



## Kiara's U-turn

Kiara Advani removes name of choreographer Jani Master, a POCSO accused, from her Instagram post after backlash

LEISURE | P2



## Charge denied

Ousted B'desh PM Hasina's son dismisses allegation of corruption in the 2015 awarding of nuclear power contract

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## FPI inflows drop

Foreign investors scale back their investments in Indian equities in 2024, with net inflows amounting to over ₹5,000cr

BUSINESS | P11



## Eyes on Rohit

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma's batting position will be in focus against Australia in the 'Boxing Day' Test Thursday

SPORTS | P12

## Giriraj Singh bats for Bharat Ratna to Naveen, Nitish

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Dec 25: Union Minister Giriraj Singh has demanded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, for Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and former Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik. Speaking to the media in Begusarai, Singh highlighted the transformative contributions of both leaders to their respective states.

Singh praised Nitish Kumar for his leadership in pulling Bihar out of what he referred to as the "jungle raj" era marked by mismanagement, crumbling infrastructure, and declining public services under Lalu Prasad Yadav's administration.

He pointed out the stark improvements in roads, hospitals, and schools, attributing these advancements to Nitish Kumar's governance.

Similarly, he lauded Naveen Patnaik's enduring tenure in Odisha, commending his dedication and service over decades, which have played a pivotal role in the state's development.

"The contributions of such leaders should be recognised at the national level with the Bharat Ratna, as their efforts have significantly impacted the lives of millions and set benchmarks in governance," Singh said.

## VHF sets seized from fishermen's houses

Kendrapara: Police Wednesday seized nine illegal very high frequency (VHF) sets from the homes of seven persons spread across four villages in Kendrapara district, officials said. "Acting on a tip-off, police conducted raids and seized the sets from Talachua, Amarabati, Bhanjaprasad, and Sailendranagar villages," police added. There have been reports of marine fishermen illegally installing VHF sets in seaside village homes to alert trawler operators about the movements of Forest department patrol vessels at sea.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Before One Nation, One Election, can we at least have One Nation, One GST number?

## AZERBAIJAN AIRLINES PLANE CRASH

REUTERS

Astana/Tbilisi/Baku, Dec 25: An Embraer passenger jet flying from Azerbaijan to Russia crashed near the city of Aktau in Kazakhstan Wednesday, killing 38 people while 29 survivors received hospital treatment, Kazakh authorities said. Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243 had flown hundreds of miles off its scheduled route to crash on the opposite shore of the Caspian Sea, after what Russia's aviation watchdog said was an emergency that may have been caused by a bird strike. But an aviation expert suggested that cause seemed unlikely.

Officials did not immediately explain why it had crossed the sea, but the crash came shortly after drone strikes hit southern Russia. Drone activity has shut airports in the area in the past and the nearest Russian airport on the plane's flight path was closed Wednesday morning.

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said according to information he had received, the plane changed course due to poor weather, but he added the cause of the crash was unknown and must be fully investigated. "This is a great tragedy that has become a tremendous sorrow for the Azerbaijani people," he said.

Video of the crash showed the plane descending rapidly before bursting into flames as it hit the seashore and thick black smoke then rising. Bloodied and bruised passengers could be seen stumbling from a piece of the fuselage that had remained intact.

Reuters was able to verify



from visible landmarks that the video was filmed on the Caspian shore near Aktau.

Sixty-two passengers and five crew were aboard. The death toll was disclosed by Deputy Prime Minister Kanat Bozumbayev in a meeting with an Azerbaijani delegation in Aktau, Russian news agency Interfax reported.

Kazakhstan's emergencies ministry said in a statement that fire services had put out the blaze and that the survivors, including two children,

were being treated at a nearby hospital. The bodies of the dead were being recovered.

Azerbaijan Airlines said the Embraer 190 jet was flying from Baku to Grozny, capital of the Chechnya region in southern Russia, but had been forced to make an emergency landing around 3 kilometers from Aktau in Kazakhstan.

Aktau is on the opposite shore of the Caspian Sea from Azerbaijan and Russia. Commercial aviation-tracking websites tracked the flight flying

- Bird strike may have caused emergency, says aviation watchdog
- Crash came after southern Russia hit by drone strikes
- Nearest Russian airport on flight path was shut

north on its scheduled route along the west coast before its flight path was no longer recorded. It then reappeared on the east coast, circling near Aktau airport before crashing

## Second instalment set for release in March '25: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday announced that the second instalment of financial assistance under Subhadra Yojana will be credited to the accounts of beneficiary women in March 2025.

