address changes, or marriage were being cited to strike off names, often without adequate opportunity to respond through statutory forms.

Banerjee's fresh salvo came a day after her scathing letter, dated January 3, to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, the third in less than two months, urging an immediate halt to what she described as an "arbitrary and flawed" process.

In the letter, she warned that the continuation of the SIR in its present form could trigger "mass disenfranchisement" and "strike at the foundations of democracy", accusing the commission of an "unplanned, ill-prepared and ad hoc" exercise marred by "serious irregularities, procedural violations and administrative lapses".

The BJP, however, has closed ranks around the poll body.

Reacting to Banerjee's announcement, Leader of the Opposition Suvenu Adhikari said she was free to approach the judiciary but would not be able to "protect infiltrators who are the TMC's core vote bank".

## Gas leak at ONGC well in Andhra sparks inferno



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mori, Jan 5: A gas leak at an ONGC well here in Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district operated by its production contractor sparked an inferno Monday, leading to the evacuation of two villages within a four-km radius.

However, no deaths or casualties have been reported so far, an official of the Maharashtra public sector company said. "The fire occurred due to a gas pipeline leakage at the Mori-5 well, which is operated by Deep Industries Ltd as part of production enhancement operations," an ONGC official told PTI.

Residents of neighbouring Irusumanda and Lakkavaram villages were evacuated to safer locations. The number of evacuees is not immediately available. Around 10 fire tenders are currently at the site battling the fire. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu inquired about the fire accident and directed officials to prioritise dousing the flames. Following the gas leak, senior officials of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) from Rajahmundry rushed to Well Mori-5 located in Malkipuram mandal to assess the situation and ascertain the cause of the fire.

The Konaseema district administration is also responding to the incident and coordinating the firefighting and safety measures at the site. The district collector, superintendent of police, deputy collector and ONGC officials are monitoring the situation at a secretariat located 100 metres away from the inferno.

## Man thrashed, wife groped, son stripped over gym ownership

shoes, leaving the 26-year-old man bleeding.

The assault, which was carried out by a group of men, unfolded at the establishment's gate, then inside the premises, and finally spilled onto the road, with policemen witnessing the incident as a mute spectator, Ritu Garg said in her complaint.

The alleged brutality faced by the Garg family, who told police that the attack was the culmination of months of harassment, threats and intimidation, is linked to a dispute over the gym's ownership.

Police said that they have arrested one of the accused, while efforts are on to nab the other suspects who are on the run.

Purported videos of the January 2 incident went viral on social media, capturing parts of the torment the family went through. In one of the clips, a group of men can be seen raining blows on the gym owner Rajesh Garg's son Vasu (26), dragging him and stripping him on a road as he pleads for mercy.

The accused can be seen repeatedly kicking the man in the face. One of them even used a shoe to assault him, while bystanders stood around watching.

The police said two police

men on a motorcycle reached the scene during the assault. In one of the videos, the officers are seen handing the victim his trousers even as some of the accused remain present nearby.

On January 2, Rajesh Garg, who runs a gym with his wife Rita Garg (51) in the basement of their house, was allegedly assaulted by the caretaker, Satish Yadav. While Rita was molested, pulled and thrashed, her husband was punched and beaten ruthlessly, they said.

But the family's agony didn't end there, the group of attackers dragged Rajesh's son onto a road, stripped him naked in full public view, repeatedly kicked his face and battered him with

## SHORT TAKES

### Minor raped, killed with axe; accused held

Narayapur (Chhattisgarh):

An 11-year-old girl reported

missing last week was found

raped and axed to death in

Chhattisgarh's Narayapur

district, police said Monday. The police have arrested a 24-year-old man, an acquaintance of the girl's family, in connection with the crime, an official said.

The child, a resident of a village under Sonpur police station

limits, had been missing since

December 31, and villagers

found her body in a field at

nearby Kosra village Sunday,

said Sundarraj P, Inspector

General of Police, Bastar Range.

### Couple from Andhra killed in US mishap

Palakollu:

A couple from

Andhra Pradesh settled in the

United States died in a road

accident in Washington, a

police official said Monday.

K Krishna Kishore, a native

of Palakollu, moved to the US

in 1999 and married Asha, a

native of Kakinada, who had

already been settled there. "The

couple, Kishore and Asha, who

were settled in the United

States, lost their lives in a

road accident in Washington

Sunday, leaving their families

in West Godavari district

devastated," the official told PTI.

### Street vendor stabbed to death

New Delhi:

A 35-year-old man was allegedly stabbed to death by two men after he objected to them parking their motorcycle near a 'dhaba' in northwest Delhi's Aman Vihar, police said Monday. The accused, identified as Sahil and Harsh alias Noni, had stopped their motorcycle at a dhaba to take food, when Avinash, who ran an egg cart nearby, allegedly objected and abused them, they said.

### Father of 5 held for raping teen

Kaushambi (UP):

A 42-year-old man was arrested Monday for allegedly raping a minor girl at a village here, police said

Monday. The accused, a father of five, was booked following a complaint by the girl's

father, they said. Circle Officer

(Kaushambi) JP Pandey said the complainant approached the police Monday. According to the

complaint, the incident occurred

Saturday evening when his

15-year-old daughter went to a

hand pump to wash utensils.



New Delhi, Jan 5: The Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre to consider taking a decision within four months on the revision of wage ceiling for the Employees Provident Fund Scheme (EPFO) which has not been revised in the last 11 years.

Sachdeva said this has deprived the majority of workers of the benefits and protection of the EPFO scheme, which is essentially a social welfare scheme.

The bench disposed of the plea filed by Nautiyal and asked him to make a representation to the central government within two weeks along with a copy of the order which will be decided by the central government within four months.

A bench of Justices J K Madeshwari and A S Chandurkar passed the order on a plea filed by activist Naveen Prakash Nautiyal claiming that the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), which administers social security

schemes for employees, currently excludes from coverage those whose wages exceed Rs 15,000 per month.

Advocates Pranav Sachdeva and Neha Rathi, appearing for the petitioner, said the wage revision has not taken place in over a decade despite the fact that the minimum wage notified by the central government and by various states is more than the EPFO wage ceiling of Rs 15,000 per month.

