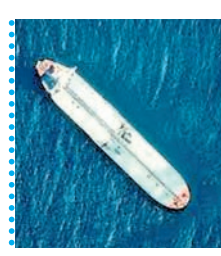




Life-changing choice

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu shares how entrepreneurship has changed her life

LEISURE | P2



US-Venezuela rift

The US seizes a Russian-flagged oil tanker that was being shadowed by a Russian submarine

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Silver skyrockets

Silver prices surge by ₹5,000 to hit a new record of ₹2,56,000 per kilogram amid strong safe-haven demand

BUSINESS | P11



ICC-BCB impasse

BCB says the ICC is "willing to work closely" with it to address security concerns around the team's participation in the T20 WC

SPORTS | P12

CM lays stone for 118 schools under new edu scheme

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched the Godabarish Mishra Model Primary School scheme and laid the foundation stone for 118 such schools across the state.

Majhi launched the scheme at Banpur in Khurda district, the birthplace of Pandit Godabarish Mishra, a noted educationist and social reformer of the state, who contributed a lot to the primary education in the state.

Launching the scheme, the CM said the initiative aims to strengthen primary education in rural and remote areas of the state by improving school infrastructure, appointing teachers, and upgrading learning facilities. The state government has allocated ₹12,000 crore in the first phase to develop 2,200 such primary schools, he said.

P3



BOOST TO EDU: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, S&ME Minister Nityananda Gond, Puri MP Sambit Patra and MLAs Prasanta Jagadev and Babu Singh during the launch of Godabarish Mishra Model Primary School scheme, in Banpur, Khurda, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

‘UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE’ Rahul takes dig at govt over Trump’s remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: In the backdrop of US President Donald Trump’s recent remarks on his ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and tariffs, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Wednesday took a swipe at the government and posted an old video in which he had talked about how in 1971 then PM Indira Gandhi had withstood pressure from America.

Trump Tuesday said that “Prime Minister Modi is not that happy with me” because of the tariffs imposed by Washington on Delhi for its purchases of Russian oil.

Trump, delivering remarks at the House GOP Member Retreat, also claimed that “Prime Minister Modi came to see me, ‘Sir, may I see you please.’ Yes.”

In a post on X, Gandhi



said, “Farq samjho, sir ji!”

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha shared his own old video in which he had alleged that Prime Minister Modi surrendered after a call from US President Trump during the India-Pakistan military conflict.

Gandhi had also said that the then prime minister Indira Gandhi didn’t budge in the 1971 war despite the US sending its Seventh Fleet. This is the difference, Gandhi had said. Sharing a video of Trump’s remarks, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also took a swipe at the PM.

‘Dhurandhar’ turns biggest Indian film

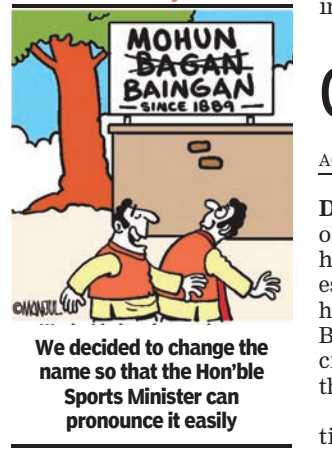
AGENCIES

Mumbai, Jan 7: Filmmaker Aditya Dhar’s ‘Dhurandhar’ has become the highest-grossing Indian film of all time in a single language with a net India collection of over ₹831 crore, the makers said Wednesday.

With its Day 33 earnings Tuesday standing at ₹5.70 crore net, the Ranveer Singh-starrer’s total India net collection climbed to ₹831.40 crore, placing it at the No. 1 spot among all Hindi releases to date. According to Jio Studios, the movie, released only in Hindi, has earned ₹1,240 crore worldwide.

“History has been rewritten. With Tuesday’s collections, ‘Dhurandhar’ has officially risen to become the highest-earning Hindi film of all time, a towering achievement that has redefined Indian box office success,” the makers said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We decided to change the name so that the Hon'ble Sports Minister can pronounce it easily

Invocation of ESMA has failed to maintain uninterrupted essential medical services in the government-run hospitals across the state amid an ongoing strike of government doctors who are boycotting OPD services for 2 hours daily. While the government termed the agitation illegal, the continued strike underscored unresolved issues such as acute staff shortages and unmet service conditions in rural and remote areas. The disruption, which has worsened the patients' existing woes, highlights the state government's inability to address doctors' grievances. Meanwhile, untoward incidents in two of the state's premier hospitals have laid bare the sorry state of healthcare

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Despite the state government invoking ESMA, over 6,000

Plaster collapse leaves patient injured in SCB

CUTTACK: An elderly patient was seriously injured after a large chunk of plaster fell from a wall inside the old medicine ward of SCB Medical College and Hospital here Wednesday. Narayan Das, 70, of Khurda district, sustained head and facial injuries in the mishap which occurred while he was lying on his bed on the first floor of the ward. His family alleged that he did not receive primary treatment for nearly 90 minutes after the incident. Hospital authorities were not immediately available at the spot. The incident triggered tension among patients and attendants, raising concerns over poor maintenance and patient safety at the state's premier government hospital.



government doctors under the banner of Odisha Medical Services Association (OMSA) Wednesday boycotted OPD service for two hours to demand fulfilment of their charter of demands, including filling up of vacant posts.

The state government Tuesday had announced the doctors' agitation as illegal for disrupting essential medical services. As per the provision of the Essential Services (Maintenance) Act or ESMA, strikes in the

OT goes dark during surgery at MKCG

BERHAMPUR: A serious lapse was reported at MKCG Medical College and Hospital here Tuesday when the operation theatre (OT) went dark in the middle of a surgery due to a power failure, allegedly exposing negligence by the General Electrical Division (GED). The incident occurred in the surgery department while doctors were operating on a patient identified as Prashant Sahu of Padmapur in Rayagada district. A sudden power outage plunged the operation theatre into complete darkness. Although power supply from generators was restored to parts of the surgery block, electricity did not reach the operation theater, creating a critical situation for the surgical team.

form of cessation of work by doctors, nursing officers, pharmacists, paramedics, and technicians have been banned for six months with effect from Tuesday.

The OMSA doctors boycotted OPD service from 9am to

11am across the state. The protest is part of their ongoing movement pressing for fulfilment of their 10-point charter of demands. Their demands include parity in pay with Central government employees, proportional restructuring of cadres across all grades, additional financial incentives for super-specialists and performance-based incentives.

“Invoking Odisha Essential Services (Maintenance) Act, 1988 (ESMA) on peaceful strike by doctors is considered as part of an oppression, intolerance and bureaucratic interference. The government must address the issues and resolve doctors' genuine problems,” OMSA president Kishore Mishra said.

The OMSA president said that the boycott of OPD service for two hours was a symbolic protest. The doctors, after the boycott hour from 9am

to 11am, attended to patients. The emergency service, surgeries and indoor treatment are also being provided by OMSA-affiliated doctors. They just boycott the OPD service demanding fulfilment of certain genuine demands, he said.

The OMSA demanded Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's intervention into the matter, even as Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling appealed to the doctors to call off the strike.

The state government has also constituted a high-level committee to consider the 10-point charter of demands of doctors. The doctors' OPD boycott agitation since December 26 has impacted health service in rural and remote areas. The doctors launched the OPD boycott for one hour from December 26 and later extended it to two hours from 9am to 11am starting January 5.

Sangam Kumar Sahoo takes oath as Patna CJ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 7: Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court Wednesday. The oath was administered by Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan in a ceremony at the Lok Bhavan here, officials said.

The function was attended by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and several other dignitaries. Justice Sahoo studied in Stewart Science College and the Cuttack Law College in Odisha and enrolled as an advocate in 1989 under the Orissa State Bar Council, Cuttack. He practised in district courts, the high court, consumer forums and the CAT in Odisha.

He was elevated as a judge of the Orissa High Court July 2, 2014.



Chased by mob, Hindu man drowns in B'desh

AGENCIES

Dhaka, Jan 7: A 25-year-old Hindu man died after he jumped into a canal to escape a mob which accused him of theft in northwestern Bangladesh, in the latest incident of violence targeting the minority community.

The deceased was identified as Mithun Sarkar,

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBUCU) spokesman Kajol Debnath said. Sarkar was chased by a mob accusing him of theft in Naogaon district Tuesday. To escape, he jumped into a canal but tragically drowned, Debnath said.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the Council demanded actions against “alarmingly increased and continued” persecution of minorities.

As the date of the general elections draws nearer, communal violence is increasing at an alarming rate, it said, adding that the forum believed the incidents aimed to prevent minority voters from casting votes for candidates of

their choice. This incident came close on the heels of the murder of two Hindu businessmen Monday.

At least six Hindus, including Sarkar, have fallen prey to a surge in violence against minorities in Bangladesh. Miscreants also raped a Hindu widow, cut her hair and tied her to a tree this week.

Lotus, Kite go hand in Hand in Maharashtra

BJP ties up with Cong, AIMIM in 2 local bodies; CM, Sena oppose move, Cong suspends 12 councillors

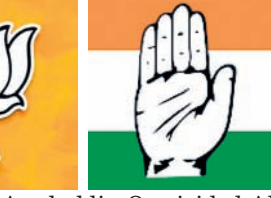
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 7: In a surprising move, the BJP forged a post-poll alliance with Congress and AIMIM in Maharashtra's two municipal councils, drawing the ire of the state leadership of the ruling as well as opposition parties, with the grand old party suspending 12 newly-elected councillors in one of these local bodies.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said such arrangements were not approved by the party leadership and violated discipline, while BJP's state ally Shiv Sena called it a betrayal of “coalition dharma”.



Following the local polls held December 20, the BJP joined hands with the Congress, its arch-rival, and the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) under the banner of ‘Ambernath Vikas Aghadi’ to form the Ambernath Municipal Council leadership, sidelining ally Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde.



The BJP also struck a similar alliance with the Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and other parties in the Akot Municipal Council in Akola district.

Left red-faced, the Congress Wednesday suspended 12 newly-elected councillors in Ambernath Municipal Council along with its block president for alliance with the BJP.

Shiv Sena (UBT) also slammed the BJP, saying it reflects the ruling party's double standards and shows it can do anything to grab power.

In Ambarnath, the BJP forged a post-poll understanding with the Congress and NCP, securing a majority of 31 seats, even though the Shiv Sena is the single largest party with 27 members.

In the polls to the 60-member council, Shiv Sena won 27 seats, falling just four short of a majority. The BJP secured 14 seats, Congress 12, NCP 4, while 2 independents were also elected.

With the support of one independent, the three-party coalition's strength has risen to 32 councillors, crossing

the majority mark of 30.

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ARIES
You are likely to give in to the demands of your children today. Ganesha says it is for times like this that you labour so hard. You will finish the tasks that you have been postponing for a long time. It is a good day for people in the medical field and in the public sector.

TAURUS
Today, you will be as creative and competent as you can get. Your work style, the deft way you handle things will awe and amaze your colleagues and superiors. Your subordinates will be highly impressed and motivated. They will be eager and compliant and will support and assist you to the utmost.

GEMINI
You will listen to your heart over your head, swept away as you will be in a flood of emotions today. This could mean that you will be unable to distinguish between good and bad. However, looking back upon your day in the evening, you are unlikely to regret any of the decisions you made, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will begin the day with a definite plan for a bright future. You will resolutely implement plans that you have made thoughtfully. Such methodical decisions will save you a lot of time in the future. Ganesha says that you will succeed in every endeavour today.

LEO
Your natural self-confidence and capability will help you attain a position of strength today. As a result, all your tasks will be completed easily and you will reap rewards greater than your expectations, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Ganesha says you realise the importance of family matters today. You have great skills when it comes to negotiations, and you will use them in settling disputes amicably. Ganesha says you have learned the lessons of life on staying level-headed, and that you keenly believe that opposition eventually leads to progress.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will have a good time with your family members and will have fun with them. You will also be able to organize a picnic or a party for your family members and enjoy the day with them. Ganesha says you will go out for a trip to a religious place or temple, which will enhance your mind and ideas.

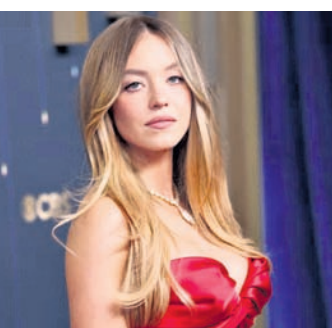
SCORPIO
Try to take a chill pill as you may be worried about petty issues today. Do not let them hinder your happiness and take a toll on your health. However, the day looks promising towards the end. Friends are just a phone call away, call them and set out for a destination unknown to destress and rejuvenate.

SAGITTARIUS
Suddenly, you become ambidextrous and plan to multi task today, says Ganesha. Your instincts will guide you today; trust them and move ahead. You may come across few challenges. But, anyway, who wants an easy way out, right?

CAPRICORN
Actions speak louder than words. Your sincere efforts and honest intentions will motivate others also to put in their best, feels Ganesha. You'll be like a friend, philosopher and guide to them. People will follow you, but it has a darker side to as many will even over take you.

AQUARIUS
You are disappointed and you seek solace in spirituality. Don't run away from the problems; rather face them with strength and confidence, advises Ganesha, to bring your life back on track. With patience and belief in the Almighty, you will be sail through the storm. Understand that challenges are a part of everyone's life.

PISCES
You are striving hard to influence your destiny. You are not going to kneel down without a fight against heavy odds. With persistent efforts you will succeed in achieving your goals. While victory is a given, hard work will be necessary. In brief, today will be a challenging day for you, says Ganesha.



SYDNEY SWEENEY: I'VE SEEN A GHOST

Actress Sydney Sweeney said that she had an imaginary friend when she was a child but “creeped out” her mom when it emerged the person she was seeing in the playground had died years before. Sweeney told W magazine: “I think I’ve seen a ghost.”

GEORGE CLOONEY RECALLS HAVING HIS FIRST KISS

Hollywood star George Clooney was just 11 years old when he had his first kiss in the back of a church in his hometown in Kentucky. He also reminisced about how he and the girl were “hiding” from their friend in the place of worship to get some privacy.