The Chief Minister confirmed that under the scheme, a flagship initiative of the BJP government in state, one crore beneficiaries will receive financial aid in a single transaction on the occasion of International Women's Day.

CM Majhi further said that over one crore women across

the state would have received the first instalment of financial aid by the end of January 2025.

The funds will be distributed through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, ensuring

## SUBHADRA YOJANA

prompt and efficient delivery of assistance to all eligible women, Majhi emphasised. He highlighted the programme's focus on improving economic opportunities for women and ensuring that benefits reach every part of the community.

The scheme has already successfully delivered an initial payment of Rs 5,000 to approxi-

mately 80 lakh beneficiaries in three phases. The state government has confirmed that preparations for the fourth phase of the first instalment transfer are underway, with completion expected by January 2025.

As of December 1, a total of 1,05,36,612 women had registered for Subhadra Yojana.

Earlier, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida announced that over 20 lakh women are likely to receive the first instalment in January 2025.

The state government had previously postponed the release of the fourth phase of the first instalment, which had been scheduled for 25 December.

## Man sets himself on fire near Parl, suffers 95% burns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: A man in his early 30s is undergoing treatment for 95 per cent burns after he set himself on fire near the new Parliament building Wednesday afternoon, officials said here.

Delhi Fire Services officials said the incident occurred around 3.35pm near the Railway Bhawan opposite the Parliament building. The local police and railway police, along with some people, immediately extinguished the fire and rushed the man, identified as Jitendra of Uttar Pradesh's Bagpat, to the RML Hospital.

According to initial investigations, the man took the extreme step due to a dispute with some people back home in Bagpat.

## TALIBAN VOW RETALIATION

## Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan kill 46



REUTERS

Kabul, Dec 25: Bombardment by the Pakistani army in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province Tuesday killed at least 46 people, most of whom were children and women, said the Afghan Taliban, vowing to retaliate against their neighbour.

The bombing occurred at four locations in Afghanistan, deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said Wednesday, adding that six people were also injured. Pakistani government and military officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

"Afghanistan considers this brutal act a blatant violation of all international principles and an obvious act of aggression. The Islamic Emirate will not leave this cowardly act unanswered," said Enayatullah Khowrazmi, the spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense.

A Pakistani official with knowledge of the matter, but declining to be named, told Reuters that Pakistan had carried out air strikes against a camp of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) Islamist militant group.

TTP pledges allegiance to, and gets its name from, the Afghan Taliban, but is not di-

rectly a part of the group that now rules Afghanistan. Its stated aim is to impose Islamic religious law in Pakistan, as the Taliban have done in Afghanistan.

A major TTP attack in Pakistan's South Waziristan area, which directly borders the location of the alleged camp targeted in Afghanistan, killed 16 Pakistani security personnel Saturday.

Afghanistan's defence ministry identified those killed in Pakistan's bombardment as "mostly Waziristani refugees" - indicating that they were from Pakistan's Waziristan territory.

The neighbours have a strained relationship, with Pakistan saying that several TTP attacks that have occurred in its country have been launched from Afghan soil - a charge the Afghan Taliban denies.

Their relationship was further complicated in March when the Taliban accused Pakistan of carrying out two air strikes on its territory, killing five women and children.

Pakistan acknowledged at the time that it had conducted "intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations" in Afghanistan but did not specify the nature of the operations.

## Indianised Christmas carols flood social media

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 25: Santa Claus grooving to a bhangra beat or lip-synching to a Bhojpuri rendition of "Jingle Bells", adding in some ha-ha-ha to the classic ho-ho-ho this festive season, are the many amusing, desi versions of Christmas carols.

Whether it's Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, or Facebook posts, social media this year is filled with a collection of humorous Christmas carols, adapted from their original English version into various regional languages like Punjabi, Bhojpuri, Hindi and more, adding a local flair to the festive spirit.

The timeless 19th-century classic "Jingle Bells", written by James Lord Pierpont, has undergone the most desi



DESI SANTA

makeover, with many even adding animated humorous videos and whimsical tunes for a good laugh.

