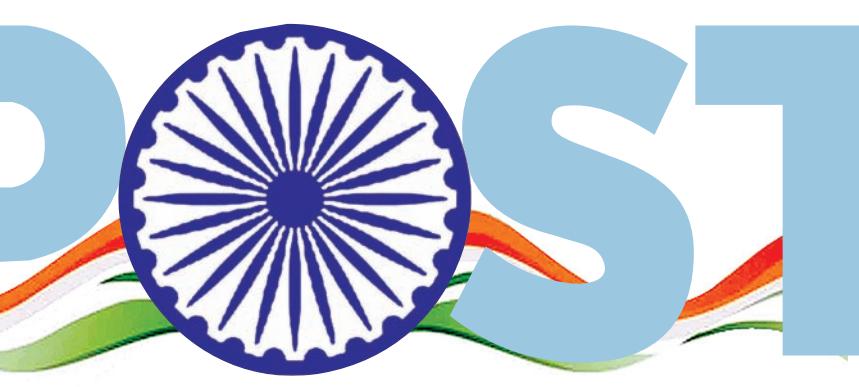


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HOLIDAY NOTICE
The offices of **OrissaPOST** will remain closed on the occasion of Republic Day. Hence, there will be no edition of the paper on January 27, 2026 (Tuesday).
-EDITOR

Veteran journo Mark Tully dies

New Delhi: Veteran journalist Mark Tully, a chronicler of India and an acclaimed author, breathed his last at a private hospital here Sunday, his close friend said. He was 90. The award-winning journalist was ailing for some time and had been admitted to the Max Hospital in Saket for the past week. "He (Tully) was admitted to Max Hospital, Saket, January 21, and died today. He (Tully) was admitted under the head of the nephrology department," a hospital source said.

P6

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Thank God, we are a republic. Now the govt can decide how we celebrate, what we say, what we wear, what we eat...

AM/NS INDIA

INS Surat
INS Mahe
INS Visakhapatnam

SMARTER STEELS
BRIGHTER FUTURES



PATRIOTIC FERVOUR: On the eve of Republic Day celebrations, children participate in a road show 'Meri Jaan Hindustan' organised by 'Vande Mataram' near PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

Musician Abhijit dies at 54

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: The Odia music industry suffered yet another jolt Sunday with the passing of renowned vocalist and music director Abhijit Majumdar after a prolonged battle at the AIIMS here. He was 54.

His demise came close on the heels of the recent death of popular singer Humane Sagar, leaving the music fraternity and lovers across the state in deep mourning.

According to AIIMS sources, he suffered a cardiac arrest earlier in the morning, and despite prolonged

resuscitation efforts, doctors could not revive him.

The musician had been battling multiple health complications, including hypothyroidism and chronic liver disease. He was admitted to AIIMS September 4, 2025, after being diagnosed with Osmotic Demyelination Syndrome. During treatment, he also developed bilateral hospital-acquired pneumonia, a multi-drug resistant bloodstream infection, severe electrolyte imbalances, and multiple nutritional deficiencies.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed deep grief over the demise of the celebrated artiste. P2

Mumbai prof killed at Malad station

Mumbai: Alok Kumar Singh, 33, a professor of NM College in Vile Parle, who was allegedly stabbed to death by a commuter following an argument over alighting from a local train at Malad station, had planned dinner with his wife to celebrate her birthday, police said Sunday. Amid widespread outrage, Government Railway Police arrested the 27-year-old accused, a metal polishing labourer, within 12 hours of the crime, under relevant sections of the BNS. He was remanded in police custody for five days. According to Borivali GRP, Omkar Shinde was apprehended from Kurar area of the western suburb for the murder that took place Saturday evening. A minor argument between Singh and Shinde, while they were alighting from a local train, escalated into a brutal attack, the official said. Police said, Singh left the college shortly after working hours and told his colleagues that he was heading out for dinner, police said, adding Singh was travelling towards Kandivali when the incident occurred.

Padma Shri for 4 Odias



Simanchal Patro



Charan Hembram



Sarat Kumar Patra



Mahendra Kumar Mishra

POST NEWS NETWORK

their continued success.

Patro, a veteran Sakhji Nata and Prahlad Natak folk artiste, is also among the Padma Shri recipients. Renowned for his mastery of traditional theatre, he has dedicated his life to preserving folk forms that demand immense vocal and physical stamina.

Hembram, a noted Santali author and composer, has worked for over three decades to promote tribal art and literature. Often described as a sentinel of the Santali language, he has founded several institutions to impart cultural education to tribal youth and has been instrumental in promoting indigenous dance traditions among women to safeguard their cultural identity.

The third awardee Sarat Kumar Patra comes from a traditional handloom weavers' family

in the Manibandha-Nuapatna Handloom Cluster of Athgarh subdivision in Cuttack district. With over six decades of experience in tie-and-dye and weaving, his fabrics are offered to Lord Jagannath in Puri during festive occasions. He produces a wide range of handloom products, including saris, dhotis and dress materials.

In the field of literature and education, Mishra has been honoured for his extensive work in documenting tribal folklore. An eminent linguist and folklorist, he has devoted decades to recording the myths, songs and proverbs of Odisha's indigenous communities. His research played a key role in the state's adoption of multilingual education, and he is also a recipient of the UNESCO International Mother Language Award for preserving tribal heritage. P6

Winter storm in US: 10K flights cancelled

Las Vegas: A massive winter storm set the stage for a brutal travel day Sunday, with airlines warning of widespread cancellations and delays at some of the nation's busiest airports. Widespread snow, sleet and freezing rain threatened nearly 180 million people - more than half the US population - in a path stretching from the southern Rocky Mountains to New England, the National Weather Service said Saturday night. After sweeping through the South, forecasters said the storm was expected to move into the Northeast, dumping about 1 to 2 feet of snow from Washington through New York and Boston. More than 14,100 flights have been cancelled across the US since Saturday, according to flight-tracking site FlightAware. Over 10,000 of those were scheduled for Sunday.

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The above images are a creative visualisation of INS Surat, INS Mahe and INS Visakhapatnam.

of the
day quoteMINNEAPOLIS
SHOOTING

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Minneapolis, Jan 25: Democrats demanded that federal immigration officers leave Minnesota after a US Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man in Minneapolis, drawing hundreds of protesters onto the frigid streets and increasing tensions in a city already shaken by another shooting death weeks earlier.

Family members identified the man who was killed as Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse who protested President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown in his city. After the shooting, an angry crowd gathered, and protesters clashed with federal officers, who wielded batons and deployed flash bangs. A federal judge has already ruled that officers participating in the federal immigration enforcement surge in Minnesota can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who aren't obstructing authorities, including when these people are observing the agents.

That decision came in a case brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of Minnesota activists. Minnesota and its two largest cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, have also sued the Trump administration, making similar arguments that the federal officers are violating the constitutional rights of Twin Cities residents.

The Minnesota National Guard was assisting local police at the direction of Gov. Tim Walz, officials said. Guard troops were sent to both the shooting site and a federal building where officers have squared off with demonstrators daily. Information about what led up to the shooting was limited, Police Chief Brian O'Hara said.

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that federal officers were conducting an operation and fired "defensive shots" after a man with a handgun approached them and "violently resisted" when they tried to disarm him.

In bystander videos of the shooting that emerged soon after, Pretti is seen with a phone in his hand, but none appear to show him with a visible weapon.



Trump blames Democrats

The president weighed in on social media by lashing out at Walz and the Minneapolis mayor. He shared images of the gun that immigration officials said was recovered and said, "What is that all about? Where are the local Police? Why weren't they allowed to protect ICE Officers?"

Trump, a Republican, said the Democratic governor and mayor are "inciting Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric."

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York was among several Democratic lawmakers demanding that federal immigration authorities leave Minnesota. She also urged Democrats

to refuse to vote to fund US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, saying via social media: "We have a responsibility to protect Americans from tyranny." Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer later said that Democrats will not vote for a spending package that includes money for DHS, which oversees ICE.

Iran unveils mural warning of retaliation

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Jan 25: A new mural unveiled in a central Tehran square Sunday contains a direct warning by Iran to the United States to not attempt a military strike on the country.

The painted image of several damaged planes on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier bears the slogan: "If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind."

There have been no further protests for days, and Trump claimed recently that Tehran had

halted the executions of about 800 arrested protesters - a claim Iran's top prosecutor called "completely false."

But Trump has indicated he is keeping his options open, saying Thursday that any military action would make last June's US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites "look like peanuts." US Central Command said on social media that its Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle now has a presence in the Middle East, noting the fighter jet "enhances combat readiness and promotes regional security and stability."

US STRIKE THREATS

The government will take necessary steps against speculative or very abnormal market moves

SANAE TAKAICHI | JAPANESE PM

China has always been committed to true multilateralism, and will firmly safeguard the international system with the United Nations at its core

GUO JIAKUN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON OF CHINA

Rome's outrage was understandable over the release on bail of the owner of the bar where a deadly fire broke out on New Year's Day

GUY PARMELIN | SWISS PRESIDENT

Another Hindu man burnt alive in B'desh

AGENCIES

Dhaka, Jan 25: There is no letup in brutal killings in Bangladesh as a 23-year-old Hindu man was burnt to death inside a garage in the violence-hit neighbouring country's Narsingdi district, triggering allegations of a premeditated killing and fresh concerns over the safety of minorities in the country.

The victim, identified as Chanchal Chandra Bhoumik, was working at the garage for several years. Chanchal, a native of Lakshimpur village in Cumilla district and had been living in Narsingdi for work. Chanchal



was the middle son of his family and its sole breadwinner.

The incident took place near the Mosque Market area adjacent to Narsingdi Police Lines. According to eyewitnesses and local sources, the attack occurred late Friday night while Chanchal was sleeping inside the garage. Assailants alleged-

ly poured petrol on the shop's shutter from outside and set it on fire, causing the flames to spread rapidly inside.

A video related to the incident showed a person igniting the fire outside the shop, after which the blaze engulfed the garage within moments.

After being alerted, local resi-

dents informed the fire service. A team from the Narsingdi Fire Service reached the spot and, after nearly an hour of effort, brought the fire under control. Once the flames were doused, Chanchal's charred body was recovered from inside the garage. Eyewitnesses said the victim remained trapped in the fire for a long time and died a painful death. "The police are conducting a thorough investigation considering the seriousness of the case. The body has been recovered and CCTV footage seized. Multiple teams have been formed to identify and arrest those involved," a police official said.

SNIPPETS

Nepal Cong dominates Assembly polls

Kathmandu: Nepali Congress party has bagged nine seats followed by CPN-UML with eight and Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party with one seat in Sunday's election to the National Assembly. The Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) - CPN-UML - had reached a pre-poll understanding ahead of the voting for the vacant seats in the upper house. According to the Election Commission (EC), as many as 95.68 per cent votes were polled for the election held from 9 am to 3 pm (local time) and the process had concluded peacefully across the country. EC spokesperson Narayan Prasad Bhattarai said that out of the 18 vacant positions in the National Assembly, election was conducted for 17 seats only as one candidate was elected uncontested. The EC data showed that the Nepali Congress won the highest seats (nine), followed by CPN-UML winning eight and the Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party getting one seat. The Nepali Communist Party has become the second largest party with 18 seats while with the current election results, the CPN-UML's strength has reached 11 in the National Assembly.

B'desh raises concern over Hasina's address in India

New Delhi/Dhaka: Bangladesh Sunday expressed concern over deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina being allowed to address a public gathering in India, saying her remarks could affect the country's political stability ahead of the general elections. In a statement issued in Dhaka, the Foreign Ministry said it was "surprised" and "shocked" that Hasina was permitted to speak at a public event in New Delhi and make political comments against the interim government, the state-run BSS news agency reported. "This clearly endangers Bangladesh's democratic transition and peace and security," the statement said. Hasina, 78, has been living in India after she fled Dhaka following the collapse of her government in August 2024, in the wake of a massive student-led agitation.

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Triple murder rocks Anandapur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Anandapur/Hatadihi, Dec 25: A horrific incident of a triple murder sent shockwaves in Anandapur area of Keonjhar district as three members of a family were hacked to death at Nialiijhara village under Ghasipura police limits Sunday evening.

The incident was the fallout of a long-drawn land dispute between Jitendra and Laxman's families, said a police official.

Anandapur Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Kamal Panda, along with officers from nearby police stations, reached the spot soon after receiving information and started an investigation.

The DSP said initial findings



Investigation in progress at Nialiijhara village OP PHOTO

Baidyanath's son — allegedly attacked the victims with sharp weapons, killing all three on the spot, he stated. Two other daughters of Jitendra ran away to save their lives.

Police have detained the prime accused, Laxman, for questioning, while efforts are underway to trace and apprehend the remaining accused.

The bodies were sent for postmortem, and a case has been registered. Further investigation is in progress, he added.

indicate that the crime was triggered by a property dispute. The accused — Laxman Soren, Baidyanath Soren and

Shubhanshu Shukla gets Ashoka Chakra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Jan 25: Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who created history by becoming the first Indian to visit the International Space Station (ISS), was Monday awarded the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

In June last year, Shukla became the second Indian to have gone to space and the first one to set foot on the ISS as part of the Axiom-4 mission.

Shukla's 18-day space odyssey came 41 years after cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma flew

21, MiG-29, Jaguar, Hawk, Dornier and An-32. On the eve of the Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu approved gallantry awards to 70 armed forces personnel, including six posthumously.

These include one Ashoka Chakra, three Kirti Chakra, 13 Shaurya Chakra, including one posthumous, one Bar to Sena Medal (gallantry) and 44 Sena Medals (gallantry). The Kirti Chakra award winners are Major Arshdeep Singh, NS Doleshwar Subba and Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair.