Sonu addresses stray dog issue

Mumbai: Sonu Sood, widely celebrated as a real-life hero for his tireless humanitarian work, has once again used his voice to champion a cause rooted in empathy and responsibility but this time, for India's stray animals. In a heartfelt message supporting animal welfare organisation Jeev Sabha, Sood spoke about the urgent need for humane and sustainable solutions to address the growing stray dog population and rabies-related concerns.

“Namaskar, I am Sonu Sood, and just as I am Indian, every stray dog born and living here is also Indian—hence they are called “Indy.”

I appeal to everyone that, just as we faced the Covid pandemic, we can similarly control rabies and other diseases among these stray dogs through vaccination and sterilization.” he added.

By advocating vaccination and sterilisation as long-term measures, Sonu highlighted the importance of science-backed, humane approaches over reactive responses. His message strongly reinforces the idea that coexistence is possible when guided by awareness, empathy, and collective responsibility.

“Let’s choose kindness, let’s choose solutions. I support Jeev Sabha. God bless you all. Take care,” he concluded, urging citizens to be part of the solution rather than the problem.

Known for stepping up during national crises, from aiding migrant workers during the pandemic to supporting healthcare and education initiatives, Sonu Sood’s support for animal welfare feels like a natural extension of his values.

AGENCIES



Sam's newfound interest

Hyderabad: Samantha Ruth Prabhu has transitioned from being a great actress to leading her own production house in the business of filmmaking. Not only that, but she is also making her name in expanding her business ventures. Recently, the Family Man star shared about the journey from films to startups and this has changed her life in many ways.

The newlywed actress shared her take on entrepreneurship, calling it the “greatest gift” she has given to herself, while speaking with *Moneycontrol*. “It’s the greatest gift that I have given myself to actually step out of my comfort zone of being an actor and to be able to work with such amazing people, doing amazing things, improving the quality of life of people around,” she said.

“You interact with just the people you’re filming with and the people that are involved in that film. But as an entrepreneur, investing in over 10 companies, I have the opportunity to understand real world problems, to work in a team, to work in partnerships,” she added.

Samantha also mentioned that launching a business made her more confident and called the process of setting it up from scratch an enjoyable process.

AGENCIES



New Delhi: For Chitrangda Singh, some opportunities arrive without planning, pitching or even expectation and that’s exactly what made *The Battle of Galwan* so special. The actress admits she never imagined she would find herself part of a film with Salman Khan, despite having known the superstar socially for years.

Sharing her first reaction on being roped in for *The Battle Of Galwan* opposite Salman, Chitrangda told this agency: “I got

Apoorva Lakhia (director) who gave me a call and I was like, ‘Really?’ I wasn’t so sure that I’d ever end up doing a Salman Khan film because I mean, I don’t even think I ever pitched myself for some work, you know with him even though I’d known him socially for a long time.”

“We never discussed or I never approached him for work But yeah, so it’s definitely something which was a huge surprise,” she added.

Asked about *The Battle of Galwan*, which is rooted in a real and emotionally charged incident, she said: “Yes, I think commercially also it’s going to be a big one, Galwan, and it is at the same time rooted in very real incidents. So I think that’s a great combination for cinema and I am very excited especially because I come from an army background.”

IANIS



Chitrangda's unexpected Galwan alliance

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

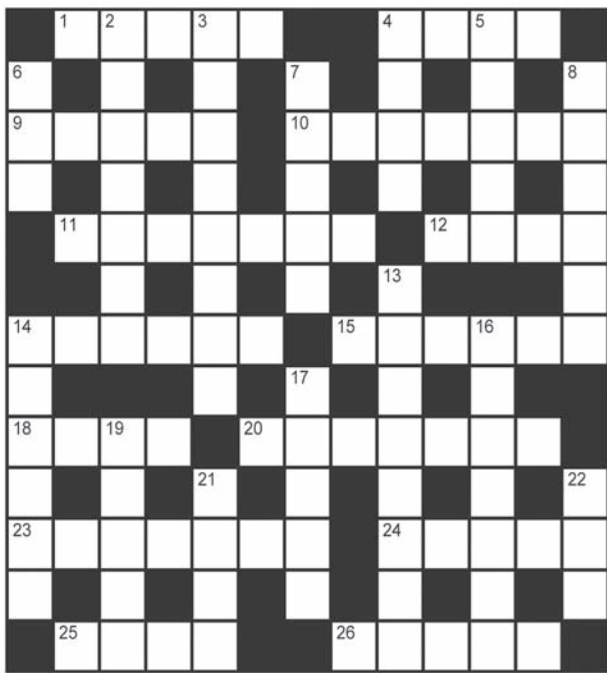


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 1 Words to a sleepyhead (3,2)
4 Small boat
9 Hipbone-related
10 Daybreak
11 Toils
12 Angler’s stash
14 Waiting lines
15 Goof
18 Assistant
20 Juice starters

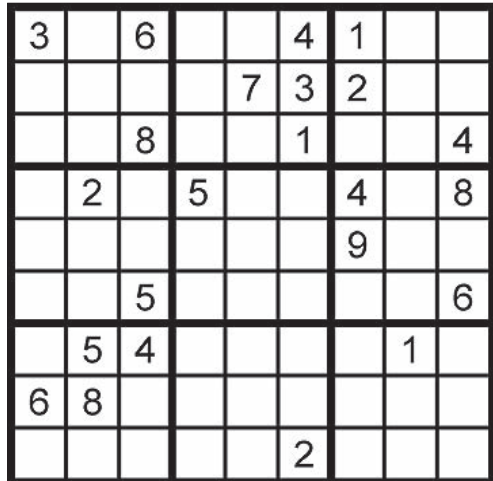
- 23 Some Camelot girls
24 Musk secreting animal
25 Apartment
26 Goatee

Down

- 2 Kuwait, for one
3 Raw
4 Buggy terrain
5 Side dish
6 Youngster
7 Autocrats of old
8 Washer setting
13 Acme
14 Misgivings
16 Butcher’s tool
17 Hair care item
19 Practice
21 Adroit
22 Airport posting (Abbr.)

SUDOKU

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

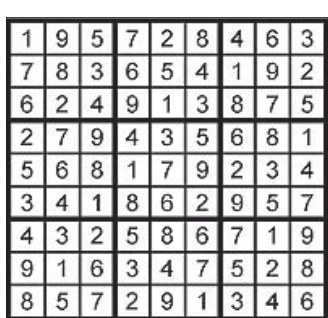


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



POST NEWS NETWORK

AGENCIES

AGENCIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

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POST NEWS NETWORK

The Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO) Monday collected water samples from 12 points on the school campus, and lab reports are awaited, officials said.

Odisha prepares for Census; first phase to begin in April

BMC CLAMPS DOWN ON POLLUTION



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Odisha has begun preparations for the Census-2027, with the first phase set to start in April 2026. In this regard, a meeting of the State Level Census Coordination Committee (SLCCC) was held Wednesday at Lok Seva Bhawan, chaired by Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary Deoranjana Kumar Singh.

At the outset, Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, Director of Census Operations, Odisha, welcomed the dignitaries and members, outlining the objectives of the meeting.

The meeting saw participation from senior officials, including the Principal Secretaries of Finance and Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water Departments, Additional Secretary of Revenue & Disaster Management, Special Secretaries of Forest & Environment and Rural Development Departments, Additional Secretary of School and Mass Education, Secretary of the State Election Commission,

sion, a representative of the Chief Conservator of Forests, and other senior officers from various state departments.

All Collectors-cum-Principal Census Officers and Municipal Commissioners-cum-Principal Census Officers from across the state joined the meeting virtually through video conferencing, along with their respective census functionaries.

Detailed agenda-wise discussions were held on the smooth conduct of House Listing Operations (HLO) 2026 and Population Enumeration (PE), scheduled for April–May 2026 and February–March 2027. The meeting also reviewed the progress of ongoing preparatory activities for Census-2027.

Key issues discussed included the freezing of administrative boundaries, Phase-I Census schedule in Odisha, deployment of enumerators and supervisors, and the possible overlap of the Census schedule with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Deliberations were also held on financial norms, selection of master and field trainers,

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Key issues discussed included freezing of administrative boundaries, Phase-I Census schedule in Odisha, deployment of enumerators and supervisors, and possible overlap with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

Deliberations were also held on financial norms, selection of master and field trainers, finalisation of forest villages, urban agglomerations and slums, special charge notifications, and identification of industrial towns.

finalisation of forest villages, urban agglomerations and slum, special charge notifications, and identification of industrial towns.

The Director of Census Operations elaborated on the modalities and operational framework of the forthcoming Census in detail.

Addressing the gathering, the Development Commissioner underlined the critical administrative role and responsibilities of Collectors-cum-Principal Census Officers and urged all departments and officials to extend full cooperation to ensure the successful execution of Census-2027, describing it as a pivotal government programme with long-term significance.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: To improve air quality in the City, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has issued a comprehensive office order enforcing strict pollution-control measures at all construction, demolition and renovation sites under its jurisdiction.

The order follows recommendations made at a high-level meeting on Bhubaneswar's air quality held December 29 last year. The directives apply to all categories of buildings, with special emphasis on apartments, commercial establishments, institutions, hospitals and other large projects.

As per the order, it is now mandatory for heavy vehicles transporting construction materials to be properly covered. Vehicles must also be regularly and thoroughly washed before entering or exiting construction sites to prevent the spread of dust on City roads.

BMC has instructed that all under-construction sites must have proper and full cladding to check dust dispersion. Set-backs and open areas within project sites must be temporarily paved and watered regularly, while approach roads that are not yet developed must be paved through temporary or permanent measures to minimise dust pollution. The civic body has also emphasised green measures, directing project authorities to undertake peripheral plantation from the inception of construction so that trees are well grown by project completion.



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underway.

Developers have been encouraged to adopt modern technologies and any other remedial measures available to reduce both noise and air pollution during construction.

As part of dust control measures, the BMC has ordered daily water sprinkling in the Lingaraj Temple area, with special focus on market zones where dedicated vehicles will

stands and residential areas, along with mandatory daily washing of buses. The BMC has further cautioned that strict action will be taken against anyone found burning waste in open spaces.

BMC warned that the instructions will be enforced with immediate effect across the City and will remain in force until further orders. Any violation could lead to suspension of building plans, stoppage of construction work

Encroachments near AIIMS cleared

Bhubaneswar: The BMC Tuesday carried out a major eviction drive to remove illegal encroachments near AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, providing much-needed relief to patients, attendants and the general public. The enforcement team cleared encroachments from both sides of the road connecting the National Highway to AIIMS. Illegal occupation of roadside spaces had been causing severe inconvenience to patients and their relatives, while also obstructing ambulance movement and creating unhygienic conditions. With thousands of patients visiting the premier medical facility daily from across Odisha and neighbouring states, the drive was undertaken to ensure smooth traffic flow, safer access and a cleaner environment. During the operation, around 110 encroachers and over 40 scrap dealers were evicted from the stretch. Local residents and commuters welcomed the action and expressed relief following the clearance. Meanwhile, BMC has also intensified its drive against unauthorised hoardings across the City. Hoardings installed without permission or with pending dues were removed after agencies failed to comply despite prior notices.



OPF urges awareness drive for RTE admissions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: The Odisha Parents' Federation (OPF) has urged the state government to promptly launch a comprehensive awareness campaign on admissions under Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act for the 2026–27 academic year.

In a representation to Chief Secretary Anu Garg, the federation raised concerns over insufficient publicity of the RTE admission process, which provides 25 per cent reservation for children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups in private unaided schools.

The federation, which claims to have been actively involved in promoting transparent RTE implementation since 2016, said its efforts had contributed to the enrolment of nearly 86,000 students in private schools under the RTE framework. However, it warned that without a robust public awareness campaign, thousands of eligible families—especially in rural, remote and underprivileged areas—risk missing out on admissions due to lack of information.

Referring to the recent School and Mass Education department notification dated December 22, 2025, which outlines the RTE admission calendar for 2026–27, the federation said timelines and online procedures remain largely unknown to the intended beneficiaries. "Small and inconspicuous notices are not enough for a scheme of this magnitude," the organisation stated, alleging that RTE admissions have historically received far less publicity compared to other government initiatives.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Nikhil Biswas, S/o.- Late Baidyanath Biswas, Resident of Patra Para, P.O./P.S.- Hanskhali, Dist.- Nadia, PIN- 741505, WB declare by this Affidavit No. 124, Dated- 06.01.2026, that now onwards I shall be known as Nikhil Chandra Biswas for all future purposes.

AOCWA, AOCA oppose scrapping of bid cap



RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: The All Odisha Contractors' Welfare Association (AOCWA) and the All Odisha Contractors' Association (AOCA) Wednesday expressed serious concern over Works department Memo No. 173/W dated January 3, 2026, which abolishes the long-standing 14.99 per cent below-estimate bidding threshold in public works tenders.

Addressing a press conference here, AOCWA President Jagadish Patra said the threshold was originally introduced in 2013 to curb reckless under-bidding and was later strengthened through multiple circulars by introducing the Additional Performance Security (APS) mechanism. He said the earlier framework helped maintain quality and financial discipline

in project execution.

The Associations pointed out that the new memo has dismantled the APS system and adopted the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) guidelines of April 30, 2025, without considering ground realities of State PWD works, many of which involve small-value projects. Applying MoRTH norms to such works could lead to abnormally low bids, poor quality, and stalled projects, they warned.

AOCA President Anil Mahalik flagged the lack of clarity on tender finalisation when SC/ST bidders achieve price parity with L-1 bidders under the 10 per cent price preference, applicable to nearly 80 per cent of contractors. He also raised concerns over excessive discretion granted to Technical Committees, which could result in arbitrariness.

IDBI Bank extends medical support to CHC Chandanpur

Puri: IDBI Bank's Puri Branch, under its special initiative Project HOPE, has donated essential medical equipment and assets to the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Chandanpur in Puri district, strengthening healthcare services in the area. Puri MP Sambit Patra attended the programme as the chief guest and appreciated the bank's community-oriented initiative, which was undertaken with his support for the benefit of the local population. Around 70 women healthcare workers from the CHC participated in the event. IDBI Bank General Manager Nihar



Ranjan Samal addressed the gathering and highlighted various voluntary and charitable initiatives undertaken by the bank in recent years. Deputy General Manager Malaya Kumar Sahoo and Puri Branch Manager Praveen Kumar Mishra were also present. On behalf of the hospital administration, spokesperson Sanjukta Mishra thanked IDBI Bank for the support, stating that the donated equipment will benefit thousands of patients from Chandanpur and nearby areas.