The Bhojpuri version of the song, "Jingle Bellwa", is perhaps the one receiving

the most views and circulating widely through countless WhatsApp forwards.

"Jingle bellwa jingle bellwa jingle bellwa bajela, daadi wala budhwa jhola leke bhaagela, ghar ghar aawela, tohfa

baatela, har bachcha chilaye dekha santa aagela," reads the lyrics of the Bhojpuri adaptation of the famous Christmas carol written back in 1850.

And how could anyone keep Punjabi music, a global sensation at the moment, from making Santa dance to its tunes? The result: a series of Punjabi party songs, apart from a version of Punjabi "Jingle Bells", doing rounds on the internet with videos of desi Santa doing bhangra to the dhol beats.

"Everyone loves Christmas. And the adaptation of the carols in regional languages gives it a very homely touch. I have myself watched it multiple times and forwarded it to my friends and family as greetings. In fact, they are so hilarious that I just can't have enough of them and have been searching for more

such adaptations on YouTube. The more the merrier, right?" said Khushi Bhatt, an IT employee in her 20s.

In addition to adaptations of carols, several Punjabi songs praising Jesus Christ and celebrating Christianity, such as "Yeshu Di Balle Balle" and "Yeshu Da Janam Hoyaa Bhaga Wali Raat Nu", have also taken the internet by storm, with numerous videos and memes featuring these songs as the backdrop.

The music of popular movie tracks like "Oo Antava Oo Oo Antava" from "Pushpa: The Rise", Yo Yo Honey Singh's rap, and even Hindi devotional songs like "Har Har Shambhu" also joined the Christmas bandwagon and are featured in videos showing Santa dancing and celebrating the Christmas festivities.

# leisure



## GARNER, AFFLECK PLAN TO SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH THEIR KIDS

Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck, who finalised their divorce in 2018, have continued to maintain a strong co-parenting relationship for the sake of their three children. This Christmas, the two decided to spend time with —Violet, Fin, and Samuel.

## BALDWIN FACES LAWSUIT FROM HUTCHINS' FAMILY

The criminal case against Alec Baldwin in the tragic Rust shooting incident has officially come to an end, but the actor is now set to face a civil lawsuit filed by the family of Halyna Hutchins, the cinematographer who lost her life on the film set.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
A romantic link is about to be presented to you as a surprise, shining and smiling. Ganesha advises you to be prepared in your best dress and to practice some romantic talking. You never know what the evening has in store for you. Only Ganesha does, and he is sporting a knowing smile.

**TAURUS**  
Spontaneity yet sincerity will be the ruling emotions of the day. Keep your eyes and ears open, advises Ganesha, as trouble might be headed your way. Make it a point to read the print well before you sign any legal contract today. Prevention is better than cure, reminds Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
Today, your enthusiasm for sports and outdoor activities is palpable. According to you, variety is the spice of life. You will keep on jumping from one venture to another. You will establish a good rapport with your bosses and colleagues. It's time to taste success in your immediate and interim objectives.

**CANCER**  
You will have enthusiasm for swift action. Variety adds spice to life. So you may change job or trade. Ties with superiors will be good. Ganesha says this is the time for challenges.

**LEO**  
You will spend the day with your family and friends today and feel closer to them. You will try to help others, as always. You will like to guide someone if your own situation is comfortable today. You will be able to fulfill the expectations placed upon you by someone and will garner a lot of well-wishes, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
You are born with a talent for business. Your organisational skills too are flawless. Ganesha advises you to use all your creativity, innovative ideas and ability to motivate others to make progress in your business. Ganesha says you may freely express yourself and make full use of your sharp judgement.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that today will be a day where you will want to look good and feel good too. You will be able to attract people with your speech and your impressive personality today at social gatherings. Your social stature will also rise today.

**SCORPIO**  
According to Ganesha, your family and friends top your priority list today. Life looks hunky dory on personal as well as professional front. Apart from business developments, romantic relations are on the bloom.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You feel like going back to carefree, childhood days. You even practice that by taking an impromptu pleasure trip, in the outskirts of the city. And bumping into an old pal, reliving your past is like an icing on the cake. As Ganesha says, golden moments are best undescribed and you too, by the end of the day, are speechless for this wonderful day!