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# national



All those Namaste Trump, Howdy Modi events, all those (forced) hugs, and all those social media posts hailing the US President have done very little good

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY IN-CHARGE COMMUNICATIONS

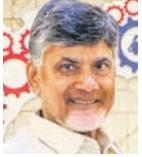
## AVOID NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL TO IRAN: MEA

India Monday urged its nationals to avoid non-essential travel to Iran as the country has been rocked by a wave of protests over inflation and currency devaluation. New Delhi also advised Indian citizens in Iran to exercise due caution and avoid travelling to areas witnessing protests or demonstrations



of the day quote

People should respect each other's languages. No language is greater or lesser than another



## Triple murder shocks Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** A 25-year-old allegedly strangled his mother, sister and minor brother in east Delhi's Laxmi Nagar after feeding them food laced with dhatura (a poisonous plant) over financial distress and later walking into a police station to confess the crime, police said Monday.

The accused, identified as Yashbir Singh, surrendered at Laxmi Nagar police station around 5 pm and claimed to have killed his family members, they said.

According to the police, Yashbir told investigators that his family was facing acute financial hardship and was struggling to make ends meet. His father, a truck driver, has reportedly not been living with the family for the past six months.

The accused claimed that he had taken a term life insurance policy worth around ₹1.5 crore and had made several attempts to end his life over the past two months by staging accidents, claiming snake bites and injecting air, but was unsuccessful, a

The accused, identified as Yashbir Singh, surrendered at Laxmi Nagar police station around 5 pm and claimed to have killed his family members



senior police officer said.

"He stated that his mother confronted him a day earlier and told him that if he intended to die, he should first kill all family members and then face the consequences," a senior police officer said, clarifying that the claims are based on the accused's version and are being verified.

According to the accused's disclosure, he went to a temple near Yamuna Bank Metro Station Monday morning, collected dhatura seeds from a nearby plant and prepared laddoos, the

police said.

He then allegedly fed the laddoos to his mother Kavita (46), sister Meghna (24) and brother Mukul (14), the officer said.

After the three family members lost consciousness, the accused allegedly strangled them using a muffler between 1.30 pm and 2 pm at their residence, they said, adding that after killing his mother and siblings, Yashbir allegedly came to the police station and surrendered.

At the time of the incident, his wife was absent and her role is also being verified.

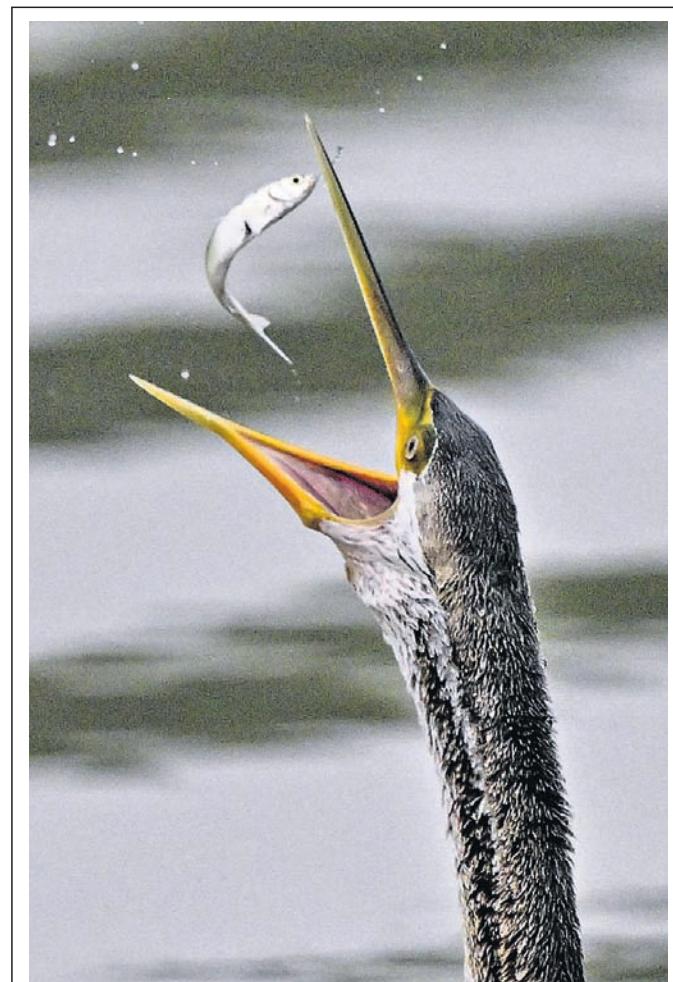
The police said the facts stated so far are based on the confession and that the matter is under investigation. Crime scene inspection has been initiated and forensic teams have been deployed to examine the scene, collect evidence and ascertain the exact cause of death.

An FIR is being registered and investigation teams have been formed to verify the sequence of events and corroborate the accused claims, the police said.

Police officials said no PCR call was received in connection with the incident and that the accused himself appeared at the police station to report the crime. Upon receiving the information, multiple police teams rushed to the house in Subhash Chowk, where the bodies of the three victims were found inside the residence.

Senior officers are examining whether the deaths were caused solely due to strangulation or if poisoning also played a role, as claimed by the accused.

Statements of neighbours and relatives are being recorded to establish the family's financial condition.



An oriental darter catches a fish in a pond at the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, officially known as Keoladeo National Park

PTI PHOTO

## Fearless judge bedrock of independent judiciary: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**New Delhi, Jan 5:** The Supreme Court Monday said just because an order is wrong or there is an error of judgment, a judicial officer cannot be put through the ordeal of a disciplinary proceeding or a prosecution, as it set aside the termination of a district judge in Madhya Pradesh for adopting different yardsticks in granting bail to accused under the Excise Act.

The court said a fearless judge is the bedrock of an independent judiciary, as much as an independent judiciary itself is the foundation on which the rule of law rests.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K V Viswanathan said a judicial officer is tasked with the onerous duty of deciding cases and invariably, one party to a case would face defeat and go back unhappy.

"Disgruntled elements amongst them, wanting to settle scores, may raise frivolous allegations. The trial judiciary also has tremendous work pressure and works under trying working conditions. A large number of cases are listed in a day and most of the judicial officers give their very best while discharging their duties," it said.