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: In an attempt to enhance awareness on mental well-being, stress control and professional efficiency to ensure safe, smooth and efficient train operations, Khurda Road Division of East Coast Railway hosted a three-day safety seminar on stress management for Loco Pilots (LPs) and Assistant Loco Pilots (ALPs), which concluded Wednesday.

Recognising that LPs and ALPs work under high-pressure and irregular duty conditions, the seminar highlighted the importance of maintaining a calm and supportive environment beyond duty hours. Railways believes that mental peace at home, coupled with adequate rest, plays a vital role in keeping crew members alert, focused and stress-free while on duty, thereby enhancing operational safety. The seminar was inaugurated by retired IRS

officer Lalit Kumar Mohanty, along with Art of Living Teacher Sanjukta Mohanty, who emphasised the importance of mental peace, self-discipline and stress management in both professional and personal life.

During the seminar, holistic approaches to stress management such as yoga, meditation, physical fitness, positive mindset and spiritual discipline were discussed. Emphasis was also laid on improving cabin ergonomics, better work-life balance through scientific duty scheduling, strong social support systems and access to counselling resources.

Indian Railways has been consistently organising regular counseling and safety seminars to sensitise LPs and ALPs about managing odd duty hours, operational challenges and occupational stress. The role of family members in creating a calm and congenial home environment was also highlighted. The seminar underlined the

importance of crew monitoring, regular interaction, counselling and family seminars to address work-life balance challenges. Participants were also briefed about modern safety systems such as Kavach 4.0 and related training initiatives.

During the closing session, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infrastructure) Subhrajyoti Mandal addressed the participants. Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Operations) Subhajit Dash also spoke about the stress of LPs and ALPs and how to manage it. Senior supervisory staff led by Abani Kumar Mahapatra, attended the programme.

A total of 39 staff members, including 24 LPs and 15 ALPs from various stations under Khurda Road Division, participated in the seminar. The programme concluded with an interactive session, emphasising that a stress-free mind and calm environment are essential for safe railway operations.

Venkaiah Naidu slams students for anti-PM, HM slogans

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 7: Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu Wednesday denounced slogans against Prime Minister and the Home Minister on the JNU campus and called those students "misled".

He said the slogan-shouting students should understand that the PM has been elected and should be respected.

"Hatred should not be a part of anybody's life. Then giving slogans against the Prime Minister, against the Home Minister and against the country is not going to help those students. They are being misled," Naidu said after attending the valedictory ceremony of the 27th Foundation Day of the Utkal University of Culture here.

Replying to another question on Venezuela, Naidu said, "No country should interfere in the internal affairs of another country. The US has no business in other countries' affairs, not only Venezuela but also other countries. The US has not done the correct thing."

Addressing the event, Naidu said that culture truly flourishes when it engages with real human concerns such as social



harmony, environmental sustainability, dignity of labour and inclusive growth.

He said Odisha occupies a unique place in India's civilisational narrative, where culture has always been regarded as a living force shaping collective life. From rituals and customs to architecture, literature, music, dance and craftsmanship, culture in Odisha permeates everyday life, he said, adding, "It was fitting that the country's first university dedicated exclusively to cultural studies was established in the state."

Addressing the students, the former Vice President said they were not only inheritors of a rich cultural legacy but also creators of its future. He urged them to respect tradition while embracing innovation, and stressed that education should empower them to question, cre-

ate and serve society.

Observing that the present era is dominated by speed and technology, Naidu said institutions like Utkal University of Culture remind society that progress must remain rooted in identity, ethics and shared memory. Development without cultural grounding, he cautioned, risks becoming hollow. Emphasising that culture is dynamic and continuously evolving, Naidu further said the responsibility of the university extends beyond conservation to meaningful reinterpretation of traditions through research, documentation, creative experimentation and academic dialogue.

He also lauded the university's interdisciplinary approach, outreach initiatives and community engagement, describing teachers as mentors and torch-

bearers who uphold a balance between academic excellence, ethics and creative sensitivity.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Hari Babu Kam-bhampati highlighted the need to view culture as a driver of innovation, enterprise and sustainable livelihoods in a rapidly changing, technology-driven world. He said students and alumni of the university are not only custodians of tradition but also potential cultural entrepreneurs and innovators.

"Culture is not merely something to be preserved, it is a living resource that can generate employment, strengthen social cohesion and contribute to sustainable development," the governor said.

Highlighting Odisha's rich civilisational legacy, Kam-bhampati said the state's culture has remained vibrant and continuous through the ages, evolving through dialogue, synthesis and diversity.

Referring to the Kalinga War, he said Emperor Ashoka's transformation conveyed a timeless message of peace and humanism, while King Khara-vela's reign reflected courage, cultural vision and social responsibility.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.01 ▲ 0.25	SENSEX	84961.14 ▲ 102.20	GOLD	₹137,799 ▲ ₹1284
EURO	105.39 ▲ 0.40	NIFTY	26140.75 ▲ 37.95	SILVER	₹248,274 ▲ ₹10,537

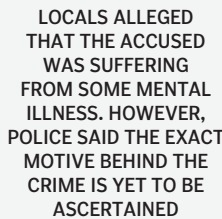
WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	26.1°	24.0°	Cold wave
Min Temp	10.2°	9.6°	
Humidity	81%	89%	
Rainfall	NII	NII	

Similipal hits freezing point; snowfall in Koida, Tensa



Man hacks father, neighbour to death



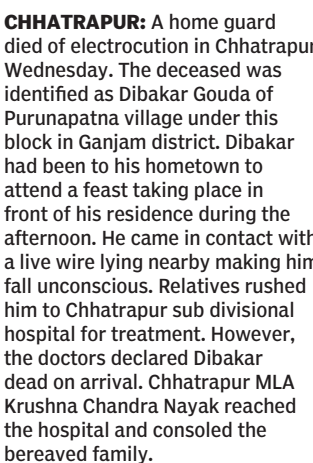
POST NEWS NETWORK

The accused, identified as Mantu Patra, reportedly attacked his father Prafulla Patra with a sharp weapon following a sudden outburst. When neighbour Ganeshwar Patra tried to intervene, Mantu also assaulted him, killing him on the spot. Ganeshwar's son, who at-

Ex-principal suspended for fund embezzlement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Home guard dies of electrocution



Bhitarkanika shut for annual crocodile census



Woman's body found; kin cry foul

POST NEWS NETWORK

2 killed, 1 hurt as bike hits tree in Ganjam

BERHAMPUR: At least two persons were killed and another sustained serious injuries when the motorcycle on which they were travelling hit a roadside tree in Ganjam district Wednesday, police said. The accident took place near Mandarada under Jarada police limits. According to the police, three persons were travelling on the motorbike towards Mandarada. The bike hit a roadside tree, the police said. Local fire-fighters rushed to the spot, resuscitated the injured persons from the spot and rushed them to Patrapur community health centre (CHC) where doctors declared two of them dead, the police said. The deceased were identified as Rahul Nayak, 27, and Kedar Naik, 26, of Banamali village in Ganjam district. Another person was seriously injured and admitted to the CHC. He was later referred to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here due to his critical condition, the police said.

1500 bottles of cough
syrup seized; 3 held



Fire breaks out at Rimjhim Ispat plant

POST NEWS NETWORK

The incident triggered panic among residents in nearby areas. More than 200 workers were reportedly present inside the factory at the time. Meanwhile, reliable sources claimed the company allegedly lacked a valid fire safety certificate, a matter that remains under investigation.



Drug Control dept raids medicine shops

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayak warned that if such violations are repeated in the future, the licenses of the concerned medicine shops will be cancelled.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-AUCTION FOR WATER VENDING MACHINE

Auction Catalogue No.: SDCM-KUR-WVM

Sl. No.	Name of the Station	No. of WVMs
1	BHADRAK (BHC)	02
2	BALUGAON (BALU)	01
3	PALASA (PSA)	01
4	JAIPUR-KEONJHAR ROAD (JJKR)	01

Auction Start Date & Time : 15.01.2026 from 1100 hrs.

Note : Prospective bidders are advised to visit the website www.irps.gov.in and check all the details regarding eligibility criteria, details of site and any other information.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/
PR-979/Q/25-26 **Khurda Road**



बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
Bank of India

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Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli,
Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.: 7008973027

SAUCTION
SALE OF
VEHICLE

Sl. No.	Branch Name / Contact No.	Name of the Borrower	Vehicle Details	Reserve Price / EMD Bid Increment Amount
1.	ARB, CUTTACK / 8249067773	Mrs. Rashmi Rekha Nayak	TATA SIGNA 4830 TK (COMMERCIAL VEHICLE) Regd. No.: OD-09-AA-8203, Date of Purchase: 16.01.2024	₹ 28,43,000/- / ₹ 2,84,300/- / ₹ 10,000/-
2.	ARB, CUTTACK / 8249067773	Mrs. Rashmi Rekha Nayak	TATA SIGNA 4830 TK (COMMERCIAL VEHICLE) Regd. No.: OD-09-AA-8265, Date of Purchase: 16.01.2024	₹ 30,62,000/- / ₹ 3,06,200/- / ₹ 10,000/-
3.	ARB, CUTTACK / 8249067773	Mrs. Rashmi Rekha Nayak	TATA SIGNA 4830 TK (COMMERCIAL VEHICLE) Regd. No.: OD-09-AA-8213, Date of Purchase: 16.01.2024	₹ 31,06,000/- / ₹ 3,10,600/- / ₹ 10,000/-

Date of Auction: 10.02.2026 from 11.00 AM, Auction Venue: ARB Cuttack, 1st Floor, Plot No.: 293/1523, Infront of OSRTC Bus Stand, At: Kunheipara, Trisula, Cuttack-754005

Parking Yard Address: M/s. S & D Stockyard, A/PO: Kanpur, PS: Rashgobindpur, Via: Baripada, Dist.: Mayurbhanj, PIN - 757016

Terms and Conditions: Interested bidders can inspect the vehicles with prior appointment of the Concerned Authority at the parking yard as mentioned above. The bidders are informed to be present at the venue positively. The successful bidder has to deposit 25% of bid amount within one day after bid is successful and the balance amount within **7 days** failing which the money deposited by the successful bidder would be forfeited. The cost of transfer of ownership and statutory dues/all misc. charges, if any has to be borne by the successful purchaser. Vehicles will be auctioned on **"AS IS WHERE IS & AS IS WHAT IS"** basis. However the Bank reserves the right to accept/reject/cancel the auction sale process of the vehicle at its own discretion at any point of time. There will be bidding in the auction and the highest bidder will be declared as successful bidder. **For further information regarding Inspection & Details of the Vehicles Contact: Mr. Prasant Kumar Mahapatro, Mob.: 7008973027.**

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 08.01.2026

Zonal Manager, Bank of India

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

THE ‘DONROE’ DOCTRINE



A reason why US forces have not yet occupied and taken over Venezuela is due to the bitter experience in Iraq, despite Trump’s declaration that US would “run the country”

drug export, transnational crime and also the burgeoning Chinese investment in the region. The paper said that Trump would achieve this through goodwill and coercion.

Trump’s twin strategy would include rewarding right-wing regimes in El Salvador, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, expressing support to the right-wing candidate Nasry Asfura in Honduras elections and pardoning former Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernandez, who was serving 45-year prison sentence in the US for drug trafficking. Also, such countries would be awarded US companies’ contracts without the need for public tenders. Friendly countries would be encouraged by Washington to “make every effort to push out foreign companies that build infrastructure in the region.” This is a reference to China, as their companies have been constructing ports from Chancay in Peru to the metro system in Bogotá. At the same time, recalcitrant States like Venezuela, Columbia and Chile would be “softened” by “targeted deployments” of military force, which would increase its presence and may resort to “lethal force” wherever necessary.

The fourth reason is, according to some observers, to divert public attention from America’s “affordability crisis” and Epstein files. As Time magazine said: “The news diverted attention from America’s affordability cri-

sis, the loss of health care coverage for millions, and the Epstein files. Instead, all eyes turned to Venezuela.”

Another dimension to this fourth issue was added by Asia Times on 2 January: the alarming situation when US debt is expected to hit 100% of GDP by the end of fiscal year 2025. For FY20 the interest was \$345 billion. It has now surged to three times more to \$970 billion.

Some of these grounds appear to be unrealistic if the actual realities are closely examined. Firstly, most of the US economic and technical publications say that the American oil industry has “no interest” in “making the needed investment to revive the antiquated drilling and refining operations of Venezuela” to extract the less desirable “heavy oil, a thick, viscous product, which is far harder to extract and move compared to the domestic US sources.”

They quote Reuters and the International Energy Agency which indicate a supply glut in 2026. Reuters said in December that the global oil supply would exceed demand by 3.84 million barrels per day, “according to figures from the Paris-based IEA’s latest monthly oil market report, down from a 4.09 million bpd surplus estimated in November.”

El Pais quotes former Chilean minister and ambassador Jorge Heine, who alleges that Trump wants South America to be like “Vassal” States. According to

him, Trump does not understand the reluctance of American companies to operate major projects in South America as they find them unprofitable. “The United States is too late; there’s no turning back from China’s presence in Latin America.” Heine also said, early in December, that South American States would not be cowed down by the threat of force through the modern “Donroe Doctrine”. which flips the Monroe Doctrine to the present with US plans to re-shape the Americas.

A reason why US forces have not yet occupied and taken over Venezuela is due to the bitter experience in Iraq, despite Trump’s declaration that US would “run the country.” As of now there is no indication that US is controlling the Delcy Rodríguez government in Venezuela.

Thus, as things stand, the abduction of Maduro is a US law and order action based on a 1989 legal opinion by then-Assistant Attorney General Bill Barr, issued six months before the invasion of Panama and the abduction of Noreiga, the de facto dictator of Panama, on 20 December 1989. That opinion, which is likely to be quoted again, had said the UN Charter’s prohibition on the use of force in international relations did not bar the American agencies from carrying out “forcible abductions” abroad to enforce domestic laws.

