



## Sreeleela's desire

Actor Sreeleela talks about her fondness for Malayalam cinema and actors she would like to work with

LEISURE | P2



## Pak-Saudi defence talks

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are in talks to convert about \$2 billion of Saudi loans into a JF-17 fighter jet deal

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Markets in red

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fall sharply by nearly 1%, continuing their weak momentum for the fourth session

BUSINESS | P11



## Australia win Ashes

Australia nab 4-1 Ashes series victory with a five-wicket win in the fifth and final cricket test Thursday

SPORTS | P12

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## VIKSIT BHARAT YOUNG LEADERS DIALOGUE 2026

09TH-12TH JANUARY | BHARAT MANDAPAM, NEW DELHI

### YOUNG LEADERS to Interact with PM Narendra Modi

Prime Minister's Special Address to Young Leaders  
Event Date : 12th January 2026 | Time : 04:00 PM Onwards  
Venue : Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

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## SUBHADRA MONEY FOR 4.57 LAKH IN JANUARY

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Financial assistance under Subhadra Yojana will be credited to over 4.57 lakh beneficiaries within this month, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida said Thursday.

"A total of 4,57,681 beneficiaries will receive the amount. They are 1,78,398 newly-enrolled beneficiaries, who attained the age of 21 years, 24,018, who were previously excluded due to application errors or verification issues, and 2,55,265 who had received only the third installment due to technical issues under this fund-transfer scheme," Parida, who also holds the Women and Child Development portfolio, told reporters.

P3

## 500% TARIFFS LOOM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

*At a time when India is facing steep US tariffs of 50 per cent, including 25 per cent on its purchases of Russian energy, President Donald Trump has given his 'go-ahead' to a Bill that seeks to impose tariffs of at least 500 per cent on countries buying oil from Moscow. The Bill, Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025, which is now headed for bipartisan approval, aims to 'punish nations like India and China that buy cheap Russian oil and fuel Putin's war machine'. The US move could further impact India's energy imports and strain its trade ties. In yet another significant development, Trump announced the withdrawal of US from over 60 global organisations, including India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA), claiming they go against US national interests. The ISA exit of US undermines global solar energy cooperation at a juncture when countries around the world are ramping up efforts to deploy clean and affordable renewable power.*

### US exits India-led ISA, 65 int'l institutions

UN/WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has withdrawn the US from 66 international organisations, including UN bodies and the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA), calling the institutions 'redundant' and 'contrary' to America's interests. Trump Wednesday signed a memorandum titled 'Withdrawal of the United States from International Organisations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States'. After signing, Trump said he has determined that it is 'contrary' to the interests of the US to remain a member of, participate in, or otherwise provide support to the 66 UN and non-UN organisations. This includes 31 UN entities, as well as 35 non-UN organisations that operate contrary to US national interests, security, economic prosperity, or sovereignty, according to a White House factsheet. Trump directed all executive departments and agencies to take immediate steps to put into effect the withdrawal of the US from the organisations 'as soon as possible'.

Ukraine is making concessions for peace, and Putin is all talk, continuing to kill the innocent. This Bill will allow President Trump to punish those countries who buy cheap Russian oil, fuelling Putin's war machine," Graham wrote on X. "This Bill would give President Trump tremendous leverage against countries like China, India and Brazil to incentivise them to stop buying the cheap Russian oil that provides the financing for Putin's bloodbath against Ukraine," he said. Graham said he looks forward to a strong bipartisan vote on the Bill, "hopefully as early as next week". Graham and Richard Blumenthal

have introduced the Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025, which would impose secondary tariffs and sanctions on 'countries that continue to fund Putin's barbaric war in Ukraine'.

The legislation has proposed a 500 per cent tariff on secondary purchase and reselling of Russian oil and one that almost every single member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has co-sponsored.

Earlier this week, Graham said that Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra informed him about New Delhi reducing its purchases of Russian oil and asked him to convey to President Trump to 'relieve the tariff' imposed on India.



## 3 Odisha courts get bomb threat emails

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Anonymous emails threatening bomb blasts prompted Odisha Police to swing into action Thursday, leading to the evacuation of three district courts—Cuttack, Sambalpur, and Deogarh—along with the Orissa High Court.

Police personnel, assisted by sniffer dogs and bomb disposal squads, rushed to the court premises and launched intensive search operations. Advocates, court staff, and members of the public were asked to vacate the premises as a precautionary measure.

"Several courts in the country have received such anonymous threat mails. There is no cause for alarm. After thorough searches conducted by security teams, court operations have fully resumed," Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said.

DGP YB Khurania said police evacuated the courts as a precaution, conducted checks, and enhanced security arrangements at all locations.

Khurania, who spoke to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and the Home department's Additional Chief Secretary immediately after the receipt of the emails, said, "Anonymous emails containing threats to damage court premises (using bombs/explosives) by 2.35 pm were received at Cuttack, Sambalpur and Deogarh district courts. Police have taken cognisance of the matter and initiated a thorough investigation."

Though no specific threat was received for the HC, police evacuated the premises in Cuttack while closely monitoring entry and exit points.

Later in the evening, the CM directed police to strengthen the bomb squad and issue a standard operating procedure to remain alert at all times.

## Nod to ₹55,783cr industrial projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: The High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA), led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Thursday approved seven industrial projects worth ₹55,783 crore and having the potential to generate 14,507 jobs.

Saffron Resources Pvt Ltd leads the approvals with a mega investment of ₹35,000 crore to establish a 6 MTPA steel plant in Dhenkanal. It is expected to generate 8,000 jobs. Jindal Poly Films Ltd got approval to set up a 0.5 MTPA Titanium Dioxide Pigment manufacturing unit at an investment of ₹12,000 crore in Ganjam. It would create 4,000 jobs.

Among other approvals, Ferro Alloys Corporation Ltd's plan to invest ₹2,000 crore in Keonjhar to establish facilities for Ferro Manganese, Silico Manganese, manganese ore beneficiation, along with a 100 MW captive power plant also got the nod. It will create 772 jobs.

P3



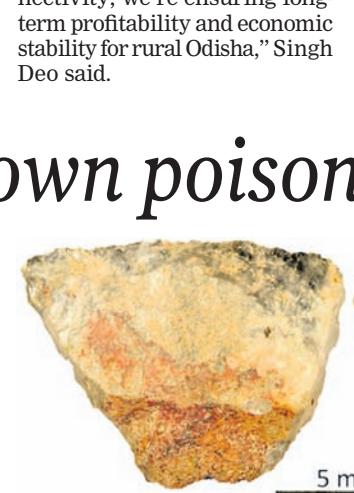
**FRIGID:** A postman passes by bicycles covered in snow, as Germany is bracing for adverse weather conditions this week, with forecasts predicting snow, storms, and freezing temperatures across large parts of the country, in Hamburg, Germany, Thursday

REUTERS

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The public thinks I drink the same dirty, polluted water as them. Mine's alkaline



and energy needed to track and exhaust a wounded animal."

Two different alkaloids, or organic plant compounds, found in the poisonous chemical residue were from the gifbol plant, or Boophone disticha. Traditional hunters in the region still utilize the plant today and refer to it locally as poison bulb, CNN reported.

Hunter-gatherers likely dipped the quartz arrowheads,

excavated from the Umhlatuzana Rock Shelter in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 1985, in poison before using them to kill animals for food. The presence of poison arrows during the Late Pleistocene suggests that hunter-gatherers knew which plants to use, as well as how long it would take for the toxins to be effective.

Understanding that a substance applied to an arrow will

weaken an animal hours later requires cause-and-effect thinking and the ability to anticipate delayed results," Isaksson wrote in an email. "The evidence points to prehistoric humans having advanced cognitive abilities, complex cultural knowledge, and well-developed hunting practices."

While humans have long relied on plants as food, poison arrows are just one example of how our ancestors living during the most recent ice age exploited the chemical properties of plants to develop medicine and toxic substances, Isaksson said.

Hunters could have applied poison to the points, also called backed microliths, by stabbing the gifbol plant's bulb, or by cutting the bulb and capturing

the poisonous substance in a container. The poison may have been concentrated by applying heat or exposing it to sunlight, according to the study.

Poisons work in different ways, with some varieties like myotoxins destroying muscle tissue and others, called neurotoxins, attacking the nervous system. Hunter-gatherers may have avoided any part of the animal affected by myotoxins, whereas neurotoxins would be diluted after spreading throughout the animal's body, Isaksson said.

"Some toxins are only dangerous if they enter the blood stream and are not harmful when ingested," he said via email. "Others may be easily destroyed by heat and thus neutralized by cooking."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 8: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday dramatically turned up at the residence of I-PAC chief Pratik Jain amid an ongoing ED raid, alleging that the Central agency was attempting to seize the TMC's internal documents, hard disks and sensitive data linked to its election strategy.

She said the raid at the residence and offices of Jain, "the in-charge of my IT cell", was politically motivated and unconstitutional.

Banerjee arrived at Jain's residence around noon, minutes after Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Verma

reached the spot, and stayed for 20-25 minutes before emerging with a green folder in her hand.

"They raided the residence and offices of our in-charge of IT cell. They were confiscating my party's documents and hard disks, which have details about our party candidates for the Assembly polls. I have brought those back," Banerjee told reporters.

She accused the ED officials of walking away with hard disks, mobile phones, laptops, candidate lists and internal strategy documents of the ruling party. Apart from providing political consultancy to the TMC, the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) also manages the party's IT and media operations.

## Oldest known poison arrows were used 60K yrs ago

Scientists have detected traces of plant toxins on Stone Age arrowheads that were used by hunter-gatherers in South Africa about 60,000 years ago.

The find marks the oldest known poison arrows and indicates that such tools and sophisticated hunting strategies existed thousands of years early than previously thought, according to the authors of a study published Wednesday in the journal *Science Advances*.

"In persistence hunting, poisoned arrows did not usually kill prey instantly," said lead study author Sven Isaksson, professor of archaeological science at Stockholm University's Archaeological Research Laboratory. "Instead, the poison helped hunters reduce the time

## Mamata storms I-PAC chief's Kolkata home amid ED search

WB CM alleges bid to seize TMC's internal data

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Kolkata, Jan 8: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday dramatically turned up at the residence of I-PAC chief Pratik Jain amid an ongoing ED raid, alleging that the Central agency was attempting to seize the TMC's internal documents, hard disks and sensitive data linked to its election strategy.

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## leisure

**JODIE FOSTER ON HOW SHE APPROACHED FAME**

Jodie Foster first found fame as a child star, but the star insists she's never chased the spotlight. "I had to do it my way. You like me as someone who has my dignity. You can't strip it away from me and then have me remain the me that I am," Foster told.

**BRADLEY COOPER ADDRESSES PLASTIC SURGERY RUMOURS**

Hollywood star Bradley Cooper has directly addressed persistent online speculation that he has undergone plastic surgery, firmly denying the rumours during a recent appearance on the *SmartLess* podcast with longtime friends Will Arnett, Jason Bateman and Sean Hayes.

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**ARIES**

Some cheerful news could put you in really high spirits today. The news could either be of a personal or professional nature - perhaps about your career, or a social gathering, or some monetary profit. You always give your best, and Ganesha says today it will lead to rich dividends.

**TAURUS**

The stars are very auspiciously disposed towards you, announces Ganesha. You have an exceptionally bright and enjoyable day ahead of you. All events and situations will work in your favour. If you are pursuing higher studies you will perform brilliantly. Those appearing for competitive examinations are likely to score very high.

**GEMINI**

A fun and frolic filled day awaits you. You will have a lot of fun with your family members, especially children. You will help your children with their work. Marital life will be blissful. Relations with your spouse will be romantic today. A pleasure filled day awaits, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**

Today, you will shift your entire focus on your personal life, feels Ganesha. Your ability to nip a problem in the bud has helped you to have a good personal life so far. And today, you will have to use your skills to mend the strain in your relationship with your loved ones.

**LEO**

You will attempt to reschedule your daily routine to be able to make the most of your day. While it is easy to make plans, implementing them and sticking to them depends on your own discipline and determination. You will become more aware about health issues and pay closer attention to your diet. You will spend an enjoyable time with your family, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

Today is the right time to start a new project, while older projects which had been postponed will be finished. Over the next week you will try to boost your energy levels. Parties will lead to a lot of entertainment and joy. Ganesha says children will bring home pride which will put you in even higher spirits.

**LIBRA**

The clock ticks on, but chances are it can hardly beat you in the race, thanks to your prompt and sincere efforts. Today, you shall be a paragon of excellence. However, Ganesha waves the red flag of caution: it always pays to be safe rather than sorry. Keep your eyes open and pay attention to the fine print before signing any contract or paper.

**SCORPIO**

A creative thought or an innovative idea may spice up your routine work. Apparently, you may seem all worked up and disorganized, but actually you may be quite systematic when it comes to your work. Keep the enthusiasm in you alive to make life happier, tips Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Hedge your bets carefully, says Ganesha. Solving problems will come naturally to you. But, beware, as you may face the music from certain disgruntled individuals. Worry not, and keep the spring in your step.

**CAPRICORN**

Mark this date on the calendar: today is going to be one of the most important days of life, the reason being you are going to meet somebody who is will stay with you through out your life. Though it may some time bore you, but your relationships will keep you busy today. Visits to religious places are on the cards for you. Most of the day you will spend time with your friends and family.

**AQUARIUS**

Meditate, and tune in to your inner sanctum. As you do this, you will realize you don't need others' advice all the time. Your boss will cooperate with you, while your loved ones will encourage you. An exciting date should close the day on a lovely note, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**

You will need broad shoulders to deal with the added responsibilities which will be heaped on your plate today. And while the work will be draining, the satisfaction of a job well done will more than ease your stress. A pleasant surprise probably awaits you back home, later in the evening, says Ganesha.

# Sreeleela's wish

**MUMBAI:** Actress Sreeleela has steadily built an impressive filmography with a series of high-profile projects, emerging as one of the most sought-after names in Indian cinema. After making her debut with the Kannada film *Kiss*, the actor quickly expanded her presence across industries and is now set to make her Tamil debut with *Parasakthi*, starring opposite Sivakarthikeyan. Recently, the actress shared her fondness for Malayalam cinema and actors she would like to work with.

During the pre-release promotions of *Parasakthi* in Kerala, Sreeleela spoke warmly about her admiration for Malayalam cinema. When asked which Malayalam actors she would like to work with, she named Mammootty and Dulquer Salmaan, saying she has always been very fond of both. Her heartfelt response won appreciation from fans, especially given Mammootty's legendary status and Dulquer's popularity across multiple languages.

AGENCIES

*Parasakthi*, a period drama directed by Sudha Kongara, is currently being promoted in Kerala. At the event, Sivakarthikeyan delighted fans by delivering a famous Mohanal dialogue. The film also stars Ravi Mohan and Atharvaa in key roles and is said to revolve around the anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu.

While the makers have announced January 10 as the release date, the censor certificate is still awaited, raising concerns about a possible delay.