Justice Viswanathan said the case highlights the unfortunate plight of a judicial officer, Nirbhay Singh Suliya, who, after 27 years of unblemished record,

was removed from service just because of four judicial orders by which he had enlarged certain parties thereon on bail.

The bench allowed the appeal of Suliya, who was terminated from service by the state government on the recommendation of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, after an inquiry officer found substance in charges of corruption in passing the bail orders.

The bench said, "The order of removal dated September 2, 2015, the order of the appellate authority dated March 17, 2016, and the impugned order of the high court are all set aside. The appellant shall be deemed to have continued in service till he attained the normal age of superannuation.

"Since the appellant has been kept out of service for no fault of his, we are of the opinion that full back wages with all consequential benefits should be given to the appellant. Let the monetary benefits be released within a period of eight weeks from today with interest at the rate of 6 per cent...."

Justice Viswanathan said the case highlights the unfortunate plight of a judicial officer, Nirbhay Singh Suliya, who, after 27 years of unblemished record,

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** Opposition leaders Monday raised questions over the Supreme Court denying bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case, while pointing out that rape convict Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim has been repeatedly granted parole.

In a post on X, Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary M A Baby said the Supreme Court's decision is shocking.

"The court's statement that 'continued detention has not crossed constitutional impermissibility to override the statutory embargo as against them' is a travesty of justice. Is languishing in jail for five years, without any possibility of trial starting, not a violation of the fundamental right to life and liberty?" he asked.

Baby said this ruling effectively enables the BJP government's "repressive tactics of targeting voices of dissent".

"At the same time, convicted rapist Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh walked out of jail today on his 15th parole since his conviction in 2017. This is shameful and unacceptable!" he added.

Taking to X, CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas said the principle that "bail is the



rule, jail the exception" clearly does not apply when it comes to certain individuals.

Serving a 20-year jail term for raping two of his disciples, Singh walked out of the Sunaria jail in Rohtak on Monday after he was granted a 40-day parole. This is the 15th time he has been granted parole since his conviction in the case in 2017.

The CPI(M) said in a post on X that the continued denial of bail to Khalid and Imam is against the principles of natural justice. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is being used to crush dissent, it charged.

Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary D Raja said more than five years in jail without a trial is not justice, it is punishment without adjudication.

He said the denial of bail exposes a disturbing double standard in the country's criminal justice system.

"Convicted offenders in cases of rape, murder and mass violence routinely obtain bail or parole, while undertrials accused on the basis of untested allegations are kept behind bars indefinitely. Under laws like UAPA, jail has become the norm and liberty the exception," Raja wrote on X.

He also referred to the late G N Saibaba, a Delhi University professor and activist who was arrested under the UAPA in 2014 over alleged links with Maoists and later acquitted.

The CPI(ML) Liberation echoed similar sentiments. The February 2020 riots in northeast Delhi left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

## Railways budget spend for FY26 crosses ₹2L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** The Indian Railways has spent 80.54 per cent, which is ₹2,03,138 crore of the total gross budgetary support (GBS) of ₹2,52,200 crore, as of the end of December 2025, the ministry said Monday.

"This represents a 6.54 per cent increase in GBS utilisation compared to the same period last year (December 2024). The expenditure has primarily focused on safety measures, capacity enhancement, infrastructure modernisation and passenger amenities," it added in a press note.

Officials said that Indian Railways is delivering faster, safer and world-class rail travel at an affordable cost across India by transforming itself into a future-ready organisation aligned with the vision of a modern and connected nation.

Demonstrating this focused approach, the Indian Railways has maintained a strong trend in the utilisation of allocated GBS outlays for 2025-26, they added.

The ministry's press note said 84 per cent of the allocated funds have been utilised in the category of safety-related works.

According to the ministry, out of ₹1,09,238 crore allocated for capacity augmentation, ₹76,048 crore (69 per cent) has been spent.

## AAP faces exodus in Goa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, Jan 5:** In a major setback to the AAP in Goa, a group of senior leaders, including its ex-state unit president Amit Palekar, acting chief Shrikrishna Parab and three other office-bearers, resigned from the primary membership of the party Monday.

Palekar, Parab and Goa Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) youth wing president Rohan Naik announced their resignations at a press conference here and their decision comes days after the Arvind Kejriwal-led outfit fared poorly in Zilla Panchayat (ZPs) elections in the coastal state.

Palekar was removed from the post of Goa AAP president late last month after the party faced humiliating defeat in the ZP (district councils) polls, winning just one of the 42 seats it contested in the December 20 elections. Parab, who was then Goa AAP general secretary (organisation), was given additional charge as acting president of the state unit. Two Goa AAP vice-presidents Chetan Kamat and Sarfaraz confirmed to PTI that they have resigned from the party though they were not present at the news conference.

## DEX detects interplanetary dust bombardment on earth

According to ISRO, Interplanetary Dust Particles (IDPs) are microscopic shrapnel from comets and asteroids that form our atmosphere's mysterious "meteor layer", and show up as "shooting star" in the night

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



are microscopic shrapnel from comets and asteroids that form our atmosphere's mysterious "meteor layer", and show up as "shooting star" in the night.

DEX, developed by ISRO's Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad, is tuned to hunt for high speed IDPs and hear impacts, capturing vital data that redefines the understanding of the universe and charts the path for safe human

deep-space missions, the Indian space agency said in a statement.

"The 140 degree wide-view detector successfully logged signals of orbital debris (dust) impacts during January 1, 2024 to February 9, 2024, confirming the instrument's capability to identify and measure such events. Skimming Earth's atmosphere on a 9.5 inclination, the detector registered several

hits--a cosmic invader striking every thousand seconds," the statement said.

DEX is a three kg dust detector based on the "cutting-edge hypervelocity principle designed to capture high-speed space dust impacts with only 4.5 Watt power consumption", ISRO said.

It added that the instrument was flown on POEM of the PSLV-C58 XPOSat mission Jan-

uary 1, 2024, and rocketed to 350 km altitude.

DEX delivered the most recent observations of IDPs entering Earth's atmosphere, which is an exciting confirmation of the constant bombardment from outer space, ISRO said.