Interestingly, the Noreiga factor had figured during the Malta Summit. This was before Bush decided to invade Panama and capture Noreiga, based on indictments by Grand Juries in Tampa and Miami, for money laundering and drug smuggling. To this Gorbachev reacted: “People ask, is there no barrier to US action in independent countries? The United States passes judgment and executes the judgment.”

It was during this summit that the two leaders, Bush and Gorbachev, had declared the end of the Cold War.

The writer is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat.

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“Timidity is a form of vanity. When you are timid, it means that you attach more importance to the opinions others have of you than to the sincerity of your actions.”

THE MOTHER

No-Rules Order

The most important question stemming from America’s intervention in Venezuela is not whether it violated international law and norms, but what it reveals about the future of the liberal international order. Contrary to what some commentators say, that order is not collapsing, since its core pillars remain in place and the alternatives to them are still weak. But sustaining it will now involve more frequent discretionary US actions, and it will become increasingly unclear where the thresholds for future interventions lie.

When the perceived limits on state action recede, the meaning of power shifts. The question is no longer what is formally permitted, but how actions will be interpreted by others within the system. Venezuela exposes a growing tension between the American prerogative to pursue unilateral enforcement and the cooperative expectations on which US leadership ultimately depends. Global leadership is not just a state’s ability to act; equally important is whether an action reinforces or erodes expectations of future prudence and restraint.

For decades, US power has rested on military and economic predominance, reinforced by dense alliance commitments. This configuration made withdrawal from US-led institutional arrangements costly, even when partners were dissatisfied. American authority, therefore, has rested not on consent alone, but on a structure of dependence created by security guarantees, alliance ties, and control over critical economic and strategic relationships.

But even if institutions can entrench advantage, they cannot offset the reputational and strategic costs of wielding discretionary power. While a single intervention against a weak or isolated state rarely alters the structure of the broader international order, the effects of such actions accumulate as others revise their expectations in response.

Venezuela is distinctive when set against earlier US interventions, such as those in Iraq, Kosovo, Libya, and Syria. These cases may have been controversial and highly contested, but each involved a clear escalation point or “red line” (even if concocted) for the United States – be it a weapons programme, mass violence, or an ongoing war. By contrast, the Trump administration based its intervention in Venezuela on an array of concerns such as migration, sanctions evasion, criminal networks, and Chinese influence. At no point was it clear when restraint would give way to coercion and escalation.

Of course, material and ideological interests – oil access, regional influence, and resistance to socialism – have always shaped US policy toward Venezuela. What is new in this case is not the presence of those interests, but the absence of a clearly articulated threshold or emergency to justify coercive action.

Moreover, this uncertainty has been reinforced by parallel moves elsewhere. US President Donald Trump’s public threats toward close US partners such as Canada (a NATO member) and Greenland (a territory of Denmark, also a NATO member) undercut the presumption that allied sovereignty is off limits to US bullying.

By capturing and prosecuting Maduro, a sitting foreign leader, the Trump administration is extending US jurisdiction through means short of war. By sidelining Venezuela’s own opposition, it is collapsing the distinction between enabling political change and imposing it. And by marginalizing Congress, it has removed a procedural check that once forced red lines to be drawn in advance.

Taken together, these moves replace visible thresholds with discretionary judgment. Before Trump, other countries could watch for a breach and anticipate the US response to it; now they are left guessing. Such is the precedent Venezuela sets.

The US has long benefited from being seen not merely as a rule enforcer, but as the central provider of security and access within an international system that it disproportionately shapes. In this context, occasional departures from rules were tolerated because they were assumed to be one-off episodes. But that assumption is now under strain.

As striking as this US intervention is, so too is the domestic political tolerance for US assertions of discretion across the hemisphere. Casual speculation about territorial claims involving close partners, however implausible in practice, would once have been politically unthinkable in an order anchored by mutual restraint. Not anymore. The White House’s public justification – framing the action as routine management against drugs, rivals, and security spillovers, rather than as an exceptional use of force – underscores how normalized the Trumpian discretion-first approach has become.

This matters. Order depends not only on outcomes, but on expectations. If more states begin to anticipate that similar US judgments could be applied against others, even if infrequently, the calculus of participation changes. Most likely, the response to the Venezuela intervention will not be mass defections or public confrontations, but rather hedging, legal insulation, institutional diversification, and quiet efforts to reduce exposure to the US. No coordination is required, and once the process begins (as indeed it already has), individual moves will reinforce one another.

This does not mean that the current order is on the verge of collapse. Systemic change requires credible alternatives, and those remain limited. Rival powers can frustrate US initiatives, but they have not replaced the institutional foundations on which global cooperation rests.

The more difficult question is whether the balance between US enforcement and the provision of global public goods can be sustained. Leadership becomes costlier when coercive tools are used more often than cooperative ones, or when enforcement expands faster than shared benefits. At that point, compliance shifts from voluntary to transactional, and authority begins to resemble domination.

Venezuela sharpens an old question rather than resolving it. The danger now is not that states will openly defect, but that they will quietly adapt to a rogue US. An order can endure under such conditions, but only at a higher cost and with diminishing returns for the dominant power.

The writer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.

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WISDOM CORNER

“A man can do what he wants, but not want what he wants.”

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

TS ELIOT

“Start with what is right rather than what is acceptable.”

FRANZ KAFKA



Vappala Balachandran

THE ARCO MINERO DEL ORINOCO, A VAST MINERAL-RICH REGION IN VENEZUELA, IS ESTIMATED TO CONTAIN OVER \$1 TRILLION IN UNTAPPED NATURAL RESOURCES



Carla Norriöf

The danger now is not that states will openly defect, but that they will quietly adapt to a rogue US. An order can endure under such conditions, but only at a higher cost and with diminishing returns for the dominant power



Mayadhar Sethy

ACCESS TO FOOD HAS IMPROVED BUT ACCESS TO GOOD NUTRITION HAS NOT KEPT PACE

Step into two neighbouring homes in rural Odisha and the first thing you notice is reassuring. In both kitchens, rice is cooking. On both plates, there is enough to eat. This quiet but significant achievement reflects years of public investment in food security and the steady expansion of the PDS. Hunger, at least in its most visible form, has been pushed back.

But look a little closer at those plates, and another story begins to emerge. In one home, the meal is simple; rice and dal, with a few vegetables. In the other, there is fish curry, leafy greens, and sometimes even fruit. These everyday differences do not take away from the success of India’s food policies. Instead, they highlight the next challenge before us: moving from filling stomachs to nourishing bodies.

A recent study examining the diets of 13,113 households across Odisha between 2011 and 2023 brings this reality into focus. The research shows that while calorie intake has become more equal across social groups, the quality of food people consume remains uneven. In other words, access to food has improved but access to good nutrition has not kept pace.

The patterns are clear. Households from historically margin-

alised communities consume far less fruit, animal protein, and dairy than socially advantaged households. Measures that capture access to varied, market-based foods show similar gaps. The success of PDS in equalising cereal consumption is undeniable. What now needs attention is everything beyond cereals; vegetables, proteins, and micronutrients that protect children from anaemia, stunting, and lifelong health problems.

One of the most useful contributions of this research is that it points not to failure, but to opportunity. By tracking households over time, it shows where progress has slowed and where policy support could make the greatest difference. Many families remain in low dietary quality brackets year after year, not because they lack motivation, but because structural barriers limit their choices. Recognising these constraints allows governments to sharpen existing programmes rather than reinvent them.

The study also challenges a common assumption: that rising incomes alone will solve nutrition gaps. Even when households earn similar amounts, differences in diet persist. This makes it clear that nutrition is shaped not just by money, but by access; access to

markets, infrastructure, and reliable food supply chains. These are areas where public policy already has a strong foothold.

Geography plays a crucial role here. Families in marginalised settlements often live farther from markets, making fresh vegetables, fruits, and dairy more expensive and harder to obtain. Addressing this last-mile gap; through mobile markets, local cold storage, better transport, and improved rural connectivity could dramatically improve diets. Encouragingly, such measures align closely with ongoing investments in rural infrastructure and livelihoods.

India’s changing food landscape adds urgency to this task. Processed and packaged foods are becoming available everywhere, but healthy diversity is not. This moment presents both a risk and an opportunity. With the right mix of nutrition awareness and support for affordable fresh foods, dietary change can be guided in healthier directions. Initiatives like the Odisha Millets Mission show what is possible—reviving traditional, climate-resilient crops that are nutritious, locally suited, and empowering for farmers, especially in tribal and rain-fed regions.

The public health implications are well known. Odisha continues to grapple with child

stunting and wasting, and improving everyday diets is central to addressing these challenges. Programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan already provide a strong institutional framework. With sharper focus on inclusion, last-mile delivery, and monitoring, these initiatives can achieve even greater impact.

Seen this way, the evidence from Odisha is not a critique of government intent, but a roadmap for the future. It shows how far food policy has come and how much more it can achieve.

As Odisha and India move to wards ambitious development milestones, success will be measured in small, everyday ways. When a child in Kalahandi sits down to a meal as varied and nutritious as a child in Bhubaneswar, it will signal not just economic progress, but social confidence and maturity. Building on existing achievements and guided by evidence, governments today have a real opportunity to ensure that India’s nutrition story is not only a story of quantity, but also of quality, equity, and hope.

The writer is ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Bhubaneswar

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarih Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Tradition upheld

Sir, The Madras High Court’s Madurai Bench delivered a welcome and principled judgment by upholding the traditional right to light the Karthigai Deepam lamp on the Deepathoon stone pillar atop the Thirupparankundram hill, dismissing the Tamil Nadu government’s law-and-order objections as unfounded. The Division Bench of Justices G. Jayachandran and KK Ramakrishnan reinforced that simple annual lighting of a sacred lamp on temple land cannot reasonably be said to threaten peace, and criticised the attempts to politicise a centuries-old custom. This decision upholds the constitutional right to worship and demonstrates judicial commitment to protecting Sanatan Dharma practices from unnecessary executive interference. In contrast, the DMK government’s resistance—framing a spiritual ceremony as a public-order risk and planning to appeal further—reflects misplaced priorities and a tendency to antagonise age-old traditions for political ends. The court’s verdict should encourage respect for cultural heritage and religious freedom over short-term political calculations..

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Bail, not jail

Sir, The Supreme Court’s decision to deny bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the Delhi riots cases is based on allegations under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), a stringent national security law. The Court stated that, at the present stage, the prosecution’s version could not be brushed aside. However, many people have expressed concern because the accused have remained in custody for years while the trial is yet to conclude. There is a growing public perception that harsh laws are being applied to suppress dissent and limit freedom of expression, giving less weight to personal liberty. The verdict appears to suggest that security concerns can outweigh the principle of “bail, not jail.” A more balanced approach could have been a conditional bail with safeguards and timely trials. In a democracy, public concerns deserve thoughtful consideration.

RS Narula, PATIALA



BJP announces new Bengal state committee

Senior organisational hands dominate the committee, but a set of calibrated inclusions and exclusions signal the leadership's effort to stabilise factional fault lines ahead of the 2026 contest rather than provoke fresh ones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 7: With just three months to go for the Assembly polls, the West Bengal BJP Wednesday constituted its long-delayed state committee, a carefully weighted organisational reset that seeks to balance old loyalties, contain internal rivalries and ring-fence key electoral players.

The 35-member committee was announced nearly six months after Samik Bhattacharya took charge as state president in July last year. Though the leadership had initially planned to roll out the team before the Durga Puja, persistent friction between the party's old guard and post-2019 inductees repeatedly pushed the exercise back, underscoring the BJP's unresolved internal churn in West Bengal.

The final list reflects a deliberate attempt at course correction without rupture. Senior organisational hands dominate the committee, but a set of calibrated inclusions and exclusions signal the leadership's effort to stabilise factional fault lines ahead of the 2026 contest rather than provoke fresh ones.

Politically, the omissions have been as telling as the appointments. Former state president Dilip Ghosh has been kept out of the state committee, despite recent public messaging from the central leadership



urging veterans to remain politically active. During a recent visit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had reportedly asked Ghosh to step up his engagement, fuelling expectations of a formal organisational role. Party insiders argue that the exclusions point to a conscious restructuring, designed to prevent overlap between organisational authority and electoral leadership.

Several senior figures seen as potential Assembly poll candidates were deliberately kept outside the committee to allow operational clarity during the campaign, sources said.

Among the key beneficiaries of the reshuffle is Bishnupur MP Saumitra Khan, who has been elevated as a general secretary, alongside reinstated leaders like Locket Chatterjee and Lok Sabha member Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato, signalling renewed emphasis on district-level mobilisation in southern and western Bengal regions where the BJP has been keen

The 294-member West Bengal Assembly is due to go to polls in April-May

to arrest erosion since 2021. Mahato and Chatterjee's retention as general secretaries, indicating continuity in organisational verticals, is deemed critical for the campaign.

In the reworked hierarchy, former general secretaries Agnimitra Paul and Jagannath Chatterjee and MLA Deepak Barman have been elevated as vice-presidents.

The move is being read with in the party as a redistribution of authority, retaining stature while narrowing operational control, rather than outright sidelining.

The BJP also named new heads for its frontal organisations, a crucial mobilisation layer ahead of the polls.

Indranil Khan will continue to lead the youth wing, Falguni Patra the Mahila Morcha, Rajiv Bhowmik the Kisan Morcha, Shubendu Sarkar the OBC Morcha and Sujit Biswas the SC Morcha. MP Khagen Murmu has been appointed head of the ST Morcha.

SPICE ROUTES CONFERENCE

Museums, art spaces remind people of togetherness: Scholars

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Jan 7: Museums and art galleries are more than spaces to display objects and installations, as they serve as cultural hubs that share stories of togetherness and interdependence, scholars and art practitioners said at a session during the International Spice Routes Conference here Wednesday. Opening the conversation on 'Aesthetics and Experiences-Museums in the region', Dr Manal Ataya, Advisor, Sharjah Museums Authority, said objects and documents in museums tell people about intercultural engagements and communicate complex ideas in a lucid fashion.

On the significance of revisiting the Spice Route as a shared legacy, Ataya said spices had been powerful inter-cultural connectors and not merely commodities to be carried along trade corridors.

The global spice trade moved merchants, scholars and shipbuilders in a world that was largely borderless.