AGENCIES



A scintillating show by the members of Sajan Group, on the theme of *Bande Mataram* at Rabindra Mandap, Thursday. The event marked the birth centenary celebration of legendary Odissi exponent Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra (More on P3)

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK



## Varun shuts down trolls



He mul-tures film tioned "Major Singh Thank you Soon after, Varun addressed the criticism directly in the comments section. When a user asked what he had to say about people questioning his acting skills, the actor replied that the very discussion had helped make the song a hit, adding that everyone was enjoying it and that God is great.

His response struck a chord with fans, many of whom came out in support of him. Several users praised his confidence, called his performance flawless and described him as a true star, applauding the song's success.

*Border 2*, directed by Anurag Singh, stars Varun Dhawan with Sunny Deol, Diljit Dosanjh and Ahan Shetty and releases January 23. The film pays tribute to soldiers.

**MUMBAI:** Following the release of the *Border 2* song *Ghar Kab Aage*, Varun Dhawan found himself facing online backlash. Several social media users criticised his dramatic expressions in the song and even questioned his acting abilities. The actor, however, chose to respond in his own candid way.

Varun took to Instagram to thank fans for the love received after the teaser and song were released. shared triple pic from the and cap them, Hoshiyar Dahiya. for the love." un addressed the criticism directly in the comments section. When a user asked what he had to say about people questioning his acting skills, the actor replied that the very discussion had helped make the song a hit, adding that everyone was enjoying it and that God is great.

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AGENCIES

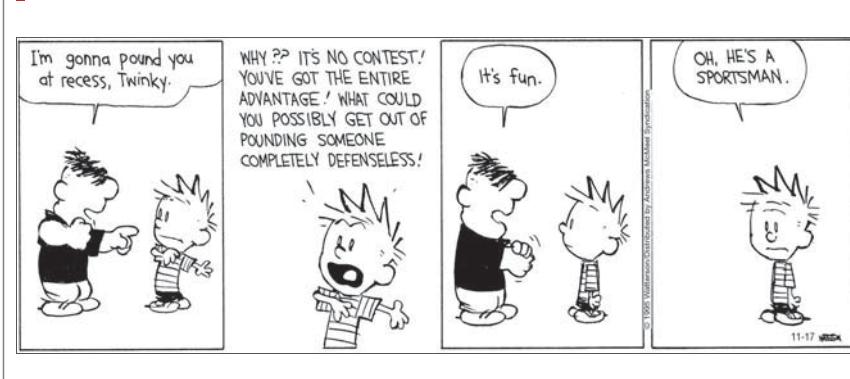
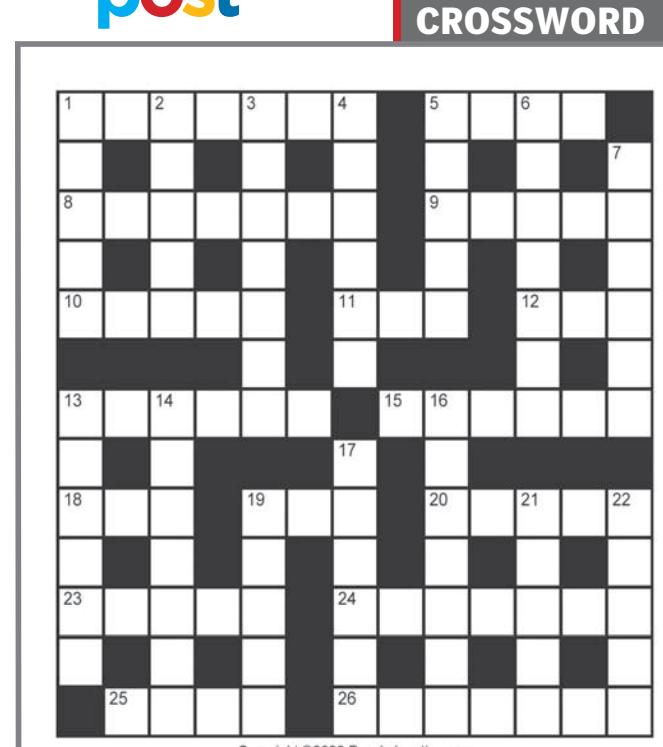
# Chitrangda on her dream role

**MUMBAI:** It is always a privilege for an actor to portray a cinematic legend, and it becomes even more special when there is a natural resemblance involved. Actress Chitrangda Singh recently shared that playing the late Smita Patil in a biopic would be an emotionally significant experience for her. Over the years, she has frequently been compared to the iconic actor, a connection she says has grown deeply personal.

In a recent interview, Chitrangda spoke about how people have long pointed out her resemblance to Smita. She revealed that these

celebrated for films like *Bhumi*, *Arth*, *Manthan*, *Chakra* and *Nishant*. Chitrangda says she now sees the resemblance herself and would cherish the opportunity.

AGENCIES

**PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****FUN POST**

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**ACROSS**

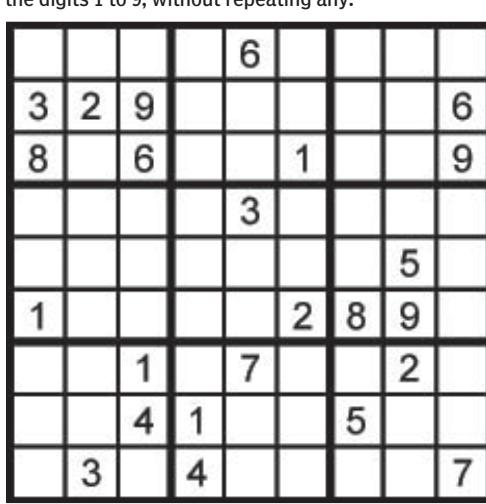
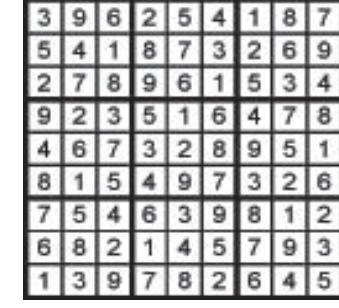
- 1 Chieftain
- 23 Lotto relative
- 5 Longing
- 24 Kind of illusion
- 8 Recipe
- 25 Coffee choice
- 9 Give the slip
- 26 Chastise
- 10 Shooting sport
- 11 Cave dweller
- 12 Skye cap
- 13 Shrivel up
- 15 Lynx
- 18 Posed
- 19 Service charge

**DOWN**

- 4 Close at hand
- 5 All thumbs
- 6 Vitriolic
- 7 Sancton
- 13 Sushi condiment
- 14 Ill-fated ship
- 16 Satellite
- 17 Brave
- 19 Leafage
- 21 Mother-of-pearl officer
- 22 Divvy up

**CROSSWORD****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****ICROSSWORD****SUDOKU**

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## HLCA approves ₹55,783-cr investments, 14,500 jobs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: The Odisha government Thursday approved seven major industrial projects worth an investment of ₹55,783 crore and having the potential to generate 14,500 jobs, an official said.

The project proposals were approved at the High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA) meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

"Through these investment clearances, we are focusing on making the state strong, Atmanirbhar and ready for Samruddha Odisha by 2036," he said.

The approved projects span key sectors including steel, rare earth, automobiles and auto-components, semiconductors, industrial gases, ferroalloys and power and renewable energy and are spread across districts such as Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Keonjhar and Khurda.

In the steel sector, Saffron Resources Private Limited, (a JSW Group Company) leads



the approvals with a mega investment of ₹35,000 crore to establish a 6 MTPA steel plant in Dhenkanal. The project alone is expected to generate around 8,000 employment opportunities.

Jindal Poly Films Limited's plans to set up a 0.5 MTPA Titanium Dioxide Pigment manufacturing unit under the rare earth manufacturing category at an investment of ₹12,000 crore in Ganjam. This project will create 4,000 jobs, an official said.

In the automobiles and auto-components sector, a reputed company will invest ₹1,697 crore in Ganjam to establish a manufacturing unit for tyres, carbon black, and zinc oxide, generating 685 jobs, he said.

Boosting Odisha's presence

in high-tech manufacturing, Sancode Semi Private Limited will set up an Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Testing (OSAT) unit in Khurda with an investment of ₹1,649.98 crore and create 570 jobs.

The industrial gases segment also received a boost with Inox Air Products Private Limited proposing an investment of ₹1,300 crore to set up an Air Separation Unit in Dhenkanal, generating 180 jobs and catering to the growing industrial demand for high-quality gases.

In the ferroalloys sector, Ferro Alloys Corporation Limited will invest ₹2,000 crore in Keonjhar to establish facilities for Ferro Manganese, Silico Manganese, manganese ore beneficiation, along with a 100 MW Captive Power Plant, creating 772 employment opportunities.

Similarly, GMR Kamalanaga Energy Limited's proposal to set up a 350 MW thermal power plant in Dhenkanal at an ₹2,136.02 crore, has been approved. This project will generate employment for 300 people.



**DEFIANCE:** Smoke from an open fire covers skies over the CRPF flyover in Bhubaneswar despite ongoing govt-enforced anti-pollution measures across the city, raising questions over monitoring and civic enforcement by the BMC

**Over 4.5L to receive Subhadra aid in Jan**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: A review meeting on the Subhadra scheme was held Thursday under the chairpersonship of Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida in the conference hall of the Women and Child Development Department.

### **Fourth installment to be released on Women's Day**

During the meeting, it was decided that over 4.5 lakh beneficiaries would receive Subhadra assistance in January. The list includes 1,78,398 newly registered beneficiaries, 24,018 beneficiaries reinstated after investigation of previous complaints, and 2,55,226 existing beneficiaries, bringing the total to 4,57,681 recipients.

The meeting also discussed the disbursement of the fourth installment of the Subhadra scheme, scheduled to be provided on International Women's Day, 8 March 2026. The department confirmed that all eligible beneficiaries would receive the fourth installment as planned.

The minimum temperature in Bhubaneswar was recorded at 9.4 degree Celsius which matched the nighttime lowest recorded on January 3, 1952, repeating a 74-year-old record, senior IMD scientist US Das said in a post on X.

According to Das, Bhubaneswar had recorded the coldest January night of 8.6 degree Celsius January 5, 1992, followed by 9 degree Celsius January 17, 2003 and 9.3 degree Celsius January 15, 2012.

"The Odisha capital witnessed a drop of 9.2 degree Celsius in just four days," Das said, adding that the minimum temperature in the city was recorded at 18.6 degree Celsius January 4, 2026.

The authorities of Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district said the mercury level

### **FARM EXPO**

Cuttack Sadar MLA Prakash Chandra Sethi and other dignitaries inaugurate a district-level farm equipment exhibition at Bali Yatra Lower Ground in Cuttack, Thursday



## Doctors suspend stir, to join OPD services today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Agitating Odisha government doctors Thursday announced the suspension of their stir and assured the administration they would resume OPD services from Friday.

The decision was conveyed by a delegation of the Odisha Medical Service Association (OMSA) led by its president Kishore Mishra, after a meeting with Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling.

"Discussion with the government was very cordial and the minister has assured to fulfill our genuine demands. Therefore, in view of public interest, we have decided to suspend the agitation for now with hope that our problems will be ad-



dressed," OMSA president Mishra told reporters here.

He said OMSA members understand that the government required some time to address the issues properly.

Mahaling said the members of OMSA were apprised that

the inter-departmental high level committee had been examining their demands.

"The discussion was very cordial and they have assured us to withdraw the agitation," the minister said.

Over 6,000 doctors serving

in different health facilities across the state had launched agitation for fulfillment of their 10-point charter of demands since December 26, which included filling up of all the vacant posts, parity in pay with central government employees, proportional restructuring of cadres across all grades, additional financial incentives for super-specialists and performance-based incentives. Though the doctors' agitation started with one-hour OPD boycott from December 26, they later extended it to two hours from 9 am to 11 am starting January 5.

Despite the state government invoking the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), doctors continued their two hour OPD boycott agitation.

## Cold wave sweeps Odisha, mercury hits '0' in Similipal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: The mercury level dropped to zero degree Celsius in Mayurbhanj's Similipal National Park even as the IMD warned of cold wave conditions in several districts of Odisha Thursday.

The minimum temperature in Bhubaneswar was recorded at 9.4 degree Celsius which matched the nighttime lowest recorded on January 3, 1952, repeating a 74-year-old record, senior IMD scientist US Das said in a post on X.

According to Das, Bhubaneswar had recorded the coldest January night of 8.6 degree Celsius January 5, 1992, followed by 9 degree Celsius January 17, 2003 and 9.3 degree Celsius January 15, 2012.

"The Odisha capital witnessed a drop of 9.2 degree Celsius in just four days," Das said, adding that the minimum temperature in the city was recorded at 18.6 degree Celsius January 4, 2026.

The authorities of Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district said the mercury level



Thursday followed by 3.2 degree Celsius at Semiliguda, 5 degree Celsius at Phulbani, Rourkela (5.4), Jharsuguda (5.8), Daringbadi (6), Bhawaniptata and Nabarangpur (7).

Kirei recorded a minimum temperature of 7.2 degree Celsius, followed by Chiplima (7.5), Angul (7.8), Keonjhar and Sundargarh (8), Ranital (8.6), Dhenkanal (8.9), Bolangir (9), Bhubaneswar (9.4), Balasore (9.5), Cuttack, Koraput and Rayagada (9.6), Sonepur (9.9), Sambalpur and Mahisapata (10). Officials of the Revenue department said that the cold wave conditions across the state have significantly affected people, especially in rural and tribal pockets.

The IMD warned of cold wave conditions in Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Balasore, Khurda, Angul, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Sundargarh, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Sonepur and Nabarangpur till January 9 morning.

It said that the night temperature in G Udayagiri had dropped to 2.5 degree Celsius

**City hosts 4th Mining & Infra Int'l Expo 2026**

## Guru Kelucharan was the very soul of Odissi: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Majhi inaugurates art and photo exhibition to mark the Odissi exponent's birth centenary**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi paid homage to legendary Odissi exponent Padma Vibhushan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra on his birth centenary, Thursday, saying Mohapatra was not just a great dancer but the very soul of Odissi.

He was addressing the media on the sidelines of the event organised by Odia Language, Literature & Culture department on the birth centenary at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre here.

Majhi paid homage at the statues of Mohapatra, Padma



efforts revived this classical art form."

He added that Guru Kelucharan harmonised Jagannath culture, Mahari tradition, classical and folk arts to give Odissi dance a unique classical identity.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including

Minister for Higher Education, Sports, and Youth Affairs & Odia Language, Literature, and Culture Suryabansi Suraj, Culture Secretary Vijay Ketan Upadhyay, Secretary of Odisha Sahitya Academy Chandrashekhar Hota, department Special Secretary Deba Prasad Dash, and senior classical danc-

ers and artistes.

The birth centenary of legendary Odissi dance guru is also being commemorated through a three-day programme titled 'Kelucharan Kirti Shatakam', being held from January 8 to January 10 at the Odissi Research Centre and Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar.

Addressing the commemorative meeting, Suraj said Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra dedicated his entire life to Odissi dance, presenting it not merely as a classical dance form but as a profound spiritual experience. He noted that Guru Kelucharan's lifelong artistic pursuit and discipline elevated Odissi dance to a distinct and respectful position on the international stage. Paying

floral tributes at the maestro's feet, the minister called upon everyone to draw inspiration from Guru Kelucharan's ideals and collectively work towards the development, promotion, and propagation of Odissi dance.