"At present, we have no measurements of cosmic dust in the thick atmosphere of Venus or in the thin atmosphere of the red planet Mars. DEX is a blueprint of the detector which can study the cosmic dust particle at any planet having atmosphere or no atmosphere," ISRO added.

The Earth-orbiting DEX can provide the first-ever direct measurements of IDP within the uncharted atmospheres of Venus or Mars. It can also provide new measurements around the Moon. Beyond pure science, this data is mission-critical. The ability to measure IDPs is essential for monitoring the space environment, precisely assessing hazards for our satellites, and ultimately, ensuring the safety and success of future manned missions to Moon, Mars and beyond, according to ISRO.

## international

of the day quote

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Helsinki, Jan 5:** The battle against fake news in Finland starts in preschool classrooms.

For decades, the Nordic nation has woven media literacy, including the ability to analyse different kinds of media and recognise disinformation, into its national curriculum for students as young as 3 years old. The coursework is part of a robust anti-misinformation program to make Finns more resistant to propaganda and false claims, especially those crossing over the 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) border with neighbouring Russia.

Now, teachers are tasked with adding artificial intelligence literacy to their curric-

ulum, especially after Russia stepped up its disinformation campaign across Europe following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago. Finland's ascension into NATO in 2023 also provoked Moscow's ire, though Russia has repeatedly denied that it interferes in the internal affairs of other countries.

"We think that having good media literacy skills is a very big civic skill," Kjia Hakkala, a pedagogical specialist for the City of Helsinki, told The Associated Press. "It's very important to the nation's safety and to the safety of our democracy."

At Tapanila Primary School, in a quiet neighbourhood north of Helsinki, teacher Ville Vanhanen taught a group of fourth

**I was at the Indian Ambassador's house about a month ago, and all he wanted to talk about was how they are buying less Russian oil**

LINDSEY GRAHAM | US SENATOR

**VATICAN CLAIMS HOLY YEAR SUCCESS**

The Vatican Monday gave a final accounting of its 2025 Holy Year, saying more than 33 million pilgrims had participated and that the only real dispute with the city of Rome concerned the style of fountains built for the event's main public works project.

**Finland's battle against fake news starts in preschool classrooms**

graders how to spot fake news. As a TV screen beamed a "Fact or Fiction?" banner, student Ilo Lindgren evaluated the prompt.

"It is a little bit hard," the 10-year-old admitted.

Vanhanen said his students have been learning about fake news and disinformation for years, beginning with reading headlines and short texts. In a recent class, the fourth grad-

ers were tasked with coming up with five things to look out for when consuming online news to ensure it's trustworthy. Now they are moving onto AI literacy, which is quickly becoming a vital skill.

"We've been studying how to recognise if a picture or a video is made by AI," added Vanhanen, a teacher and vice principal at the school.

Finnish media also play a role, organising an annual "Newspaper Week," where pa-

pers and other news are sent to young people to consume. In 2024, Helsinki-based Helsingin Sanomat collaborated on a new "ABC Book of Media Literacy," distributed to every 15-year-old in the country as they began upper secondary school.

"It's really important for us to be seen as a place where you can get information that's been verified, that you can trust, and that's done by people you know in a transparent way," Jussi Pullinen, the daily newspaper's managing editor, said.

Media literacy has been part of the Finnish educational curriculum since the 1990s, and additional courses are available for older adults who might be especially vulnerable to misinformation.

The skills are so ingrained into the culture that the Nordic nation of 5.6 million people regularly ranks at the top of the European Media Literacy Index. The index was compiled by the Open Society Institute in Sofia, Bulgaria, between 2017 and 2023.

**Narco-terrorism charges: Maduro pleads not guilty**

REUTERS

While world leaders and U.S. politicians grappled with the extraordinary seizure of a head of state, an emergency order in Venezuela, published in full Monday, ordered police to search and capture anyone who supported Saturday's US attack.

Also Monday, the UN Security Council debated the implications of the raid, which was condemned by Russia, China and leftist allies of Venezuela.

UN Chief Antonio Guterres raised concerns about instability in Venezuela and the legality of Trump's strike, the most dramatic U.S. intervention in Latin America since the 1989 Panama invasion. U.S. Special Forces swooped into Caracas by helicopter on Saturday, shattered his security cordon and dragged him from the threshold of a safe room.

On Monday morning, Maduro - his hands zip-tied - and his wife Cilia Flores were escorted by armed guards in tactical gear from a Brooklyn detention center to a helicopter bound for court.

The judge began the hearing at 12:02 p.m. (1702 GMT) in Manhattan federal court by summarizing the charges in the indictment.

Maduro, in orange and beige prison garb, listened on headphones through an interpreter. He has long denied the allegations, saying they were a mask for imperialist designs on Venezuela's rich oil reserves.

**Anne Frank's stepsister dies****London:**

Auschwitz

survivor Eva Schloss, the

stepsister of teenage diarist

Anne Frank and a tireless

educator about the horrors

of the Holocaust, has died.

She was 96. The Anne Frank

Trust UK, of which Schloss

was honorary president,

said she died Saturday in

London, where she lived.

Britain's King Charles III

said he was "privileged

and proud" to have known

Schloss, who co-founded

the charitable trust to help

young people challenge

prejudice. "The horrors that

she endured as a young

woman are impossible

to comprehend, and yet

she devoted the rest of

her life to overcoming

hatred and prejudice,

promoting kindness,

courage, understanding

and resilience through

her tireless work for the

Anne Frank Trust UK and

for Holocaust education

across the world," the king

said. Born Eva Geiringer

in Vienna in 1929, Schloss

fled with her family to

Amsterdam after Nazi

Germany annexed Austria.

She became friends with

another Jewish girl of the

same age, Anne Frank,

whose diary would become

one of the most famous

chronicles of the Holocaust.

The economy has profited

from friction between Wash-

ington and Beijing as factories

shifted out of China, joining ear-

lier waves of foreign investment

by the Japanese and South Ko-

reans that have made Vietnam a

global manufacturing hub.

But rising labour costs, worker

shortages and inadequate in-

frastructure are exposing the

limits to its rapid rise.

With rivals like Indonesia

and the Philippines competing

for new projects, Vietnam is trying to climb into higher-value manufacturing and expand export markets to maintain that momentum. That effort is evident in Bac Ninh.