Spice trade did not merely exchange goods but also interconnected the world and saw the movement of language, ideas, skills and technologies across borders, Ataya noted.

Noted multi-media artist and curator Riyas Komu said at a time when artists are forced to speak about freedom, Kochi has huge potential to emerge as a 'contemplative art site.'

As a site, Kochi can be a metaphor for new imaginations, one of the best places for reconciliation, celebrating diversity, empowering community pride and triggering cultural economy.

Robert Carter, Qatar Museum, in an online presentation, said global trade in the past not only accelerated commerce but also augmented production, a process in which different cultures including Indian trading communities, were involved.

Kerala approves relief packages for disaster victims, fishermen



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 7: The Kerala cabinet Wednesday decided to allocate Rs 58.45 lakh from the Chief Minister's relief fund for 143 disaster victims whose houses were completely or partially damaged in the natural disasters in Pathanamthitta district since January 2023. Compensation will also be provided to fishermen for 14 days of work lost between May 18 and 31, 2025 due to the weather warning banning fishing, an official release here said.

A sum of Rs 48.20 crore will be allocated from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to be distributed to 1,72,160 fishermen and their dependent families. The cabinet also decided to provide Rs 3 lakh from the CM's relief fund to Kumari Akhil, the youngest daughter of Sudhakaran, who was murdered in Pothundi in Nenmara of Palakkad district.

The dependents of Jaryaram, Michael and Sundarapandyan, natives of Tamil Nadu who died while cleaning a sewage tank in Kattappana village in Idukki district, will be provided with Rs 5 lakh

The cabinet also decided to provide Rs 3 lakh from the CM's relief fund to Kumari Akhil, the youngest daughter of Sudhakaran, who was murdered in Pothundi in Nenmara of Palakkad district

each from the CM's Fund. A sum of Rs 21.93 lakh will be allocated from the Relief Fund to the district collectors concerned for distributing margin money to 20 farmers and entrepreneurs who have taken loans from South Indian Bank, Thrissur branch, under the Ujjivan Loan Scheme.

The 20 reserve sub-inspector posts in the police department will be upgraded to create 20 Reserve Inspector posts. The posts are being upgraded because a higher post is essential for supervising the operations of the Armed Reserve Camp, the release said.

It was also decided to increase the salaries of the posts

of Srunk, boat driver, lasker, boat commander, assistant boat commander, and special marine home guard at the coastal police stations.

The cabinet also approved the beautification projects of the Heritage Village project and AKG Memorial Hall at Mavilayi in Kannur district, with financial assistance from KIIIFB under the Local Self-Government department.

The 10th salary revision will be granted to the employees of the National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH) with retrospective effect from July 1, 2019.

An additional government guarantee of Rs 400 crore will be provided to the Kerala State Backward Classes Development Corporation for a period of five years to avail loans from the National Safai Karmachari Finance Development Corporation (NSKFC).

The cabinet also decided to provide a guarantee of Rs 8 crore for eight years to the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFD) for the successful implementation of the e-ticketing project in all cinema theatres in Kerala, the release said.

Thiruvizha Jayashankar wins Harivarasanam award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 7: Nagaswaram exponent Thiruvizha Jayashankar has been chosen for the Kerala government's prestigious 'Harivarasanam' award for the year, state Devaswom Minister VN Vasavan said here Wednesday.

The honour, announced ahead of Makaravilakku in Sabarimala every year, will be presented to the 90-year-old artist at the Sannidhanam (temple complex) January 14, the festival day, he said.

The award, which has been given since 2012 onwards for eminent musicians and those versatile in temple art forms,

comprises a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a citation.

Hailing from Thiruvizha village near Cherthala in Alappuzha district, Jayashankar is a recipient of several state and central honours, he said.

Among the previous recipients of the award are KJ Yesudas, SP Balasubrahmanyam, MG Sreekumar, Gangai Amararam, KS Chitra and P Susheela and so on, the minister added.

Vasavan also said elaborate arrangements have been completed for the smooth conducting of the 'Thiruvabharanam' procession to the Sabarimala and to ensure smooth Makaravilakku darshan for pilgrims.

"We hope lakhs of devotees,



converging on Sabarimala Sannidhanam and its premises on the Makaravilakku Day, will have a hassle-free darshan of Makaravilakku," he added.

When reporters asked about the ongoing SIT probe into the gold loss case in Sabarimala, Vasavan said the High Court recently expressed satisfaction

over the progress of the investigation, but the media did not report it.

"The court also directed the SIT to continue the probe without succumbing to any external pressure. The government is completely happy about it," he further said. He also reiterated that the state government cannot interfere in the daily businesses or policy matters of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), which manages the shrine.

TDB president K Jayakumar, who was also present during the press meet, detailed various initiatives being implemented by the present board to end some illegal practises prevailed at Sabarimala for years.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PHYSICAL PLANTS OUAT, BHUBANESWAR		
No.KK-319 "e-Procurement Notice No.04/2025-26		
1	Name of the work	: Repair and renovation of different works of OUAT Bhubaneswar
2	Total no. of Work	: 06 Nos.
3	Estimated cost	: Rs.7.22 lakh to 65.62 lakh approximate
4	Class of Contractor	: As per DTCN
5	Period of Completion	: As per DTCN
6	Type of tender	: Single/Double Cover system
7	Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal	: From Dt.09.01.2026 to 17.00 hrs of dt.27.01.2026
8	Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal	: Dt.27.01.2026 upto 17.00 hrs
9	Submission of Original documents (TP cost, EMD, Affidavit etc as per DTCN)	: During office hours from dt. 28.01.2026 to dt.29.01.2026 upto 17.00 hrs in the office of the undersigned
10	Date of opening of Bid (Cover-I) through online	: Dt.30.01.2026 at 11.30 hrs in the office of the undersigned
11	Name & address of the O.I.T (Officer Inviting tender)	: Director of Physical Plants, OUAT, BBSR
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in . N.B. Subsequent corrigendum/addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above.		
OIPR-		Sd/- Director of Physical Plants OUAT, Bhubaneswar

Lifebuooy drone deployed for Gangasagar pilgrims' safety



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gangasagar (WB), Jan 7: A high-speed remote-controlled lifebuooy, used for search and rescue of people in distress in seas or rivers, has been deployed by the West Bengal government at the Gangasagar Mela on the Bay of Gangasagar for the safety of pilgrims, an official said Wednesday.

The lifebuooy has a range of 1km and is capable of towing up to 1,000 kg, enabling it to assist multiple survivors or even life rafts after spotting them with the use of an

on-board high resolution video camera.

A remote-controlled lifebuooy, or water drone, is a motorised, self-propelled flotation device that operators guide with a remote control to quickly reach people in distress in the rivers and seas and bring them to safety. The gadget features a GPS, video feedback, and powerful towing capacity for multiple victims.

The lifebuooy deployed by the state government can achieve a maximum speed of seven metres

per second, enabling it to reach victims significantly faster than a human lifeguard.

It can recover from being flipped over or capsized within two seconds, ensuring uninterrupted operation even in rough sea and weather conditions.

"The advanced remote controller includes a screen that displays a 1080p HD video feed from an on-board camera, helping rescuers navigate precisely and monitor the situation," the official said.

He said the device uses GPS for navigation and will automatically return to its launch point if signal is lost or the battery drops below 15 per cent.

"Made from high-density, impact-resistant LLDPE (Linear Low-Density Polyethylene) polymer, its enclosed propellers make it safe for distressed individuals to hold onto, preventing secondary injuries," the official added.

The annual Gangasagar Mela is scheduled to be held on Sagar Island from January 12 to 15 at the confluence of River Ganga and the Bay of Bengal.

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया

Bank of India

of the day

quote

We will take steps to complete all Polavaram Project works by next March (2027). By December 2027, our goal is to bring the project to use

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | ANDHRA CM

It was Omar's (Abdullah) job and not mine, but I do not know what world does Omar with his 50 MLAs, many MPs live that he does not talk about these issues? He only criticises PDP, he is obsessed with the PDP

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF

A satellite city is planned to be developed over 10,000 acres in Kharkhoda of the Sonipat district. Besides, a wholesale market will be established in Rai, for which traders have already started approaching the government

NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

SHORT TAKES

BJP leader Kabindra Purkayastha dies

Hailakandi (Assam): Veteran BJP leader and former Union minister Kabindra Purkayastha died Wednesday due to old age related issues. He was 94. "Purkayastha was hospitalised a few days ago for old age related ailments. Eventually, he was kept on ventilation. He died sometime back," a doctor at Silchar Medical College and Hospital told reporters. He is survived by a son and a daughter. His wife had predeceased him.

Man accused of raping minor held

Amroha (UP): A man accused of raping a three-and-a-half-year-old girl was arrested following a police encounter here, officials said Wednesday. On Tuesday evening, while the girl was playing outside in her village under the Saidanagli police station area, the accused, Gajendra Singh Mallah (48), lured her to a secluded place on the pretext of giving her a chocolate and raped her, Circle Officer (Hasanpur) Pankaj Tyagi said.

2 workers found dead in factory

Jaipur: Two workers died under suspicious circumstances at a textile factory in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district Wednesday, sparking protests by employees who alleged negligence by the management. The workers, identified as Gajanand Gadri (25) and Kamlesh Gurjar (24), were employed in the boiler section of the factory in Rainsinghpura area.

Encounter breaks out

Jammu: An encounter broke out between security forces and terrorists in a remote village in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday, officials said. The encounter started at Kahog village of Billawar this evening when security forces launched a search operation following information about presence of two to three terrorists, they said.

Skeleton found

Lucknow: A skeleton, suspected to be that of a woman reported missing last month, was recovered from a mustard field on the outskirts of Lucknow Wednesday. Police have sent the remains for a DNA test to confirm the identity. The skeleton remains were found near Kubehra village.

What will be achieved by changing the name of MGNREGA? In reality, this is the BJP's secret conspiracy to slowly finish MGNREGA

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

J&K POLICE RAIDS MULTIPLE LOCATIONS ACROSS VALLEY

The Counter Intelligence wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Police detained 22 suspects Wednesday following raids at multiple locations across the valley, officials said. They said the operation was part of an investigation into a cyber terror case involving the use of mule accounts

Top court flags road accidents due to strays

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Flagging non-compliances of rules and directions by civic bodies, the Supreme Court Wednesday said that people were dying not only due to dog bites alone in the country but also because of accidents caused by stray animals on roads.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria, which was hearing pleas for modification of its earlier orders of the apex court filed by dog lovers and those seeking stringent compliance of orders, said it is conducting the hearing as many lawyers and animal activists claimed that they were not heard before passing of the order November 7.

"The roads should be clear of dogs and stray animals. It is not only the dog bites but also the roaming of stray animals on roads that are proving danger-

ous and causing accidents. No one knows which dog is in what mood in the morning. Civic bodies have to implement the rules, modules and directions strictly," the bench said.

Justice Mehta pointed out that two Rajasthan high court judges have suffered accidents in the last 20 days and one of the judges is still suffering from spinal injuries.

"It's a serious issue," he

told lawyers appearing in the matter. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioner seeking modification of the earlier order of the court in the matter, said that the solution is not to capture all dogs but to adopt a scientific formula, accepted worldwide for reducing animal-human conflict.

He submitted that the court can adopt the formula of CSVR (Capture, Sterilise, Vaccinate

and Release) for managing and controlling the population of stray dogs which will gradually reduce the dog bite incidents.

"Prevention is always better than cure," Justice Nath said and pointed out that there was nothing much to argue in the matter as the court is only directed to remove the stray dogs from institutional areas and has not interfered with any rules and regulations.

The bench said what it is trying in the matter is the strict enforcement of rules, regulations, modules and standard operating procedures (SOPs) by states and civic bodies. When some counsels, appearing for different parties, submitted that dog attacks are happening, the bench said that it understands that children and adults are being bitten and losing their lives.

At the outset, senior advocate Gaurav Agarwal, who has been

appointed as amicus curiae in the matter, said that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has prepared an SOP to implement the court order.

"They have identified 1,400 km of road as a vulnerable stretch. However, after detection, the NHAI says that the state governments have to take care of it," Agarwal said. The bench suggested fencing the roads and expressways to prevent stray animals from coming onto the roads.

Agarwal submitted that states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab are yet to file compliance affidavits while some states have filed very "disappointing" affidavits.

Justice Nath said that the court will deal with those states. In his arguments, Sibal submitted that the response against this stray dog issue should be reflective of a mature and responsible society.

Wild elephant kills 13 in two days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chaibasa (Jharkhand), Jan 7: An elephant killed 13 people in two days in separate attacks in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, creating panic in the region, a senior forest official said Wednesday.

Four others were also injured in the attack by the jumbo, Chaibasa Divisional Forest Officer Aditya Narayan told PTI. The tusker, which had attacked several people in the last few days, entered the No-amundi and Hatgamariah police station areas late Tuesday and trampled the six people to death, including four members of a family, he said.

The same pachyderm claimed the lives of seven people, including three members of a family in the Kolhan region on the previous day, Narayan said. Teams of forest officials with experts from West Bengal's Bankura district have been engaged to drive away the elephant back to the forest, the official said.

Meanwhile, six pairs of trains in the Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway have been cancelled in the area due to the movement of elephants, a railway official said. Officials said that the rogue elephant has triggered panic in the region.

Meanwhile, BJP leader and former chief minister Madhu Koda criticised the forest department for allegedly failing to initiate concrete measures to find out a lasting solution to the menace.

Koda, who visited the families of the victims in a village in Nomaundi during the day, claimed that the department used to distribute articles such as torches and firecrackers to members of the Gram Samity to drive away herds of elephants entering villages, but the practice has been stopped now.

He also demanded that the government rehabilitate the minor children, who became orphans due to elephant attacks, and bear the expenses of their education.

Modi, Netanyahu reaffirm resolve against terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday received a phone call from his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, who shared an update on the Gaza Peace Plan and reaffirmed their shared resolve to fight terror.

"The two leaders warmly exchanged New Year greetings and wished the people of both countries peace and prosperity," a statement from the prime minister's office said. It said Netanyahu briefed the prime minister on the implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan.

"The Prime Minister reaffirmed India's consistent support for efforts towards a just and durable peace in the region," the statement said.