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Real life 'spider-man' scales Taipei tower without ropes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei, Jan 25: American rock climber Alex Honnold climbed the Taipei 101 skyscraper Sunday without any ropes or protective equipment.

Cheers erupted from a gathered crowd as he started climbing the 508-metre

(1,667-foot) tower earlier Sunday, using the horizontal metal beams to pull himself up with his bare hands. The onlookers cheered again when he paused at one point and turned around to face them, in a red short-sleeve shirt that stood out as he made the climb.

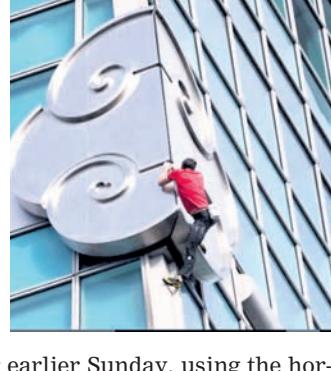
Honnold's free solo climb of the iconic building in Taiwan's capital city was being broadcast live on Netflix with a 10-second delay. The ascent, originally scheduled for Saturday, was delayed for 24 hours due to rain.

The climb drew both excitement and concern over the ethical implications of attempting such a high-risk endeavour on live broadcast.

Honnold, known for his ropeless ascent up Yosemite National Park's El Capitan, climbed up one corner of Taipei 101 using small L-shaped outcroppings as footholds. Periodically, he had to manoeuvre around and clamber up the sides of large ornamental structures that jut out from the tower.

The building has 101 floors, with the hardest part being the 64 floors comprising the middle section - the "bamboo boxes" that give the building its signature look. Divided into eight, each segment has eight floors of steep, overhanging climbing followed by balconies, where he took short rests as he made his way upward.

Honnold isn't the first climber to ascend the skyscraper, but he is the first to do so without a rope. French rock climber Alain Robert scaled the building on Christmas Day in 2004 as part of the grand opening of what was then the world's tallest building.



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MESSAGE OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF ODISHA ON THE AUSPICIOUS OCCASION OF REPUBLIC DAY - 2026

On the auspicious occasion of celebration of Republic Day-2026, I extend my heartfelt greetings and warm wishes to the people of Odisha.

On this sacred occasion, I call upon everyone to take a solemn pledge to transform Odisha into a prosperous, progressive and developed State of our country.

(Hari Babu Kambhampati)

OIPR-



ପବିତ୍ର ସାଧାରଣତତ୍ତ୍ଵ ଦିବସ-୨୦୨୭
ଅବସରରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ବାର୍ତ୍ତା

ପବିତ୍ର ସାଧାରଣତତ୍ତ୍ଵ ଦିବସ ଅବସରରେ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ଭାଇଭାଇଶାମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର
ଆତରିକ ଶୁଭେତ୍ତା ଓ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦ ଜଣାଉଛି । ଆଜିର ଦିବସ ହେଉଛି ଗର୍ବ, ଗୌରବ ଓ
ସଂକ୍ଷର ଦିବସ ।

ଆସନ୍ତ୍ର, ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧିତ ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧକୁ ଆଧାର କରି ଦେଶର ଶକ୍ତି, ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ
ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧିତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ବାର୍ତ୍ତା ।



(ମୋହନ ରତ୍ନ ମାଣ୍ଜୀ)
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

DADLS-83

20 police personnel to receive Guv's Medals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: The Odisha government on Sunday announced the names of 20 police personnel selected for the Governor's Medal for 2025, to be conferred Monday on the occasion of Republic Day.

According to an official notification from the Home department, the awards were approved in recognition of distinguished service across various ranks of the Odisha Police.

In the Inspector General of Police rank, the awardees are Niti Shekhar, IG of Police, Southern Range, Berhampur, and Satyajit Naik, IG of Police, Central Range, Cuttack.

Under the Superintendent of Police and Additional SP category, Prateek Singh, SP of Puri district and Anupama Mohapatra, Additional SP, Vigilance Directorate, Cuttack, have been selected.

In the DSP and Assistant Commandant category, the medal has been awarded to Sachiandana Rath, DSP, STF,



CID-CB, Cuttack and Prasanna Kumar Rout, Assistant Commandant, Security Wing, Bhubaneswar.

The Inspector and equivalent ranks awardees include Karunakar Rout, Inspector of Police, Baripada; Anusuya Senapati, DSP (Deployed), Vigilance Cuttack Division; and Rakesh Prasad Jena, Inspector (Armed), Special Intelligence Wing, Bhubaneswar.

Under the Sub-Inspector

category, the recipients are D Gajapati Dora, SI, Gajapati, Pratap Kalo, SI, Sundargarh and Sankar Prasad Behera, SI (Armed), OSAP 3rd Battalion, Boudh district.

In the Assistant Sub-Inspector and Havildar category, the awardees are Arun Kumar Samanta, ASI, PTI, Byree, Sadhu Singh Samad, ASI, Vigilance Bhubaneswar Division and Pitoraj Kurumi, Havildar (APR), Malkangiri.

The Constable and Sepoy category awardees include Akshaya Kumar Samanta, Constable, Vigilance Sambalpur Division; Firoj Kumar Rout, Constable, UPD, Cuttack;

Manoj Kumar Bisi, Constable, Special Branch, Bhubaneswar; Phula Patel, Constable (OR), Jharsuguda; and Pabitra Kumar Sahoo, Sepoy, OSAP 6th Battalion, Cuttack.

Nat'l service medals for 26

The Central government has released the list of recipients for the Gallantry Medal, President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PMS), and Medal for Meritorious Service (MS), to be awarded to police, fire, home guard, and other personnel for their dedicated contributions in their respective fields. A total of 26 personnel from Odisha across various departments will receive the medals. The Gallantry Medal will be awarded to Atul Krishna Das, Deputy Superintendent of Police; Purna Chandra Padhan, Assistant Sub-Inspector; Ghanashyam Sahoo, Constable; and Thabir Majhi, Constable. Likewise, President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM) will be conferred to Prateek Mohanty, additional director general and Prafulla Kumar Singh, deputy commissioner of police. Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM) will be conferred to 11 police personnel including Sarthak Sarangi, Inspector General, Shriprasad Tamang, Commandant, Subhanarayan Muduli, Additional Superintendent of Police, Pradeep Kumar Aind, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Pranita Kumari Ray, Deputy Superintendent of Police and others. For Fire services, Odisha's Arjuna Behara, Laxman Majhi leading fire fighters, Narendra Kumar Ping, assistant station officer, Alekha Chandra Rout, fire fighter, will be awarded on the occasion. Besides, Ramesh Chandra Mohanty, home guard platoon commander and warnder Sadashiva Pradhan will be awarded. Chief warnder Mandardhar Pradhan, Ronita Badajena, civil defence volunteer, and Prabhat Kumar Sahu, home guard will be awarded.

The episode coincided with National Voters' Day. On the occasion, the Prime Minister appealed to young voters to register their names in the electoral rolls and actively participate in the democratic process. He also stressed the importance of prioritising quality in industry and startups, promoting cleanliness, and enhancing awareness about environmental protection.

Through Mann Ki Baat, the Prime Minister continues to inspire citizens by showcasing stories of grassroots success, innovation and public participation, offering guidance and motivation to people across the country.

The programme at the school was attended by Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, MLA Manoranjan Dyan Samanta, social worker Jagannath Pradhan, senior leaders, and a large number of local residents.

The delegation interacted closely with KISS students and exchanged views with them. The visiting MPs expressed deep appreciation for the campuses and lauded the efforts of KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta in bringing tribal students into the mainstream through education at KISS.

The delegation lauded the efforts of KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta in bringing tribal students into the mainstream through education at KISS.

During his recent visit to Sri Lanka, Samanta held extensive discussions with several eminent leaders and policymakers and invited them to visit KIIT and KISS. Honouring the invitation, a delegation of Sri Lankan MPs arrived to tour the institutions.

The delegation was accorded a warm welcome by KIIT and

KIIS representatives at the airport, followed by a grand traditional reception on their arrival at KISS.

Sri Lankan MPs Chithral Fernando and Milinda Rajapaksha, while addressing the students, said that they belonged to a good institution and advised them to make the best possible use of the opportunities available to them.

In his welcome address, Samanta said that India and Sri Lanka share age-old relations from various perspectives. From ancient times, both countries have maintained close cultural, traditional, commercial and diplomatic ties.

Among others present on the occasion were KIIT University Vice-Chancellor Saranjit Singh, Registrar Prashant Kumar Routray, along with other dignitaries.

KIIS representatives at the airport, followed by a grand traditional reception on their arrival at KISS.

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Vande Mataram finds unified voice in Odisha



Suryabanshi Suraj

and staff members came together, not as participants in a formal event, but as citizens sharing a common emotion - a deep sense of dedication to the nation.

What made this initiative a truly distinctive one was the meticulous groundwork that preceded the event. A comprehensive "Vande Mataram Training workshop" was rolled out across the state to ensure uniformity, participation and inclusivity. District Collectors selected three teachers per block or urban local body - two from schools and one from colleges, giving priority to those having interest towards music and arts.

Odisha was divided into five Mandals (Zones) - Jeypore, Brahmapur, Balasore, Sambalpur and Bhubaneswar, covering all districts of the state. Between December 15 and 30, Mandal (Zone) level training workshops were conducted by experts from Odia Language, Literature and Culture department. This was followed by block and urban local body level training from January 1 to 10, 2026, led by trained mandal trainers, ensuring that the initiative reached the grassroots.

On January 12, educational institutions not only sang Vande Mataram collectively but also organised competitions, recited the Atmanirbhar Bharat Swadeshi Sankalp, and selected one student as the Atmanirbhar Bharat Ambassador. Between January 15 and 31, the celebration will be extended further with state wide collective singing and recognition of outstanding participation.

Institutions under the Skill Development and Technical Education department also actively joined the programme, reflecting its truly cross sectoral nature. Notably, the Odisha Legislative Assembly had earlier unanimously adopted a resolution to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram across the state, lending legislative backing to the initiative.

Summing up the spirit of the moment, it can be said, "One time, many places; One vibe, the Song of the Nation!"

As lakhs of young voices echoed the words that once stirred a nation into freedom, Odisha offered a quiet yet powerful reminder: patriotism, when nurtured through culture and education, becomes not just an emotion, but a shared responsibility.

The writer is the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Higher Education, Sports & Youth Services, and Odia Language, Literature & Culture departments

16TH NAT'L VOTERS' DAY CELEBRATED

3-tier panchayat polls to be held on time: SEC

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Odisha State Election Commissioner (SEC) Madhusudan Padhi Sunday said the three-tier panchayat elections will be held on time.

Speaking to reporters here on the sidelines of an event organised to observe the National Voters' Day, Padhi said, "The Panchayat elections will be held on time, after completion of five year tenure of the existing Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)."

The last rural polls were held in the state in five phases starting from February 16, 2022, and the next elections are due in 2027. He, however, said that the necessary groundwork, including identification of polling booths and availability of ballot boxes, has begun at the revenue divisional level.

The SEC held meetings with district Collectors over the last 10 to 12 days to assess initial preparations and streamline the preparatory steps required for holding the elections, Padhi said.

"Directions have been issued to begin work related to booths, ballot boxes and other required items, and we will follow up on this accordingly," the SEC said.

State BJP president Manmohan Samal had earlier hinted that the panchayat elections in the state will be advanced by six months.

"The upcoming panchayat elections could be held earlier than scheduled, possibly two to three months ahead of the census," Samal said while addressing the party workers and leaders at a meeting.

He had also told the BJP workers that all should remain prepared for the event as the BJP needs to win all the wards, gram panchayats and Zilla Par-

ishad seats.

There are a total of 853 Zilla Parishad seats, 91,916 wards and 6,794 panchayats that will go to the polls.

Meanwhile, Opposition BJD criticised the ruling BJP for making such an announcement of panchayat polls in its party office.

"The BJP has announced a constitutional matter at its party office. Which kind of mentality is this?" asked BJD MLA Arun Sahoo.

BJP leader Babu Singh claimed that his party is ready to fight the rural polls in the state. The party president has given advice to party leaders in this direction, Singh said.

Meanwhile, as part of the National Voters' Day event, a rally involving school and college students was organised from Ram Mandir Square to Lok Seva Bhawan. The programme also featured a street play performed by students to promote voter awareness. Winners of reels, slogan-writing and other competitions organised by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer were felicitated.

On the occasion, Padhi distributed voter identity cards to eight newly-enrolled young voters. For outstanding performance in election-related work, Khurda Collector Amrit Rituraj, Boudh Collector Bibhuti Bhushan Nayak and Subarnapur Collector Niranjan Sahu were awarded certificates and trophies by the chief guest.

Also, district Collectors, sub-collectors, electoral registration officers and deputy collectors (election) from Khurda, Subarnapur, Malkangiri, Sambalpur, Boudh, Nuapada, Sundargarh, Balasore, Keonjhar, Angul, Kalahandi and other districts were felicitated for notable contributions.

Odisha Discoms lead nat'l power rankings

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Tata Power led Odisha Discoms has solidified their position as a national leader in the energy sector, achieving top-tier honours in the 'Fourteenth Integrated Ratings' and 'Rankings Report of Power Distribution Utilities for FY 2025'. The latest report, released by the Ministry of Power evaluated a total of 65 utilities across India. This milestone marks the third consecutive year that the Tata Power-led Odisha Discoms have been recognised on a national platform for their transformative impact on the state's power infrastructure.

TPNODL emerged as a standout performer, securing the ninth position nationally among all discoms. This milestone marks a significant achievement for Odisha, with TPNODL and TPCODL both maintaining the prestigious A+ grade, while TPWODL secured a high-performance A grade.

Commenting on the recognition, TPNODL CEO and Chief of Odisha Distribution Business Gajanan Kale said, "We are dedicated to fundamentally transforming India's power distribution landscape by building utilities that are not only operationally efficient and future-ready but also deeply rooted in the needs of our customers. This national recognition from the Ministry of Power is a testament to our success in placing the consumer at the heart of our digital and infrastructural evolution."