Traditionally a centre for artisans, Bac Ninh's first boom began around 2008 when Samsung built its first phone factory there, turning Vietnam into its largest offshore manufacturing base.

Now, Chinese companies are pouring in as they diversify their factory locations to skirt US tariffs and other trade

restrictions. After Hanoi and Beijing normalized ties in the 1990s, inflows of Chinese investment began to pick up as Chinese firms in places like Bac Ninh tapped Vietnam's electronics supply chain, labour force and supportive local governments, often aided by Chinese-speaking intermediaries who smooth paperwork and logistics.

But Vietnam is too small to replace China, whose economy is 40 times larger, as the world's factory floor. To try to keep up,

its leaders are building new infrastructure, including a highway to the Chinese border that has cut travel time by more than an hour. A railway will connect Hanoi to Haiphong — Vietnam's largest seaport — and then the border town of Lao Cai.

On December 19, Bac Ninh broke ground on the expansion of an industrial zone for high-tech manufacturing, including electronics, pharmaceuticals and clean energy. It's part of a synchronized nationwide push in which Vietnam launched 234 major projects worth more than USD 129 billion just weeks before a pivotal National Party Congress in January, when leaders will decide the country's political leadership and economic direction.

In Bac Ninh's downtown, a convenience store bears the name Tmall, after Alibaba's flagship online marketplace.

Signs in Chinese advertise services for investors. Chinese-Vietnamese language schools have opened to help locals and Chinese to learn

each others' languages. But as Chinese companies compete for the best labour and other resources, costs are rising for the "China plus one" strategy of moving factories out of China to other locations, for example, Apple's shift to India.

"It is becoming difficult to recruit workers," said Peng, who works at a telecoms equipment company that moved from China's southern technology hub of Shenzhen. He gave only one name because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Labour costs have jumped 10 per cent-15 per cent since 2024, he said. "And we expect them to keep rising."

Vietnam still need technology, equipment and expertise from China, which had created "the best manufacturing ecosystem," said Jacob Rothman, co-founder and CEO of China-based Velong Enterprises, which makes grill tools and kitchen gadgets and has shifted some production to Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia and Vietnam.

**UK to seize phones, SIM cards of illegal migrants**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Jan 5:** Mobile phones and hidden SIM cards can be seized from migrants arriving illegally in the UK on small boats across the English Channel under new powers enforced from Monday.

Law enforcement agencies can now seize electronic devices like mobile phones and SIM cards from illegal migrants without needing to arrest them. This is intended to help them gather intelligence to track down and arrest people smugglers.

The UK Home Office said the "game changing" new criminal offences will help authorities intercept organised criminals faster and enable police to arrest people smugglers fuelling illegal migration.

"We promised to restore order and control to our borders which means taking on the people smuggling networks behind this deadly trade," said Alex Norris, UK's minister for border security and asylum.

"That is exactly why we are implementing robust new laws with powerful offences to intercept, disrupt and dismantle these vile gangs faster than ever before and cut off their supply chains."

These operational measures sit alongside sweeping reforms to the system, to make it less attractive for migrants to come here illegally and remove and deport people faster," he said.

Phone seizures began at a short-term holding facility of migrants at Manston in Kent, south-east England, with technology on site enabled to download material from the seized devices.

The National Crime Agency (NCA), police and other Immigration Enforcement officers can now make such seizures in a range of settings, including during property or vehicle searches and raids.

Officers can also demand illegal migrants remove an outer coat, jacket or gloves, and conduct searches inside their mouth for a hidden SIM card.

**This Vietnamese town boomed as factories left China**

ASSOCIATED PRESS



hard for new projects, Vietnam is trying to climb into higher-value manufacturing and expand export markets to maintain that momentum. That effort is evident in Bac Ninh.

Traditionally a centre for artisans, Bac Ninh's first boom began around 2008 when Samsung built its first phone factory there, turning Vietnam into its largest offshore manufacturing base.

Now, Chinese companies are pouring in as they diversify their factory locations to skirt US tariffs and other trade

restrictions. After Hanoi and Beijing normalized ties in the 1990s, inflows of Chinese investment began to pick up as Chinese firms in places like Bac Ninh tapped Vietnam's electronics supply chain, labour force and supportive local governments, often aided by Chinese-speaking intermediaries who smooth paperwork and logistics.

But Vietnam is too small to replace China, whose economy is 40 times larger, as the world's factory floor. To try to keep up,

its leaders are building new infrastructure, including a highway to the Chinese border that has cut travel time by more than an hour. A railway will connect Hanoi to Haiphong — Vietnam's largest seaport — and then the border town of Lao Cai.

On December 19, Bac Ninh broke ground on the expansion of an industrial zone for high-tech manufacturing, including electronics, pharmaceuticals and clean energy. It's part of a synchronized nationwide push in which Vietnam launched 234 major projects worth more than USD 129 billion just weeks before a pivotal National Party Congress in January, when leaders will decide the country's political leadership and economic direction.

In Bac Ninh's downtown, a convenience store bears the name Tmall, after Alibaba's flagship online marketplace.

Signs in Chinese advertise services for investors. Chinese-Vietnamese language schools have opened to help locals and Chinese to learn

each others' languages. But as Chinese companies compete for the best labour and other resources, costs are rising for the "China plus one" strategy of moving factories out of China to other locations, for example, Apple's shift to India.

Labour costs have jumped 10 per cent-15 per cent since 2024, he said. "And we expect them to keep rising."