Modi and Netanyahu identified shared priorities to further strengthen the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in the year ahead, guided by shared democratic values, deep mutual trust and a forward-looking vision. "They reiterated their zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirmed their commitment to fight this menace," the statement said.

Modi and Netanyahu also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest and agreed to remain in touch.

In a post on X, Modi said they also reaffirmed their shared resolve to fight terrorism with greater determination.

Delhi: Clash erupts during anti-encroachment drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: An anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Delhi's Ramliha Maidan area on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday triggered violence as many people pelted stones at police personnel, injuring five of them, including the area's station house officer.

Police used force and lobbed teargas shells to quell the protest. Four people were arrested and a juvenile was apprehended. Police also said 10 to 15 people have been detained. Trouble brewed when a social media post claimed the mosque, opposite the Turkman Gate, was being demolished during the anti-encroachment drive, and people started gathering there, police sources said.

They claimed that 150 to 200 people were involved in the pelt of stones and glass bottles at the police and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) workers. A senior police officer said Samajwadi Party MP Mohibullah Nadvi was also present there. "In a preliminary investigation, it has come to light that he was present there, but had left by the time the demolition began. This is being investigated," Joint Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Madhur Verma said. The MP from Uttar Pradesh's Rampur Lok Sabha Constituency, who is also the Imam of Parliament Street mosque, could not be contacted over the phone when PTI tried to reach out to him, seeking his comment.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was carrying out a demolition drive on a

Police used force and lobbed teargas shells to quell the protest

Four people were arrested and a juvenile was apprehended. Police also said 10 to 15 people have been detained

Trouble brewed when a social media post claimed the mosque, opposite the Turkman Gate, was being demolished during the anti-encroachment drive, and people started gathering there

land adjoining the mosque and a nearby graveyard at the Turkman Gate area, on the Delhi High Court's direction.

Some commercial establishments, including a diagnostic centre and banquet hall, were demolished during the drive, MCD Deputy Commissioner Vivek Kumar said while making it clear that the mosque was not damaged. According to police, 150 to 200 people had gathered at the site when the demolition drive was underway. While many dispersed after being persuaded, some created a ruckus and resorted to stone-pelting, resulting in injuries to five police personnel. The Delhi Police, in a statement, said teargas was used to disperse the crowd, after which the situation was brought under control. It is being probed whether the violence was spontaneous or a pre-planned attempt to disrupt the demolition drive, it said.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said the MCD, which owns the land, scheduled the demolition for the intervening night of January 6 and 7. They had informed the police in advance about the proposed drive and sought deployment of force for maintaining law and order.

More than 50 MCD officials, accompanied by hundreds of police personnel, deployed 32 JCBs and four Poclain machines to carry out the demolition drive.

Census 2027: Houselisting from April 1 to Sept 30

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: The first phase of Census 2027-- houselisting operations-- will take place between April 1 and September 30 this year in all states and Union territories over a 30-day period specified by each state and UT, a government notification said Wednesday.

There will also be an option for self-enumeration to be conducted in 15 days' time period just before the start of houselisting operations of 30 days, said the notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The decadal exercise which was scheduled to take place in 2021 got postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The mammoth exercise to

give a headcount of country's population will be conducted in two phases -- houselisting and housing census from April to September, 2026; and population enumeration (PE) in February 2027.

The houselisting and housing census systematically lists out all the structures, houses and households throughout

the country for preparation of a sound frame for conduct of the population enumeration.

"...the Central government hereby declares that the houselisting operations of the Census of India 2027 shall take place between 1st April, 2026 and 30th September, 2026 in all states and Union territories during the period of 30 days

The decadal exercise which was scheduled to take place in 2021 got postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

specified by each state and Union territory.

"There shall also be an option for self-enumeration which shall be conducted in 15 days' time period just before the start of house to house houselisting operations of 30 days," a notification issued by Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan said.

The Census 2027 will also cap-

ture caste data electronically in the population enumeration phase, the government had said earlier. The last comprehensive caste-based count was done by the Britishers between 1881 and 1931. Caste was excluded from all census operations conducted since Independence.

The decision to include caste enumeration in the upcoming census was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi April 30 last year.

In the first ever digital Census, conducted by around 30 lakh enumerators, data will be collected using mobile applications that will be available for both Android as well as iOS versions to ensure better quality data.

of the day

quote

Efforts should be made to "effectively address various risks and challenges, and jointly safeguard the national security and social stability of both countries"

WANG XIAOHONG | PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER, CHINA

The Americans, in my view, are being productive right now; we have good results... They need to put pressure on Russia. They have the tools, and they know how to use them

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

The government is exhausting any available means, is fixing decade-long ills and is introducing transparency rules to reboot the primary sector

KOSTAS TSIAKAS | AGRICULTURE MINISTER, GREECE

SHORT TAKES

Deadly clashes resume in Syria

Aleppo: Fierce fighting resumed in Syria's northern city of Aleppo between government forces and Kurdish fighters for a second day Wednesday, sending thousands of civilians fleeing and leaving at least four people dead. The violence, and statements trading blame over who started it, signaled that a stalemate between Damascus and Kurdish authorities that have resisted integrating into the central government was deepening and growing deadlier. It began Tuesday, when at least six people were killed, including two women and a child, in an exchange of shelling between Syrian government troops and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Dozens of Italian tourists evacuated

Rome: Italy has begun repatriating dozens of its citizens stranded on the Yemeni island of Socotra, with a first flight carrying 46 tourists due to land in Jeddah Wednesday, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Another 59 Italians remain on the island and are expected to return on additional flights in the coming days, as authorities work with Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Saudi authorities will grant the Italians a four-day transit visa to help facilitate their return home. The United Arab Emirates last week its troops from Yemen under a deadline from Saudi Arabia, also leaving behind the remote Yemeni island of Socotra and roughly 600 tourists who had flown in but could no longer fly out.

Iran executes man convicted of spying

Tehran: Iran executed a man convicted of spying for Israel's Mossad, state media reported Wednesday. The official IRNA news agency identified the man as Ali Ardestani, saying he relayed sensitive information to Mossad officers in return for financial rewards in the form of cryptocurrencies. The report said the man confessed to the spying charges and that he had hoped to receive a million-dollar reward as well as a British visa. It called Ardestani a "special operative force of Israel" and said he gave images and footage of "special places" to Mossad agents. IRNA did not elaborate about the time and place of his detention. The report said Israel recruited Ardestani online, adding that his case went through legal procedures, both in primary courts and the country's Supreme Court.

US seizes Russian-flagged oil tanker linked to Venezuela



REUTERS

Washington, Jan 7: The US seized a Russian-flagged oil tanker that was being shadowed by a Russian submarine Wednesday, after a more than two-week-long pursuit across the Atlantic as part of a US "blockade" of Venezuelan oil exports, two US officials told Reuters.

This appeared to be the first time in recent memory that the US military has seized a Russian-flagged vessel.

The operation took place after the tanker, originally known as the Bella-1, slipped through a US maritime blockade of sanctioned tankers in the Caribbean and rebuffed US Coast Guard efforts to board it. The seizure effort was first reported by Reuters. In a post on X, the US military's European Command said the Trump administration had seized the vessel for violating US sanctions.

"The blockade of sanctioned and illicit Venezuelan oil remains in FULL EFFECT — anywhere in the world," US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in reply to that post. The US officials, who were speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday's operation near Iceland was being carried out by the Coast Guard and US military. The Coast Guard did not immediately respond to a re-

quest for comment. The officials said Russian military vessels were in the general vicinity of the operation, including a Russian submarine. It was unclear how close the vessels were to the operation, but there were no indications of a confrontation between US and Russian military forces.

NOT CLEAR WHERE VESSEL WILL NOW GO

The seizure took place just days after US special forces swooped into Caracas before dawn Saturday in a deadly raid to seize President Nicolas Maduro and take him to the United States. The US military turned him over to federal authorities for prosecution on charges involving alleged drug trafficking.

It was unclear where exactly the ship would now go, but sources said it would likely be entering British territorial waters. The US Coast Guard first attempted to intercept the vessel last month, but it refused to be boarded. Since then, it has registered under a Russian flag and been renamed Marinera.

The vessel is the latest tanker targeted by the US Coast Guard since the start of US President Donald Trump's pressure campaign against Venezuela.

Separately, the US Coast Guard has also intercepted another Venezuela-linked tanker

■ Vessel had been renamed and registered under Russian flag

■ Seizure took place in the Atlantic, near Iceland

■ Pursuit of vessel was part of US pressure campaign on Venezuela

■ Seizure took place days after capture of President Nicolas Maduro

in Latin American waters, US officials told Reuters Wednesday, as the US continues enforcing its blockade of sanctioned vessels from Venezuela.

TRUMP EYES VENEZUELAN OIL

Top Venezuelan officials have called Maduro's capture a kidnapping and have accused the US of trying to steal the country's vast oil reserves, estimated to be the largest in the world.

In turn, Trump and top US officials have accused Venezuela of stealing US oil, in an apparent reference to the country's nationalization of its energy sector in several waves over the past half-century.

Venezuela has millions of barrels of oil loaded on tankers and in storage tanks that it has been unable to ship due to the effective US blockade on exports imposed since mid-December.

Trump said Tuesday that Caracas and Washington have reached a deal to export up to \$2 billion worth of Venezuelan crude to the United States, an agreement that would divert supplies from China while helping Venezuela avoid deeper oil production cuts.

Such an agreement would be a strong sign that the Venezuelan government is responding to Trump's demand that authorities there open up to US oil companies or risk more military intervention. Trump has said he wants interim President Delcy Rodriguez to give the US and private companies "total access" to Venezuela's oil industry.

I call for restraint to prevent the mood from becoming further inflamed so that, heaven forbid, we do not have additional tragedies

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PRIME MINISTER, ISRAEL

PHILIPPINES BRACES FOR VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS

A series of mild eruptions at the most active volcano in the Philippines has prompted the evacuation of nearly 3,000 villagers in a permanent danger zone on its foothills, officials said Wednesday. Authorities raised the 5-step alert around Mayon Volcano in the northeastern province of Albay to level 3 Tuesday



Couples line up to pose for photos after the group wedding ceremony at the annual Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, China

REUTERS

SK Lee asked Xi to play a mediating role on North Korea

REUTERS

Seoul, Jan 7: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said Wednesday that much progress had been made in restoring trust with Beijing, and that he had asked Chinese President Xi Jinping to play a role in mediating Seoul's efforts to engage North Korea.

Lee, who held talks with Xi this week, said the Chinese leader had noted patience was needed when they discussed nuclear-armed North Korea. Lee was speaking to South Korean media in Shanghai with his remarks relayed live on television. The South Korean president said he laid out the efforts - so far without success - that Seoul had been making to engage North Korea in dialogue and improve relations, and asked Xi to play a role to mediate for peace on the Korean peninsula.

"President Xi acknowledged our efforts so far and said patience is needed," Lee said.

Lee has been on a state visit to China and his meeting with Xi was their second in less than three months.

B'desh to buy Pak's JF-17 fighter jets



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad/Lahore, Jan 7: Pakistan and Bangladesh air chiefs held talks on "potential procurement" of JF-17Thunder fighter jets by Dhaka as a mark of deepening defence ties between the two countries, the Pakistani military has said.

However, Bangladesh has not yet confirmed whether such a plan exists. The JF-17 Thunder is a single-engine lightweight combat jet developed jointly by the Chengdu Aircraft Corporation (CAC) of China and the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC).

Though Pakistan claims that the jet has proved its capabilities during the conflict with India, its effectiveness is not clearly known. Pakistan had extensively used Chinese-origin Chengdu J-10 fighter jets during the May 7-10 conflict with India, according to experts and military officials. A high-level defence delegation led by Chief of the Air Staff, Bangladesh Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, called on Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad, Tuesday.

The meeting focused on strengthening operational cooperation and institutional synergy, with emphasis on training, capacity building, and collaboration in aerospace advancements, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of Pakistan's military - said in a statement Tuesday.

"Detailed discussions were also held on the potential procurement of JF-17 Thunder air-

B'desh to resume direct flights with Pak from Jan 29

Dhaka: Bangladesh's flag carrier will resume direct flights between Dhaka and Pakistan's largest city Karachi from January 29, restoring non-stop air connectivity between the two countries after over a decade, officials said Wednesday. Initially, state-run Biman Bangladesh Airlines will operate twice a week, Thursdays and Saturdays, on the Dhaka-Karachi route, the airline said in a statement. The flight will depart Dhaka at 8:00 pm local time and arrive in Karachi at 11:00 pm. The return flight will depart Karachi at 12:00 midnight and arrive in Dhaka at 4:20 am, it said. Currently, passengers travelling between the two countries largely depend on connecting flights through hubs such as Dubai or Doha. According to Biman officials, the plane would fly over Indian airspace, while the aerial distance between Dhaka and Karachi is around 2,370 kilometres.

craft," it said, adding that the delegation also visited key PAF facilities. During the meeting, Sidhu briefed Khan on PAF's recent advancements and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting the Bangladesh Air Force through a comprehensive training framework from basic to advanced flying and specialised courses across PAF institutions. He also assured fast-tracked delivery of Super Mushshak trainer aircraft, along with a complete training and long-term support ecosystem, the statement said. Khan was leading a high-level defence delegation.

The move follows warming relations between Islamabad and Dhaka after changes in Bangladesh's political leadership in August 2024.

Japan condemns China's dual-use export ban

REUTERS

Tokyo, Jan 7: Japan called China's ban on dual-use exports for its military "absolutely unacceptable" Wednesday, amid a looming threat of broader curbs on vital rare earths in an escalating dispute between Asia's top two economies.

Dual-use items are goods, software or technologies that have both civilian and military applications, including certain critical minerals essential for making drones and chips.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi touched off the dispute late last year by saying a Chinese attack on democratically-governed Taiwan could be deemed an existential threat to Japan. China regards Taiwan



as part of its territory, a claim the island rejects.

Beijing has demanded she retract the remarks, which she has not done, prompting a series of countermeasures, the latest of which was Tuesday's ban on exports to military users or for any purposes that contribute to Japan's military strength.

Asia's top two economies embroiled in biggest dispute in years

n China's ban latest response to Japan PM's Taiwan remarks

n Beijing weighing broader rare earth curbs, state media says

n Japanese automakers at risk if restrictions expanded

"A measure such as this, targeting only our country, differs significantly from international practice, is absolutely unacceptable and deeply regrettable," said Japan's top government spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara.