During the interaction, CM Majhi explained the objectives and inspirational messages from the Prime Minister's address.

Chief Minister Majhi also discussed in detail the key motivational messages shared by the Prime Minister during the episode, engaging the students in an open and meaningful dialogue. He urged young

'MANN KI BAAT'

Focus on innovation, learn from startup success: CM to students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Highlighting India's achievements in the startup ecosystem, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday urged students to focus on innovation, creativity and new ideas as they shape their future.

The Chief Minister was interacting with students after listening to the 130th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat along with school students and local residents at the Raj Bhavan Government Upper Primary School in Bhubaneswar.

During the interaction, CM Majhi explained the objectives and inspirational messages from the Prime Minister's address.

Chief Minister Majhi also discussed in detail the key motivational messages shared by the Prime Minister during the episode, engaging the students in an open and meaningful dialogue. He urged young

minds to remain curious, forward-looking and committed to nation-building through innovation.

The episode coincided with National Voters' Day. On the occasion, the Prime Minister appealed to young voters to register their names in the electoral rolls and actively participate in the democratic process. He also stressed the importance of prioritising quality in industry and startups, promoting cleanliness, and enhancing awareness about environmental protection.

Through Mann Ki Baat, the Prime Minister continues to inspire citizens by showcasing stories of grassroots success, innovation and public participation, reflecting its truly cross sectoral nature. Notably, the Odisha Legislative Assembly had earlier unanimously adopted a resolution to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram across the state, lending legislative backing to the initiative.

The response was overwhelming. Over 21 lakh students from over 16,000 educational institutions across the state participated, lending their voices to the national song. Government and private institutions alike joined the programme, creating a moment of synergy that transcended language, geography and discipline. From urban part of the state to rural areas Odisha sang as one. The state wide programme was jointly organised by the Odia Language, Literature and Culture department, the Higher Education department, the School and Mass Education department, and the Sports and Youth Services department. Teachers, students

MAGHA SAPTAMI

THOUSANDS TAKE HOLY DIP AT CHANDRABHAGA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 25: Thousands of devotees Sunday took holy dip at Chandrabhaga beach in Puri district on the occasion of 'Magha Saptami'.

Magha Saptami is observed as the birthday of the Sun God and is held on the seventh day of 'Magha' month of the Hindu calendar.

The devotees waited at the Konark beach for the sun to appear before taking the dip at a pond signifying Chandrabhaga River which does not exist anymore, after which they offered prayers.

According to mythology, Lord Krishna's son Samba was cured of leprosy by offering prayers to the Sun God at Chandrabhaga beach.

The devotees take a holy dip with the belief that this ritual will cleanse them of their sins and rid them of skin diseases.

This year, the ritual started at 4:41am and the sadhus were given the first opportunity to take a dip. Later, others were allowed.

Devotees also offered cooked rice and dried fish (shukhwa) dalma to mythological demon Arkasura in whose name the



Konark area has been named Arkasura Kshetra. The demon was slain by the Sun God. As per tradition, the devotees smash the pots in which the food is cooked before taking the dip.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, state BJP president Manmohan Samal and several other leaders also took part in the festival and offered 'Arati' to the Sun God.

The district administration of Puri had made elaborate arrangements at Chandrabhaga beach for the festival. The Puri District Collector and superintendent of police were present on the spot to monitor the arrangements.

Around 33 platoons (one platoon comprises 30 personnel) of police along with six additional SP rank officers, 20 DSPs, 45 inspectors, 125 sub-inspectors

WEATHER

BBSR CTC FORECAST

Max Temp 32.0° 29.0° Dry weather likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha

Min Temp 13.4° 13.0°

Humidity 80% 96%

Rainfall Nil Nil



WEATHER

POST NEWS NETWORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

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Prayas Group of Institutions operates on temporary CoR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 25: Under guidelines issued by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), all government and private educational institutions are required to obtain permission from the district administration to operate hostels for children below 18 years of age. Officials are authorised to take action and declare hostel operations illegal if run without approval from the district administration.

However, allegations have surfaced that hostels run by various wings of the Prayas Group of Institutions at Tandarada in Korei block are operating without the mandatory permission required under NCPCR guidelines.

The institution is also alleged to be functioning on a temporary Certificate of Recognition (CoR). When contacted, Korei Block Education Officer (BEO) Sudarsan Malick said the Prayas Group of Institutions has been granted a temporary CoR for the 2025-26 academic year.

Irregularities have reportedly been found in the formation of the School Management Committee constituted while seeking the CoR approval. CoR orders prohibit schools from

operating for the benefit of any individual, group, or association, according to standard RTE conditions. Allegations, however, suggest the institution has become a profit-oriented venture benefiting a few individuals.

The issue has triggered discussion amid claims that irregularities involving private educational institutions are allegedly being shielded through a data entry operator working in the 'Samagra Shiksha' office of the district.

According to available information, the first batch of students of the Prayas Group of Institutions has yet to appear for its first matriculation examination. The institution is alleged to have been operating for the past four years on the basis of a temporary CoR by influencing certain officials.

Authorities of Prayas Group of Institutions have also been accused of charging annual and monthly fees far exceeding government-prescribed rates.

Korei BEO Malick said the Prayas Group of Institutions has been granted a temporary CoR for 2025-26 academic year. He added that the institution has applied for permanent recognition and that appropriate action will be taken after the required inquiry.

Samagra Shiksha reportedly issued a show-cause notice (Letter No. 3927 dated Nov. 14, 2025) to the school's secretary. The school later revised the committee and submitted it to the education department, which reportedly accepted the explanation.

Similarly, despite alleged irregularities in the formation of the management committee at Prayas Group of Institutions, the education department is accused of taking no action.

Instead of granting the five-year recognition, the institution was issued a one-year CoR. Allegations claim the recognition was granted without verifying infrastructure and other mandatory requirements, including land ownership, buildings, committee formation through a proper forum and registration status.

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Education eludes children as school shut

POST NEWS NETWORK

LOWER SUKTEL DISPLACEMENT



Bolangir, Jan 25: Education has been brought under the ambit of fundamental rights through the Right to Education Act, which mandates free and compulsory schooling for children aged 6 to 14. However, a starkly opposite picture has emerged from the Lower Suktel submergence area in Bolangir district. In the tribal-dominated Kumiapali village affected by the Lower Suktel project, the children's right to education is being openly violated.

Due to displacement-related issues, the village primary school has remained closed for nearly three years. As a result, more than 35 children from the village have been deprived of both primary and secondary education. Despite children being out of school for such a long period, neither the district administration nor the district education department has made any alternative arrangement.

In the absence of government intervention, a retired school peon, Gandharba Bariha, has stepped in to fill the gap. He is voluntarily providing tuition to children who have been denied formal education. After the failure of the official sys-

tem, the effort of a retired high school peon to ensure learning for village children has become a matter of public discussion.

Ahead of the 2024 general election, the then chief minister Naveen Patnaik hurriedly inaugurated the unfinished Lower Suktel Major Irrigation Project. In 2023, residents of villages in the project's submergence zone were forcibly displaced.

While some families from Kumiapali village were relocated, more than 70 families launched

protests and refused to leave until their pending demands were met. Following the agitation, the district administration did not evict them.

However, the Project Upper Primary School in the village, established in 1961, was shut down. As a result, schooling for the village's children has effectively been halted for nearly three years. Some of the students have enrolled at a school in nearby Kapilbhal village, but poor road connectivi-

ty and other constraints have prevented regular attendance. The village Anganwadi centre has also been closed.

Ankita Bariha, 10, said she has not attended school since it was shut in the village and now studies through private tuition. Sagar Bariha, 11, said the school has been closed for about three years. Though he and his friends want to study, they spend most of their time playing because there is no school.

Concerned by the situation, Gandharba Bariha, a retired peon of Rengali High School, has been providing tuition to about 18 children at his home. He has become a key support for them. Gandharba said many children in the village have talent, but without a school and proper opportunities, their future looks bleak. Reopening a school in the village at the earliest would benefit everyone, he said.

Parents Nepur Bariha and Labanga Bariha demanded that a new colony be developed with immediate facilities including a school, an Anganwadi centre and drinking water facilities. They also urged authorities to make interim arrangements for children's education in the village.

Safety fears grow over NALCO railway line

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Jan 25: Residents of Angul town outskirts have raised serious safety concerns over the movement of NALCO's private trains through residential areas without adequate railway crossings or protective gates.

Locals alleged that NALCO has opened its private railway corridor in the name of development, exposing villagers to constant danger in the absence of proper level crossings, gates and guards. Despite repeated written

complaints, residents claimed the NALCO administration has failed to address the issue.

According to locals, NALCO's private trains operate round the clock through Banda village under Banarpal block, a route that connects four to five panchayats. The absence of railway gates has forced villagers, including school and college students, to cross the tracks risking their lives.

Similar concerns have been reported from villages such as Gotamara, Balaram Prasad, Pingua resident Manoranjan

Sahu alleged that the failure to provide basic safety measures reflected administrative insensitivity. Locals have warned of agitation if immediate steps, including construction of gates and deployment of guards, are not taken.

Meanwhile, NALCO authorities stated that there are 26 level crossings in the peripheral areas of the smelter and power complex, with security personnel deployed at 10 crossings, while others are managed under short- and long-term safety measures.

Non-veg ban: Koraput Collector eats crow

PNN & AGENCIES

Koraput, Jan 25: After public outrage, Koraput Collector Sunday withdrew the order issued two days ago prohibiting the sale of meat, chicken, fish, eggs and other non-vegetarian food items on the occasion of Republic Day.

In a letter issued January 23, Koraput Collector Manoj Satyawan Mahajan had directed the tehsildars, block development officers (BDOs) and executive officers of municipalities to issue an official notification in their jurisdiction prohibiting the sale of meat, chicken, fish, eggs, etc and other non-vegetarian food items on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day Celebration, 2026 in the district.

In a fresh order issued Sunday, the Collector said the instruction was issued purely on the suggestion of the district-level Republic Day preparatory committee.

"Now, after due consideration, the aforesaid letter is hereby revoked with immediate effect," it said.

However, the Collector has not mentioned the reason behind the revocation of the order. Sources said that the ban order was withdrawn following public outrage in the district.

Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka, who had criticised the non-veg ban order of the district administration, Sunday, wrote on X, "The arbitrary and unconstitutional order has now been rescinded.

Constitutional freedoms cannot be suspended at will, especially in a diverse, tribal district like #Koraput. Republic Day is about liberty, not coercion. Jai Johar, Jai Koraput, Jai Hind."

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GREETINGS ON THE 77th REPUBLIC DAY

26th January, 2026

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Each new dawn brings
the possibility of a new
progress.

THE MOTHER



Republic of India

We are aware how, once the month of January gets over, the rest of the year flies past in the blink of an eye. This 2026 also seems ready already to end its innings. True that many more events are bound to take place in the next 11 months that will bewilder humanity at a scale unknown over the past century. We had all gotten used to our daily bickering and screaming that we had completely blocked our ability to hear what the Earth has been trying to tell us for decades. Concerns for the environmental hazards that industries and big businesses have been incessantly creating has reached a pinnacle. On the other side, political power and the greed for immense personal wealth has been very successful in leading major countries to behave in such erratic manner that it looks obvious some of the steps could lead to total annihilation of humankind over a period of time. There are many who laugh at the scientific proof of Nature's destruction. They say that many decades have passed since scientists have been claiming that disasters will befall sooner than expected. Fortunately, science is not always correct and Nature takes its own time to manifest itself in various physical shapes.

While environment and ecological imbalances are issues of huge concern, global politics and economy are taking a completely new form that many people are unaware of or are unwilling to understand. Take for example the case of India. There was a time, not so long ago, when daily reports of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) was the front page news and many thought this was the future for India. Now we hear only about FDI fleeing India lock, stock and barrel. Then came the period when Indians across economic groups believed the country was headed to be one of the largest economies of the world. We Indians started believing we are truly Vishwaguru or World Leader. Now we are in a stage where we are incapable to read the future and act present. The 'now' seems frightening for our establishment and this is visible when our government is incapable of deciding where to go in international affairs. The three genuine Vishwagurus, namely America, China and Russia are visibly carving out portions of the world which they feel they deserve to have as their backyards. We all remember how some in India organised 'havans' and pujas for the victory of Donald Trump for his second term. The dark skinned Kamala Harris seemed anti-Indian and not quite our type. At that time, the white American voted for the white man who won on a card of racism enclosed in a box called Make America Great Again (MAGA). Indians were dismayed when the nation's top leadership was not invited for Trump's inauguration in January 2025. In spite of this Indians were hoping against hope. Then came Operation Sindoora and the ensuing fiasco. Trump claimed to have ended that skirmish over and over again. He was desperate for both India and Pakistan to accept his role. Initially Pakistan kept quiet but later Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif accepted Trump's claim while India kept on refuting POTUS's claims and is now seemingly dumbstruck. Foreign relations create the guidelines for foreign policy. India was at a stage where everyone wanted to befriend it simply because it was a massive market. Today the consumables have changed primarily due to artificial intelligence (AI). When the product changes character, the producer is bound to look at different consumers. AI is no more a joke. It is no more a topic of discussion whether AI can write with its left hand or with its right hand. In current times, India seems to be in a limbo and it could be getting pushed back in time. The rest of the world could pass us by if our leadership proves itself incapable to change to a more humble and practical narrative.

26 January 2026, the completion of 76th year of adoption of the Constitution of India by the people of this country, should be a day to reaffirm our faith in our people and their intelligence while also safeguarding interests of the country.