He also released a short documentary film based on the life of the Guru and Odissi Research Centre. He later visited a photo exhibition showcasing significant moments from the maestro's life and artistic journey.

Several eminent Odissi dancers and disciples of Mohapatra, including Padma Shri Priyambada Hejmadi, Padma Shri Kumkum Mohanty, Padma Shri Madhavi Mudgal, and Guru Ratikant Mohapatra, were present.

### **Pact inked to provide gifts for eligible girls**

**MKBY BOOST**



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: In a significant move to bolster women-centric welfare initiatives, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed Thursday between the Women and Child Development (W&CD) department and Utkalika, the Odisha State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation, for supplying gift items under Mukhyamantri Kanya Bibaha Yojana (MKBY).

The MoU was signed by Additional Secretary of W&CD department Sumitra Pattnayak and Executive

Director of Utkalika Mamata Nayak, in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who also oversees the W&CD department.

Under the agreement, Utkalika will supply a variety of items to eligible girls for their marriage, including sarees, bangles, footwear, ornaments, alta and sindoor, other bridal accessories and household items such as utensils and cushions.

The Deputy CM emphasised that this collaboration will not only ensure that welfare schemes reach the intended beneficiaries, but also promote Odisha's handloom and handicraft sectors, giving a boost to local artisans.

The programme was attended by senior officials, including W&CD department Principal Secretary Shubha Sharma, Director Monisha Banerjee, Director of Handlooms, Textiles, and Handicrafts department Nivedita Prusti, Additional Secretary Pratap Hota and other senior officers from both departments.

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# Review meeting on transit, affordable housing projects

**PROVISIONAL ALLOTMENT OF COMPLETED HOUSING UNITS; EMPOWERED COMMITTEE TO ENSURE OPTIMAL UTILISATION**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 8:** A high-level review meeting on Transit Housing and Affordable Housing Projects (AHPs) was held Thursday under the chairpersonship of the Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development department, Usha Padhee, to assess the status of completed housing stock, streamline allotment mechanisms, and strengthen measures for planned urban growth.

The meeting undertook a detailed review of key Affordable Housing Projects, including the Chandrasekharpur Affordable Housing Project (Buddha Vihar), Nilamadhab Awas Yojana, Santipali Awas Yojana, and the Subuddhipur Affordable Housing Project. Emphasis was laid on to ensure timely occupation of completed housing units, with project-wise progress, beneficiary coverage, and inter-agency coordination discussed to avoid vacancies in ready housing stock.

Progress of upcoming Affordable Housing Projects at Ghatikia and Gadakana was also reviewed. Directions were issued for monitoring of timelines and adherence to

schedules, as these projects are critical to addressing urban housing demand and preventing unplanned settlements and encroachments.

A key outcome of the meeting was the decision to constitute an Empowered Committee, chaired by the Principal Secretary, to provide policy oversight and ensure coordinated decision-making on affordable housing, rental housing prioritisation, allotment modalities, and optimal utilisation of completed AHP units. The committee will facilitate swift resolution of inter-departmental issues and ensure uniform implementation of housing policies.

It was decided that completed affordable housing units will be provisionally allotted to eligible beneficiaries. The provisional allotment will be valid for a period of six months, during which occupancy, usage, and compliance with eligibility conditions will be closely monitored.

Final allotment orders will be issued only after successful completion of this watch period. The allotted dwelling units will not be transferable, sub-let, or handed over to any other person, thereby ensuring disciplined and intended utilisation

of affordable housing stock.

To promote sustainable urban mobility, the meeting underscored the importance of integrating housing allotments with the AMA bus public transport system to improve accessibility while encouraging the use of public transport.

Reaffirming the government's firm commitment to the policy of "No New Slums and No New Encroachments", Padhee emphasised that proactive housing provision, prioritisation of rental housing, and strict enforcement must proceed in tandem to ensure orderly, inclusive, and sustainable urban development.

The meeting also highlighted the need to prioritise rental housing, particularly for migrant workers, the urban poor, and families in transition. Engagement with NGOs was identified as a key enabler for beneficiary outreach, awareness generation, verification, and post-allotment handholding.

The meeting was attended by Chanchal Ranu, Vice Chairman, Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) and Commissioner, BMC; Arindam Dakua, Director, Municipal Administration; Subhananda Mohapatra, Additional Secretary; Surendra Routroy, Additional Secretary; Manoj Kumar Swain, Additional Commissioner, BDA; Ajay Kumar Mohanty, Deputy Commissioner, BMC along with other senior officials.

The review concluded with directions for time-bound provisional allotment, transparent processes, strong inter-agency coordination, and robust monitoring, reinforcing Odisha's commitment to planned urbanisation, affordable housing, and improved quality of life for urban residents.

The ranking exercise was conducted under the guidance



**ICG PARADE:** A passing out parade (POP) for Batch 02/25 was held at INS Chilka Thursday. The impressive ceremony marked the successful culmination of 16 weeks of rigorous and transformative training undertaken by 2,103 Agniveers, including 113 women Agniveers, 270 Senior Secondary Recruit (Medical Assistant), 44 Sports Quota Sailors and 295 Naviks of Indian Coast Guard

OP PHOTO

## BOSE tops Odisha Polytechnic Ranking

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 8:** The fourth edition of the Odisha Polytechnic Ranking for the academic year 2023-24 was unveiled Thursday by Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain at the State Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (SCTE&VT) auditorium here.

Bhubananda Odisha School of Engineering (BOSE), Cuttack, secured the top position, followed by Government Polytechnic, Bhubaneswar, and Jharsuguda Engineering School. Utkalmani Gopabandhu Institute of Engineering ranked fourth, while SKDAV Government Polytechnic, Rourkela, stood fifth.

The ranking exercise was conducted under the guidance



of the National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (NABET) of the Quality Council of India (QCI). A comprehensive assessment was carried out by expert panels drawn from the SCTE&VT Appeals Committee, the Core Grading Committee and other related bodies. The initiative aims to encourage both government and private polytechnic institutions to improve academic processes and adopt innovative practices for continuous quality enhancement.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Swain underscored

the vital role of skill development and vocational education in shaping the future of Odisha's youth. He said the ranking system helps institutions impart industry-relevant skills while also fostering creativity and innovation among students.

He further urged institutions to draw up time-bound action plans for holistic growth, with emphasis on academic quality, faculty skill upgradation, industry collaboration, optimal use of infrastructure, and effective management.

Department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Bhupendra Singh Punia also shared insights on the progress of the state's vocational education sector, stressing the need to strengthen student skill development and foster an entrepreneurial spirit among the youth.

## Cuttack Stewart School marks Netaji's 1st school entry anniv

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Jan 8:** Stewart School, Cuttack, Thursday commemorated the anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's first school entry, marking the start of his educational journey. About 200 students, along with teachers, NCC and Guide members, organised a roadshow from the Netaji Birth Place Museum at Odia Bazar to the school via Sutahat. Wearing masks of young Subhas Chandra Bose, the students marched in a disciplined manner to pay tribute to the leader. The rally was conducted peacefully with support from local police.

Following the rally, a patriotic programme was held at the Hostel Field in the presence of students and staff. The programme opened with a prayer by Rev. FC North, followed by the Bible reading by Shilpa Sahu and an opening hymn by the school choir. Principal D Martina delivered the welcome and keynote address, highlighting Netaji's historic association with the institution, while Satyaki Gupta spoke on patriotism and the role of youth in nation-building.



## ₹500 parking fee at Bhakta Nivas draws flak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Puri, Jan 8:** The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration's (SJTA) move to impose ₹500 parking fee for four-wheelers at its Bhakta Nivas (devotee guest house) facilities here has drawn sharp opposition from tourists, servitors and political leaders.

In a notification issued Wednesday, the SJTA said guests staying at its four Bhakta Nivas would have to pay ₹500, including 18 per cent GST, for parking a four-wheeler for 24 hours. The arrangement will continue until further orders.

SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee said the decision was aimed at ensuring structured parking manage-

ment and better organisation of parking spaces, adding that it would improve convenience for visitors.

However, following objection from various quarters, Puri district Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida, who is also the deputy chief administrator of the SJTA, said the administration would reconsider the decision.

"We will reconsider the parking fee. I will get back to you after taking up the matter with the authority," he told reporters.

Puri BJD MLA Sunil Kumar Mohanty demanded an immediate rollback, saying hotels in Puri and elsewhere in the country do not charge guests

separately for parking. "It must be withdrawn immediately," he said.

Local MP Sambit Patra of the BJP said he was not aware of the development. "Our government will take a decision that is good for all, particularly the poor people," he said.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Bhakta Charan Das opposed the move. In a post on X, he called the fee unjustified and an unnecessary financial burden on devotees.

He urged the authorities to roll back the decision and ensure pilgrim-friendly facilities.

Addressing a press conference in Bhubaneswar, BJD vice-president Sanjay Das Burma also demanded immediate

withdrawal of the hefty parking fee, alleging that staying at Bhakta Nivas had already become more expensive.

"The administration is trying to derive financial benefit from the religious sentiments of devotees," he said.

Tourists, too, voiced their discontent. "While parking a car at airports costs around ₹150, the administration here is demanding ₹500. This could become the country's highest parking fee," claimed Chaturbhuj Samal, a frequent visitor to Puri.

Sources said the four Bhakta Nivas were built during the previous BJD government, with room tariffs ranging between ₹900 and ₹2,500 for 24 hours.

**Millers end stir, participate in paddy procurement**

**BHUBANESWAR:** All Odisha Rice Millers' Association, which has been on an indefinite strike since Monday, called off the protest Thursday and cooperated with the state government in the procurement of paddy from farmers. The rice millers had launched the strike since Monday, leading to disruption in the paddy procurement process, an official said. The association has been demanding an increase in milling charges, revision of transportation rates for paddy and rice and enhanced custody and maintenance levies for the grain stored in their godowns.

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Batakrushna Mohanty, S/o - Basanta Mohanty, resident of house no - 56, Ward no - 16, Village - Dhabapalli, Post - Baragam, PS - Kotinada, Aska, Dist - Ganjam, Pin - 761111, State - Odisha, declare by this Affidavit No -1606, Dtd - 1.11.2025, that now onwards I shall be known as BATAKRUSHNA BASANTA MOHANTY for all future purposes.

## Odisha applauded for national road safety & transport reforms

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, Jan 8:** Odisha has emerged as a national frontrunner in road safety and transport reforms, earning widespread recognition at the recently concluded Transport Development Council (TDC) Meeting. Held January 7-8, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, the event was organized by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Government of India, and chaired by the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways.

The TDC meeting saw the participation of transport ministers and senior officials from all states and Union Territories, where Odisha's groundbreaking achievements in road safety, digitization, and driver training were spotlighted.

Principal Secretary of Odisha Commerce and Transport Department, Usha Padhee led the state's delegation, presenting Odisha's innovative road safety measures and transport governance. She highlighted key initiatives such as the state's

digital transport governance system, technology-enabled enforcement, and comprehensive driver training programs.

Sources said, Odisha reported full readiness for the roll-out of PM-RAHAT, a cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims, ensuring coverage of up to ₹1.5 lakh. Odisha is now the first state in the country to integrate the e-DAR (electronic accident reporting) system with the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems), providing seamless coordination among police, health, and transport authorities. This integration, developed in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and IIT Madras, was hailed as a model for other states to follow.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways praised Odisha's SUVAHAK and AMA SUVAHAK programs, as well as community-based safety initiatives such as Rakshak and Junior Rakshak. These programs, which focus on educating and empowering local communities to take an active role in road safety, have now inspired the

Sadak Suraksha Mitra initiative, which will be implemented at the national level.

Despite only qualifying for two Institutes of Driving Training and Research (IDTRs) under a centrally sponsored scheme, Odisha has already set up four such centres, with MoRTH noting them as among the best in the country. The central government has indicated that additional IDTRs may be considered for Odisha in the future.

Odisha's reform-driven approach was further recognized when it was included in a high-level Committee of Secretaries formed by MoRTH. The committee is tasked with drafting and refining transport rules and amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act, as well as introducing reforms such as Automated Testing Stations (ATS) and Vehicle Location Tracking Devices (VLTDs).

MoRTH officials encouraged the state to enhance its implementation of VLTDs and High Security Registration Plates (HSRP) and raise awareness regarding the Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUCC) to ensure greater compliance.

## ECoR offers 3% discount on digital unreserved tickets

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 8:** The Khurda Road Division of East Coast Railway (ECoR) is encouraging digital ticketing by offering a three per cent discount on unreserved tickets booked through the RailOne App.

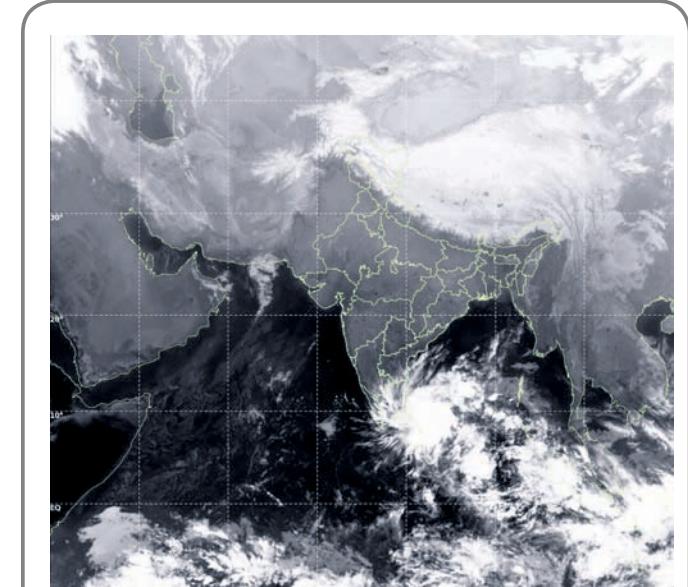
The benefit, earlier limited to R-Wallet cashback, has now been extended to other digital payment modes such as UPI, debit/credit cards and net banking, while the R-Wallet scheme will continue unchanged.

The discount will be available for six months, from January 14 to July 14, 2026. The Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) will review the scheme's implementation in May 2026 to decide on its continuation.

This initiative aims to enhance passenger convenience, reduce queues at ticket counters, and promote cashless transactions, supporting Indian Railways' goal of digital transformation.

To raise awareness, the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Anil Kumar S, has instructed staff to actively inform passengers through public announcements, banners, and posters at prominent locations across railway stations.

MARKET WATCH			
CURRENCY	BOURSES	COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.03 ▾ 0.01	SENSEX	25876.85 ▾ 263.90
EURO	105.25 ▾ 0.14	NIFTY	84180.96 ▾ 780.18
		SILVER	₹242,697 ▾ ₹7,908



WEATHER	
Max Temp	28.1°
Min Temp	9.4°
Humidity	75%
Rainfall	Nil
CTC	25.4°
OP	Cold wave condition is very likely to prevail over Bhubaneswar and neighbourhood

# Unsafe mineral transport alleged at railway siding

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, Jan 8:** Allegations of unsafe and irregular mineral transportation have surfaced at a South Eastern Railway (SER) siding at Jurudi in Keonjhar district, raising concerns over compliance with safety norms.