At a daily press conference Wednesday, he declined to comment on the possible impact on Japanese industry, saying it remained unclear exactly what items would be targeted.

RARE EARTH CURBS NEXT?

Beijing is considering further clamping down on exports

Gen Z revolters angry at govt they installed after Nepal's protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kathmandu, Jan 7: Mukesh Awasti was all set to leave for Australia to pursue a degree in civil engineering on a sunny day in September, but instead he joined a youth revolt against corruption in Nepal and lost his leg after being shot by security forces.

Lying on a hospital bed at the National Trauma Centre in the capital Kathmandu where his leg was amputated, 22-year-old Awasti said he regrets giving up so much for the little that has been achieved after the sacrifices of so many people.

Violent protests in Kathmandu that began Sept 8 left 76 people dead and more than 2,300 injured before the demonstrations fuelled by "Gen Z" activists forced the appointment Sept 12 of Nepal's first female prime minister, Sushila Karki,

a retired Supreme Court judge who has promised fresh elections in March.

Since then, the interim government and its leader have come under criticism from many of the people who took part in the protests and expected major changes in the Himalayan nation.

"I am regretting my decision to take part in the protest because they have been zero achievement from the new government we brought which has failed us," Awasti said.

"There should be end to corruption which has not happened and the people who opened fire on the demonstrations should have been arrested but that that has also not happened either."

DEMONSTRATORS SAY PROMISES HAVE NOT BEEN MET

Dozens of demonstrators,



including some who were injured in September, recently have protested against the government they brought to power. These protests outside the prime minister's office has been held in the past few weeks with police forced to break some of them.

"We are back here in the street because the government

has failed to live up to their promise.

There are so many families of those who lost their lives and many who were injured but what has the government done? Nothing," said Suman Bohara, who walks with crutches on a shattered right foot. "We are here because we are compelled to."

GEN Z GROUPS SHOW A LACK OF CLARITY

Different demands have emerged from separate groups among the young protesters including direct election of prime ministers, scrapping the present constitution and jailing all previous politicians.

There is no single leader or group but rather several individuals who have claimed to represent Nepal's voice in the Gen Z movement.

The lack of clarity among the protesters since September has been a key hurdle in Nepal, according to analysts.

"All the confusion right now in Nepal is because of the lack of clarity among the Gen Z groups on what they are demanding and how the government was formed," said Abeerl Thapa, principal of Polygon College of Journalism and Mass Communications in

Kathmandu.

Some are beginning to oppose the planned elections in March, saying their protest was not intended only to bring about elections for a new Parliament, while their demands to end corruption and arrest all the corrupt politicians should be fulfilled immediately.

Other groups seek elections that would bring new lawmakers who would perform all these tasks. It has not been clear how powerful the government is and the limitations on a mandate to fulfil all the demands from the people who brought the interim leaders to office. When appointing the interim government, the president mentioned that the key purpose was to conduct elections for Parliament.

It remains doubtful the promised election in March can be held, but there are no alternatives to polls, Thapa said.

business

of the day quote

India's domestic macro strength and improving earnings outlook remain supportive, but elevated valuations and global uncertainties call for a disciplined approach

NITIN AGARWAL | HEAD OF INVESTMENT RESEARCH, CLIENT ASSOCIATES

India must learn to process silver from the ore stage for domestic value addition

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

India's jewellery market is at an inflection point where consumption is no longer defined only by tradition or price, but by a convergence of wealth creation, self-expression and everyday relevance

PRAVEEN GOVINDU | PARTNER, DELOITTE INDIA

SHORT TAKES

₹ closes at 89.87

Mumbai: The rupee rose 31 paise to close at 89.87 against the US dollar Wednesday on possible intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and a fall in global crude oil prices. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.20 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 89.75-90.23 before settling at 89.87, up 31 paise from its previous close. The rupee snapped its four-day losing streak to appreciate 12 paise to settle at 90.18 against the American currency Tuesday. "The rupee rose... as RBI sold dollars at 90.23 levels, signalling that one-sided movement of currencies are not what they want from the market. It is difficult to take a call on rupee's direction at the moment but 89.50-90.50 can be broadly considered as the range for January," Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent higher at 98.65. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.99 per cent lower at \$60.10 per barrel in futures trade.

Housing sales drop

New Delhi: Housing sales fell 1 per cent last year to over 3.48 lakh units across eight major cities, with demand stagnating amid an average price rise of up to 19 per cent, according to Knight Frank. In a virtual press conference Wednesday, real estate consultant Knight Frank India noted that the decline in interest rates on home loans, strong economic growth and lower inflation were some of the key factors that helped in sustaining the housing demand during the 2025 calendar year despite fears of an impending correction. As per the data, the housing sales declined 1 per cent in 2025 to 3,48,207 units across eight major cities of the country.

Titan revenue zooms

New Delhi: Jewellery and watch maker Titan Co Ltd Tuesday reported a whopping 40 per cent annual growth in standalone revenue during the December quarter of FY26, aided by surging gold prices. According to the latest quarterly updates, the Tata Group firm said its jewellery division, which contributed around 85 per cent of its business, "clocked a robust 41 per cent YoY growth in Q3FY26". "Revenue growth was driven by substantial average selling price increases, offsetting flattish buyer growth," the company said.



With 15 per cent blending, India can save nearly \$4,500 crore in foreign exchange and substantially reduce its dependence on imported crude oil

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

INDIGO GETS FIRST A321XLR

Domestic carrier IndiGo Wednesday received its first Airbus A321 XLR aircraft at the Delhi airport, and will be deployed for non-stop services to Athens from Delhi and Mumbai starting later this month. Of the total order of 40 A321 XLR aircraft, nine are expected to be delivered in the 2026 calendar year



FRESH PEAK

Silver climbs ₹5K to ₹2.56 lakh/kg

The escalating tensions between US and Venezuela have boosted safe-haven appeal, while supply-side constraints and strong industrial usage further amplified silver prices

GOLD & SILVER



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: Silver prices surged by Rs 5,000 to hit a new record of Rs 2,56,000 per kilogram in the national capital Wednesday, amid strong safe-haven demand and robust industrial buying, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The white metal closed at Rs 2,51,000 per kilogram Tuesday. "Silver prices were also driven by sustained buying by the investors and China's export curbs on silver that came into effect from January 1," an expert said.

Meanwhile, the price of gold of 99.9 per cent purity slipped marginally by Rs 100 to Rs 1,41,400 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), compared to the previous close of Rs 1,41,500 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices experienced a slight decline on Wednesday as investors took profits following a recent rally," Saumil Gandhi,

We could see some profit booking from here, but when it breaks the previous top again, the next level to watch for is \$84 (Rs 2,66,000 per kg) and \$88.5 (Rs 2,80,000 per kg)

RENISHA CHAINANI | HEAD (RESEARCH), AUGMONT

Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that a recovery in the US dollar also weighed on gold prices, though persistent geopolitical risks continue to support safe-haven demand for precious metals, which is limiting sharp downside.

In the international market, spot gold fell by \$45.22, or 1.01 per cent, to \$4,449.87 per ounce.

Spot silver was trading lower by \$2.55, or 3.15 per cent, to \$78.69 per ounce. During the session, the white metal climbed by \$1.45, or 1.8 per cent, to hit an intraday high of \$82.75 per ounce in the overseas trade.

45% YoY GROWTH

HMSI sees 4.46L unit sales in Dec

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gurugram, Jan 7: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) recorded strong sales momentum in December 2025, reporting total sales of 4,46,048 units, marking a robust 45 per cent year-on-year growth compared to the same month last year.

Of the total sales, domestic despatches stood at 3,92,306 units, while exports contributed 53,742 units, reflecting sustained demand for HMSI's products across both Indian and international markets.

For the year-to-date period of FY26 (April-December 2025), HMSI achieved cumulative sales of 46,78,814 units. This included domestic sales of 42,04,420 units and exports of 4,74,394 units, registering a 3 per cent YoY growth.

Alongside its sales performance, HMSI continued to strengthen its focus on road safety and customer engagement. In line with its vision of 'Safety for Everyone,' the company conducted nationwide road safety awareness campaigns across multiple cities, including New Delhi, Jaipur, Bhopal, Rajkot, Goa, Ludhiana and Calicut, promoting responsible riding practices.

HMSI also organised a road safety Convention in Raipur, engaging educators to help inculcate safe riding habits among children and foster a culture of safety from an early age.

Further expanding its footprint, HMSI inaugurated new authorised dealerships in Auraiya, Bangalore, Delhi and Jhargram, supported by trained sales and service teams. The company reiterated its commitment to customer-centric mobility solutions, with a continued focus on safety, accessibility and sustainable growth.

FASTEST GLOBALLY

GDP TO GROW AT 7.4% IN FY26

India expects strong economic growth despite US tariff hit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: India is likely to grow at a faster pace of 7.4 per cent during 2025-26, compared to 6.5 per cent in the previous year, driven by a strong performance in the services and manufacturing sectors, thus retaining its position as the world's fastest growing major economy.

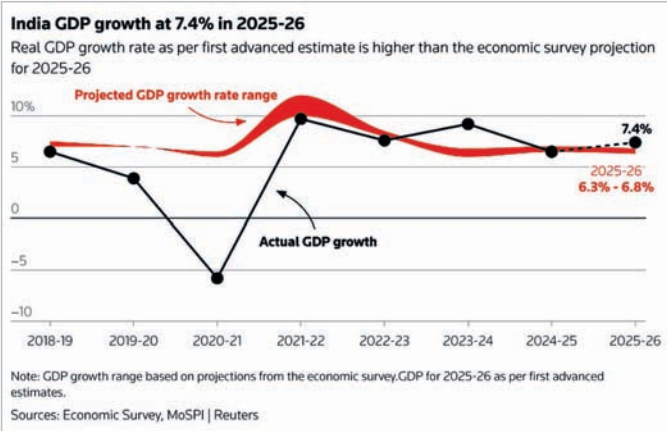
The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had expanded by 9.2 per cent during 2023-24.

The First Advance Estimates of national income released by the government on Wednesday, also showed that Gross Value Added (GVA) is estimated to grow at 7.3 per cent during the current financial year as against 6.4 per cent in the year-ago period.

The manufacturing sector is expected to post a 7 per cent growth (GVA) in the current fiscal, up from 4.5 per cent in 2024-25.

The growth in the services sector has been estimated at 9.1 per cent versus 7.2 per cent in 2024-25, according to the data released by National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Growth in the agriculture and allied sector moderated to 3.1 per cent in the current fiscal from 4.6 per cent in the 2024-25. "Real GDP or GDP at constant prices is estimated to at-



India's growth momentum has sustained despite elevated global uncertainty due to tariff tensions, riding on accommodative monetary and fiscal policies, robust corporate balance sheets, and favourable developments such as above-normal monsoons and low crude oil prices

DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI | CHIEF ECONOMIST, CRISIL

tain a level of Rs 201.90 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, against the provisional estimates (PE) of GDP for FY 2024-25 of Rs 187.97 lakh crore, registering a growth rate of 7.4 per cent," NSO said.

The nominal GDP, which factors in inflation, is estimated to attain a level of Rs 357.14 lakh crore in 2025-26, against Rs 330.68 lakh crore in 2024-25, showing a growth rate of 8 per cent. The government had estimated the nominal GDP ex-

pansion at 10.1 per cent in the Union Budget presented in February last year.

The First Advance Estimates are used in preparation of the Union Budget, likely to be presented February 1.

According to World Bank's China economic update issued in December, the country is estimated to grow at 4.9 per cent in 2025 and 4.4 per cent in 2026.

The NSO's GDP estimate for the current fiscal is marginally

LIC unveils 'Jeevan Utsav Single Premium' plan

NEW DELHI: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has introduced a new insurance product, "LIC's Jeevan Utsav Single Premium" (Plan No 883), aimed at providing guaranteed lifelong income along with whole-life risk cover. The plan was launched January 6 by LIC's Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director R Doraiswamy. It is a non-participating, non-linked, individual savings and whole-life insurance plan, available on a single premium basis. The plan's UIN is 512N392V01. LIC's Jeevan Utsav Single Premium is open to individuals aged 30 days to 65 years. The minimum Basic Sum Assured is Rs 5 lakh, with no upper limit, subject to underwriting norms. During the Guaranteed Addition Period, policyholders will receive guaranteed additions of Rs 40 per Rs 1,000 of Basic Sum Assured at the end of each policy year. The plan offers two survival benefit options. Under Regular Income Benefit, policyholders receive 10% of the Basic Sum Assured annually, starting after 7 to 17 years, as chosen. The Flexi Income Benefit allows the income to be accumulated and withdrawn later, earning 5.5% annual compounded interest. In case of death, the nominee will receive the Sum Assured on Death plus accrued Guaranteed Additions. On maturity, the Sum Assured on Maturity along with Guaranteed Additions will be payable. Loan facility, high sum assured rebates and optional riders are also available. The plan will be available for purchase from January 12, 2026.



US tariff fears weigh on stock markets

SENSEX, NIFTY EXTEND LOSSES INTO 3RD SESSION ON GEOPOLITICAL CONCERNS, TRADE UNCERTAINTIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 7: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty drifted lower for the third day in a row Wednesday as geopolitical tensions and renewed concerns about potential US tariff hikes weighed on investor sentiment.

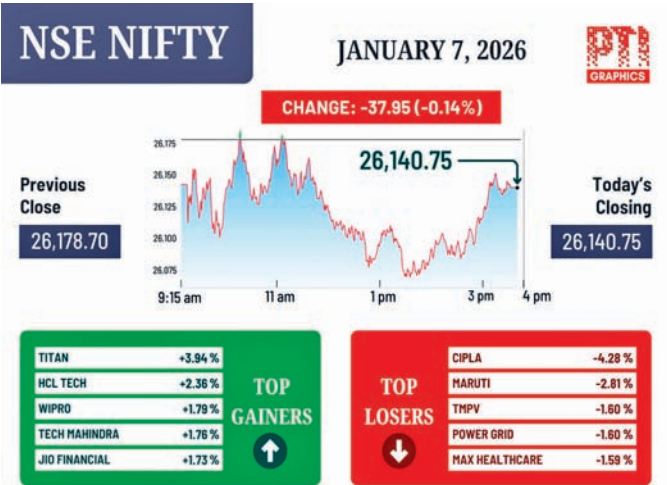
Sustained foreign fund outflows also dragged the markets lower, traders said.