WISDOM CORNER

Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood. All is riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1788: Arthur Phillip, who had sailed into what is now Sydney Cove with a shipload of convicts, hoisted the British flag and established the first permanent European settlement on the continent of Australia.

1885: British General Charles George Gordon and much of the Egyptian garrison defending Khartoum were killed by Mahdist.

1905: World's largest diamond discovered. On this day in 1905, a diamond that weighed over a pound was found in the Premier Mine in South Africa. When it was presented to the mining office, however, it was dismissed as a worthless crystal and tossed out a window. It was recovered soon after and sold in 1907 to the king of Britain. The gem, which became known as the Cullinan diamond, eventually spawned 9 major stones and 96 minor stones.

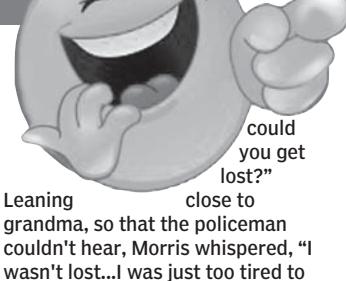
1988: Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Phantom of the Opera, a musical version of Gaston Leroux's melodramatic novel, opened in New York City. It went on to become the longest-running show in Broadway history, closing in 2023.

2011: A massive earthquake struck near Bhuj, Gujarat, India, on the morning of the country's Republic Day holiday, killing more than 20,000 people, injuring 150,000, and causing extensive damage.

LOL

TOO TIRED TO WALK

A police car pulls up in front of Grandma Bessie's house, and grandpa Morris gets out. The polite policeman explained that this elderly gentleman said that he was lost in the park...and couldn't find his way home. "Oy Morris," said grandma, "You've been going to that park for over 30 years! So how



"could you get lost?"
close to
grandma, so that the policeman
couldn't hear, Morris whispered, "I
wasn't lost...I was just too tired to
walk home."

power post

FOCUS CLIMATE CHANGE

HIMALAYAN SNOW DROUGHT

An alarm bell is tolling. A "snow famine," or more accurately, recurrent and intensifying snow droughts, is occurring in the Himalayas due to climate change and weakened weather patterns (Western Disturbances). This decline in seasonal snowpack has severe, far-reaching impacts on India's water security, agriculture, hydropower, and overall ecosystem stability.

The most fertile cradle of Indian civilisation, the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, could be severely hit with water shortage, if blasting and construction activities in the Himalayas are not stopped immediately. Human activities in higher Himalayas beyond Badarinath and other regions during coldest days, not only in India but in neighbouring Pakistan, Nepal and other areas are also contributing to delayed and scarce snowfalls.

A report on Hindu Kush Himalaya by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development confirms this transformation, reporting a consistent 24% decline over the last three years in seasonal snow cover across the region and this is the lowest of 23 years, warning of serious implications for downstream water availability. The Himalayas function as a natural water tower for the Indian sub-continent. Snow accumulated during winter acts as a slow-release reservoir, feeding rivers such as the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra during the dry pre-monsoon months. This buffering role checks seasonal water variability. It sustains agriculture, hydropower generation and urban water supply downstream. That system is now under strain.

Several interconnected forces are driving this snow drought. Weakened Western Disturbances are central. These low-pressure systems historically delivered winter snow and rain to



This decline in seasonal snowpack has severe, far-reaching impacts on India's water security, agriculture, hydropower, and overall ecosystem stability

northern India. In recent years, they have become less frequent, weaker and more erratic, resulting in prolonged dry winters across J&K, Himachal and Uttarakhand. Rising temperatures compound the problem. The Himalayan region is warming faster than the global average.

Another accelerant is black carbon deposition. Soot from vehicles, biomass burning and industrial activity in the Indo-Gangetic plains settles on snow surfaces, darkening them and increasing heat absorption. This accelerates melting and shortens snow cover duration. Together, these factors are transforming Himalayan winters from snow-dominated to rain-dominated — a structural shift with cascading consequences.

Indian agriculture, particularly in the north and northwest, is tightly coupled to Himalayan hydrology. Rabi crops depend on timely meltwater for irrigation. Unseasonal snowfall, sudden rain-on-snow events, or prolonged dry spells can damage standing crops and orchards. Horticulture is vulnerable, as chilling requirements are no longer reliably met. Over time, this volatility threatens food security, farm incomes and rural livelihoods, adding economic stress to regions already experiencing

climate-driven migration.

India's Himalayan states have invested heavily in hydropower, viewing it as a clean energy solution. Yet many existing and planned projects in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh depend on predictable spring-summer snowmelt. Declining and erratic river flows reduce power generation capacity, complicate reservoir operations and increase financial risk.

Global parallels are instructive: in 2022, parts of the Alps experienced exceptionally weak snowmelt, contributing to a 25-year low in Alpine hydropower production by mid-summer. As climate warming accelerates, India's hydropower strategy faces mounting uncertainty.

The Himalayan ecosystem is delicate. Reduced snow cover alters soil moisture, vegetation patterns and wildlife habitats. Alpine flora and fauna adapted to cold conditions are increasingly stressed, while invasive species move upslope. More dangerously, rapid and unpredictable melting raises the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), landslides and flash floods. Rain-on-snow events — increasingly common in warmer winters — amplify runoff and destabilise slopes. The economic fallout is already visible in win-

ter tourism hubs like Auli and Gulmarg. Snow-poor winters have slashed visitor numbers, disrupted ski seasons and hurt livelihoods dependent on hotels, guides and transport services. As snow becomes unreliable, the viability of winter tourism itself is in question, forcing mountain economies to rethink development models built around predictable snowfall.

What is unfolding in the Himalayas reflects a global pattern. Studies project that by 2100, snow droughts could become three to four times more common than in the 1980s, with "warm" snow droughts — where precipitation falls as rain — dominating by mid-century. In 2015, the US West Coast experienced a classic warm snow drought: normal precipitation but record-low snowpack, complicating water management decisions such as those at California's Oroville Dam. These cases underscore that snow loss, not just rainfall deficits, defines future water risk.

Experts agree that adaptation must be multi-layered. Priorities include investing in seasonal water storage, upgrading irrigation efficiency, strengthening real-time snow and hydrological monitoring, and developing cross-sectoral drought management plans and reduced human activities in sensitive ecozones. Lessons can be drawn from the Alps, where flexible reservoir operations, coordinated planning, and nature-based solutions have improved resilience. Integrated water management, community-led adaptation and evidence-based policy will be essential in the Himalayan context.

Ultimately, the Himalayan snow famine is not a distant environmental issue. It is a slow-burn crisis at the heart of India's water, food and energy systems. Policy changes are must to save the mountains and the globe.

SPECTRUM POLITICS

The authoritarian illusion

At virtually every historical turning point over the past century and a half, liberal democracy has been declared moribund. That was the case in the 1930s, when supposedly "efficient" fascist regimes proliferated, and in the late 20th century, when state capitalism propelled the success of the "Four Asian Tigers" (Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan), and then, most remarkably, China. The same can be said today about the rise of authoritarian leaders who seem capable of quick decisions and forceful action, if not long-term planning as well.

For many people, democracy has become a slow luxury in a fast world — an ideal that is difficult to deliver in a world beset with anxiety, division, and violence. The question is no longer whether democracy is just, but whether it remains useful. Not since the late Cold War era have so many people lived under autocratic or illiberal regimes.

In a world of instantaneous comparison, every slow or clumsy response from a demo-

cratic government is measured against the speed and efficiency of authoritarian execution. Every compromise is contrasted with vertical decision-making.

China, where President Xi Jinping has steadily consolidated power, has done the most to advance this authoritarian illusion. The government's long-term planning, infrastructure investments, and supply-chain dominance in strategic sectors such as rare earths, batteries, and renewables create the impression of an omniscient strategic state that looks far into the future and prioritizes the greater good over particular interests.

But this impression assumes that information is never distorted, that errors are openly acknowledged without political sanction, and that truth always prevails over loyalty. This could not be further from reality. Single-party systems that suppress debate and accountability invariably end up confusing discipline and obedience with intelligence and insight. Authoritarians know how to execute, which creates efficiencies in the short term, but their unwillingness to brook dissent comes with long-term costs.

Dictatorships give the impression of producing fewer inequalities than democracies, when in fact they conceal them.

What is portrayed as greater social justice is often nothing more than opacity. Democracies expose societal fractures, whereas authoritarian regimes bury them. The former suffer from telling the truth; the latter survive by making the truth unspeakable. Some people explain away these differences as culturally determined, claiming that certain societies are not ready for democracy.

But democracy is a social consequence, not a cultural tradition. It emerges when individuals become more mobile, educated, and autonomous.

The structural links between free markets and democracy are more illuminating. The market produces an individual who weighs their options, makes their selection, and often changes their mind. What is true of their purchases applies to political opinions. In the long run, no power can sustainably control a free consumer accustomed to choosing.

Dictators' true enemy is the desire for freedom, which is why they highlight democracy's flaws, amplify its divisions, and present its failure as inevitable. It is also why the US under President Donald Trump will do everything it can to weaken European lead-

ers, who are more frightening to America's wannabe dictator than the Russian and Chinese autocrats he often praises.

Democracies will likely experience further setbacks over the next five years, with some societies settling into hybrid regimes combining market mechanisms and prosperity with control and surveillance by mid-century.

But these setbacks need not be definitive. An educated, connected, mobile, aging, complex society cannot be governed sustainably through fear. It may submit for a time. It may consent out of exhaustion. But it always ends by demanding choice and responsibility. Democracy never triumphs once and for all. It returns, in different forms, with different institutions, whenever individual freedom becomes an economic and existential necessity. Even if the path is not linear, and even if violence erupts along the way, it will ultimately prevail, because no other system can sustainably govern free individuals. Democracy is always simultaneously obsolete and ahead of its time.

The writer is Founding President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

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NOT SINCE THE LATE COLD WAR ERA HAVE SO MANY PEOPLE LIVED UNDER AUTOCRATIC OR ILLIBERAL REGIMES



Jacques Attali

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Shifting global politics

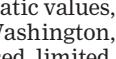
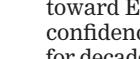
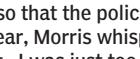
Sir, The global political climate has shifted perceptibly. A sitting US president openly contemplated the use of economic pressure against close European allies to advance territorial ambitions, challenging long-standing principles of sovereignty and alliance solidarity. Although a partial retreat has followed, marked by the suspension of tariff threats and a step back from military rhetoric, the episode has reinforced a deeper unease. It has underscored a growing reality: established norms, alliances and assumptions that once anchored the Western order can no longer be taken for granted. While President Donald Trump's decision to step away from the prospect of force over Greenland offered temporary relief, it does not amount to strategic reassurance. The contours of the proposed "framework" on Greenland remain vague, and it is unclear whether it can satisfy an administration driven by impulse rather than institutional process. More damaging has been the erosion of trust. The tone adopted toward European partners particularly in Davos has weakened the confidence that underpinned NATO and transatlantic cooperation for decades, replacing predictability with persistent uncertainty. The post-war order is fading and no clear successor has yet emerged.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Strategic pragmatism

Sir, India's support for Iran in a UN vote criticizing killings in the country reflects strategic pragmatism rather than ideological alignment. While the resolution was backed mainly by Western nations, India chose to side with Iran, partly to safeguard long-term geopolitical and economic interests. A key factor is India's investment in Iran's Chabahar Port, which gives New Delhi critical access to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Eurasia while bypassing Pakistan. Supporting Iran helps India maintain goodwill and operational stability around this project. The move also signals India's commitment to strategic autonomy—taking independent positions rather than automatically aligning with Western blocs. To manage possible US pressure, India balances its stance through diplomatic engagement, emphasizing shared democratic values, expanding defense and trade ties with Washington, and framing its Iran policy as interest-based, limited, and non-confrontational.

RS Narula, PATIALA





STALIN: NO PLACE FOR HINDI IN TN THEN, NOW AND FOREVER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Chennai, Jan 25: DMK President and Chief Minister MK Stalin Sunday hailed the "Language Martyrs" of the state who sacrificed their lives during the anti-Hindi agitation in the past and asserted that there was "no place" for the language here forever.

Paying tributes on the occasion of Language Martyrs Day, he said, "A state that loved its language like its life, unitedly struggled against Hindi imposition; protested with the same intensity every time it was imposed."

"Language Martyrs Day; there is no place for Hindi then, now and forever (in TN)," the Dravidian party chief said in a social media post.

He shared a brief video of the history related to the an-

ti-Hindi agitation, which peaked during 1965, that included references to the 'martyrs,' besides the contributions of late DMK stalwarts, CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi in the language issue.

"Tamil Nadu, by leading the anti-Hindi agitation, safeguarded the right and identity of various linguistic national races in the sub-continent,"

Stalin added. "I pay my grateful respects to those martyrs who gave their precious lives for Tamil. No more life will be lost in the language war; our love for Tamil will never die! We shall oppose Hindi imposition forever. #LanguageMartyrsDay #StopHindiImposition," the CM said.

The CM also paid tributes at the memorial of Language Mar-

tyrs Thalamuthu and Natarasan, here. Further, he inaugurated their busts at the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) building in the city.

Language Martyrs is a reference to those who had sacrificed their lives, mainly by self-immolation, during the anti-Hindi agitation across Tamil Nadu in 1964-65.

Till this day, the southern state follows the Two Language formula-Tamil and English, even as the DMK has been alleging Hindi imposition through the Centre's NEP 2020.

Meanwhile, AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami and Tamila Vettri Kazhagam leader Vijay also paid tributes to the Language Martyrs.

"Mother Tamil is equal to our life," Palaniswami, also state Leader of Opposition, said in a social media post.

Snowfall will help restore water table in Kashmir: Omar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Srinagar, Jan 25: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Sunday said the snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir has come as a blessing for the people as it has started attracting tourists and will restore the water table also.