Vietnam still need technology, equipment and expertise from China, which had created "the best manufacturing ecosystem," said Jacob Rothman, co-founder and CEO of China-based Velong Enterprises, which makes grill tools and kitchen gadgets and has shifted some production to Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia and Vietnam.

of the  
day quote

The last year's performance reflects more than record numbers, it signals a long-term growth trajectory anchored in strong fundamentals



**ANSHUL JAIN** | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, INDIA, SEA, MEA & APAC OFFICE AND RETAIL, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

By leveraging ADM's market linkages and global resources, we aim to equip 1,00,000 farmers with the tools to strengthen economic resilience



The muted central award activity has altered the sector's dynamics, pushing states into the driver's seat. While this shift ensures continuity, it also introduces complexities around execution and financing

**RESULTS CORNER****BoM clocks 20% loan growth in Q3**

**New Delhi:** Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) Monday said it has registered a total credit growth of 19.61 per cent to ₹2.73 lakh crore in the October-December quarter. The outstanding credit was ₹2.29 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of the previous fiscal year, the BoM said in a regulatory filing. The total credit also includes ₹1.02 lakh crore corporate credit, while RAM (retail, agriculture, and MSME) advances of ₹1.71 lakh crore during the quarter, it said. The Pune-headquartered public sector lender reported a 15.3 per cent increase in total deposits to ₹3.22 lakh crore in the reporting quarter against ₹2.79 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of the previous financial year.

**HDFC Bank logs 12% rise in loans**

**New Delhi:** The country's biggest private sector lender, HDFC Bank, Monday said it has registered a 12 per cent increase in loan growth at ₹28.44 lakh crore in the December quarter. The lender reported a 12 per cent rise in average deposits to ₹27.52 lakh crore, as against ₹24.52 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of the previous financial year. The bank's average advances under management (advances grossing up for inter-bank participation certificates, bills rediscounted and securitisation/assignment) were ₹28.63 lakh crore for the quarter under review, registering a growth of about 9 per cent over ₹26.27 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

**BoB logs 15% loan growth in Dec qtr**

**New Delhi:** State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) Sunday said it has registered a credit growth of 14.57 per cent to ₹13.44 lakh crore in the third quarter of FY26 ending December 2025. The total outstanding credit was ₹11.73 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of previous fiscal, BoB said in a regulatory filing. The lender reported a 10.25 per cent increase in total deposits to ₹15.47 lakh crore in the reporting quarter against ₹14.03 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of the previous financial year. As a result, the total business (total credit and deposits) of the bank registered an increase of 12.22 per cent to ₹28.91 lakh crore compared with ₹25.76 lakh crore at the end of December 31, 2024.



With EatRight, we are offering food options that blend seamlessly into a user's regular ordering habits, removes decision fatigue through clear categorisation and integrates healthier choices naturally into everyday food ordering

**DEEPAK MALOO** | VICE PRESIDENT, FOOD STRATEGY, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE & NEW INITIATIVES, SWIGGY

# Trump threats take down D-St

**MURKY MONDAY****BSE SENSEX**

JANUARY 5, 2026

CHANGE: -322.39 (-0.38%)



the weekend," according to Ashika Institutional Equities.

From the 30-Sensex firms, HDFC Bank, Infosys, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finance, Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards.

In contrast, Bharat Electronics, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Steel and UltraTech Cement were among the gainers.

"Indian equity benchmarks ended lower on Monday after paring early gains, as selling pressure in IT stocks and heightened geopolitical tensions following the US attack on Venezuela over

lyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The BSE smallcap and midcap indices went up marginally by 0.07 per cent and 0.05 per cent, respectively.

Among sectoral indices, IT declined by 1.37 per cent, oil & gas (1.18 per cent), BSE Focused IT (1.17 per cent), energy (0.95 per cent), telecommunication (0.81 per cent), utilities (0.38 per cent) and financial services (0.25 per cent).

On the other hand, realty jumped 2.16 per cent, consumer durables (1.25 per cent), metal (0.58 per cent), commodities (0.56 per cent), FMCG (0.51

per cent) and PSU bank (0.40 per cent).

Trump, while talking to reporters Sunday aboard Air Force One en route to Washington from Florida, said, "They (India) wanted to make me happy, basically. Modi is a very good man; he is a good guy. He knew I was not happy, and it was important to make me happy. They do trade, and we can raise tariffs on them very quickly. It would be very bad for them".

Trump's remarks came after US Senator Lindsey Graham, accompanying him on Air Force One, said that the tariffs imposed on India by Trump are the "chief reason" New Delhi is now buying substantially less Russian oil.

Graham spoke about his tariff bill that seeks to impose 500 per cent levies on imports from countries buying Russian oil.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹289.80 crore Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) also bought stocks worth ₹677.38 crore.

On Friday, the Sensex climbed 573.41 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at 35,762.01. The Nifty went up by 182 points or 0.70 per cent to 26,328.55.

**AIR INDIA HUNTS NEW CEO**

Air India's board is scouting for a new chief executive to replace Campbell Wilson as the airline faces intense scrutiny over safety lapses following a June crash that killed 260 people. Regulators have flagged issues including missed emergency checks, delayed engine replacements, maintenance record forgery and weaknesses in managing crew fatigue



# Spam lapses cost telcos ₹150 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** The telecom regulator Trai has imposed a penalty of ₹150 crore on telecom operators for their failure to curb spam calls and messages, according to an official source.

The ₹150 crore penalty imposed for three years beginning 2020, however, has been challenged by telecom operators.

"Financial disincentives of more than ₹150 crore have been imposed on the telecom service providers for wrong closure of customer complaints and not taking action on telecom connections of spammers in accordance with regulations," the source said.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) imposes penalties on telecom operators who fail to comply with regulations that impose financial disincentives.

The regulations provide for a financial disincentive of up to ₹50 lakh per month per licensed Service Area for a telecom operator.

"It is important to note that the financial disincentives are imposed on TSPs (telecom service providers) not because someone has sent through their network, but because they fail to take appropriate action, in accordance with the Regulations, on the telecom resources of spammers.

"While action on the consumer complaints is the key to controlling spam, during audit of complaints, Trai has observed many cases of wrong closures of customer complaints by the TSPs," the source said.

Trai has disconnected over 21 lakh spammers and blacklisted more than 1 lakh entities in the last year.

About 18.8 lakh spammers' connections were disconnected, and more than 1,150 entities were blacklisted in September 2024, consequent to the direction issued by Trai August 13, 2024.

Although the regulatory framework provides for taking action against unregistered



senders by the telecom service providers, which ranges from suspension of connections to disconnection of all the connections for one year and complete blacklisting of the sender across all telecom service providers in the country, the trigger for action comes from customer complaints only, the source said.

Trai has rolled out a DND app, which enables users to register complaints in just 4-6 clicks. "While registered tele-marketers have been subject to strict regulations, the majority of spam now originates from unregistered individuals using 10-digit mobile numbers.