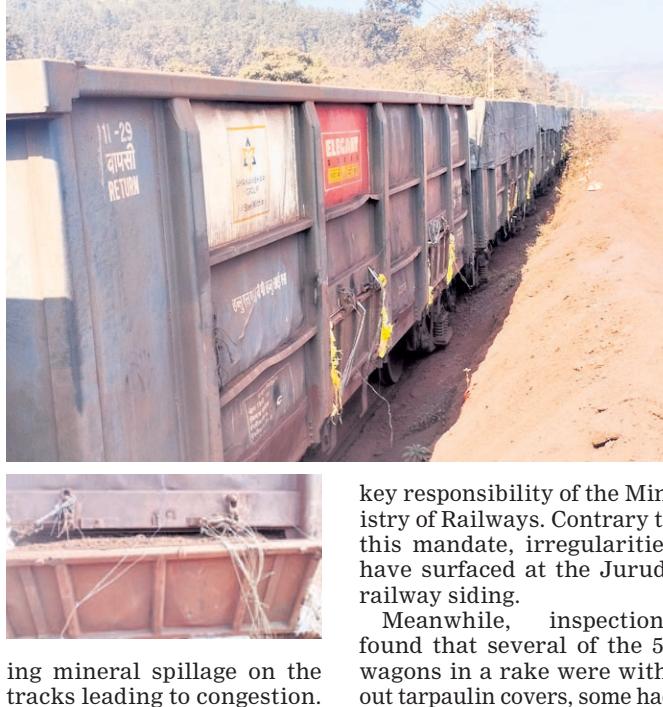
Sources said mineral loading takes place daily on five to six lines at the siding, with hundreds of rakes moving out on a daily basis. However, rules meant to ensure safe transport are allegedly being flouted. Several wagons are reportedly not cleaned properly before loading, while some have holes that remain unrepaired. In addition, minerals are said to be loaded unevenly and transported without tarpaulin covers.

Officials and locals said spillage of minerals along the track poses a serious risk, including the possibility of train derailments.

Railway guidelines require rakes to be placed on designated lines and loaded within five hours of placement. Before loading, the wagons must be thoroughly cleaned and holes on those sealed to prevent leakage during transit. These steps are intended to ensure that minerals do not spill onto the tracks.

Despite these clear norms, contractors allegedly continue unsafe practices, while the Ministry of Railways has remained silent, effectively leaving operations in the hands of private contractors, critics say.

If wagon doors and openings are not properly secured, they can open during transit, caus-



ing mineral spillage on the tracks leading to congestion. In several cases, this has also raised the risk of train derailments and accidents.

Sources said railway wagons are often loaded mechanically with more than 60 metric tonnes of minerals, which then require manual leveling by workers. If the load is not evenly leveled, there is a strong possibility of derailment at turning points while the rake is en route to its destination.

However, proper levelling is reportedly not ensured at railway sidings. Even after loading, tarpaulins are not being used to cover wagons to prevent minerals from flying off. Avoiding such lapses and ensuring the safe movement of trains to their destinations is a

key responsibility of the Ministry of Railways. Contrary to this mandate, irregularities have surfaced at the Jurudi railway siding.

Meanwhile, inspections found that several of the 58 wagons in a rake were without tarpaulin covers, some had doors not secured properly, and many loaded wagons had not been leveled Wednesday. If such negligence continues, the Ministry could suffer financial losses running into several crores of rupees. There have been calls for senior departmental officials to intervene.

Jurudi Station Manager Shashikant Jajo said the contractor involved would be warned, adding that the responsibility lies with the commercial department. He said rakes are despatched only after clearance from the commercial wing. Goods and commercial department officer Goutam Kumar, however, claimed the process was being carried out properly.

## 300 fall ill after wedding feast

**Rajnagar:** As many as 300 people fell ill with diarrhoea and vomiting after they attended a wedding feast under this block in Kendrapara district, prompting health authorities to rush medical teams to the affected villages. The outbreak was reported from Endulapur, Prasannapur and Khandamara villages under Hatina panchayat. Health officials said the illness spread after people consumed food served at a wedding reception Tuesday night. According to local sources, the feast was organised for the wedding of Kanha Rout, the younger son of Dayanidhi Rout of Endulapur village. Nearly 1,000 people attended the feast, including residents of Endulapur and neighbouring villages. Soon after the feast, many guests developed symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting. Some sought treatment from local pharmacies and unlicensed practitioners Wednesday, but their condition did not improve. By Thursday, the number of patients had increased sharply, with entire households getting affected in Endulapur.

Officials said more than 200 people were affected in Endulapur alone, while over 100 cases were reported from Prasannapur and Khandamara villages. Two medical teams led by Dr Rashmi Ranjan Mohanty, chief medical officer of the Rajnagar Community Health Centre, reached the villages Thursday. The teams set up temporary camps and conducted door-to-door visits, providing treatment and distributing medicines to the patients.

## Youth stripped, paraded on nat'l highway; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Jan 8:** Police arrested two persons Thursday after a youth was allegedly stripped, assaulted and paraded on National Highway-220 over his love affair with a minor of a separate community under Bahalda police limits in Mayurbhanj district. After their arrest, the two accused were produced in the court Thursday.

The victim, who is a member of a minority community, was allegedly targeted by relatives of the minor girl over an alleged love affair. According to local authorities, the attackers tied the man's hands with a rope, stripped and forced him to walk along the NH-220.

A video of the assault went viral on social media, prompting police to register a case. Investigators confirmed that two suspects were taken into custody and produced before a court.

The victim's family met with Mayurbhanj Collector Hema Kanta Saya to demand a thorough investigation. Formal complaints were also submitted to the Superintendent of Police, the Odisha Human Rights Commission, and the Orissa High Court Police are investigating the assault and public humiliation of the youth from a minority community who was allegedly stripped and paraded through the streets January 2.

According to authorities, the victim had travelled by car to meet the minor girl with whom he was reportedly in a relationship. The girl's relatives, who had previously filed a police complaint against the youth, discovered the two together and intercepted the man.

The group allegedly vandalised the victim's vehicle and physically assaulted him. Witnesses and officials stated that the attackers tied the man's hands, stripped him, and forced him to walk on the road while shouting verbal abuses. The assailants also reportedly forced the victim to chant religious slogans against his will.

IIC Bhaskar Pradhan said a case has been registered and authorities are working to identify all those involved.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Auction Catalogue No. SCDM-KUR-MPS  
Lot No./Category: MPS-KUR-KUR-MPS-3-23-1 (MPS-Multi Purpose Stalls)  
**DESCRIPTION :** MULTI PURPOSE STALL ON PLATFORM NO. 2 AT BRAHMAPUR END OF KHURDA ROAD RAILWAY STATION RESERVED FOR SCHEDULED TRIBE CATEGORY.

Auction Start Date & Time : 14.01.2026 at 1100hrs, Auction End Date & Time : 14.01.2026 at 1130 hrs.

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

Sr. Divl. Commercial Manager / Khurda Road

PR-982/Q/25-26

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
E-Tender Notice No. ST-SBP-TENDER-2025-44, Dtd. 26.12.2025  
**NAME OF WORK :** PROVISION OF CCTVS IN PARCEL & BOOKING OFFICE AT VARIOUS STATIONS OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

**SCOPE OF WORK :** PRS AND PARCEL OFFICES OF HIRAKUD, SAMBALPUR, RENGALI, JHARSUGUDA ROAD, BADMAL, SAINTALA, DEOGAON ROAD, BALANGIR, LOISINGHA, DUNGIRIPALI, BARPALI, BARGARH ROAD, ATABIRA, LANJIGARH ROAD, NORLA ROAD, RUPRA ROAD, KESINGA, THERUBALI, BHAWANIPATNA, JUNAGARH ROAD, MUNIGUDI, AMBODALA, TITLAGARH, MURIBAHAL, AMBODALA, KANTABANJI, HARISANKAR ROAD, NAWAPARA ROAD, KHARIAR ROAD, KOMAKHAN, BAGABHARA, MAHASAMUND, SAMBALPUR CITY, JIJOMURA, RAIRAKHOL, BAMURAMBOINDA.

**Tender Value :** ₹ 54,09,080.10, **Bid Security :** ₹ 1,08,200/-

**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1100 hrs. on 27.01.2026.

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

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in)

**Note :** The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.

Divl. Signal & Telecom Engineer (Signal), Sambalpur

PR-982/Q/25-26

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
No. O-1949  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION, DEOGARH**  
E-mail Id [ewer\\_deogarh@yahoo.co.in](mailto:ewer_deogarh@yahoo.co.in)

# state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack/Badamba, Jan 8:** Two tribal dominated villages under Narsinghpur block in Cuttack district have become the first fully solar-powered villages of the state following the project's inauguration Thursday.

This has been achieved under the Centre-sponsored PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana. These villages were identified as Mundia Sahi in Olaba panchayat and Kandha Devabhuji village under Debabhuji panchayat of Narsinghpur block.

A total of 76 families including 47 in Mundia Sahi and 29 in Kandha Devabhuji villages will receive free electricity through solar panel installations. The solar panels have been installed by TPCODL, through which the villages



have been completely electrified using renewable solar energy.

Badamba MLA Bijaya Kumar Dalabehera inaugurated the power supply in the presence of Cuttack Collector Dattatraya Bausaheb Shinde, Athagarh Sub-Collector Prahlad Narayan Sharma, TPCODL

authorities and other officials.

With this development, villagers will be able to avail all electricity-based facilities without dependence on conventional power supply. The entire installation work has been completed successfully within a span of approximately 25 days.

For each solar panel installation, the Central government provided a subsidy of ₹30,000, while the state government contributed ₹25,000. The remaining beneficiary contribution has been borne by the district administration with funds available from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF).

This initiative has been specifically implemented for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families to ensure equitable access to reliable electricity. The availability of uninterrupted solar power will improve living standards by supporting household lighting, education, healthcare, and livelihood activities. It will also significantly reduce electricity expenses for beneficiary families while promoting energy self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability.

## Gopalpur Beach Fest from Jan 22

**Chhatrapur:** The Ganjam district administration led by Collector V Keerthi Vasan held a preparatory meeting here Thursday ahead of the five-day Gopalpur Beach Festival scheduled to start January 22. The meeting was primarily focused on traffic streamlining, food safety measures, management of law and order and other aspects for smooth conduct of the festival. The popularity of the event has given rise in requests of participation among cultural dance troupes. An audition will be conducted soon to shortlist the troupes, the Collector said. A ban has been imposed on use of single-use plastic bags during the festival and alternatively, paper bags and non-woven bags shall be encouraged among the stall owners and merchants. Special torches from Tara Tarini Temple under Chhatrapur sub-division, Balakumari Temple under Berhampur sub-division and Byaghradevi Temple under Bhanjanagar sub-division will reach Gopalpur to start the beach festival with a 'samudra arati'. Various committees were formed by the organising committee comprising Berhampur Municipal Commissioner Prathamesh Arvind Rajshrike, ADMs Debadatta Panda and Pramod Kumar Prusty, Berhampur Sub-Collector Avinash Kumar, Chhatrapur Sub-Collector Sabashis Baral and Bhanjanagar Sub-Collector Uma Shankar Behera, DUDA Project Director Sunil Kumar Kerkeeta, heads of various departments and other private stakeholders in the district for smooth conduct of the festival.

Pradhan sought permanent solution to rising air pollution in Angul-Talcher belt

## Pradhan seeks permanent solution to rising air pollution in Angul-Talcher belt

PNN &amp; AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 8:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has sought personal intervention from the Centre and the state government to find a permanent solution to the alarmingly rising air pollution in the Angul-Talcher industrial belt.

In separate letters addressed to Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy, and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Pradhan highlighted the serious threat posed by deteriorating air quality to public health in the region.

Expressing deep concern over the Air Quality Index (AQI) in Angul consistently remaining in the "severe" category, Pradhan noted that Talcher's inclusion among the most polluted cities in the country is particularly worrying.

He pointed out that the sit-

uation is severely affecting children, the elderly, and people suffering from respiratory illnesses.

The Union minister stressed the need for strict enforcement of pollution control norms in industrial areas and for strengthening real-time air quality monitoring systems. He urged the Ministry of Coal to introduce mechanised coal transportation systems along with advanced dust suppression measures.

Pradhan also proposed the creation of green buffers through large-scale plantation around industrial zones and mining corridors, and the expansion of target-based initiatives under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Observing that measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) are largely temporary, he emphasised the importance of a long-term, coordinated strategy involving the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), district administration, and industrial establishments.

**FACOR**

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed to the general public that the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India has granted Environment Clearance (EC) to Kalarangiatta Chromite Mine of M/s Ferro Alloys Corporation Limited (FACOR) on dated 05.01.2026 for enhancement of production up to 0.15 MTPA Chromite Ore (ROM). This EC is also available in the official portal of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change i.e. <https://parivesh.nic.in>

## PANCHAYAT SAMITI, CHHENDIPADA

### INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

IDENTIFICATION No: - CHHB- 02/2025-26

E-mail address: [ori-chhendipada@nic.in](mailto:ori-chhendipada@nic.in)

The Block Development Officer, Chhendipada on behalf of the Governor of Orissa invites Percentage rate bid in single cover system for the 1 no of Auditorium Building, 1 no of Multi Purpose Hall & 3 nos. of ACR Building "C" & "D" contractors accordingly, registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent grade / Class registered with Central Government/ MES / Railway, to be eventually drawn up in PWD P-1 form, for execution of Building. The proof of registration from the appropriate authority shall be enclosed along with the bid. If successful, the bidder who has not registered under State Government has to register under the State PWD in appropriate class of eligibility before signing the agreement. Bidders may submit bids for any or all the Buildings. The details of the Eligibility criteria, enclosures etc. along with the list of project and date and time of sale, receipt and opening of bid documents can be viewed in the office of the undersigned during office hours & downloaded from the District website i.e [www.angul.odisha.gov.in](http://www.angul.odisha.gov.in).