However, buying on select blue-chip counters and lower crude prices in the international market supported equities, they added.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 102.20 points or 0.12 per cent to settle at 84,961.14. During the day, it dropped 445.85 points or 0.52 per cent to 84,617.49.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went down by 37.95 points, or 0.14 per cent, to 26,140.75.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Maruti, Power Grid, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, HDFC Bank, Asian Paints and Tata Steel were among the biggest



laggards. However, Titan, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.47 per cent, and the smallcap index went up by 0.12 per cent. Among sectoral indices, BSE utilities declined by 0.80 per cent, oil & gas (0.76 per cent), auto (0.68 per cent), tele-

communication (0.61 per cent) and realty (0.39 per cent).

However, BSE Focused IT jumped 2.52 per cent, IT climbed 1.97 per cent, consumer durables (1.25 per cent), healthcare (0.42 per cent) and capital goods (0.41 per cent).

"Indian equity markets ended today's session on a subdued and cautious note, with investors adopting a selective approach amid mixed domes-

EV RETAIL SALES SURGE 16.37% TO OVER 22.70 LAKH UNITS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 7: Electric vehicle (EV) retail sales surged 16.37 per cent year-on-year to 22,70,107 units in 2025, driven by a 77 per cent jump in electric passenger car sales, according to data released by dealers' body FADA Wednesday.

The EV makers had recorded a total sales of 19,50,727 units in 2024, the Federation of Automobile Dealers' Association (FADA) said.

Electric car sales rose 77.04 per cent to 1,76,817 units in 2025 from 99,975 units a year earlier, it said, adding that e-commercial vehicle sales during the reporting period increased 54.2



per cent to 15,606 units from 10,123 eCVs retailed a year ago.

The electric two-wheeler sales for the year under review stood at 12,79,951 units compared to 11,49,416 units in

the year-ago period, registering a growth of 11.36 per cent.

Similarly, the e-three-wheeler retail sales rose 15.39 per cent to 7,97,733 units in 2025 against 6,91,313 units sold in 2024, FADA said.

CY25 clearly reinforces that India's electrification journey is no longer a pilot; it is scaling, segment by segment

CS VIGNESHWAR | PRESIDENT, FADA

"On the strength of robust ground-level adoption, electric two-wheelers retailed around 12.80 lakh retails (+11.36 per cent YoY) with an EV share of 6.3 per cent, while electric passenger vehicles grew sharply to 1,76,817 units (+77.04 per cent YoY), taking EV share to around 4 per cent from 2.4 per cent last year," said CS Vigneshwar, president, Federation of Indian Automobile Dealers'

Association (FADA).

The most decisive transformation continues to be in three-wheelers, where EVs now command 60.9 per cent share, with EV 3W retails at 7,97,733 units (15.39 per cent higher year-on-year), a strong endorsement of EV economics in the last-mile mobility, he added.

Even in commercial vehicles, while the base is still evolving, momentum is visible with EV CV retails at 15,606 units (54.2 per cent jump year-on-year) and EV share rising to 1.55 per cent, Vishneshwar said, adding that this transition is being powered by improving product choices and total cost of ownership benefits.

ICC to address BCB's concerns

Following Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL, a livid BCB demanded that its four World Cup matches in India to be shifted to co-host Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Jan 7: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Wednesday said the ICC is "willing to work closely" with it to address "security concerns" around the team's participation in the T20 World Cup in India even though its demand for a change of venue has not yet been accepted.

The T20 World Cup starts February 7 and Bangladesh are due to play their four games in Kolkata and Mumbai.

"In its communication, the ICC has reiterated its commitment to ensuring the full and uninterrupted participation of the Bangladesh team in the tournament," the BCB said in a statement.

"The ICC has conveyed its willingness to work closely with the BCB to address the concerns raised and has assured that the Board's inputs will be welcomed and duly considered as part of the detailed security planning for the event," it added.

BCB president Aminul Islam

WINNING START FOR SINDHU, SAT-CHI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Jan 7: Returning from a prolonged injury lay-off, PV Sindhu began the new season on a winning note along with the formidable men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy as they entered the second round of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here Wednesday.

The 30-year-old former world champion, who had opted to withdraw from all BWF World Tour events in October last year to recover from a foot injury, defeated Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun 21-14, 22-20 in a 51-minutes showdown of the women's singles opening round.

The 18th-ranked Sindhu showed no signs of discomfort as she overcame the lower-ranked Sung for the second time to take her head-to-head to 2-0 and set up a round-of-16 clash with world No 9 Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan.

Sindhu has a 1-1 record against Miyazaki, whom she beat in the 2025 China Masters during their last meeting. Later, Satwik and Chirag, the former World No 1 pair, saw off Chinese Taipei's Yang Po-Hsuan and Lee Jhe-Hue 21-13 21-15 in 35 minutes to also enter the pre-quarterfinals. The Panda sisters - Rutuparna and Swetaparna - also faced defeat, going down 11-21 9-21 in a lop-sided contest against second seeded Malaysians Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan.

Track legend Jinson hangs up spikes

THE INDIAN RUNNER HAD HIS BEST MOMENT WINNING THE 1500M GOLD IN THE 2018 JAKARTA ASIAN GAMES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 7: National record-holder and Asian Games gold-winning Indian middle distance runner Jinson Johnson announced his retirement Wednesday, saying that "it is time for something new" after a 15-year career shaped by "relentless training, quiet struggles, and painful injuries".

The 34-year-old Kerala athlete has not competed since winning a 1500m bronze in the Hangzhou Asian Games in October 2023. His best moment was winning the 1500m gold in the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games with a time of 3 minutes 44.72 seconds. He also won a silver in 800m in the same Games.

In 2018, Johnson broke legendary Sriram Singh's 42-year-old men's 800m national record during the National Inter-State

T20 WORLD CUP



When the Champions Trophy was held, India did not go to Pakistan, and Pakistan also did not come to India to play in the last World Cup. So we are also hopeful that we will get a proper response (from the ICC)....you know that the hybrid World Cup that is happening, the main reason behind that is security. So we are hopeful that we will be able to establish the reasons we have

AMINUL ISLAM | PRESIDENT, BANGLADESH CRICKET BOARD

and government Asif Nazrul addressed a press conference after the board issued the statement on the sensitive subject.

Both reiterated their stance on why they are not comfortable with the team's travel to India. Azrul was more vocal than BCB president Aminul.

"So far, we have very clearly taken this decision that we will make the ICC understand that we do not have an environment suitable for playing in India. This will be conveyed tonight or by tomorrow morning. With those sufficiently strong arguments, we will make the ICC understand that the core principle of our stand is that on the questions of Bangladesh's security, Bangladesh's honour, and Bangladesh's dignity, we will not compromise. But we definitely want to play the Cricket

World Cup," said Nazrul.

Aminul cited the arrangement between India and Pakistan under which the arch-rivals play their ICC matches in a third country. With security for his players being a major concern for Aminul, he argued the same should be done for the games involving Bangladesh.

Hostilities shot up between India and Bangladesh following Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL on BCCI's instructions.

The Indian Board did not give a clear reason for the decision but it was largely attributed to the deepening diplomatic tensions between the two neighbours in the wake of attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.

The BCCI's action prompted a livid BCB to demand that

ASHES TEST

Jacob's first test century stalls Australia's victory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 7: Jacob Bethell posted his first test century Wednesday and it couldn't have come at a more crucial time for England, ensuring the fifth and last Ashes test will be decided on Day 5 at the Sydney Cricket Ground.



The 22-year-old, Barbados-born allrounder went to the crease in the first over of England's second innings when Mitchell Starc trapped Zac

Crawley lbw on the fifth ball.

He shared an 81-run second-wicket stand with Ben Duckett (42), 32 with Joe Root (6), 102 with Harry Brook (42) and 45 with Jamie Smith (26) to help England reach 302-8 at stumps on Day 4, a lead of 119 runs.

Bethell finished 142 not out from 232 balls, helping England erase the 183-run first-innings deficit and maintain a chance of winning back-to-back tests Down Under. The Australians retained the Ashes with wins in the first three tests, but England is determined to narrow the margin after its drought-breaking win in Melbourne.

"It was special to get the milestone," Bethell said in a TV interview. "To have the family over ... (and) to top it off with a hundred here is very special."

SENIOR BOXING NATIONAL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 7: Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen, World Boxing Cup Finals 2025 gold medallist Pawan Bartwal and Sumit dominated their respective opponents, while most other top players registered comfortable wins to reach the quarterfinals of their respective weight categories in the Elite Men and Women National Boxing Championships with easy

wins at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida Wednesday.

This is the first time that the men and women National Championships are being held simultaneously at the same venue and 600 boxers from across the country are participating in 10 weight categories each for men and women.

In the women's 48-51kg category, referee stopped the bout between Nikhat and Ladakh's Kulsooma Bano in the first



Championship in Guwahati by clocking 1 minute 45.65 seconds. His national mark was, however, eclipsed by Mohammed Afsal in 2025.

During the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, Johnson broke Bahadur Prasad's 23-year-old 1500m national record with a time of 3

minute 37.86 seconds though he finished fifth in the final.

He later improved his own national record twice, the latest instance being the 3 minute 35.24 seconds mark in 2019 in a Berlin meet.

"Breaking two National Records and contributing to Indian athletics remains one of the

round due to the domination of the Telangana boxer while Pawan (men's 50-55kg) defeated Lalit and Sumit (men's 70-75kg) beat Madhya Pradesh's Kapil after both the bouts were stopped in the third round.

Earlier, world champion Minakshi (women's 45-48kg) continued her march with a comfortable 5:0 win over Annu of Jharkhand.

In the men's 50-55kg category, Jadumani Singh comfortably

From a boy with dream started the journey from Kolkata and reached up to Asian Games podium in Hangzhou 2023. Thank you Athletics. Some journeys are measured in meters and seconds. Some are measured in tears, sacrifices, faith, and the people who never let you fall

JINSON JOHNSON

proudest moments of my life.

"I was blessed to represent my Country at the Olympic Games, World Athletics Championships, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games. Every time I wore the tricolour, I ran not just with my legs, but with my heart."

Recalling his long journey, Johnson said, "My journey began in 2007 in Kolkata, with

against defending champions England, Italy and Nepal.

'No ultimatum from ICC'

The BCB also rejected reports that it had been told to either participate as per the decided schedule or forfeit its games by the ICC.

"The BCB has also taken note of certain reports published in a section of the media suggesting that the Board has been issued an ultimatum in this regard.

"The BCB categorically states that such claims are completely false, unfounded and do not reflect the nature or content of the communication received from the ICC," it asserted.

Aminul also dismissed such reports in the press conference.

"Regarding this propaganda that is going on that the ICC has informed us that playing in Sri Lanka is not possible — no such thing has happened as far as I know. I would call it propaganda, false news, because we are still in contact with the ICC. We have informed them of one thing, and they are asking us what the issues are," he asserted.

Rahman was bought for Rs 9.2 crore by Kolkata Knight Riders at last year's players' auction in Abu Dhabi.

After his ouster from the IPL, he was Tuesday roped in by the Pakistan Super League even though the players' draft of that event has not yet taken place.

72ND SENIOR NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

THREE WINS IN A ROW FOR ODISHA



POST NEWS NETWORK

Varanasi, Jan 7: Continuing their dominant run at the 72nd Senior National Volleyball Championship, the Odisha men's volleyball team secured their third consecutive win on the third day of the championship here Wednesday, further

consolidating their position in the league stage of the prestigious national tournament being held from January 4 to 11.

In their third league match, Odisha produced a spirited comeback to defeat Andhra Pradesh by 3-1 with set scores of 19-25, 25-14, 26-24, and 25-19. After conceding the opening

set, the Odisha side showed remarkable resilience and tactical sharpness, bouncing back strongly in the second set with dominant attacking and effective blocking.

The third set witnessed intense competition, with both teams trading powerful rallies, but Odisha held their nerves at

the crucial juncture to clinch the set 26-24, shifting the momentum decisively in their favour. Carrying this confidence forward, Odisha controlled the fourth set with disciplined defense and consistent spikes to seal the match convincingly.

Congratulating the team on their impressive performance, Achyuta Samanta, President of the Odisha Volleyball Association, appreciated the players for their fighting spirit, composure under pressure, and collective team effort. He expressed confidence that the team would continue their strong showing in the remaining matches.

With three consecutive victories in the league stage, the Odisha men's volleyball team has emerged as one of the front-runners in the competition and will look to sustain their winning momentum in the upcoming matches.

Khelo India Beach Football: Odisha women march on



POST NEWS NETWORK

Diu, Jan 7: The Odisha Women's Team continued their strong performance in the 2nd Khelo India Beach Football Tournament by securing their second consecutive victory Wednesday. In their latest match against Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha defeated Arunachal Pradesh with an impressive scoreline of 8-4.

Arunachal Pradesh began brightly, matching Odisha stride for stride in the opening period, which ended with the northeastern side trailing narrowly at 2-1. Their early energy and quick transitions suggested a closely fought contest, but Odisha's superior finishing soon began to tell.

The second period proved decisive as Odisha raised the tempo and found the net three times, while Arunachal managed a solitary goal in response. Captain Shibani Munadri marshalled the midfield effectively, allowing Odisha's forwards to press aggressively and create

repeated scoring chances. Satyabati Khadia emerged as a key contributor, striking twice to swing the momentum firmly in Odisha's favour.

Despite trailing, Arunachal Pradesh showed commendable resilience in the third period, scoring two goals and refusing to capitulate. However, Odisha continued to attack with intent, adding three more goals to seal the contest convincingly. Goalkeeper Sasmita Parida also played her part with timely interventions, ensuring Arunachal's comeback hopes never fully materialised.

With no goals in extra time and no requirement for penalties, Odisha comfortably closed out the match, underlining their attacking depth and tactical discipline. The win strengthens Odisha's position in the group stage, while Arunachal Pradesh, despite the loss, can take positives from their fighting spirit and moments of attacking promise as the tournament progresses.