"Consumer complaints are the key mechanism to trigger action against spam since a sender is identified as a spammer on the basis of the number of complaints received against them in a given time. Blocking numbers on phones alone does not stop spam, as spammers frequently change their numbers. Complaints enable action across all operators," the source said.

Trai has tightened rules to curb pesky calls and sms. Consumers can make complaints against unregistered senders without registering their DND preferences.

The regulator also has a complaint window extended from 3 to 7 days, meaning a subscriber can register a complaint against pesky callers within 7 days of receiving a call or SMS.

Trai has also tightened the criteria for taking action against spammers. Now, five complaints against the sender in the last 10 days are sufficient to trigger action against them.

## ₹ declines for 4th day on trot

REUTERS

**VENEZUELA CRISIS****Crude oil rises in futures trade**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 5:** Crude Oil prices rose by ₹42 to ₹5,197 per barrel in the futures trade Monday amid cautious sentiment over geopolitical developments.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), crude oil futures for January delivery rose by ₹42, or 0.81 per cent, to ₹5,197 per barrel in a business turnover of 18,270 lots.

Similarly, the February contract increased by ₹37, or 0.72 per cent, to ₹5,202 per barrel in 3,011 lots.

In the international markets, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures went up by 0.24 per cent to \$57.46 per barrel, while Brent Crude was trading marginally higher at \$60.78 per barrel in New York.

"WTI crude oil futures hovered around USD 57.2 per barrel on Monday, moving between gains and losses as investors assessed the implications of recent US military action in Venezuela, including the capture of President Nicolas Maduro," Rahul Kalantri, VP Commodities, Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The market sentiment remains cautious amid concerns over potential supply disruptions, given Venezuela's status as the country with the world's largest proven oil reserves, he added.

The precious yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹1,39,440 per 10 grams Friday.

Silver prices also extended

**RUPEE ₹ VS DOLLAR \$**

The rupee's retreat reflects underlying dollar demand fol-

owing the RBI intervention that triggered a recovery in the currency last week, traders said.

Traders said routine corporate dollar buying and a lack of offers from exporters kept the currency on the defensive. Weakness in regional peers such as the Malaysian ringgit and Philippine peso added to the drag.

Asian stocks climbed with AI-linked themes in focus at the start of the first full trading week of the year, while oil prices dipped on the view US military action in Venezuela would be unlikely to disrupt a well-supplied energy market.

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# B'desh bans IPL broadcast in another retaliatory move

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its 2026 roster. The IPL is due to start March 26.

The move to ban IPL broadcast came a day after Bangladesh refused to travel to India for next month's T20 World Cup and requested the International Cricket Council to shift all its league games to Sri Lanka, the co-host of the tournament.

"No logical reason for such a decision (Rahman's release) by the BCCI is known, and such a decision has saddened, hurt, and aggrieved the people of Bangladesh," read the government notification.

"In this situation, until fur-



mier League (IPL). This order is issued with the approval of the proper authority and in the public interest," said the signed by assistant secretary Feroz Khan.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, while announcing the dictat to release Rahman, had merely stated that it was being done because of "developments all around", without explaining the specifics.

Bangladesh was scheduled to play three T20 World Cup matches in Kolkata and one in Mumbai.

Drawn in Group C, the team was due to face the West In-

dies in their opening match at Eden Gardens in Kolkata and subsequently compete against defending champions England, Italy and Nepal.

The Indo-Bangladesh relationship has hit a rocky patch 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.

## SHORT TAKES

### Anahat in British Jr U-19 Open squash semifinals

**Birmingham:** Rising Indian player Anahat Singh moved into the women's semifinals of the British Junior Under-19 Open squash tournament here. The teenaged Indian top seed beat Egypt's Barb Sameh 11-4, 10-12, 11-9, 11-3 in the quarterfinals at the University of Birmingham. She will meet another Egyptian, Malika El Karasky (3/4), in the semifinals. Earlier, the Delhi player defeated Malak El Maraghy of Egypt 11-3, 11-3, 11-6 in the last-16 round and Hong Kong's Wing Kai Gladys Ho 11-1, 11-3, 11-3 in the second round after receiving a first-round bye. Anahat had a breakout 2025, achieving a career-best world ranking of 28 in what was only her second year on the Tour and downing two top-20 players during the year.

### Díaz fires Morocco into AFCON top 8

**Rabat:** Brahim Díaz kept Morocco's Africa Cup of Nations title hopes on track while five-time winner Cameroon beat South Africa 2-1 for a showdown with the host nation in the quarterfinals. Díaz sent Morocco through with a 1-0 win over Tanzania Sunday before Cameroon held on to beat South Africa for the first time since 1992 thanks to goals from Junior Tchamadeu and Christian Kofane. They meet in the next round Friday. Díaz, who has quickly emerged as Morocco's star player, broke the deadlock against Tanzania in the 64th minute. He beat Hussein Masalanga at his near post when the Taifa Stars' goalkeeper probably expected a cross. It was Díaz's fourth goal in four games and it set off celebrations of relief around Rabat's near 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, where the home team will play all its games as long as it keeps winning through to the final January 18.

### MUFC coach Amorim sacked

**Manchester:** Ruben Amorim is out as coach of Manchester United after just 14 months in the job. The Premier League club announced Monday that Amorim's reign was over - with the decision coming a day after he made provocative comments about his position following a 1-1 draw with Leeds. United said youth coach Darren Fletcher would take charge of its match against Burnley Wednesday. "I'm not going to quit" Amorim oversaw a slew of unwanted records at the 20-time English champion including its lowest finish in the Premier League era last season. The United job has proved one of the most difficult in world soccer since club legend Alex Ferguson retired in 2013, with Amorim the sixth permanent manager or coach to be discarded in that time.

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The karts are 30kg heavier (115kg in mini to 145kg in junior) and have three times the horse power (10 bhp with top speed 105 kmph to 29bhp with top speed of 126 kmph).

In a clear sign of her rare talent, the Akcel GP backed Atiqa thrived in the unfamiliar territory rather than getting overawed by the occasion.

By finishing fifth out of 35 drivers in a male dominated grid, Atiqa also became the first female to register a top five finish in the history of IAME UAE Championship on debut.