**CAPRICORN**  
You will walk down the memory lane, cherish those lost moments and later on feel an urge to meet or contact old friends, says Ganesha. Expectations of your near and dear ones, however, may seem burdensome. You will still see the brighter side of everything, and spending quality time with your sweetheart will certainly re-energise your powers to deal with difficulties.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will finally end today and you will enjoy the fruits of your hard-work. You are very good at considering all the pros and cons of every situation/project, drawing a plan on paper and distribution of responsibilities, however, execution of those plans is a problem area for you.

**PISCES**  
You will come up trumps against your competition today. This will make you enthusiastic about your future prospects. You shy away from the spotlight usually, but today you will find yourself thrust into the role of a leader, as you take on new assignments.

# Kiara's about-turn



Mumbai: Actress Kiara Advani recently found herself at the center of controversy after posting about her collaboration with choreographer Jani Master in connection with the song Dhop from the upcoming Ram Charan starrer Game Changer.

The backlash arose when Kiara initially included Jani Master's name in her Instagram caption, appreciating his choreography. However, she has since edited the post, removing his mention following criticism for associating with a public figure facing serious legal allegations. The issue stems from allegations against Master, who was

booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act earlier this year. A former female employee accused him of rape and mental harassment, alleging that the incidents occurred when she was 16 years old. The charges have sparked widespread outrage, and many questioned Kiara's decision to acknowledge the choreographer in her post.

In response, Kiara quietly updated her caption, removing Master's name entirely. While she did not issue a public statement, the move is being seen as an acknowledgment of the

criticism and an effort to distance herself from the controversy.

The incident has overshadowed the release of Dhop, a track that was meant to be a major highlight for Game Changer, a pan-India project directed by Shankar Shanamugham. Despite its psychedelic visuals and unique vibe, the song has struggled to capture the audience's attention, with much of the focus shifting to the controversy surrounding Kiara's post. IANS



## Rapping's extension of me: Raja Kumari

Mumbai, Dec 25: Rapper Raja Kumari, who has lent her voice for the song Beast from the Varun Dhawan-starrer Baby John said that for her, rapping is more than just creating music and that it is an extension of her.

Raja Kumari has lent her vocal prowess for Beast and the music is by Thaman S, which features Varun in a massy avatar. "I am beyond elated to see the outpouring of love from the audiences. Though I gave my heart and soul to Beast Mode and Baby John's track, the love it's receiving is

overwhelming, and I am filled with gratitude," said the raptress.

"For me, rapping is more than just creating music. It's an extension of me, and I'm so glad to see the audience loving it to no bounds!" added Raja Kumari.

In 2023, Raja Kumari had crooned for the title

track of Jawan starring Shah Rukh Khan.

Raja Kumari, whose real name is Svetha Yallapragada Rao is best known for her collaboration with notable artists including Gwen Stefani, Iggy Azalea, Fifth Harmony, Sidhu Moosewala, Knife Party, Fall Out Boy. IANS

## A complete entertainer that ticks every box

Released Wednesday, Baby John is more than just a film. It offers a cinematic experience that cements Varun's position as one of Bollywood's finest this year. The film features a perfect blend of emotions, action, music, and masala entertainment with a message. This movie is a complete mass family entertainer. It is directed by Kalees, the film reflects Atlee's signature touch of grandeur and emotional depth, delivering a narrative about women safety that strikes a chord with the audience.



Director : Kalees  
Cast: Varun Dhawan, Keerthy Suresh, Wamiqa Gabbi, Rajpal Yadav & Jackie Shroff

a loving father and a fierce protector as a police officer Satya. His on-screen chemistry with Zara, playing his daughter, is heartwarming. Zara is a revelation, her innocence and charm light up the screen, making the father-daughter bond the emotional backbone of the film. Varun and Rajpal Yadav's camaraderie brings in humour and fun moments to the film.

Jackie Shroff's commanding presence as the antagonist is a show-stealer. As always, his effortless portrayal of the character adds depth to the narrative. Keerthy Suresh is brilliant and does complete justice, Wamiqa Gabbi also

shines, her action scenes are also good.

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan also appears in a cameo at the end. His presence lights up the screen.

Thaman's background score is nothing short of spectacular, elevating every scene to new heights.