Sd/- Block Development Officer, Chhendipada

## GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

### No. O-1949

### OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

### RURAL WORKS DIVISION, DEOGARH

E-mail Id [ewer\\_deogarh@yahoo.co.in](mailto:ewer_deogarh@yahoo.co.in)

### E-Procurement Notice

### BID IDENTIFICATION NO. SERWDGH-Online- 12/2025-26

1. No of Road works :- (03 Nos)

2. Estimated cost :- Approx. Rs.8.47 lakh to Rs.45.34 Lakhs each

3. Mode of submission of tender :- Tender shall be submitted online in [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

4. Availability of tender for online bidding :- 08.01.2026, 10.00 A.M to 17.01.2026 up to 5.00 P.M

5. Date and time of opening of tender :- 19.01.2026, 11.00 A.M

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

7. Corrigendum / Addendum if any shall only be published in the above website.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer

R.W. Division, Deogarh

OIPR-

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

No. O-1949

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

RURAL WORKS DIVISION, DEOGARH

E-mail Id [ewer\\_deogarh@yahoo.co.in](mailto:ewer_deogarh@yahoo.co.in)

E-Procurement Notice

BID IDENTIFICATION NO. SERWDGH-Online- 12/2025-26

1. No of Road works :- (03 Nos)

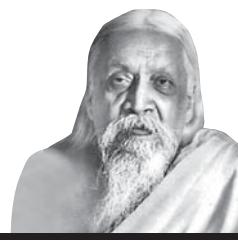
2. Estimated cost :- Approx. Rs.8.47 lakh to Rs.45.34 Lakhs each

3. Mode of submission of tender :- Tender shall be submitted online in [www.tenders](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)



What the soul sees and has experienced, that it knows; the rest is appearance, prejudice and opinion.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Public office, private gain

Last month, US President Donald Trump banned or severely restricted nationals of 20 additional countries from entering the United States, expanding the entry restrictions he put in place in June, supposedly to mitigate "national security and public safety threats." But a cursory glance at the list of targeted countries makes clear that this is just another case of ethnonationalist politics dressed up as an anti-terrorism measure.

Many of the countries Trump targeted in 2025 – including Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Haiti, Laos, Malawi, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tonga, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – have virtually no history of exporting transnational terrorism. But a large share of them – 16 out of the 20 announced last month and 26 of the 39 targeted in 2025 – are in Africa. The obvious conclusion, especially in light of Trump's wider agenda and rhetoric, is that racial bias is informing US policy, much as religious bias guided his first administration's 2017 restrictions on travel and resettlement from seven Muslim-majority countries.

To be sure, US officials say their decisions reflect "demonstrated, persistent, and severe deficiencies in screening, vetting, and information-sharing," as well as criteria like visa-overstay rates and even refusal to accept US deportation flights. But these justifications are more improvised than airtight. For example, as the American Immigration Council observes, the Trump administration is using non-immigrant overstay rates to justify bans on immigrant visas.

Moreover, much like Trump's tariffs, the criteria are being selectively applied, with some countries, such as Egypt and Kuwait, facing no new restrictions, despite high overstay rates, documented information-sharing, and vetting deficiencies. Even countries with longstanding links to global jihadism, such as Pakistan and Qatar, are being spared, despite Trump's claim to be motivated by national-security considerations. Saudi Arabia belongs to both groups, yet it has never been targeted by Trump.

Some of these privileged countries are almost certainly dangerous. What they have in common is not that they are safe, but that they are useful. Countries like Egypt and Iraq are considered strategically indispensable. Saudi Arabia is not only a key US defense partner; it is, like Qatar, a major investor in the US – and in the investment firm of Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Pakistan signed a major investment deal with World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency firm majority-owned by the Trump family, as part of its aggressive courtship of the US administration. It's a strategy that never fails to pay off: No country that hosts a major Trump-branded property or has struck a high-profile business deal with a member of Trump's inner circle faces US travel restrictions.

A telling example of this pattern is that while the Trump administration tightened restrictions on many countries, it lifted its pre-existing ban on non-immigrant visas for Turkmenistan, which has supposedly made "significant progress in improving its identity-management and information-sharing procedures." Conspicuously, the decision came just a few weeks after the reclusive, gas-rich country agreed to cooperate with the US on energy and critical minerals, and to consider granting preferential treatment to US firms.

This lesson is clear: countries that have strong personal ties to the Trump administration or lucrative business relationships with his family and cronies receive favorable treatment. The boundary between US public office and private gain has never been so porous, with Trump's business empire expanding rapidly since his return to the presidency.

The result is absurd. A citizen of Burkina Faso, a country with no history of threatening US security, is barred from entering the country, but a national of Bangladesh, which is beset by Islamist violence and anti-American extremism, is not. This incongruity undermines the credibility of US diplomacy and counterterrorism efforts, as it sends a dangerous message to states that sponsor or tolerate extremism: accountability is negotiable.

If Trump actually wanted to protect the US from terrorism, he would pursue a strategy based on credible intelligence and consistent standards. He would recognize that international terrorism is not confined to weak or isolated states; on the contrary, some of its most prolific enablers are regional powers. And he would demonstrate a willingness to confront US partners and adversaries alike.

Unfortunately, for all of Trump's talk about security, he has proven far more interested in lining his own pockets. His latest travel restrictions are a case study in how the language of national security can be repurposed for coercive diplomacy and private gain.

In a sense, this was the natural evolution of the "America First" ethos. The concept was always intended to justify a transactional approach to international engagement. But during Trump's second presidency, it has ascended to a higher level of cynicism. Now, those who fail to produce adequate offerings for Trump are punished, while those who prove themselves useful to him can act virtually with impunity – US national security be damned.

*The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.*

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## WISDOM CORNER

**“The mind is the root from which all things grow if you can understand the mind, everything else is included.”**

BODHIDHARMA

**“He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger.”**

CONFUCIUS

**“The snow goose need not bathe to make itself white. Neither need you do anything but be yourself.”**

LAO TZU

# FOCUS POLLUTION CONTROL NO BEIJING MODEL FOR DELHI



**While exact figures are unavailable, it is clear that Beijing spent billions of dollars to clean its air. That scale of expenditure is simply not feasible for India**

**T**here is a Hindi idiom – chutki lena – that loosely translates as teasing, trolling, mocking or putting someone down. Social media today is full of people taking chutki over air pollution in Delhi. The recent tweet by Chinese Embassy spokesperson, offering "step-by-step guide" on how Beijing tackled air pollution, falls into this category. It is unsolicited, overly generic and not helpful – regardless that the Chinese capital recently suffered a rare smog (AQI of 214) after years of pollution clean-up efforts.

Researchers in India, including myself, have followed Beijing's air quality journey closely for years. We have studied the "Beijing model," examined its successes and understood its limitations. One must first recognise a basic reality about information coming out of China: it is tightly controlled and never complete. While general descriptions of actions taken and headline pollution reductions are widely available, crucial information is missing.

Data on regulatory enforcement, economic costs, public expenditure, private sector liabilities, worker displacement, compensation and social costs are largely absent. Without this information, simply lifting the Beijing model and superimposing it on Delhi is neither feasible nor responsible.

That said there is no denying Beijing has achieved remarkable improvements in air quality in a relatively short period. India can – and should – learn from their experience. But learning does not mean copying.

Value of a regional action plan: The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei (BTH) regional framework enabled coordinated action across an airshed, leading to significant emission reductions. However, it is important to understand the administrative simplicity behind

it. BTH region covers about 2.2L sq km under two centrally administered municipalities – Beijing and Tianjin – and a single province, Hebei, with 11 cities. Coordinating action across this region, while challenging, was administratively manageable.

Replicating this approach for Delhi is far more complex. A meaningful regional plan for Delhi would need to cover areas within a 150 km radius, spanning six states (Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, UP, MP and Rajasthan), urban local bodies and cantonment areas. Delhi is governed by three authorities – Centre, state and municipal corporations, cantonment aside. So, we'll require an entirely new administrative and governance model to make regional action work.

Public transport and vehicle electrification are other areas where Beijing offers important lessons. Many measures Beijing adopted – stricter emission standards, cleaner fuels, and scrapping old vehicles – are also being attempted in Delhi, but with limited success. A key difference is that Beijing actively curtailed the growth of private vehicles; Delhi has not. But like Beijing, we need to build world-class public transport across all of NCR. Similarly, rapid electrification of transport is essential.

In many ways, Beijing's air pollution crisis helped catalyse China's rise as the world leader in electric vehicles. China converted an environmental crisis into an economic opportunity. India should aim to do the same.

Reduction of coal use and strict regulation of power plants and industries is another critical lesson. While Delhi has shut down its thermal power plants and shifted many industries to the outskirts, coal use within the broader airshed remains substantial. Beijing not only reduced coal consumption by nearly 90% but also enforced extremely stringent emission standards. For example, the particulate matter standard for coal power plants in China is 10 mg/m<sup>3</sup> or lower; in India, the standard is 30-100 mg/m<sup>3</sup> – 3 to 10 times higher.

China's SO<sub>2</sub> standard is 35 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, whereas in India even relaxed limits of 100–600 mg/m<sup>3</sup> were exempted for nearly 75% of coal-based power plants. Without enforcing strict pollution norms, meaningful air quality improvement is impossible. This is one of Beijing's clearest lessons.

Shutting down or relocating more than 3,000 heavy industries, as Beijing did, would effectively de-industrialise the entire region. Such an approach would be economically disastrous, so

cially destabilising and politically untenable in India.

Then there is the question of cost. While exact figures are unavailable, it is clear that Beijing spent billions of dollars to clean its air. That scale of expenditure is simply not feasible for India. Any clean air plan for Delhi must work within the country's fiscal constraints.

Finally, Delhi faces challenges Beijing never had to confront. The most prominent is stubble burning. Beijing's air quality was not affected by seasonal agricultural fires the way Delhi's is. Any serious clean air plan for Delhi must directly address this problem.

Similarly, clean cooking fuel was never an issue for Beijing. China transitioned most households to gas by the early 2000s and launched a Clean Heating Policy in 2013 to move residential heating away from biomass and coal. In contrast, biomass use for cooking and heating remains a major source of pollution in the Delhi-NCR and must be tackled head-on.

Lastly, the Delhi airshed also faces a major challenge from pollution generated by lakhs of informal micro and small enterprises – from jaggery and confectionery makers to small metalworkers and many others. These enterprises must be supported to shift to clean fuels.

In sum, while Delhi can and should learn from Beijing – and from other cities around the world – it must develop its own clean-air strategy and make it work in Indian conditions. From a researcher's perspective, it is clear Delhi's air pollution challenge is far more complex than Beijing's ever was. Social media chutki may earn likes and retweets, but cleaning Delhi's air requires far more than a step-by-step guide.

*The writer is an environmentalist and CEO, iFOREST.*

## DELI FACES CHALLENGES BEIJING NEVER HAD TO CONFRONT. THE MOST PROMINENT IS STUBBLE BURNING

Chandra Bhushan

**A citizen of Burkina Faso, a country with no history of threatening US security, is barred from entering the country, but a national of Bangladesh, which is beset by Islamist violence and anti-American extremism, is not**

**Bebra Chellaney**

## SPECTRUM DEMOGRAPHY

# The looming population bust

**W**hile many people still view runaway population growth as today's most urgent global challenge, falling fertility rates are the real demographic time bomb. Nearly two-thirds of people now live in countries where fertility is below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. The UN expects the world's population to peak in the 2080s, with some scholars arguing that the turning point may arrive even sooner.

The consequences of this shift are already visible. As the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD's) latest Transition Report shows, the median age in advanced economies has risen from 29 in 1950 to 41 in 2023. The trend is even more pronounced in Central and Eastern Europe: the median age in Croatia and Bulgaria now stands at 45 and 44, respectively, while in Poland it has reached 42. In Nigeria, by contrast, the median age is just 18.

What sets Central and Eastern European economies apart is that their demographic transitions are unfolding at income levels 3-4 times lower than was the case for advanced economies. In other words, they are growing old before they grow rich, leaving them with limited capacity to sustain growth.

Declining fertility reflects profound shifts in social norms

and cultural attitudes toward family planning, as people marry later in life and, increasingly, do not marry at all. The EBRD report finds that more than three-quarters of baby boomers in the EU's eastern member states were married by their early 30s. Among millennials, that figure has fallen to roughly two-thirds.

At the same time, motherhood has changed. Women are becoming mothers later in life, owing to longer education, shifting gender roles, and evolving career aspirations. Since 1990, the average age of first-time mothers has increased from 24 to 29 in Croatia, from nearly 24 to 28 in Poland, and from 26.8 to 31.5 in Spain. A growing share of women have no children, while those who do typically have fewer than in previous generations.

Later motherhood and persistent economic pressures reduce the likelihood of having larger families. As a result, many people have fewer children than they may want. Surveys show that in the world's richest countries, respondents have, on average, one child fewer than their stated ideal. In poor countries, where fertility rates remain high, the opposite is the case.

The combination of falling fertility and rising life expectancy implies rapidly aging populations and shrinking workforces, which will increase the number of retirees relative to workers and erode living standards. According to the EBRD's projections, demographic headwinds will shave an average of 0.4 percentage points off annual GDP per capita growth in emerging European economies through 2050.

Structural reforms could mitigate some of these demographic pressures. Raising the pension age, for example, would extend productive working lives. Increased immigration could help supplement shrinking labor forces, while technological innovation could boost productivity.

But none of these measures would be easy to implement or realize. As France's abandoned pension reform illustrates, raising the retirement age remains deeply unpopular. Similarly, increased migration, especially at the scale required to offset demographic decline, would invariably face strong voter resistance in countries where immigration has become a major political fault line. And while AI advances may enable some workers to become more productive, many others will be displaced and require retraining.

The greatest obstacle, however, may be aging itself. As societies age, so do electorates, with older voters increasingly shaping policy outcomes. Turning out in higher numbers, they

tend to favour higher spending on pensions, health care, and defence while showing far less enthusiasm for immigration, education, or short-term risk-taking in pursuit of long-term growth.

Political leadership is aging as well, particularly in countries with entrenched incumbents, narrowing the space for critical pension reforms, labour-market adjustments, and pro-immigration policies. Reversing this trend will require not only bold policy choices but also sustained efforts to mobilize younger voters.

Despite these constraints, demography need not be destiny. Reforms that take effect gradually, including pension adjustments, are often more politically palatable when enacted well in advance. What is needed is political courage: a willingness to explain difficult trade-offs, resist short-term pressures, and act before demographic realities close off available options. Only leaders prepared to address those realities today – and, crucially, bring younger voters into the debate – can ensure shared prosperity in the decades ahead.

*The writer is Chief Economist of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.*

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Political hubris

**Sir,** The rampant mushrooming of unauthorized flex banners and posters across major cities of the country, by politicians of all stripes is not just an eyesore; it is a blatant assault on the Prevention of Disfigurement Act. It is a stinging irony that those who draft our laws are the primary architects of their violation. From birthdays to wedding anniversaries, every political party regardless of ideology has turned public squares into personal billboards. This vanity is funded by the taxpayer's sweat and results in massive plastic waste, choking our environment. When public spaces are hijacked for personal glorification, the "rule of law" becomes a mockery. If our representatives cannot respect the sanctity of our streets, how can they demand civic discipline from citizens? The authorities must shed their selective blindness and hold these "lawmakers" accountable. We need a city defined by its heritage, not by the plastic ego of its politicians.

**Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR**

### Dangerous convergence

**Sir,** Images of a handcuffed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, detained by American forces, evoke unsettling historical parallels – most notably the capture of Iraq's Saddam Hussein in 2003. Such moments force an uncomfortable question: what remains of international law and multilateral institutions when powerful states act unilaterally against the elected leaders of sovereign nations? In hindsight, the failure to substantiate the charges against Hussein stands as a cautionary tale. Against this backdrop, concerns surrounding Venezuela are not merely about one country or one leader, but about the precedent such actions set in an already fragile global order. The implications extend far beyond Latin America. Similar ambitions are visible elsewhere, particularly in Eastern Europe, where Russia's war in Ukraine has normalized the language of arrest, regime change, and territorial absorption. Moscow's claims of drone attacks targeting President Vladimir Putin's residence, whether verified or not, have intensified rhetoric of retaliation. In such an atmosphere, the prospect of Kyiv facing pressures similar to Caracas no longer seems implausible. The dangerous convergence of power politics and personal vendettas has become a defining feature of contemporary conflict.

**Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH**

## WISDOM CORNER

**“The mind is the root from which all things grow if you can understand the mind, everything else is included.”**

BODHIDHARMA

**“He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger.”**

CONFUCIUS

**“The snow goose need not bathe to make itself white. Neither need you do anything but be yourself.”**

LAO TZU

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# national

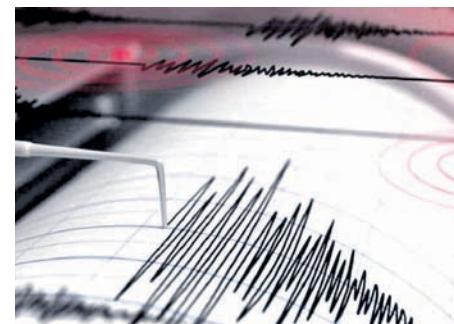


**“**  
Tell me which issue I have remained silent on. There is none. If anyone wants further answers, the Assembly session is coming up. Members can raise questions there, and we will respond

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

## QUAKE HITS ASSAM

A 3.9 magnitude earthquake hit Assam Thursday evening, three days after a 5.1 tremor jolted the state and its neighbouring areas. According to officials, the latest quake had its epicentre in Udalguri district and lay at a depth of 10 km



## WATER CONTAMINATION

# Several fall ill in Greater Noida

The incident follows heightened concern over water safety following recent cases reported from Indore in Madhya Pradesh, where multiple deaths were linked to the consumption of contaminated water



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

such as vomiting, fever and loose motions after consuming contaminated water," he said, adding that similar complaints had earlier surfaced from other blocks as well.

The incident follows heightened concern over water safety following recent cases reported from Indore in Madhya Pradesh, where multiple deaths were linked to the consumption of contaminated water, and from Gandhinagar in Gujarat, where several people reportedly fell ill due to polluted water supply. Authorities across states have since stepped up monitoring and testing of drinking water sources.

The residents of Delta 1 alleged that sewage water from blocked sewer lines was mixing with broken pipelines and reaching household taps.

A resident complained of a severe stomachache after consuming tap water, while others said water leakage has been a recurring issue in the sector.

Harendra Bhati, a resident of Beta 1 Sector located nearby, claimed that sewage overflow is a common problem in several parts of Greater Noida.

"I have raised the issue multiple times, but no permanent solution has been implemented," he said.

GNIDA officials said the authority took immediate note of the complaints on Wednesday, with a water department team visiting the affected homes and testing water samples.

## SIKH GURU ROW

# Assembly Speaker orders forensic probe of video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta Thursday directed a forensic examination of a video that carries the alleged insult to Guru Tegh Bahadur and referred the matter to the Privileges Committee.

The Winter session of the Assembly was paralysed for the second day in a row as the BJP MLAs trooped into the well of the House demanding action against Leader of the Opposition Atishi.

Opposition AAP MLAs also protested, shouting slogans and waving posters.

The BJP MLAs Tuesday accused Atishi of "insulting" the Sikh Guru after a special discussion on a programme held by the Delhi government to mark his 350th martyrdom anniversary in November last year.

Gupta said that both the ruling party and the Opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) members have demanded a forensic examination of the video clip.

He ordered the forensic probe report to be submitted within 15 days.

"The matter related to the remarks allegedly made by the Leader of Opposition regarding Sikh Gurus has been referred by Speaker Vijender Gupta to the Privileges Committee for examination and report," a statement from the Delhi Assembly secretariat read.

On Thursday, the speaker adjourned the House for the entire day amid protests. It was adjourned without transacting any business Wednesday also.

The session has been extended for one day to complete important business, including tabling of CAG reports, motion of thanks on LG address to the House, tabling of Jan Vishwas Bill, and appropriation Bills.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Parvesh Verma demanded a time-bound completion of the probe into the matter by the Privileges Committee.

## Bomb threat emails target Bihar courts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna/Araria/Kishanganj, Jan 8: Several courts in Bihar Thursday received bomb threat emails, prompting searches by security forces on the court premises, officials said.

The threats were later found to be hoaxes. Security was tightened at the Patna Civil court following a bomb threat email received by the authorities. The entire court premises was searched thoroughly but no suspicious object was found, Patna (Central) SP Diksha told PTI.

The search operation was carried out without causing any inconvenience to the people, she said. "Prima facie, the mail appears to be a hoax," the SP said.

"A bomb threat through email was received by one of the senior judges of Patna civil court Thursday morning. It was mentioned in the mail that explosives were planted inside the civil court premises. Security was immediately tightened on the court premises, and the bomb disposal squad and dog squad were engaged in the security drill," an official said.

Offices within the court premises were thoroughly checked, and nothing was found," the SP told PTI.

A case has been registered and the cyber cell has also been engaged to trace the origin of the email.

A decision has also been taken to conduct a security audit of the Patna civil court, she added.

Similarly, a bomb threat email was received by the office of the district judge in Araria district, which triggered a swift emergency response and evacuation, Anjani Kumar, Araria SP, told reporters.

The mail, which said explosives were planted in the civil court, appeared hoax, he said adding a case has been registered and further investigation is on.



(come together). I don't see any other alternative to it," Thackeray asserted.

The Congress, an important partner in the Opposition's Maha Vikas Aghadi in Maharashtra, decided to go solo in the BMC polls citing Shiv Sena (UBT)'s alliance with the MNS which is known for its strident anti-North Indian stand.

When asked whether the MNS will be part of the INDIA bloc in future, Thackeray said, "Currently, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and MNS have come together. Anyone else who wants to come can join us. It's their wish. We are not going to ask them if they want to come along."

On his stormy relations with the BJP, he said, "I am sad and angry that I campaigned for Narendra Modi in 2014 and 2019. Even after helping him twice, he broke my party."

"I was (then) saying that he should be made prime minister. Now, he is saying that I should be finished," Thackeray added.

He also alleged that separating Mumbai from Maharashtra

was the "old dream" of the BJP.

"Now they think that (Uddhav's father and Sena founder) Balasaheb Thackeray is not there (and) they have finished off the Sena on paper. But they can't do so on the ground," he said.

"BJP's tendency is to use and throw. This bad tendency was not there during Atal ji's (Atal Bihari Vajpayee) time. The BJP has turned the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena into a doormat," Thackeray said.

Shinde, notably, split the Shiv Sena led by Thackeray in June 2022, and formed a government with the BJP's support.

On his rapprochement with cousin Raj Thackeray, Uddhav said they have come together "after much thought and understanding."

The once-estranged cousins, fighting for survival after the drubbing their respective parties received in the 2024 assembly elections, announced an alliance last month ahead of the polls in Mumbai and 28 other municipal corporations in Maharashtra.

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The mail, which said explosives were planted in the civil court, appeared hoax, he said adding a case has been registered and further investigation is on.

"Around six to seven families fell ill with symptoms

# NO ALTERNATIVE TO OPPN UNITY: UDDHAV

Use-and-throw has been the BJP's policy and it has reduced the Shiv Sena faction led by Eknath Shinde to a "doormat", the former Maharashtra chief minister said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 8: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray Thursday said there was no alternative to the unity of the Congress and regional Opposition parties at the national level, and blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "breaking" his party.

Use-and-throw has been the BJP's policy and it has reduced the Shiv Sena faction led by Eknath Shinde to a "doormat", the former Maharashtra chief minister said in an interview to PTI Videos ahead of the all-important election to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) January 15.

His cousin, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray, and him will never part ways now that they have come together after several years, Uddhav said.

Responding to the question whether the INDIA bloc still exists, Uddhav said, "Probe a bit and check whether the INDIA bloc is there or not. It is true that we met only once after Parliamentary polls at Rahul ji's (Rahul Gandhi) residence."

Congress unilaterally declared that it wanted an alliance with Shiv Sena (UBT) for the civic polls but not with the other parties (MNS) which are with the Sena, he said.

"(Sharad) Pawar saheb (NCP-SP) is with us (in the BMC polls). Congress is not with us. At the national level we want everyone to be together. We, other regional parties and Congress should be there. There should be an attempt to

ash them if they want to come along."

On his stormy relations with the BJP, he said, "I am sad and angry that I campaigned for Narendra Modi in 2014 and 2019. Even after helping him twice, he broke my party."

"I was (then) saying that he should be made prime minister. Now, he is saying that I should be finished," Thackeray added.

He also alleged that separating Mumbai from Maharashtra

was the "old dream" of the BJP.

"Now they think that (Uddhav's father and Sena founder) Balasaheb Thackeray is not there (and) they have finished off the Sena on paper. But they can't do so on the ground," he said.

"BJP's tendency is to use and throw. This bad tendency was not there during Atal ji's (Atal Bihari Vajpayee) time. The BJP has turned the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena into a doormat," Thackeray said.

Shinde, notably, split the Shiv Sena led by Thackeray in June 2022, and formed a government with the BJP's support.

A case has been registered and the cyber cell has also been engaged to trace the origin of the email.

A decision has also been taken to conduct a security audit of the Patna civil court, she added.

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The mail, which said explosives were planted in the civil court, appeared hoax, he said adding a case has been registered and further investigation is on.

## Tenor of Wangchuk's speech not to spread violence, wife tells SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: Jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, told the Supreme Court Thursday that the tenor of her husband's speech was not to propagate violence, but to quell it, and facts are being manipulated to portray him as a criminal.

Angmo also told the top court that Wangchuk was not provided with the "complete grounds" of his detention and was not given a proper opportunity to make a representation to the authority concerned against detention.

Hearing in the matter remained inconclusive and will continue January 12.

Wangchuk was detained under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) September 26, 2025, two days after violent protests demanding

statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh left four people dead and 90 injured in the Union territory. The government has accused him of inciting the violence.

The NSA empowers the Centre and states to detain individuals to prevent them from acting in a manner "prejudicial to the defence of India". The maximum detention period is 12 months, though it can be revoked earlier.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Angmo, told a bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and Prasanna B Varale that Wangchuk was detained by the administration to prevent him from indulging in the prejudicial activities.

Playing a video of Wangchuk's speech in the top court, Sibal said the climate activist made a speech while breaking his hunger strike.

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## 12 suspended Cong councillors join BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane: Twelve newly-elected councillors in the Ambernath Municipal Council in the district, suspended by the Congress for joining a post-poll front led by the BJP, have formally joined the saffron party. The Congress slammed the BJP over the development, pointing out that while it took action against the councillors, the BJP welcomed them into its fold even though Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had called the alliance unacceptable.

Congress unilaterally declared that it wanted an alliance with Shiv Sena (UBT) for the civic polls but not with the other parties (MNS) which are with the Sena, he said.

"(Sharad) Pawar saheb (NCP-SP) is with us (in the BMC polls). Congress is not with us. At the national level we want everyone to be together. We, other regional parties and Congress should be there. There should be an attempt to

ash them if they want to come along."

On his stormy relations with the BJP, he said, "I am sad and angry that I campaigned for Narendra Modi in 2014 and 2019. Even after helping him twice, he broke my party."

He also alleged that separating Mumbai from Maharashtra

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## CBI arrests Vodafone area sales manager

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: The CBI has arrested an area sales manager of Vodafone for allegedly facilitating the fraudulent issuance of bulk SIM cards, which were used by a cyber-criminal gang involved in large-scale phishing operations, officials said Thursday.

The alleged role of Binu Vidhyadhar, posted as the Vodafone area sales manager, New Delhi, surfaced during a CBI probe into a cyber-criminal gang operating from Delhi-NCR and Chandigarh in December last year.

New Delhi, Jan 8: The winter chill deepened Thursday across northern states, as fringes of Dal Lake and several other water bodies froze in Jammu and Kashmir, and mercury plunged further in the national capital and Uttar Pradesh.

Icy cold wave conditions continued in most parts of Himachal Pradesh as well, with sub-zero temperatures in 13 districts and near-zero in four, officials said.

In Jammu and Kashmir, several places, including Srinagar, experienced the coldest night of the season as cold conditions tightened their grip in Kashmir with a significant fall in the

## international



The directive will slash needless layering of bureaucratic burden and restore common sense to the environmental review and permitting process. NEPA's regulatory reign of terror has ended

KATHERINE SCARLETT | CHAIRMAN OF THE CEQ, US

## CHINA'S TOP DIPLOMAT MEETS ETHIOPIAN PM

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Thursday and called for greater cooperation in infrastructure, green industry, the digital economy and other fields, the Chinese foreign ministry said



of the day quote



## RUSSIAN TANKER SEIZURE

## 3 Indians on board

The Russian Foreign Ministry said information about the Marinera tanker, previously known as Bella 1, that was seized Wednesday by the US coastguard in the North Atlantic, was conveyed to America repeatedly

Wednesday by the US coastguard in the North Atlantic, was conveyed to America repeatedly



Our UK armed forces showed skill and professionalism in support of a successful US interception of the vessel 'Bella 1' while on its way to Russia. This action formed part of global efforts to crack down on sanctions busting

JOHN HEALEY | DEFENCE SECRETARY, UK

Then there is the breakdown of values by our most important partner, the USA, which helped build this world order

FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER | PRESIDENT, GERMANY

## SHORT TAKES

## Syrian army launches new strikes in Aleppo

**Aleppo:** The Syrian army launched new strikes in parts of Aleppo Thursday after ordering residents to evacuate, accusing the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) of using Kurdish-majority areas to launch attacks as clashes entered a third day. The army released more than seven maps identifying areas it said would be targeted in strikes, urging residents to leave immediately for their safety. Its operations command announced a curfew in the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh from 3 pm.

## Israeli forces kill 4 in Gaza

**Cairo/Dubai:** Israeli forces killed at least four Palestinians in two separate strikes in the Gaza Strip Thursday, hours after the military said it had hit the site of a failed militant rocket launch, the latest violence to jeopardise the ceasefire. Medics said an Israeli airstrike killed at least three people and wounded three others, including children, in a tent in the western area of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. Another strike killed a person east of the city, near where Israeli forces operate. There was no immediate Israeli comment on the death reports. Earlier, the military said it had struck a launch site shortly after the firing of a rocket that had failed to reach Israeli territory. It accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire twice in the past 24 hours.

## Separatist leader flees Yemen with UAE help

**Aden:** The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said Thursday that the United Arab Emirates had spirited a separatist leader out of the country by boat in a dramatic twist to a rift between the Gulf powers, as Saudi-backed forces advanced to the port of Aden after losing ground there. The escape of Aidarus al-Zubaidi, head of a UAE-backed southern separatist group, could exacerbate tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, global oil heavyweights and both close allies of the United States. The Saudi assertion that the UAE helped him escape raises the stakes in a crisis that erupted last month when the separatists swept through southern Yemen, including Aden, advancing within reach of the border with Saudi Arabia. Riyadh declared the move a threat to its national security.