Timely snowfall in the valley will also benefit the people as scant precipitation could have led to a drought-like situation, he said.

"This time we had snow in Chilai-Kalan which is a good thing. People (tourists) have started coming here now as they were waiting for snowfall," Abdullah told reporters at Gulmarg, the skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

"If we had not had this snow, we would have faced water scarcity in summer," he said.

Many parts of Kashmir, including Srinagar, received

fresh snowfall Sunday. The snowfall has disrupted traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway. Abdullah said he arrived here Saturday to review the situation in the aftermath of the snowfall.

He expressed satisfaction over the restoration works carried out by various departments.

"The electricity (distribution) system was affected. Against a peak demand of 1700 MW, we have been able to restore 1500 MW. It will take some time to restore electricity in the far flung areas which were severely affected by the snowfall," he said.

The chief minister said he is

in Gulmarg to sort out the issues faced in operationalising the ski drag lift. "I was expecting that the drag lift will be operational by now but there are some issues. I have directed the officials to make the lift operational before I go back," he added.

Asked about BJP leader Tarun Chugh blaming the National Conference for Jammu statehood demand, Abdullah said his party is even against separation of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir.

"They (BJP) have destroyed Ladakh. We have been against separation of Ladakh and we are against separation of Jammu. I can name several leaders (of BJP) and their cohorts in Kashmir who raised this issue," he said. Abdullah said "it is good" if demand for a separate Jammu state is not the stand of the BJP.

2026 polls not just election, but democratic battle: Vijay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mamallapuram(TN), Jan 25: TVK chief Vijay Sunday characterised the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections as a high-stakes democratic battle rather than a mere electoral contest, asserting his party's unique position to challenge established political powers.

"What is going to happen now is not just an election; it is a democratic battle. You are the commanders who are going to lead this democratic battle," Vijay told a gathering of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) cadres here.

The actor-turned-politician declared that only TVK has the guts and attitude to take on the 'evil force' that is ruling right now and the 'corrupt force' that has previously governed the state-obvious references to the ruling DMK and the AIADMK, respectively.

"Whether it is this evil force or that corrupt force, both should not rule Tamil Nadu. Only we have the guts and the attitude to truly and boldly oppose such parties," said Vijay.

He also emphasised the core mission of his political entry, stating, "We are here to save the people and protect the soil from anyone who intends to cause harm."

Claiming that the support to his party transcends traditional political affiliations, and that he is viewed as a family member in homes across the state, the top star committed to a high standard of political integrity, maintaining that "we will never compromise our politics for anyone or anything".

"I will not commit corruption like those before or those here now. I will not touch even a single paisa. Not even a drop of a corruption stain will occur," Vijay vowed.

He also dismissed rumours of political pressure or surrendering to national parties. He alleged that previous administrations were "slaves to the BJP" and claimed the current DMK government had "surrendered indirectly" while maintaining a "facade" through attractive announcements.

R-DAY CELEBRATIONS

Chennai declared high-security red zone; drone ban imposed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 25: As part of the 77th Republic Day celebrations in Chennai, the city police have declared extensive areas in and around Marina Beach as a high-security Red Zone, imposing a complete ban on the operation of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), drones, and all other aerial objects Sunday and Monday.

The ban will apply across key ceremonial routes, with exemptions granted only for authorised government arrangements connected to the Republic Day events. According to an official release, the Red Zone restrictions cover the stretch along Kamarajar Road, where the Governor of Tamil Nadu will hoist the national flag near the Labour Statue, as well as the route traversed by the Governor from Lok Bhavan to Marina Beach.

The route taken by the Chief Minister from his Chittrajan Salai residence to the venue has also been brought under strict security cover.

The city police have announced that a five-tier security arrangement will be implemented along Kamarajar Road and the surrounding areas to ensure the smooth and safe conduct of the celebrations.

As part of these measures, total of 7,500 police officers and personnel have been deployed across the city for special security duties. Security has also been significantly tightened at sensitive and high-footfall locations, including Chennai International Airport, major railway stations such as Chennai Central and Egmore, bus terminals and bus stands, business hubs, beach areas, and places of worship falling under the jurisdiction of the Greater Chennai Police.

Officials said these steps are being taken as a precautionary measure to prevent any untoward incidents during the national event. In addition, lodges and hotels across the city have been inspected by the police. Owners and managers have been advised to remain vigilant and to immediately alert the police if they notice any suspicious activities or individuals on their premises.

Citywide patrolling has been intensified, with special check posts set up at major entry points to Chennai, including Madhavaram, Tiruvottiyur, Maduravoyal, Meenambakkam, Thoraipakkam, and Neelangarai.

Anti-sabotage checks are also being conducted at all vital installations and public transport hubs. These checks are being carried out by Special Control Personnel teams comprising Bomb Detection and Disposal Squads and Dog Squads.



Greeting to all fellow citizens on 77th REPUBLIC DAY

Soul of the Nation – Vande Mataram

Strength of the Nation – Aatmanirbhar Bharat

66

The inherent spirit of the Constitution is

'We the People.'

We must move forward, with the mantra of
'Sabka Prayas'.

When Viksit Bharat becomes the shared dream of
140 crore citizens, collective resolve turns
aspirations into achievements.

- Narendra Modi

99



Live telecast of Republic Day celebration from Kartavya Path 9:25 AM onwards on Doordarshan Network

CBC22201/13/0026/2526

national

of the day quote

The state government has provided over one lakh government jobs so far, while recruitment is underway for 1.43 lakh posts

BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

Whatever Assam does, it does at scale! Today, over 6 lakh tea garden workers received ₹5,000 each as a mark of gratitude for their hard work, which has made tea synonymous with Assam

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

I am overwhelmed by the beauty of Dumbur lake, which comprises 48 islands. It appears that Mother Nature has blessed Dumbur lake abundantly. I urge the domestic tourists as well as foreigners to visit the place and feel as if you are in paradise

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | UNION MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EAST REGION (DONER)

POST OF THE DAY

Fan account
Upper Caste – not happy with Modi
Lower Caste – not happy with Modi
Farmers – not happy with Modi
Women – not happy with Modi
Muslims – not happy with Modi
South Indians – not happy with Modi
So, who is Voting for Modi ?
@Polytikles

SHORT TAKES**ED chargesheets gaming app WinZO**

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Sunday said it has chargedsheeted real-money online gaming app WinZO and its promoters, alleging that players lost ₹734 crore on the platform as the company "embedded" bots and AI to "manipulate" the game's algorithms. According to an official statement, the ED's Bengaluru zonal office filed the prosecution complaint January 23 before a local court designated to try cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Man held for gargling in Golden Temple sarovar

Ghaziabad (UP): A 32-year-old man from Loni in Ghaziabad was arrested after a purported video surfaced on social media showing him gargling and washing his mouth and legs in the holy sarovar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, police said Sunday. The accused, identified as Subhan -- resident of Nasbandi Colony under Ankur Vihar police station area -- was allegedly seen in the viral video, performing the profane act in the sacred pool, hurting religious sentiments of the Sikh community, they said. According to police, Subhan had travelled to Amritsar on January 15 and visited the Golden Temple.

Over 25 booked over vandalism of 'mazar'

Dehradun: A more than 100-year-old 'mazar' (shrine) of Syed Baba Bulleshah, located within the premises of a private school in Mussoorie was allegedly vandalised by a mob, police said Sunday. Police said a case has been registered against 25 to 30 unknown persons in connection with the incident, which took place late Saturday, and an investigation has been launched.



Every legal system is an inheritance and none of us gathered here today invented the courts we are practising in, the procedure we rely upon or the principles we invoke with such familiarity. We all received them by centuries of struggle, debate, compromise, and moral courage. The inheritance confers privilege but then it also imposes restraint and responsibilities

SURYA KANT | CJI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Police suspect rape in Patna NEET aspirant death case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 25: Police investigating the NEET aspirant death case in Patna Sunday said forensic report of the student's clothes has detected traces of semen, a finding that suggests sexual assault of the girl.

Police will obtain a DNA profile from the traces of semen detected in the forensic report, officials said. In another development in the case, Patna Police late Saturday night suspended Hemant Jha, Additional Officer-in-Charge of Kadambuan Police station and the Officer-in-Charge of Chiragupt Nagar police station, Sub-Inspector, Roshni Kumari, on charges of dereliction of duty in the case.

The 18-year-old aspirant and a resident of Jehanabad, who was preparing for the medical entrance exam NEET, was found unconscious in the room of Shambhu Girls Hostel in Patna's Chiragupt Nagar earlier this month. She was staying at the private hostel to take coaching for the examination. She died at a private hospital January 11 after remaining in a coma for days. Her family had alleged that she was sexually assaulted, accusing authorities of attempting a cover-up. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is investigating the case.

A statement issued by the SSP office said, "The forensic report of the student's clothes, which she wore at the time of hospitalisation, detected traces of semen in the leggings. These clothes were provided by the family members of the victim January 10 and further police sent these clothes for forensic examination.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Former Kerala chief minister and Communist leader V S Achuthanandan and actor Dharmendra are among the awardees to receive the second-highest civilian honour, Padma Vibhushan, posthumously for 2026, the government announced Sunday.

In a statement, the government announced 131 Padma awards for the year 2026, including five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri, which includes two duo cases in which the award for two individuals is counted as one.

Ninety awardees are women, and the list also includes six persons from the category of foreigners, NRI, PIO, OCI, and 16 posthumous awardees, it said.

Besides Dharmendra and Achuthanandan, former Supreme Court judge KT Thomas as for public affairs, Hindustani classical musician and violinist N Rajam in art, eminent Malayalam journalist P Narayanan in literature and education have also been awarded Padma Vibhushan, it said.

The Padma Bhushan has also been awarded to playback singer Alka Yagnik, former Uttarakhand chief minister Bhagat Singh Koshyari, actor Mammootty, tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, banker Uday Kotak, Tamil Nadu-based gastroenterologist Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy, US-based Oncologist Nori Dattatreya, social worker SKM Maileanandhan, Avadhanam bhajan performer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Padma Awards

Padma Vibhushan Padma Bhushan Padma Shri

Shatavadhani R Ganesh and General Secretary of SNDP Yogam and SN Trust Vellappally Natesan, the statement mentioned further.

Senior BJP Leader VK Malhotra, JMM Founder and former Jharkhand Chief Minister Shibu Soren and advertising icon Piyush Pandey have been given the award posthumously.

Indian aerospace scientist in Defence Research and Development Laboratory, Chandramouli Gaddamanugu, who directed the Akash Missile system from development to deployment during Operation Sindoor, and ISRO's eminent scientist, A E Muthunayagam, who led the cryogenic propulsion system, have been awarded Padma Shri.

Ramamurthy Sreedher, the former CRPF DG and chief of STF that killed notorious poacher Veerappan and the founder of community radio in India, along with Satyanarayana Nuwal, the founder of India's first licensed private defence company, which pioneered manufacturing of indigenous ammunition, have also been awarded with Padma Shri.

Actors R Madhavan, Prosenjit Chatterjee, Sarabhai Vs Sarabhai actor Arvind Vaidya and Anil Kumar Rastogi, Gadde Babu Rajendra Prasad have

also been awarded Padma Shri.

Former MHA under secretary RVS Mani, former JNU VC M Jagadesh Kumar and former Prasar Bharti CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati, archaeologist Budha Krishna Mani, who led excavations in Ayodhya and Sarnath, have been awarded Padma Shri, the ministry said.

The award has also been given to Ashok Khade, a self-made entrepreneur from a Dalit cobbler family, who established a cutting-edge offshore fabrication company; Ashok Kumar Singh, an agriculture scientist who developed over 25 rice varieties; and Dalit author Asok Kumar Haldar, who wrote inspiring literature while being a railway guard. Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who created history by becoming the first Indian to set foot on the International Space Station (ISS), was Sunday awarded the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

On the eve of the Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu approved gallantry awards to 70 armed forces personnel, including six who would receive the honour posthumously.

These include one Ashoka Chakra, three Kirti Chakra, 13 Shaurya Chakra, including one posthumous, one Bar to Sena Medal (gallantry), 44 Seva Medals (gallantry), six Nao Sena Medals (gallantry) and two Vayu Sena Medals. Meanwhile, 45 individuals chosen for the Padma Shri award in the 'unsung heroes' category on the occasion of Republic Day, sources said Sunday.

TMC, BJP supporters 'clash'

Supporters of West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress and opposition BJP reportedly clashed Sunday evening at Sakherbazar on the southwestern outskirts of Kolkata over the use of microphones by a local club allegedly on high volume. A makeshift stage, where former Tripura chief minister Biplob Deb addressed a public meeting in the afternoon, was also allegedly set on fire during the clash



Dharmendra, Achuthanandan among 131 Padma awardees

Mamata accuses EC of bulldozing Oppn



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the Trinamool Congress chief wrote in the social media post.

She also claimed, "Instead of complying with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's verdict and working as per rules and norms to provide and protect the democratic voting rights of people, ECI is finding newer and newer pretexts in the name of logical discrepancy to harass the people and try to deny them and take away from them their electoral rights!"

After the completion of the first phase of the SIR, the draft electoral rolls, published on December 16 last year, showed the poll panel of bulldozing the Opposition and destroying the foundation of the country's democracy on "behalf of the BJP".

Banerjee alleged that the commission was working as "His Master's Voice" and was busy "snatching away" people's voting rights.

"On behalf of BJP, their Master, they are busy in bulldozing the opposition and destroying the foundation of Indian democracy, and yet they have the guts to celebrate Voters' Day!!" Banerjee wrote on X.

The chief minister has been accusing the EC of holding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, where Assembly polls are due in a few months, in undue haste.