Kalees has done utmost justice to the story, blending larger-than-life moments with intimate emotions. The film's theme, which revolves around child trafficking, a topic close to everyone's heart, is handled with sensitivity, stirring conversations long after the credits roll. Baby John is a complete entertainer that ticks every box—emotions, music, action, laughter, and more. IANS



## Patriotic poetry recitation fest



Balalore, December 25: The district administration, in collaboration with the Information and Public Relations Department, organised a patriotic poetry recitation festival as part of the centenary celebrations of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, ahead of his 100th birth anniversary.

The event was held here at Gandhi Smruti Bhavan Auditorium, Wednesday. The event was presided over by Sahitya Akademi Award-winning poet Bimal Jena. Former professor and poet Dr Harishchandra Behe-

ra attended the programme as the chief guest. The poetry recitation session was conducted by Professor Dilip Rath. Additional District Magistrate Sudhakar Nayak and I&PR Officer Aishwarya Samanta shared their views on the significance of Good Governance Day which was observed Wednesday.

The poets who recited their works included Yashodhara Das, Sairindhree Sahu, Bimal Jena, Shrideb, Krushna Kumar Mohanty, Ranjan Baug, Sitansu Lenka, Preetilekha Das, Jayanti Biswal Behuria, and Harishchandra Behera. IANS

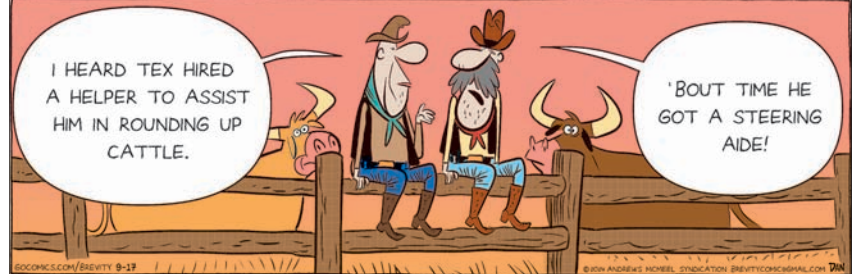
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

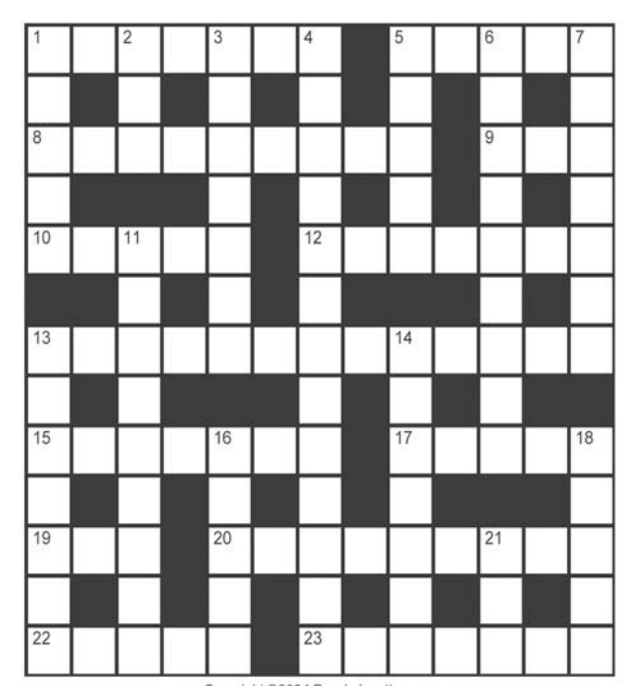


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

### CROSSWORD



- Across  
1 Like some birthday cards  
5 Joined together  
8 Something to balance things out  
9 Music genre  
10 Soothing ointment  
12 Candidate  
13 Essential  
15 Trap  
17 Compare
- 19 As well  
20 Impediment  
22 Expert  
23 Cook in fat (4-3)  
Down  
1 Pub orders  
2 Bud's buddy  
3 Bank clerks  
4 Couldn't care less  
5 Assembly  
6 South African gazelle  
7 Exhaust  
11 Permanent magnet  
13 Physics topic  
14 Binge buy  
16 Bank check-up  
18 Dapper  
21 Gremlin

### SUDOKU

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

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

### SOLUTIONS



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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Artistes perform during 15th Annual Biswa Odissi Utsav at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



downtown

CM, LoP pay tributes to Vajpayee

₹455 crore 15th FC grants for state



CM Mohan Charan Majhi paying homage to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at BJP office in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

In a post on X, Majhi paid tributes to the former prime minister and extended heartiest congratulations and best wishes to everyone on the occasion of Good Governance Day.