## MERCOSUR TRADE DEAL

**Paris, Jan 8:** French farmers blockaded roads into Paris and landmarks like the Arc de Triomphe with tractors Thursday in protest against a sweeping trade deal the European Union is due to sign with South American nations.

Farmers from the right-wing Coordination Rurale union called for the protests in Paris amid fears the planned free trade agreement with the Mercosur bloc will flood the EU with cheap food imports.

They also protested against high costs and excessive local regulation and demanded an end to a government policy of culling herds of cows in response to a highly contagious cattle disease, which they consider excessive.

"We are between resentment and despair. We have a feeling of abandonment, with Mercosur

being an example," Stephane Pelletier, a senior member of the Coordination Rurale union, told Reuters beneath the Eiffel Tower.

## FARMERS' PROTEST PILES PRESSURE ON MACRON

The farmers overran police checkpoints to enter the city, driving along the Champs Elysees avenue and blocking the road around the Arc de Triomphe before dawn, before gathering in front of the National Assembly.

National Assembly President Yael Braun-Pivet was booted and jostled when she stepped outside of the assembly's gates to talk with the Coordination Rurale protesters.

Dozens of tractors obstructed highways leading into the capital ahead of the morning rush hour, including the A13 leading into Paris from the western suburbs and Normandy causing 150 km of traffic jams, the

transport minister said.

Farmers from the FNSEA farm union told reporters, referring to the Mercosur deal.

The protest piles yet more pressure on President Emmanuel Macron and his government, a day before EU member states are expected to vote on the trade accord. Without a majority in parliament, any policy misstep by Macron risks a perilous vote of no confidence in the chamber.



## Pak, Saudi in talks on JF-17 jets for loans deal



Dhaka suspends visa service in India, seeks US visa bond exemption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Jan 8:** Bangladesh's interim government Thursday said it has asked its key missions in India, including at New Delhi, to suspend visa services over security concerns.

Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain told a media briefing at his office that Bangladesh has also sought reversal of a recently imposed visa bond requirement by the United States.

"What I have done is that I have asked our three missions (in India) to keep their visa sections closed for the time being. It's a security issue," Hossain said.

The adviser's comments came after Bangladesh's Deputy High Commission in Kolkata overnight restricted visa services after identical moves in New Delhi and Agartala keeping business and work visas beyond the purview of the restriction.

Bangladesh has diplomatic missions in Mumbai and Chennai as well, where the visa services remained operative.

India had earlier imposed restrictions on visas for Bangladeshi nationals after August 5, 2024, citing security concerns.

Bangladesh ties with New Delhi have remained strained since prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime was ousted following a violent student-led street protest in July-August 2024.

Hossain also told reporters that Bangladesh will pursue diplomatic efforts to seek exemption from the United States' newly imposed visa bond requirement calling the decision "certainly unfortunate and painful for us."

He, however, said the US decision was "not abnormal" as it was not applied for Bangladesh alone and a number of countries were faced with immigration-related challenges in view of the US administration's measure.

REUTERS

**Islamabad, Jan 8:** Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are in talks to convert about \$2 billion of Saudi loans into a JF-17 fighter jet deal, two Pakistani sources said, deepening military cooperation months after the two nations signed a mutual defence pact last year.

The talks underscore how the two allies are moving to operationalise defence cooperation at a time when Pakistan is facing acute financial strain and Saudi Arabia is reshaping its security partnerships to hedge against uncertainty about US commitments in the Middle East.

The mutual defence deal was signed following Israel's strikes on what it said were Hamas targets in Doha, an attack that shook the Gulf region.

One of the sources said the discussions were limited to the provision of JF-17 Thunder fighter jets, the light combat aircraft jointly developed by Pakistan and China and produced in Pakistan, while the second said the jets were the primary option among others under discussion.

The first source said the total deal was worth \$4 billion, with an additional \$2 billion to be spent on equipment over and above the loan conversion. The sources close to the military with knowledge of the matter spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak on the deal.

Pakistan's military and finance ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Saudi Arabia's government media office also did not respond.

Pakistan's Air Chief Zameer Ahmed Baber Sidhu was in Saudi Arabia this week to discuss "bilateral defence cooperation, regional security environment and future avenues of collaboration" with his counterpart Lieutenant General Turki bin Bander bin

Talks follow landmark mutual defence pact

Deal could be worth \$4 billion, one source says

JF-17 exports key to Pakistan strategy

Saudi loan helped avert Pakistan default

Abdulaziz, Pakistan's military said in a statement Thursday.

## ARMS SALES OUTREACH

Pakistan has in recent months stepped up defence outreach as it seeks to expand arms exports and monetise its domestic defence industry.

Last month, Islamabad struck a weapons deal worth more than \$4 billion with Libya's eastern-based Libyan National Army, officials said, one of the country's largest-ever arms sales, which includes JF-17 fighter jets and training aircraft.

Pakistan has also held talks with Bangladesh on the possible sale of JF-17s, as it widens its arms supply ambitions beyond South Asia and the Middle East.

Pakistan's defence minister Tuesday said the success of its weapons industry could transform the country's economic outlook.

"Our aircraft have been tested, and we are receiving so many orders that Pakistan may not need the International Monetary Fund in six months," Khawaja Asif told broadcaster Geo News.

## Foreign troops in Ukraine would be targets: Russia UK and France pledge post-ceasefire deployment

REUTERS

**Moscow, Jan 8:** Russia said Thursday that any troops sent to Ukraine by Western governments would be "legitimate combat targets", after Britain and France announced plans to deploy a multinational force there in the event of a ceasefire.

A Russian Foreign Ministry statement said "militaristic declarations" by a coalition of pro-Ukraine Western governments were becoming increasingly dangerous.

Russia was responding for the first time to a meeting of the "coalition of the willing" in Paris Tuesday at which Britain and France signed a declaration of intent on the future deployment.

French President Emmanuel Macron said it could involve



sending thousands of French troops. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said it paved the way for a legal framework where "British, French and partner forces could operate on Ukrainian soil, securing Ukraine's skies and seas and regenerating Ukraine's armed forces for the future".

Russia "warns that the deployment of Western military units, military facilities, depots and other infrastructure on Ukrainian territory will be

classified as foreign intervention, posing a direct threat to the security of not only Russia but also other European countries," the statement from Moscow said.

"All such units and facilities will be considered legitimate combat targets of the Russian Armed Forces."

It added, "The fresh militaristic declarations of the so-called coalition of the willing and the Kyiv regime constitute a veritable 'axis of war'".

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## Protesting French farmers block Paris streets

French Farm Minister Annie Genevard said Wednesday that, even if EU members backed the accord, France would continue to fight against it in the European Parliament, whose approval will also be required for the agreement to enter into force.

This week the European Commission proposed making 45 billion euros of EU funding available earlier to farmers in the bloc's next seven-year budget and agreed to cut import duties on some fertilizers in a bid to win over countries wavering in their support of Mercosur.

The deal is backed by countries such as Germany and Spain and the Commission appeared closer to winning Italy's backing. Rome's support for the deal would mean the EU had the votes needed to approve the trade accord even without French support.

A vote on the accord is expected Friday.

Farmers protest against Mercosur deal, fearing cheap imports

They also protested against local regulations, cattle culls

Protests add pressure on President Macron

EU vote on Mercosur deal expected Friday

## MERCOSUR VOTE EXPECTED FRIDAY

France has long been a stiff opponent of the trade deal.

Even though Paris has won significant last-minute concessions, the trade deal is a political hot potato for the government, with municipal elections in March and the far right polling strongly ahead of elections to replace Macron in 2027.

"This treaty is still not acceptable," government spokesperson Maud Bregeon told France Info radio.

A vote on the accord is expected Friday.

of the  
day quote

We all know the strength of the sector and the untapped potential of India to be the global food basket; the need is to now channelize the resources

CHIRAG PASWAN | UNION MINISTER

The proposed collaboration with IGX marks a significant step in NSE's efforts to deepen India's commodity derivatives markets

SIRAM KRISHNAN | CHIEF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, NSE

Expanding women's participation through apprenticeships represents a significant opportunity for India's workforce. Female enrolment has grown by nearly 58 per cent over the last three years, yet women continue to account for less than one-fifth of the total apprentice base, indicating substantial untapped potential

NIPUN SHARMA | CEO, TEAMLEASE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

## SHORT TAKES

## Mobile tariffs may go up by 15%

New Delhi: Telecom operators are expected to increase mobile tariffs by 15 per cent after two years, which is estimated to more than double the revenue growth rate of the sector in FY27, a report by analysts said Thursday. The Jefferies report by Equity Analyst Akshat Agarwal and Equity Associate Ayush Bansal expects that a proposed initial public offering of Jio in the first half of 2026 will increase the valuation of the sector as well as support an increase in mobile services rates. "We expect mobile tariffs in India to rise by 15 per cent in June 2026, two years after the last tariff hikes -- in line with trends in the past," the report said. The report projects a hike of 10-20 per cent in mobile tariff by Jio to push its valuation closer to Bharti Airtel, and offer investors a double-digit internal rate of return.

## Bajaj acquires 23% Allianz stake

New Delhi: Financial services firm Bajaj Finserv Thursday announced the completion of the 23 per cent stake acquisition in its insurance subsidiaries - Bajaj General Insurance and Bajaj Life Insurance - from Germany's Allianz SE for Rs 12,190 crore and Rs 9,200 crore, respectively. The acquisition, carried out in alliance with Bajaj Holdings & Investment Ltd and Jamnala Sons Private Ltd, takes the ownership of the Bajaj Group in both insurance companies to 97 per cent from 74 per cent, giving Bajaj Finserv complete control of the insurance companies with 75.01 per cent stake. This acquisition marks the end of a successful 24-year joint venture between Bajaj Finserv and Allianz SE, Bajaj Finserv said in a statement.

## IREDA bags 'Excellent' rating for fifth time

New Delhi: The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) has received the prestigious 'Excellent' rating in the MoU signed with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) for the fifth consecutive year, underlining the organisation's sustained focus on operational efficiency and financial discipline, an official statement issued Thursday said.



Targeted incentives for the emerging industries will be crucial in driving innovation and attracting both domestic and foreign investors

SAMEER GUPTA | NATIONAL TAX LEADER, EY INDIA

## BMW EXPANDS INDIA LINEUP

BMW will launch 10 new cars in India this year, including EVs and its popular MINI brand, while boosting local sourcing to lower costs as luxury car sales in the country remain stubbornly small, its India CEO said. Still, the German carmaker sold a record 18,000 cars in India in 2025, growing 14% from a year ago, and closing the gap with rival and market leader Mercedes-Benz



## PROFIT-BOOKING

## Silver crashes ₹12,500

After touching fresh peak Wednesday, the white metal falls to ₹2,43,500 per kg

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: Silver prices declined sharply from record levels, plummeting Rs 12,500 to Rs 2,43,500 per kg, while gold receded by Rs 900 in the national capital Thursday, amid a rush of profit-booking globally.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal surged Rs 5,000 to touch a record high of Rs 2,56,000 per kg in the previous session Wednesday.

In the local bullion market, the price of gold of 99.9 per cent purity decreased by Rs 900 to Rs 1,40,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) compared to the previous close of Rs 1,41,400 per 10 grams.

"Gold extended its fall on Thursday, weighed down by long liquidation as traders reduced their positions due to ease of safe-haven demand and a stable US dollar," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold fell

## GOLD &amp; SILVER

PTI  
GRAPHICS

10g = ₹1,40,500\*



1kg = ₹2,43,500\*



Spot gold prices for 24-carat in Delhi for per 10 grams

Source: All India Sarafa Association

\*Provisional

and Currency, LKP Securities, said market participants will await Friday's non-farm payrolls report, which is likely to add volatility and provide direction to bullion prices.

About the outlook, Saumil Gandhi of HDFC Securities added, "We expect the ongoing corrective phase in bullion prices to persist for the day, and the market remains under pressure from position unwinding and cautious investor sentiment."

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## RCPL onboards Amitabh Bachchan as Brand Ambassador for Campa Sure



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore, Jan 8: Reliance Consumer Products Limited (RCPL), the FMCG arm of Reliance Industries Limited, has roped in legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan as the brand ambassador for its packaged drinking water brand, Campa Sure, positioned as one of the most affordable offerings in the segment.

The association brings together two iconic Indian names, strengthening consumer trust as RCPL aims to democratise access to safe and affordable packaged drinking water across the country. Since acquiring the Campa brand in 2022 and relaunching it in 2023, RCPL has expanded its beverage portfolio to include Campa Cola, Campa Energy, Raskik beverages, juices, and Campa Sure packaged drinking water.

Announcing the association, Ketan Mody, Executive Director, RCPL, said, "Just like brand Campa, Amitabh Bachchan is a true Indian icon who symbolises trust, purity and authenticity. Access to clean and affordable drinking water is everyone's right, and Campa Sure ensures safe hydration at unprecedented price points. This is a pivotal moment for India's beverage industry."

Expressing his association with the brand, Amitabh Bachchan said, "I am very happy to associate with Campa Sure. I am impressed with its endeavour to help provide clean drinking water access to every Indian."

Campa Sure is available in a wide range of SKUs ranging from 250 ml to 20 litres, catering to diverse consumer needs. Backed by the trusted legacy of Reliance and Campa, the water undergoes over 10 stages of purification, ensuring quality, purity and easy availability nationwide.

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## Air India gets 1st Dreamliner after privatisation

The new aircraft has a three class configuration -- economy, premium economy and business class seats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: Tata Group-owned Air India has taken delivery of the first Boeing 787-9 aircraft after the airline was privatised nearly four years ago.

This is also the first line fit or custom-made Dreamliner for the airline. Generally, line fit refers to an aircraft specifically made for a particular airline.

An official Thursday said Air India completed the title transfer of the Dreamliner at the Boeing's Everett factory in Seattle January 7.

After inspections by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the aircraft, also the first line fit Dreamliner to be taken by Air India after being acquired by Tatas in January 2022, is expected to arrive in India in the next few days.

The new aircraft has a three class configuration - economy, premium economy and business class seats.

The last line fit Dreamliner



that was acquired by Air India was in October 2017 when the carrier was under the government ownership.

According to the official, the latest aircraft is the airline's first wide-body and 52nd overall delivery from the 220 Boeing jets ordered in 2023.

Air India Express has already taken delivery of 51 narrow-body Boeing 737-8s, including its first line fit plane that was inducted in late December.

After Tatas took over in January 2022, Air India placed orders for 350 Airbus and 220 Boeing planes. Out of the Airbus order, 6 A350s have already been inducted into the Air India fleet.

Air India already has 26 B787-8s and 6 B787-9s of erstwhile Vistara which was merged with the airline. Currently, Air India Group has over 300 planes, including 185 aircraft with Air India and the remaining ones

with Air India Express.

The official said a dozen more legacy Dreamliners with refreshed interiors are expected to return to service through 2026. In November last year, Air India CEO and MD Campbell Wilson said Air India Group expects to induct 26 wide-body and narrow-body planes, and operate 81 per cent of its international flights with upgraded aircraft by the end of 2026.