"Election Commission of India is celebrating National Voters' Day today, and what a tragic farce that is! The Commission -- working as His Master's Voice -- is busy now in snatching away people's voting rights, and they have the temerity to celebrate Voters' Day! I am deeply distressed and disturbed by their conduct today,"

She claimed the poll panel has made the exercise "NRC trial for citizens, including particularly those belonging to minorities, scheduled castes and tribes".

"Can you summon-- the way you are doing-- persons above 85, 90, 95 years of age, and even physically challenged persons to physically appear before you to prove their credentials? The stress caused by this kind of illegal pressure is leading to a series of suicides and deaths, and yet you are continuing to do this at the behest of your political masters," Banerjee alleged.

"IndiGo cancels flights to Tbilisi, Almaty, Tashkent, Baku till Jan 28

New Delhi: IndiGo has cancelled its flights to Tbilisi, Almaty, Tashkent and Baku till January 28 due to the prevailing situation in Iran. "We remain vigilant to developments in the region around Iran and are proactively reviewing flight operations, with safety being our highest priority," the airline said in a post on X Sunday. In view of the prevailing situation and after careful assessment, IndiGo said it was cancelling flights to and from Tbilisi (Georgia), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Baku (Azerbaijan) January 26, 27 and 28. For these destinations, the airline flies over the Iranian airspace and due to the current situation, it is avoiding that airspace. Also, some alternative routes take longer time which means more fuel is burnt, according to an official. IndiGo Sunday cancelled flights between Delhi-Tbilisi and Mumbai-Almaty.

J&K: Pak intruder shot dead along IB in Samba

Jammu: A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by the Border Security Force (BSF) troops along the International Border in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir late Sunday night, officials said. The Pakistani national was attempting to sneak into Indian territory through the border outpost check in the Majra area of Ramgarh sector when his movement was picked up by the border guards, officials added. They further informed that the intruder was fired upon after he ignored the warnings and tried to sneak into Indian territory under the cover of darkness. Meanwhile, the body of the deceased is lying close to the IB, officials said, adding the area will be searched with the first light of day Monday, and further details will be shared accordingly.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER BALASORE (ROADS & BUILDINGS) DIVISION-I

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BID INVITATION NO. SE (R and B)

No.B-1016 Letter No. 495 Date : 21.01.2026

BLS-Divn-I-38/2025-26

Letter No. 495 Date : 21.01.2026

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R-DAY
EVE
ADDRESS

India a messenger of peace: Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Amidst geopolitical tensions escalating across multiple continents, President Droupadi Murmu Sunday said India is spreading the message of peace in the world which is crucial to secure the future of humanity.

In her address to the nation on the eve of 77th Republic Day, she spoke about various issues including Operation Sindoar and women empowerment, and also touched upon the topics of Vande Mataram and growing economy of the country.

President Murmu outlined India's position as a "messenger" of peace while reinforcing ancient civilisational commitment to universal harmony.

"In our tradition, we have been offering prayers for peace to prevail in the entire universe. The future of humanity can remain secure only if there is peace in the whole world."

"In an atmosphere marked by conflicts in many parts of the world, India is spreading the message of peace," she said.

During her speech, the President also underscored a firm commitment to national security by highlighting the recent success of Operation Sindoar, a precision strike that dismantled terror infrastructure across the border.

"Last year, our country launched precision strikes against terror infrastructure... terror centres were destroyed, and many terrorists met their



President's address motivates every citizen: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday said President Droupadi Murmu's Republic Day eve address to the nation motivates every citizen to reaffirm their commitment to strengthening democracy. "On the eve of Republic Day, Rashtrapati Ji gave a very inspiring address. She has correctly emphasised the uniqueness of our Constitution and appreciated the collective spirit that has taken our nation forward," Modi said in a post on X. The prime minister said the President's address motivates every citizen to reaffirm their commitment to strengthening democracy, upholding constitutional ideals and building a Viksit Bharat.

end," she said, highlighting country's "self-reliance" in the field of defence that powered the historic success of Operation Sindoar.

Reflecting on the strength of the Armed Forces, the President recalled personal visits to the Siachen Base Camp and sorties in the Sukhoi, Rafale, and the submarine INS Vaghsheer.

"Based on the strength of the Army, Air Force, and Na-

vy, people have complete trust in our defence-preparedness," she said, linking the military readiness to India's ability to advocate for peace from a position of strength.

In her address, President Murmu hailed the rise of "nari shakti" (women power) as the cornerstone of India's journey toward becoming a developed nation by 2047.

She emphasised that the

"active and empowered participation of women is extremely important for the development of the country".

From the depths of rural self-help groups to the frontiers of space and defence, the story of modern India is increasingly being written by its daughters, she said. The President noted that over 10 crore women associated with self-help groups are currently redefining the grassroots economy.

She said that women now make up nearly 46 per cent of representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions and the Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam is set to take political empowerment to "unprecedented heights", ensuring women-led development remains a national priority.

The past year served as a "golden chapter" for Indian women in the global arena, the President said, as she took special pride in the dominance of India's daughters in sports, specifically citing the historic win at the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and victory in the Blind Women's T20 World Cup.

President Murmu highlighted that women are making significant marks in the Armed Forces, space research, and entrepreneurship, proving that no field remains a "traditional stereotype" for the women in the country.

The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign was credited with encouraging girls' education across the country, she said.

41 Chhattisgarh villages to celebrate R-Day for 1st time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, Jan 25: The Tricolour will be hoisted for the first time on the occasion of Republic Day in 41 villages freed from Maoist influence in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, the move emphatically underlining the success in the fight to end 'Red Terror' and heralding of peace and development.

Of these, 13 villages are in Bijapur district, 18 in Narayanpur and 10 in Sukma, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P told PTI.

"The 76th Republic Day will be celebrated for the first time with zeal and enthusiasm in 41 villages of Bastar division. These villages, which had remained disconnected from such national celebrations for decades, are now actively participating in the democratic and constitutional spirit of the nation," he said.

"This positive transformation has been made possible due to the sustained efforts of security forces and cooperation of local communities. Last year, 13 villages hoisted the national flag for the first time August 15. Now, a total of 54 villages, including these 13 villages, will celebrate Republic Day for the first time," the IG said.



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77th गणतंत्र दिवस
Republic Day

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26th January

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HAPPY
Republic Day
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Go with the flow. At least that's what Ganesha suggests where relationships are concerned. You can be your assertive self some other time. Today, you can be large-hearted and fulfill your beloved's wishes, maybe even propose. What say?

TAURUS

You may face conflicts on the personal front and find your thoughts leaning towards aggression today, says Ganesha. There is a possibility of suffering losses due to loved ones. Exercise restraint in arguments with relatives and siblings, advises Ganesha.

GEMINI

Today, your house gets a facelift – a new rug, matching cushion covers, or a brand new kitchen. This will take up most of your time. First, you will be busy furnishing and setting up your home, and then you will spend your time flaunting it to your friends, relatives, neighbours, bosses, colleagues, acquaintances.

CANCER

You will make new friends. You will have a jolly time with them, but some worry or tension will nag you. But Ganesha says that all worries will go away by evening, when you relax with friends.

LEO

The desire and passion for learning is a life-long quest, says Ganesha. It may be that you love to learn, but dissipating the knowledge you have acquired is equally important. So on this day, it is through teaching that you shall learn just how fascinating and frustrating children can be. Give them time and space and you shall find yourself filled with pride as they scale greater heights.

VIRGO

Expenses will mount uncontrollably today, and they will be mostly wasteful in nature. However, positive energies are gathering momentum, and Ganesha says you would do well in making full use of them, both in your personal and professional spheres.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that this is the right time to enhance your personality and prove your talents to the world. Today you will be able to buy new clothes too. It is essential that you pay attention to people close to you.

SCORPIO

Aries, expect the day to be as dull and mundane as those repeat telecasts of sitcoms. But remember, it's not always going to be grey. The dance of planets will usher in new change for a better tomorrow. Keep hoping against a boring day, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha foresees business expansion on your cards. Your friends, relatives and other contacts across seven seas will lend a helping hand to develop your business. And thanks to your super communication skills that make the task easier. The leader in you is all set to conquer the world. Way to go!

CAPRICORN

Confidence is the key to unlock the doors of success. Today, with your positive attitude you will mark your presence and come one step closer to success, says Ganesha. You're not a carefree person. You value your achievements and make every decision wisely.

AQUARIUS

You are a workaholic. With a lot of hard work you have achieved your targets. You are not somebody who will fail to differentiate between a pit stop and the final destination. Your success will motivate you to plan for bigger and longstanding goals.

PISCES

Your patience and capabilities will be on trial today and will be put to test with every work you undertake. Even simple tasks and common goals will seem hard to achieve and will require a considerable amount of effort to complete. Due to the unfavourable position of the planets, Ganesha suggests that it is best to steer clear of trouble unless you wish to step on already sore toes.



CHANNING TATUM REFLECTS ON FATHERHOOD CHALLENGES

Though Channing Tatum shines on screen, he admits parenting is far tougher. At the 2026 Sundance Film Festival, while presenting his thriller *Josephine*, the 45-year-old actor spoke about raising his 12-year-old daughter Everly, saying fatherhood changes daily, requiring balance between being strict and being a loving, supportive friend, always evolving

PORTMAN SLAMS OSCARS OVER SNUBBING WOMEN DIRECTORS

Natalie Portman criticised the 2026 Oscars for overlooking women-directed films. At a press conference, she questioned the Academy's selection process, highlighting persistent systemic barriers for female filmmakers despite critical acclaim and strong performances by women-led projects



JAHNVI on self-worth

Mumbai: Actor Jahnvi Kapoor recently opened up about self-worth, external validation and the gradual evolution of her confidence as an artiste. Reflecting on her professional journey, she shared that true belief begins from within, not from how others perceive or treat you. According to Jahnvi, walking into any room or work environment requires an inner decision to trust yourself first, because once self-belief is established, everything else naturally follows.

She explained that her focus today is not on whether respect comes from the outside, but on doing her work with sincerity, dedication and hard work. Knowing her craft and being prepared on set, she believes, ultimately earns respect organically. The *Dhadak* actor admitted that fame came easily to her because of her family background, which meant attention,

AGENCIES



Rashmika backs powerful women narratives

Mumbai: Moving away from the bubbly, light-hearted roles that once defined her career, Rashmika Mandanna's recent choices, including the intense thriller *The Girlfriend* and the upcoming *Mysaa*, reflect a shift towards darker, female-driven narratives. However, the actor maintains that this transition wasn't a calculated decision. She says she continues to choose projects purely out of genuine interest, without altering her approach to scripts.

What Rashmika truly hopes to see is a larger shift within the industry. She believes there is a growing need for stronger, more meaningful roles for women, stressing that female actors possess the depth, screen presence and capability to deliver powerful performances when given well-written characters. She also expressed her desire to see more women step behind the camera to tell their own stories.

Looking ahead, the actress is eager to explore diverse genres. She shared her fascination with biopics and period films, adding that she avoids limiting herself creatively.

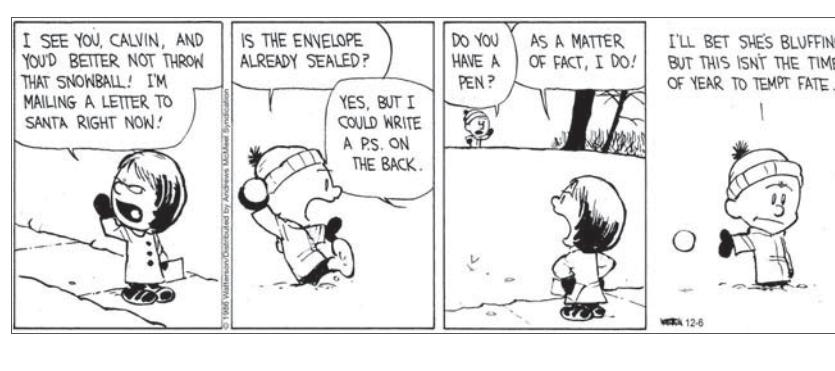
AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



15TH IFFB - DAY IV

'Himalaya's landscape & truth shape my cinema'

Bhubaneswar: The fourth day at 15th Indian Film Festival of Bhubaneswar (IFFB), organised by Film Society of Bhubaneswar, began with repeat screening of three short films—*Two Sinners* by Samir Zaidi, *The Unknown Filmmaker* by Hemant Gaba and *Samvega-Prasada* by Elroy Pinto.

Under Adoor Gopalakrishnan retrospective segment, critically acclaimed *Mathilukal* (1990) was screened. Set in the 1940s during the Indian freedom struggle, the film follows renowned writer Vaikom Muhammad Basheer during his imprisonment in the Trivandrum Central Jail. While in prison, he falls in love with a woman named Narayani, an inmate from women's prison on the other side of the high walls. They never meet face-to-face but exchange messages, flowers, and promises of love over the wall.

Post lunch session, Praveen Mochhal's *White Snow* captivated the audience with cinematic exploration. The film is set in Kargil area, up in the mountains where a mother journeys through Himalayan



Praveen Mochhal in conversation with FSB president Subrata Beura

peaks with her yak Riri and an old cathodic TV to screen her son's film, banned by fanatics and State - a turbulent path that ultimately leads her to liberation.

Joining for a post screening conversation with the audience, Mochhal said, "The film is inspired by the story of a young artist, which made me question the relationship between acceptance and resistance to art. All of my earli-

er works is a reflection of the landscape and truth the place holds on."

Later in the evening, *Bakshabandi*, co-directed by Saumyananda Sahi and Tanushree Das, which premiered at Berlin this year, riveted the crowd with a captivating performance by Tilotama Shome. Both the directors joined for a post screening conversation via online.

"What stood out for me was

the range of perspectives on display at the festival. The post-screening interactions were especially rewarding—candid and genuinely approachable," said Malaika, a 24-year-old graduate from New York University, who is in town to specifically attend the festival. The day ended with screening of Ritwik Ghatak's restored classic *Titas Ekti Nodir Naam*.