Several senior political leaders from Odisha including Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jual Oram and state BJP president Manmohan Samal paid homage to Vajpayee on his birth centenary.

"Humble tributes to former Prime Minister of India, #AtalBihariVajpayee on his birth anniversary. #Atal ji was a distinguished statesman, outstanding parliamentarian, a renowned poet and orator. His contribution to the nation building will continue to inspire," former chief minister Naveen Patnaik wrote on X.

Meanwhile, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar observed the day, with senior functionaries of the institute paying floral tributes at the statue of Vajpayee, installed on the campus.

AIIMS-Bhubaneswar executive director Ashutosh Biswas expressed profound respect for Vajpayee, highlighting his instrumental role in the development of the institution.

The foundation stone of the institute was laid by Vajpayee July 15, 2003. AIIMS-Bhubaneswar is noteworthy as the second AIIMS established in the country and the only one whose foundation stone was laid by the former PM himself.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The Centre released around ₹455 crore for Odisha as Fifteenth Finance Commission (XVFC) grants for FY2024-25, Wednesday.

"Of the ₹455 crore, ₹370.20 crore is towards the second instalment and ₹84.50 crore the first instalment of Untied Grants for FY2024-25 meant for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in Odisha. 6,794 gram panchayats, 314 block panchayats and 30 district panchayats of the state will benefit from the funds," official sources said.

This apart, the Centre also released around ₹614 crore for Rajasthan.

"Out of ₹614 crore, ₹560.63 crore is towards the second instalment and ₹53.4123 crore the first instalment of Untied Grants of the FY2024-25 for RLBs. The funds would benefit 10,105 gram panchayats, 315 block panchayats and 20 eligible district panchayats of the state," they said.

The Untied Grants will be utilised by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) or RLBs for location-specific needs, under

the 29 subjects enshrined in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, except for salaries and other establishment costs.

"The Tied Grants can be used for the basic services of (a) sanitation and maintenance of ODF status, and this should include management and treatment of household waste, and human excreta and fecal sludge management in particular and (b) supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling," they added.

The Union government through Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Jal Shakti (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation) recommends release of XVFC grants to states for RLBs which are then released by Ministry of Finance. The allocated grants are recommended and released in two instalments in a financial year.

The XVFC grants provided to PRIs or RLBs play a crucial role in strengthening grassroots democracy. This financial support is improving rural local governance, enhancing accountability, and promoting self-reliance in villages.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Naveen Patnaik paid tributes to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary, Wednesday. The Information and Public

Relations (I&PR) department, in a message, termed Vajpayee as 'Vikas Purush' and said the state scaled new heights under his leadership.

The government recounted some major developmental projects, including the establishment of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, an oil refinery at

Paradip and creation of the East Coast Railway (ECoR) division with its headquarters in Bhubaneswar, undertaken during the tenure of the former PM.

The construction of 400km of highways in Odisha under the Golden Quadrilateral project, and road network of more than

18,000km (PMSY) to connect the unconnected stand testament to the eponym 'Vikas Purush', it said.

On the occasion of Good Governance Day, the people of Odisha paid heartfelt tribute to Vajpayee, the architect of administrative excellence, it added.

ASO ASSAULT

EXIT OF DAS RAISES HOPE FOR JUSTICE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The family members of a government official, who was allegedly assaulted by outgoing Odisha Governor Raghubar Das's son six months ago, Wednesday expressed hope that the 'culprit' will be taken to task in accordance with the law.

Assistant section officer (ASO) Baikuntha Pradhan's wife Sayoji said, "We hope that the government will now take action as Raghubar Das is no longer the Governor. He and his son are now common citizens. Though Das had assured me justice when I met him July 13, no action has been taken against anyone."