## US SHOCKS

## D-St continues to bleed for 4th day

In the past four days, BSE has tanked 1,581.05 points or 1.84%, and Nifty dropped 451.7 points or 1.71%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 8: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell sharply by nearly 1 per cent Thursday, continuing their weak momentum for the fourth straight session, due to renewed concerns over potential US tariff hikes amid widespread selling pressure in global markets.

Deep losses in metal, oil & gas, and commodity stocks amid unabated foreign fund outflows added to the pressure, analysts said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 780.18 points, or 0.92 per cent, to settle at 84,180.96. During the day, it plummeted 851.04 points, or 1 per cent, to 84,110.10.

A total of 3,158 stocks declined while 1,039 advanced and 170 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 263.90 points or 1.01 per cent to 25,876.85.

"Market sentiment deteri-



orated amid heightened geo-political tensions and global

political trade-related concerns, which weighed on overall risk appetite. Continued foreign institutional selling, coupled with weakness in the rupee, further added to the negative bias. With global cues remaining mixed and the earnings season approaching, trading activity remained cautious and largely stock-specific," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, and Trent were among the biggest laggards.

## SEBI overhauls stockbroker rules after 30 years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 8: Market regulator SEBI has overhauled its stockbroker regulations for the first time in more than three decades, replacing the 1992 rules with the new Sebi (Stock Brokers) Regulations, 2026.

The move is aimed at simplifying compliance, improving clarity, and making it easier for brokers to do business.

Under the new framework, stockbrokers will now be allowed to carry out activities that fall under other financial regulators, as long as they follow the rules prescribed by those authorities.

The market regulator said such activities will be governed by the concerned financial sector regulator, not by Sebi.



The regulator has also rewritten the rules in simpler language, removed outdated provisions, and introduced clearer definitions.

The regulations are now organised into eleven chapters that cover all major aspects of stockbroking, making them easier to read and understand.

Several old schedules have been deleted and relevant parts have been directly added as chapters.

SEBI has also removed repetitive sections and reorganised rules related to underwriting, code of conduct, and other permitted activities.

Key definitions have been updated, including those for clearing members, professional clearing members, proprietary trading members, and designated directors.

The market regulator clarified that proprietary trading refers to trading done by a stockbroker in its own account, while a proprietary trading member is a broker that only trades on its own behalf.

To reduce compliance burden, SEBI has allowed joint inspections by the regulator along with stock exchanges, clearing corporations, or depositories.

Brokers will also be permitted to maintain their books of accounts in electronic form, but they must inform the stock exchange about the location where these records are kept.

SEBI has also revised the criteria for identifying qualified stockbrokers. Brokers with a large number of active clients or high trading volumes will now come under closer supervision and stricter compliance requirements.

## Salemymachine hosts Mega Loan Mela-2026

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Salemymachine.com, India's fast-growing platform for used construction and mining equipment, is organising Mega Loan Mela-2026 at its premises in Pahala, Bhubaneswar. The fair began Wednesday and will continue till January 12.

The inauguration was attended by Anil Narnolia, Chairman, Anish Narnolia,

and Avinash Nigam, Head of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Chola Mandalam Finance,

along with officials from various banks.

The event offers customers easy and quick loan approvals, low interest rates, and simplified documentation for used construction and mining machinery. Salemymachine.com is a leading name in buying, selling, and financing used equipment across India.



# AUSTRALIA RETAIN URN



AGENCIES

**Sydney, Jan 8:** Australia completed a 4-1 Ashes series victory with a five-wicket win in the fifth and final cricket test Thursday.

The Australians bowled England out for 342 on the fifth morning of the series finale and were chasing 160 for victory.

Tension grew with a succession of wickets and a contentious DRS review before Alex Carey hit the winning runs to guide the Australians to 161 for five in 31 overs.

Carey finished unbeaten on 16, Cameron Green was unbeaten on 22, and 39-year-old Usman Khawaja was sent into retirement with a victory. The Australians retained the Ashes with wins in the first three tests, but England was determined to narrow the margin after its drought-breaking win in the Boxing Day match at Melbourne.

**Khawaja's kiss goodbye**

The 39-year-old veteran walked to the crease after Smith was bowled by Will Jacks and Australia was 92-3.

He was given a guard of honor from the England players, shook hands with Stokes and hugged Marnus Labuschagne.

He saluted the crowd, then kneeled and kissed the turf in

front of a "Thankyou Uzzy" sign that was painted onto the field.

**Contentious call**

England's continued bad luck with the decision review

system added extra spice to the last day of the series.

England reviewed umpire Ahsan Raza's not out decision to a caught behind appeal when Weatherald wafted at a delivery from Brydon Carse with Australia on 33-0. DRS technology appeared to show a slight murmur when the ball passed the toe of Weatherald's bat before going through to the wicketkeeper. But TV umpire Kumar Dharmasena deemed there was inconclusive evidence the ball touched the bat.

The England players were stunned, after watching the DRS replays on the stadium screens, and Stokes had to step in to move Carse away from umpire Raza as he demanded an explanation. Stokes calmly approached the umpire, discussed the decision-making process, and got on with the game.

**Brief Scores:** England 384 (Joe Root 160; Michael Neser 4-60) & 342 (Jacob Bethell 154; Beau Webster 3-64) lost to Australia 567 (Travis Head 163; Josh Tongue 3-97) 161/5 (Marnus Labuschagne 37; Josh Tongue 3-42) by 5 wickets

## Crowd breaks 79-yr-old SCG attendance record



The match scripted history as it attracted a record number of crowd to become the highest-attended SCG Test, breaking the record set in the 1946-47 Ashes. While the 1946-47 SCG Test of the Ashes series witnessed a total of 195,253 people attending the game over the course of five days, the fifth game of the 2025-26 Ashes, held at the same venue, recorded a crowd of 211,032 till the fifth day as the hosts clinched the series 4-1. Notably, the Aussies had won the five-game series 3-0 during England's Ashes tour in 1946-47.

**MALAYSIA OPEN**

**Sindhu, Sat-Chi into QF**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kuala Lumpur, Jan 8:** Star shuttler PV Sindhu produced an impressive performance, defeating Japan's Tomoka Miyazaki to book her spot in the women's singles quarterfinals but India's challenge ended in the men's singles at the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here Thursday.

Former world champion Sindhu, returning after a long injury lay-off, defeated the eighth-seeded Miyazaki 21-8, 21-13 in 33 minutes.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, will take on third-seeded Japanese Akane Yamaguchi, a three-time world champion, who defeated China's Gao Fang Jie 21-11 4-21 21-17 in another match.

Top men's pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who won a second bronze at world championships last year, also sailed into the quarterfinals with a 21-18 21-12 win over Malaysia's World No. 17 Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap in 39 minutes.

## VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

### Railways outclass Odisha by 5 wickets



Odisha's Dinesh Kumar Majhi makes his List-A debut Thursday

POST NEWS NETWORK

ing five fours and four sixes at a strike rate exceeding 155.

Baral anchored the innings from the other end, scoring a patient 50 off 65 deliveries to stabilise the middle order. However, Odisha failed to capitalise on their strong starts, losing wickets at regular intervals. Railways bowlers kept things tight, with R K Choudhary and Varun leading the attack, claiming three wickets each to prevent Odisha from pushing beyond 260.

In reply, Railways chased the target with maturity and depth in batting. Sahab Yuvraj Singh

anchored the innings with a superb unbeaten 118 off 134 balls, laced with 11 boundaries, showcasing patience and shot selection under pressure. He found able support in ZA Khan, who played a decisive cameo, remaining unbeaten on 65 from just 43 balls, striking five sixes to swing the momentum firmly in Railways' favour.

Odisha's bowlers tried to mount a comeback, with Govinda Poddar picking up two wickets while maintaining an economical spell. Debabrata Pradhan also chipped in with a wicket, but the lack of breakthroughs in the middle overs hurt Odisha's chances.

The unbroken partnership between Yuvraj Singh and Khan ensured there were no late stumbles, as Railways reached 254 for five in 45.2 overs.

The result underlined Railways' superior finishing ability and game awareness, while Odisha were left to rue missed opportunities despite promising individual performances.

## Vedanta Kalinga Lancers register 2-1 win over SBT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 8:** Boby Singh Dhami produced a late goal as Vedanta Kalinga Lancers registered their second win on the trot, clinching a narrow 2-1 victory against Shrachi Bengal Tigers (SBT) in the men's Hockey India League here Thursday.

Alexander Hendrickx (52') and Dhami (57') scored for the winners, while Aman Yousuf (56') netted for the Tigers.

Kalinga Lancers dominated possession, registering 11 circle entries but couldn't find a significant opening apart from the lone penalty corner in a goalless first quarter.

The Tigers grew into the game in the second quarter with 9 circle entries and 4 shots but were kept at bay by Krishan Bahadur Pathak, who pulled off some exceptional saves in goal for the Lancers.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Navi Mumbai, Jan 8:** Still basking in the glory of their maiden ODI World Cup triumph, India's effervescent women cricketers will return to competitive action in the fourth Women's Premier League starting here Friday, kicking off their build-up to this year's T20 World Cup.

Two-time winners and defending champions Mumbai Indians, led by Harmanpreet Kaur, will face the only other title-winning side in the WPL, Smriti Mandhana's Royal Challengers Bengaluru, in the tournament-opener here at the 'home of Indian women's cricket', the DY Patil Stadium.

The fourth WPL will be held in two stages, in Navi Mumbai and Vadodara, presenting play-

ers from around the world to go against the best and augment their preparations for the T20 World Cup, slated for June-July in England.

MI have the best squad on paper at their disposal led by Harmanpreet with captains of England (Nat Sciver-Brunt) and West Indies (Hayley Matthews) in tow.

Having retained the majority of their squad, MI will be the team to beat given their formidable batting, bolstered by New Zealand's Amelia Kerr, promising Australian Milly Illingworth, and India's dependable Amanjot Kaur.

With G Kamalini at the top, MI could also find themselves facing selection headache with the available talent.

Shabnam Ismail will lead the bowling attack which also includes Saika Ishaque, who will face the challenge of getting her act together after a tough couple of seasons following an impressive debut in 2023.

With Meg Lanning moving to UP Warriorz, mercurial Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues has taken charge of the Delhi Capitals' outfit which carries the burden of tripping at the finish line all three times in the finals.

The Capitals have a dangerous squad and one that can go the distance if things fall in place.

Among Indians, Delhi have the World Cup winners and in-form opener Shafali Verma, Sneh Rana and Shree Charani,

## Anand, Nihal share lead at Tata Steel Chess India Rapid



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 8:** Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand recovered from an early setback to register two victories and emerge as joint leader with Nihal Sarin after six rounds of the Tata Steel Chess India Rapid here Thursday.

Rounds four to six produced fighting chess and frequent shifts at the top of the standings in both the Open and Women's sections. Both Anand and Nihal are tied on 4.5 points.

In round four, the 56-year-old Anand appeared to be pressing in the middle game before a rook blunder allowed Arjun Erigaisi to turn the tables. The young Indian defended patiently and later capitalised on an endgame error to seal the win.

Anand, however, bounced back strongly, picking up full points against Hans Niemann and Volodar Murzin in the next two rounds to return to the top of the standings.

Nihal, meanwhile, surged into joint lead with three successive wins. He first cap-

italised on a knight blunder by Niemann, followed it up with a neat back-rank combination against Murzin, and then showcased fine endgame technique to defeat compatriot Vinit Gujrathi in a knight endgame.

Elsewhere, Aravindh Chithambaram went down to Wei Yi, while R Praggnanandhaa methodically outplayed Murzin on the queenside.

In round five, Anand's clash against Niemann featured opposite-side castling in the Italian, with the Indian defending calmly before converting with active rook play and a superior pawn structure.

Vidit and Praggnanandhaa settled for a quick draw, while Arjun prevailed in a subtle rook endgame by pushing a pawn race from a symmetrical position. Aravindh was also punished for an endgame pawn blunder by Wesley So.

Round six saw Anand deliver a positional master-class in an opposite-coloured bishop middle game against Murzin to stay atop the leaderboard.

In the women's section, Katerina Lagno led the standings with 4.5 points from six rounds.

Among the Indians, Vantika Agrawal was placed fifth with three points, while Hari Dronavalli, Ra Vaishali and Rakshita Ravi were tied on 2.5 points.

Rakshita earlier produced a fearless attacking display to defeat Nana Dzagnidze in an

opposite-side castling battle, while Lagno converted an endgame advantage against Divya and Stavroula Tsolakidou outplayed Vantika in a controlled encounter.

Aleksandra Goryachkina later overcame Divya after weathering early pressure, while Dzagnidze capitalised on an opening error by Carrissa Yip, and Vantika handed Rakshita her first loss of the event.

Vaishali then powered past Rakshita with strong central pawn play, while Lagno defeated Tsolakidou to move into the sole lead.

**KHELO INDIA BEACH GAMES 2026**

### Odisha beat HP 7-0, reach finals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8:

Bhubaneswar gears up to host 16th International Grandmasters Chess Festival (IGCF) Odisha Open, organised by All Odisha Chess Association (AOCA) and E-Sports Association of Odisha (ESPAO), in collaboration with SOA University and the Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar Neeladri from January 16 to 24 at SOA Campus-2.

The event will feature GM's and top-ranked players from across the globe. The event will offer a major platform for local and emerging players to compete alongside professionals.

During a presser, notable dignitaries including tournament director and AOCA secretary Debabrata Bhatt and ESPAO secretary Abhishek Mitra, reception committee chairman Rajeev Sekhar Sahu, Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar Neeladri president Sujit Kumar Rout were present among others.

Tamil Nadu will have a chance to win both the men's and women's gold medals. TN's women's team of Deepika and Pavithra came from a set down

to beat teammates Swathi and Dharshini 19-21, 21-12, 15-6 in the first semi-final and will now face Pondicherry's Revathi and Swetha in the gold medal match.

The men's final will be played between Tamil Nadu's Bharat and Rajesh and Goa's Sawan and Gauns. The KIBG 2026, organised by the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, is being held under the technical supervision of the Sports Authority of India and national sports federations.

Odisha also bagged Gold in Women Regu and Bronze in Men Regu.

AGENCIES

Diu, Jan 8:

Defending champions Odisha registered a dominating 7-0 win over debutants Himachal Pradesh to reach the women's final in Beach Soccer at Khelo India Beach Games (KIBG) 2026 in Diu Thursday. Srijana Tamang, Satyabati Khadia, and Khundongbam Ambalika scored two goals each for the winners.

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Odisha also bagged Gold in Women Regu and Bronze in Men Regu.

Marizanne Kapp and Alana King will handle the bowling workload but Annabel Sutherland's withdrawal has reduced the firepower to some extent.

A lot will hinge on how Mandhana, in the absence of the legendary Ellyse Perry, pulls the RCB side while garnering runs at the top.

Mandhana's form is never really a concern and she will feel confident given the talent base which the 2024 winners have.

**WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE STARTS TODAY**

## Harmanpreet's MI in pursuit of third title



MI could also find themselves facing selection headache with the available talent.

Shabnam Ismail will lead the bowling attack which also includes Saika Ishaque, who will face the challenge of getting her act together after a tough couple of seasons following an impressive debut in 2023.

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