PNN

END OF AN ERA

Odisha mourns Abhijit Majumdar

Bhubaneswar: The Odia music industry plunged into deep mourning Sunday with the demise of renowned vocalist and music director Abhijit Majumdar, who passed away at the age of 54 after a prolonged battle with serious illness. His death came close on the heels of the passing Humane Sagar, marking a painful period for Odisha's cultural fraternity.

Majumdar breathed his last at AIIMS Bhubaneswar at 9:02 am Sunday. Hospital sources said he suffered a cardiac arrest early in the morning and, despite sustained resuscitation efforts, doctors were unable to revive him.

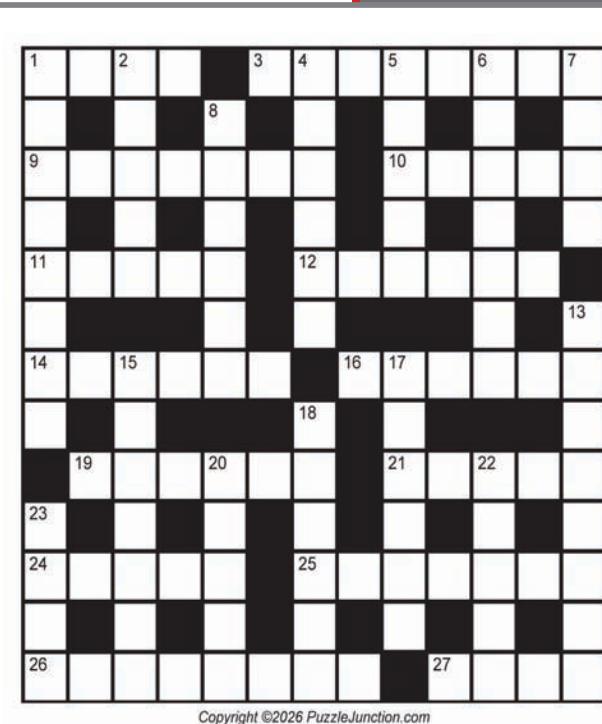
Majumdar began his career with audio albums before making his mark in Odia entertainment industry with *Kasia Kapila* (2000). Over more than two decades, he had composed music in over 60 films and 100 albums, earning Odisha State Film Awards for *Tu Tha*

Mu Jauchi Rushi (2010) and *Trushna* (2022). Some of his most popular compositions include *To Hrudaya Kichhi Kahi-la*, *To Ribhan Fita*, *Ae Rangabati*, *Chhap-pan Chori*, *Barlight Duku Duku*, *Balunga Toka*, *Sajani Sajani*, and *Ame Ta Toka Sandha Marka*. Majumdar has delivered high-energy



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



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3	Laughs softly	27	Flag symbol	Thick soft
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16	Greek goddess of wisdom	15	Having a lot to lose?	
19	Borealis	16	20	
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CROSSWORD

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SUDOKU



SUDOKU

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of the day quote

Nalco eyes 200-300 MW green power capacity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: State-owned Nalco is transitioning its power-intensive smelting operations to renewable energy sources, and plans to set up 200-300 MW of green power capacity backed by battery storage to ensure a reliable supply and significantly cut overall carbon emissions.

Nalco, which currently relies 100 per cent on coal-based captive power plants that account for 80 per cent of its carbon emissions, plans to ramp up its efforts to produce green aluminium, its Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) Brijendra Pratap Singh said.

The smelting process, which constitutes 35-40 per cent of production costs, draws power from in-house coal plants at ₹3.35 per unit, while green power rates hover at ₹4.5-5 per unit, he said.



In a bid to address this, National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco) is pursuing power-purchase agreements (PPAs), developing its own green power plants, and appointing a consultant to devise strategies for securing green energy at minimal cost with round-the-clock availability, he said.

Plans include setting up 200-300 MW of green power capacity backed by battery storage to ensure a reliable supply and significantly cut overall carbon emissions, he added.

Challenges such as higher green power tariffs and supply consistency remain, but the shift is critical for sustainable aluminium production, he explained.

As a part of a green initiative, the company has installed 198 MW wind power plants at various locations in the country and 1020 kWp rooftop solar power plants at its premises for carbon neutrality.

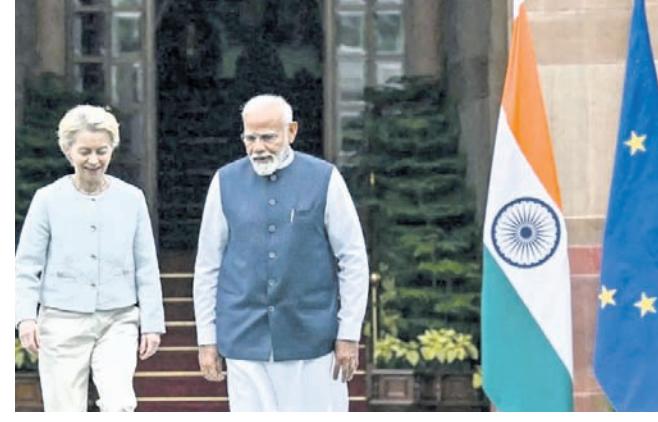


Artificial Intelligence models in healthcare must be tested on large and diverse population datasets before being deployed on the ground to ensure trust, accuracy and inclusion

DR SUNIL KUMAR BARNWAL | CEO, NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

UDAY KOTAK AWARDED PADMA BHUSHAN

The Centre Sunday announced the Padma Awards on the eve of Republic Day, with veteran banker and industrialist Uday Kotak being conferred the Padma Bhushan for his exceptional contribution to the financial sector. The Padma Awards, among the country's most prestigious civilian honours, are given in three categories -- Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. Uday Kotak's journey is seen as one of the most remarkable success stories in India's financial sector

**India, EU to announce closure of FTA talks Jan 27**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: India and the European Union are set to announce January 27 the conclusion of negotiations and finalisation of a free trade agreement, which is aimed at boosting economic ties between the two regions amid disruptions in global trade due to US tariffs, an official said. The pact is nearing the finishing line after 18 years. The talks started in 2007.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has termed this free trade agreement (FTA) mother of all deals the country has signed so far.

The conclusion of talks for the agreement will be announced in the India-EU (European Union) Summit here, the official said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen landed here January 24 for a four-day visit. President of the European Council Antonio Costa and von der Leyen will hold summit talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi January 27. While India and the 27-nation bloc EU will announce closure of FTA talks this week, it will be signed after legal vetting of the text on a mutually agreed date. Implementation of the deal may take some time as it requires approval of the EU parliament. In India, it requires the nod of the Union

cabinet only.

In such pacts, two sides reduce or eliminate import duties on over 90 per cent of goods traded between them. On a number of products (like from labour intensive sectors such as textiles and footwear), duties get eliminated immediately on the first day of implementation of a trade pact. On certain items, the duty gets eliminated or reduced in a phased manner over five, seven or ten years.

The two sides also provide quota-based market access for certain sectors like alcoholic beverages and automobiles (in case of trade deals with Australia and the UK), while no duty cuts are extended for sensitive goods like some agri products to protect small and marginal farmers. Besides, an FTA also liberalises norms to promote trade in services sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, accounting, and auditing.

The NDA government has finalised seven trade pacts since 2014 Australia, the UK, Oman, New Zealand, the UAE, the EFTA bloc, and Mauritius. Before that, several pacts were implemented, and those include the 10-nation Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) bloc, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Agreement), and Singapore.

India's pact with the EU will

be the biggest, as the bloc comprises 27 developed countries. The EU includes France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Denmark, and Sweden.

This pact is important, as the US' imposition of high tariffs has disrupted global trade flows. India is facing steep 50 per cent tariffs. The FTA is expected to help Indian exporters diversify their shipments. It will also help reduce dependence on China.

The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, and the bloc's exports to India constitute 9 per cent of its total overseas shipments.

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was USD 136.53 billion in 2024-25 (exports worth USD 75.85 billion and imports worth USD 60.68 billion), making the EU India's largest goods trading partner. The services trade in 2024 was USD 83.10 billion.

As per reports, the EU, with a GDP of about USD 20 trillion and a population of over 450 million, is the major global trade player, exporting about USD 2.9 trillion and importing more than USD 2.6 trillion annually.

India, with a population of 1.4 billion, exported USD 437 billion in goods and USD 387.5 billion in services. It imported goods worth USD 720 billion and services worth USD 195 billion in 2024-25.

India is looking at zero-duty market access for its labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, handlooms, and some processed foods. The EU, on the other hand, is seeking greater access to Indian markets for its auto exports, wines, and emerging high-tech manufacturing sectors. Sensitive agriculture issues have been kept out of the deal. The EU has been protective of its beef, sugar and rice markets.

India's tax-to-GDP ratio reaches 19.6 pc: Report

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

prehensive tax reforms aimed at simplification, rationalisation and digitisation. These efforts are expected to push the tax-to-GDP ratio higher in the coming years.

Key regulatory steps, including the introduction of the Income Tax Act, 2025, and the rationalisation of corporate tax structures, are expected to improve transparency and make compliance easier.

The new Income Tax Act, scheduled to come into effect from April 1, 2026, is also expected to widen the tax base by bringing more of the informal economy into the formal system. The report's historical analysis shows that tax collections and nominal GDP have started moving more closely together over time. Between FY93 and FY02, this relationship was volatile due to a narrow tax base. However, from FY14 onwards, a clear convergence has emerged, becoming more pronounced from FY23.

Current data suggest that tax elasticity is around 1.1, which is higher than the long-term average. This indicates that tax collections are growing faster than the economy. The report also found a strong positive link between various tax components and macroeconomic indicators.

Adani group, Embraer to make commercial jets in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Adani Group and Brazilian aerospace major Embraer are set to announce next week the plan to set up a final assembly line for civilian aircraft in India, a significant push for the efforts to make planes in the country.

India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and air traffic demand is rising, with airlines expanding their fleets and new airports coming up.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be inked by executives of Adani Defence and Aerospace, and Embraer in the presence of Civil Aviation Minister K Ramamohan Naidu January 27 in the national capital. The plan is

Adani Group is also likely to start manufacturing the aircraft components.

In an invitation sent out jointly by the two companies for a media briefing in the national capital January 27, they said "a historic development in India's commercial aviation 'Make in India's journey will be announced".

Seeking to capitalise on the huge growth opportunities in the Indian market, Embraer, in October 2025, opened its new office in the national capital.

The venture with the Adani Group will be a major fillip for the Brazilian major in India's civil aviation space where it aims to provide cost-competitiveness with its regional jets.

Rupee at 92/USD**Imports, overseas education, travel hurt; exporters gain**

meet its needs for fuels, such as petrol, diesel and jet fuel.

However, it is a relief for the Indian exporters as they receive more rupees in exchange for dollars.

The basket of Indian imports includes crude oil, coal, plastic material, chemicals, electronic goods, vegetable oil, fertiliser, machinery, gold, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones, and iron and steel. Importers need to buy US dollars to pay for imported items. With the dip in the rupee, importing items will get more expensive. Not just oil but electronic items, such as mobile phone components, some cars and appliances, are likely to get expensive.

A weaker local currency means one has to pay more rupees to buy one US dollar for

travel expenses.

Non-resident Indians (NRIs) who send money back home will end up sending more in the rupee value.

Exporters are likely to gain from the depreciation as they

get more INR from one

USD. However, import-dependent exporters may not gain from the weakening of the Indian currency.

In theory, sectors with low import dependence, like textiles, should gain the most from a weaker rupee, while high-import sectors like electronics should benefit the least.

As per the latest data, the country's imports rose by 8.7 per cent to USD 63.55 billion in December 2025. Trade deficit, difference between imports and exports, stood at USD 25.04 billion in December 2025 as against USD 24.53 billion in November last year and USD 22 billion in December 2024.

Crude oil imports, which are mostly priced in USD, rose by about 6 per cent to USD 14.4 billion in December 2025. Sil-

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 25: Russia's decision to showcase its civil aircraft, the Ilyushin IL-114-300 and the Superjet SJ-100, at Wings India 2026 in Hyderabad marks a new phase in India-Russia economic cooperation, with a clear focus on civil aviation, a report has said.

The move signals Moscow's intent to tap into India's fast-growing regional aviation market through long-term industrial partnerships rather than a simple aircraft sales push, according to The Sunday Guardian report.

So far, India's aviation growth has largely been driven by massive aircraft orders placed by Indian airlines with

Airbus and Boeing. However, beyond these headline deals lies a fast-expanding regional aviation segment that connects tier-two and tier-three cities.

Supported by airport expansion and the government's UDAN connectivity scheme, this segment carries an estimated 18 to 36 million passengers every year and represents a multi-billion-dollar opportunity across aircraft purchases, leasing, maintenance, training and operations.

Russia is now aiming squarely at this market. Given the long-standing defence and industrial ties between India and Russia, experts believe New Delhi could be open to allowing Russian manufacturers to set up local production and as-

sembly lines under the "Make in India" programme.

The IL-114-300 is a 68-seat turboprop aircraft designed for short runways and challenging operating conditions. It is positioned as a competitor to aircraft such as the ATR 72-600 and the Dash-8 Q400, which currently dominate India's regional routes.

Industry estimates suggest the aircraft could be priced between \$20 million and \$35 million once mass production stabilises, broadly in line with existing turboprop options.

One of the sources said that in due course after the operationalisation of the FAL, the plan is

NHAI to reduce debt to below ₹2 lakh cr

New Delhi: State-owned NHAI is planning to reduce its debt to below ₹2 lakh crore in the current financial year ending March, a senior government official said Sunday. NHAI's debt liability had peaked at ₹3.5 lakh crore in 2021-22. As of December 31, 2025, the debt stands at ₹2,35,947 crore. "In line with the government policy, NHAI has not borrowed since 2023 and since then the debt liability was reduced by around 32 per cent," the official said.