With only a few days of testing to get used to the junior kart, Atiqa once again proved that her fitness and dedication are second to none in a grueling 21-lap race at the historic Formula 1 Circuit here.

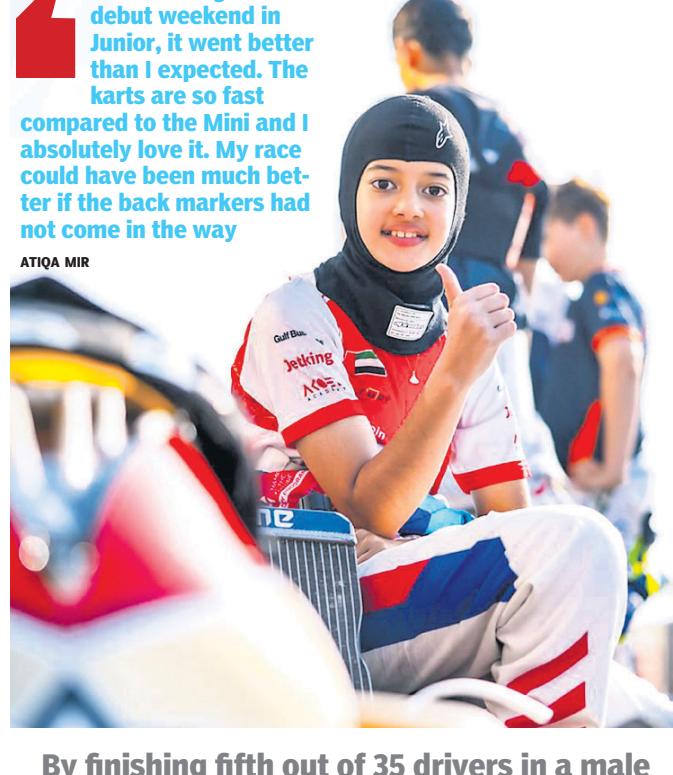
She qualified 18th due to an issue with her kart but that

## SPECTACULAR SWITCH

# Atiqa's historic finish

The Indian racing prodigy secures landmark top-5 finish on junior class debut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



By finishing fifth out of 35 drivers in a male dominated grid, Atiqa also became the first female to register a top five finish in the history of IAME UAE Championship on debut

didn't deter her in the races.

In the heat race, she climbed up six places, and in the pre-final she went up eight places to finish fourth, displaying mature race craft and overtaking drivers with much more experience (in the category as well as age).

Starting the final fourth and on the trickier outside lane, Atiqa held her ground and got in the mix of the leading group.

She put in some stunning lap times to keep up with the leading pack.

The pace in front was so fast that they came up to lap the

back markers but one of them blocked Atiqa and she lost time due to that. If that was not the case, she could have finished two places higher and on the podium. In the end, she lost out on the podium by only four tenths of a second.

"That was a good debut weekend in Junior, it went better than I expected. The karts are so fast compared to the Mini and I absolutely love it. My race could have been much better if the back markers had not come in the way," said Atiqa, who aims to reach Formula 1 one day.

"But nonetheless I'm happy with my speed this weekend. I hope to keep learning and improving myself in this new category."

Atiqa's father Asif Mir said the decision to fast-track her daughter to the junior category was vindicated with the performance over the weekend.

"We decided to move Atiqa up to Juniors in a late call in December. I felt she could learn more in the higher category and improve her skill even though she is barely eligible being so young and going up against drivers who are 2-3 years older than her," said Asif, who is also India's first national karting champion.

"She had a stellar debut and deserved a podium for her efforts but just fell short. It is not easy going from a Mini to a Junior kart with the higher G forces and Speed. She even surprised me with her performance," he added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Jan 5:** Joe Root made his second hundred of the series, while Travis Head closed in on his third, as Day 2 of the final Ashes test between Australia and England closed evenly poised Monday.

England was bowled out just before tea for 384 at the Sydney Cricket Ground, with Joe Root leading with a masterful 160 for his best test score in the country from his four Ashes tours.

At stumps, Australia was 166-2 in reply in its first innings, with Travis Head again in imperious form as he slashed his way to 91 not out from 87 balls and nearing his third hundred of the five-match series.

Ben Stokes had both wickets for the tourists, which struggled to stem the flow of runs in the final session but the wicket of the well-set Marnus Labuschagne late in the day buoyed England's hopes.

Earlier Monday, as wickets fell regularly around him, Root showed all the composure of a 163-test veteran as he notched his 41st century off 146 balls, with 11 boundaries and celebrated with the same shrug gesture as when he broke through for his first ton in four Ashes tours at Brisbane last month.

"I just felt like we've had some amazing support throughout this series and we've not been able to achieve what we set out to as a group, but at no point has that (support) ever wavered," Root said.

"It (the celebration) is a way

# Root equals Ponting's feat after 41st Test ton

England star is now among the leading Test centymakers, with only Sachin Tendulkar (51) and Jacques Kallis (45) having scored more hundreds



## 2ND KHELO INDIA BEACH FOOTBALL

### Odisha dominate Maha in opener

POST NEWS NETWORK



ed with 2 goals, while Manisha Naik, Ankita Naik, Shibani Mundari, and Sumitra Hembram each found the back of the net, with each player contributing to the high-scoring result.

Odisha's star player, Satyabati Khadka, played a pivotal role in the win, scoring an impressive 5 goals. Her excellent positioning and clinical finishing were key to her team's dominant performance. Alongside her, Srijana Tamang contribut-

Starting the final fourth and on the trickier outside lane, Atiqa held her ground and got in the mix of the leading group. She put in some stunning lap times to keep up with the leading pack.

The pace in front was so fast that they came up to lap the

ident of the Odisha Volleyball Association, Achyuta Samanta, lauded the players for their spirited performance and fabulous beginning to the championship. He expressed his confidence in the team and wished them even better performances in their upcoming matches.

The General Secretary of the Odisha Volleyball Association,

Dr Gaganendu Dash, also congratulated the players on their well-deserved victory and extended his best wishes for the remainder of the tournament.

With this strong opening win, the team has set a positive tone for their campaign and will look to build on this momentum in the matches ahead.

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