Further, to reduce its overall debt, he said NHAI has prepaid liabilities of ₹86,000 crore of which ₹50,000 crore was NSSF loan.

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Further, to reduce its overall debt, he said NHAI has prepaid liabilities of ₹86,000 crore of which ₹50,000 crore was NSSF loan.

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SPORTING HONOURS

Amritraj gets Padma Bhushan; Rohit, Harmanpreet Padma Shri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, World Cup winning captains Rohit Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur were among the prominent sportspersons honoured in the Padma Awards for 2026, announced Sunday.

Amritraj was the only sportsperson to receive the Padma Bhushan this year. India's third-highest civilian honour, the award recognises his pioneering role in putting Indian tennis on the global map during the amateur and early Open Era.

A former Davis Cup stalwart, Amritraj had earlier received the Padma Shri in 1983 and the Arjuna Award in 1974. He had reached the singles quarterfinals at Wimbledon and the US Open twice and later served Indian sport in various administrative and ambassadorial roles.

Former India captain Rohit and the 2025 ODI World Cup winning skipper Harmanpreet were among several sportspersons named for the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honour.

Rohit's recognition follows a defining leadership phase in Indian men's cricket. As captain, he guided India to two ICC titles, lifting the T20 World Cup in 2024 and the Champions Trophy in 2025.

After winning the T20 World Cup, Rohit retired from the



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Harmanpreet's Padma Shri comes after a landmark year in Indian women's cricket. In 2025, she led India to their maiden ICC Women's World Cup title on home soil, defeating South Africa in the final at Navi Mumbai

shortest format and later stepped

away from Test cricket in 2025, continuing to feature in ODIs.

Harmanpreet's Padma Shri comes after a landmark year in Indian women's cricket. In 2025, she led India to their maiden ICC Women's World Cup title on home soil, defeating South Africa in the final at Navi Mumbai.

The triumph made her the first Indian captain to lift the Women's World Cup and only the second Indian skipper overall to win a World Cup at home, after MS Dhoni.

Other sportspersons honoured with the Padma Shri include Paralympic gold medal

winning high-jumper Praveen Kumar, Indian women's hockey goalkeeper Savita Punia, veteran coach Baldev Singh, and K Pajaniyal.

Former wrestling coach Vladimer Mestvirishvili, who had trained Olympic medal winners Yogeshwar Dutt and Bajrang Punia, was awarded the Padma Shri posthumously.

The Centre announced a total of 131 Padma Awards for 2026, comprising five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri honours across various fields, including sports, arts, literature and public service.

Abhishek, Suryakumar blaze fifties as Men in Blue seal the five-match series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Jan 25: Abhishek Sharma produced a breathtaking 14-ball fifty while skipper Suryakumar Yadav continued his sublime touch with another attacking half-century as India waltzed through the chase in just 10 overs to seal an eight-wicket win over New Zealand in the third T20I, sealing the five-match series 3-0 here Sunday.

Chasing

a modest 154, India turned the contest into a one-sided exhibition of power-hitting with Abhishek remaining unbeaten on a blistering 68 off 20 balls (7x4, 5x6) and Suryakumar smashing an equally fluent 57 not out off 26 deliveries (6x4, 3x6).

The duo stitched together an unbroken 102-run

3RD T20I

stand for the in just finish with 60 to spare.

Earlier, spinner Ravi marked his with a superb alongside the soned duo of Jas-Bumrah and Hardik Pandya as India strangled New Zealand with disciplined bowling to restrict them to an un-

der-par

153/9.

Abhishek's assault was par-

ticularly stunning as the left-hander

raced to a 14-ball fifty -- the second fastest by an Indian in T20Is, just two balls slower than his mentor Yu-

vraj Singh -- as he dismantled the New Zealand at-

tack with fearless intent.

Ishan, fresh from his match-winning 76 in Raipur, launched for two sixes and a four in a single over, showcasing his imperious pull and lofted drives.

Abhishek, who had fallen for a duck in the previous game, soon joined the carnage, dancing down the

track to hammer Jacob Duffy and collecting 16 runs in an over.

India's powerplay score swelled to 94/2 -- their second-best ever, just one short of the 95 they had posted against England -- effectively putting the result beyond doubt.

Ishan fell for a brisk 28 off 13 balls. But there was no respite for New Zealand. Suryakumar slipped seamlessly into top gear, piercing gaps at will and improvising with his trademark scoops and flicks as Abhishek continued to clear the ropes with ease.

Hardik (2/23) set the tone in the opening over with a stunning backward-running catch to dismiss Devon Conway (1). He then struck in his next over as Rachin Ravindra (4) mistimed a short delivery and Bishnoi at deep square leg completed the formalities.

Bumrah, introduced as sec-ond change, made an immediate impact and was again the pick of the bowling grabbing three for 17. Returning after being rested for the Raipur game, he knocked over Tim Seifert (12) with a full delivery that came in to uproot the off-stump.

Bishnoi then bowled with precision, denying the batters any momentum. Despite that passage, India quickly regained control through tight spells from Bumrah, Hardik and Bishnoi, ensuring New Zealand could never break loose.

Brief Scores:

New Zealand: 153 for 9 in 20 overs (Glenn Phillips 48; Jasprit Bumrah 3/17) lost to **India:** 155 for 2 in 10 overs (Abhishek Sharma 68, Suryakumar Yadav 57; Matt Henry 2/28) by 8 wickets

Former BCCI prez IS Bindra passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 25: Former BCCI president Inderjit Singh Bindra, who played a major role in ushering in a new era of cricket marketing, passed away here Sunday. He was 84. He is survived by a son and daughter.

Bindra served as the board president from 1993 to 1996, and was also the president of the Punjab Cricket Association from 1978 to 2014.

In 2015, the PCA stadium was renamed as IS Bindra Stadium as a tribute to his inspiring work as an administrator.

Jay Shah, chairman of the International Cricket Council, wrote on his X account: "Deepest condolences on the passing of Mr I S Bindra, former BCCI president and a stalwart of Indian cricket administration. May his legacy inspire future generations. Om Shanti."

As Shah mentioned, Bindra was indeed a stalwart of Indian cricket administration, having started the association with the game as an official in 1975.

He was best remembered for his role in organising the 1987 World Cup - then known as the Reliance Cup - in India and it was the first time the global event was moved out of England after the 1975, 1979 and 1983 editions.

Bindra, who retired from cricket administration in 2014, also worked as the principal advisor of the International Cricket Council when Sharad Pawar held the president's post.

Before that in 1994, Bindra had approached the Supreme Court of India to break the monopoly of Doordarshan in cricket broadcasting.

HOCKEY INDIA LEAGUE

Ranchi Royals enter final



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi Royals registered a sensational 3-2 win over Hyderabad Toofans in Qualifier 2 to enter the men's Hockey India League final here Sunday.

Royals will face Vedanta Kalinga Lancers in the title clash Monday.

It was a hat-trick of goals by Tom Boon (13', 15', 34') that ensured Royals book their place in the final, and the Toofans reprieved through Jacob Anderson (5') and Amandeep Lakra (38').

It was top-class action between the two teams with Toofans getting off the blocks with a sensational goal by Anderson in the 5th minute.

The 1-0 lead by Toofans put them in good stead but they ended up squandering it when

they gave away two easy PCs to Ranchi Royals.

Boon struck two back-to-back goals for the Royals with good injection from the experienced Manpreet Singh in the 13th and 15th minute to end an entertaining opening quarter.

It was Boon again at the centre of the action when his team won another PC in the 34th minute. Once again, it was a fine injection by Manpreet that was picked up fiercely by Boon to flick it past the Toofans keeper.

This goal put the Royals ahead by 3-1. But four minutes later, Junior World Cup bronze medal winner Amandeep Lakra struck one for the Toofans to make 3-2.

The final quarter remained tense with Toofans pushing their ante to score an equaliser but Royals did well to hold on to their 3-2 lead.

Alcaraz, who is yet to drop a set at this year's tournament,

Carlos, Novak enter QFs as next generation roars

AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE

Melbourne, Jan 25: Carlos Alcaraz powered into the Australian Open quarter-finals Sunday and Novak Djokovic joined him without hitting a ball, as the next generation roared. Aryna Sabalenka surged through but Coco Gauff was forced to fight at Melbourne Park, where temperatures eased to 22C after the brutal heat of a day earlier.

Top seed Alcaraz was in ominous touch at Rod Laver Arena, dismissing the American Tommy Paul 7-6 (86), 64, 7-5 in a masterclass. The 22-year-old plays home hope and sixth seed Alex de Minaur, who defeated 10th seed Alexander Bublik in straight sets.

Djokovic, chasing a record 25th Grand Slam crown, was scheduled to face Jakub Mensek in the last 16 Monday but the Czech player pulled out injured.

Djokovic will face American ninth seed Taylor Fritz or the fifth seed Lorenzo Musetti of Italy for a place in the semi-finals.

Alcaraz, who is yet to drop a set at this year's tournament,

AUSTRALIAN OPEN



If he can finally break his Australian duck he will become the youngest man in history to win a career Grand Slam of all four majors.

The Spaniard has in the past struggled with precision and a lack of consistency in his serving technique.

He is now sporting a new look serve that has become a handy weapon -- and been compared to Djokovic's serve.

World number one Sabalenka will face impressive 18-year-old American Iva Jovic in a

ka, a two-time Melbourne champion, opened the day on Rod Laver Arena and saw off the brave challenge of 19-year-old Canadian Victoria Mboko.

Sabalenka won 6-1, 7-6 (71) while Jovic destroyed unseeded Yulia Putintseva 6-0, 6-1 in just 53 dominant minutes.

She has yet to drop a set as her title charge gathers pace.

Third-seeded American Gauff faces Ukraine's Elina Svitolina or another 18-year-old, Russian Mirra Andreeva, in the quarter-finals.

Saudi postpones 2029 Asian Winter Games

Dubai: Saudi Arabia's Olympic Committee and the Olympic Council of Asia have agreed to indefinitely postpone the 2029 Asian Winter Games, which were to have been held in a mountain resort in Saudi's futuristic city project NEOM. In a statement released Saturday, the Olympic Council of Asia said the two bodies had agreed "to an updated framework for future hosting" of the games, which will be postponed "to a later date to be announced in due course." It did not provide a reason. Instead, Saudi will host a series of stand-alone winter sports events in coming years, the statement said. The games were to have been held in Trojena, planned as a year-round ski resort in the mountains of NEOM, a \$500 billion project to build a new city in Saudi Arabia's western desert on the Red Sea. The kingdom is slated to host a series of major events in coming years which require tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure investments. But with oil trading at around \$60 a barrel as global demand slows, affecting the kingdom's revenues, the postponement of the Asian Games was an indication that the ambitious projects are coming under pressure.

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Mbappe's brace lifts Real Madrid to the top

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

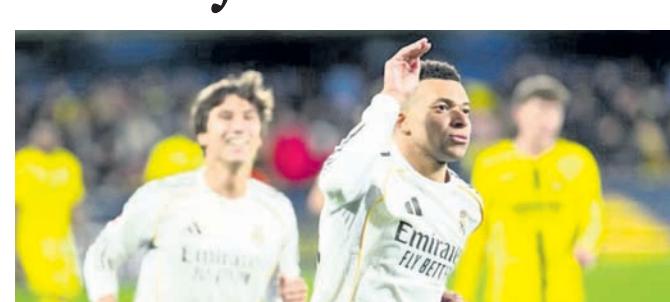
Barcelona, Jan 25: Despite a coaching change and some poor play that irked its fans, Real Madrid returned to the top of La Liga after Kylian Mbappe scored a brace in a 2-0 win at Villarreal.

Mbappe scored early in the second half and added an injury-time penalty Saturday to ensure Madrid rose two points above Barcelona, which will need to beat bottom side Real Oviedo at home Sunday to reclaim first place.

Those were Mbappe's La Liga-leading 20th and 21st goals in 20 appearances by the France star.

Madrid has stayed close to Barcelona even though it has not been playing up to the standards of its demanding club executives and supporters.

The club fired coach Xabi Alonso after it lost to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final two weeks ago, only for the



team to also endure an embarrassing exit to a second-tier team in the Copa del Rey in the debut of his replacement, Alvaro Arbeloa.

The sudden coaching change and poor play sparked fan protests during Madrid's last two home games, a pair of wins in La Liga and the Champions League.

But a loss by Barcelona at Real Sociedad last weekend opened the door for Madrid to slip ahead at Villarreal. And

LA LIGA

starting lineup.

Morocco forward Brahim Diaz, who missed a penalty that could have given Morocco a lead late in stoppage time, went on as a second-half substitute for Madrid.

Valencia edged Espanyol 3-2 after the referee awarded the host a questionable penalty in injury time when Ruben Sanchez was adjudged to have fouled Lucas Beltran.

Sevilla fought back for a 2-1 win over Athletic Bilbao at home. That snapped a five-game winless run for Sevilla.

Osasuna also won at Rayo Vallecano 3-1 to move into eighth place.

Only four points separate Osasuna and Getafe down in 17th in a compact lower half of the table that includes Rayo, Sevilla and Athletic.

A minute of silence was held before kickoff in all of this weekend's games for the victims of two deadly train wrecks in Spain this week.

The AFC Asian Cup runs from April 30 to May 17 in China.

The AIFA said the 43-year-old Conti has joined the Indian

U-17 women's training camp in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, where the Young Tigresses are preparing for the continental tournament.

Nivetha Ramadoss will continue in the role of assistant coach.

Conti's first official assignment will be the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship 2026 that will take place in Pokhara, Nepal, from January 31 to February 7. India will participate in the tournament with their U-17 squad, consisting of players born in or after 2009.