President Droupadi Murmu Tuesday appointed Mizoram Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati as the new Odisha Governor and accepted the resignation of Das. Pradhan was allegedly assaulted by Das's son Lalit Kumar and four others at the Governor's House in Puri July 7 when President Murmu visited the Pilgrim Town to witness Rath Yatra. Pradhan, who then worked at the Raj Bhavan in Bhubaneswar, was deployed at Puri Governor's House in light of the President's visit.

Will return urban cooperative bank depositors' money: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday announced that his government would return the money to the people who lost their savings after the Urban Cooperative Bank, Bhubaneswar shut operations in 2015.

Addressing a function from where he launched 1,542 Multipurpose Primary Agriculture Cooperatives (MPACs), Majhi said his government took the decision to return the money of the depositors to re-establish people's trust in the cooperative banking system.

The Urban Cooperative Bank, Bhubaneswar shut operations in 2015 after the RBI cancelled its licence as the state government failed to merge it with some other co-operative bank. A total of 13,797 depositors lost around ₹30 crore because of it, while loans worth ₹17.82 crore remained uncollected from 1,760 customers.

With Majhi launching the new MPACs, their total number went up to 4,253.

He said the government has decided to take up 54 programmes under the cooper-

Man kills wife

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 25: A woman constable was killed by her husband over marital discord at Siddheswar Sahi under Lalbag police limits here, Wednesday.

The victim, Bishnupriya Mallik, worked as a constable at the cyber police station here, while her husband Biswajit Mallik is an entrepreneur.

Bishnupriya and Biswajit tied the knot in 2019. A few months after the marriage, their relationship was strained over unknown reasons and the couple frequently quarrelled.

The duo had an argument Wednesday afternoon. Soon, a mountain was made out of a molehill and Biswajit slit Bishnupriya's throat with a knife, leading to her instantaneous death. After killing Bishnupriya, Biswajit also tried to end his life with the knife. However, neighbours intervened.

On being informed, police reached the spot and recovered Bishnupriya's lifeless body from a pool of blood. "An injured Biswajit has been admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital. Bishnupriya's body has been sent for post-mortem," ACP Pradipt Kumar Rout said, adding that the couple's six-year-old daughter, who witnessed the gruesome episode, is safe.

Govt invites applications for PM housing scheme

State government launches digital drive to provide affordable housing for urban poor, ensuring inclusive growth

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The state government has asked all urban local bodies (ULBs) across the state to initiate a process to receive applications under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) 2.0, an official statement said Wednesday.

Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM) under the Housing and Urban Development department has issued an instruction to the civic bodies to this effect.

To ensure a smooth application process for eligible beneficiaries, ULBs have been advised to establish helpdesks at their offices, organise ward-wise camps, and collaborate with common service centres (CSCs) to assist applicants, it said.



The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) here has launched the process by organising a camp in Gadakana.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Gadakana on his 74th birthday September 17 this year during which he interacted with beneficiaries of PMAY (U).

On the advice of Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, Gadakana has been selected to be developed as a model village.

In August this year, the Centre had approved the PMAY (U) 2.0 with an aim to construct 1

crore houses for urban poor and middle-class families over the next five years with an investment of ₹10 lakh crore and a government subsidy of ₹ 2.30 lakh crore.

During the inaugural camp, conducted in collaboration with OUHM, Economically Weaker Section (EWS) households were invited to submit applications. Beneficiaries were guided to bring the required documents for immediate processing. The event witnessed a positive response, with 28 applications successfully uploaded to the portal.

5 gunrunners arrested



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The twin city Commissionerate Police arrested five members of a notorious gang involved in gun-running late Tuesday night, official sources said Wednesday.

The accused were identified as Bhabani Prasad Mohanty, 32, Sk Rehmat Ali, 28, Md Zakir, 26, Deepak Kumar Sahoo, 36, and Sangram Pradhan, 29. Five firearms, 15 live bullets, seven smart phones, and ₹84,000 in cash were recovered from them, Police Commissioner Suresh Dev Datta Singh said.

About the crackdown, the top cop said the five are history-sheeters. "Multiple criminal cases have been registered against them in the twin cities." Singh said. The gang was planning to commit robbery Wednesday. "Acting on reliable inputs, a police team managed to nab them near Mahaveer College under Chandaka police limits in the City late Tuesday night," Singh added.

Rain dampens Christmas celebrations across state

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Phulbani, Dec 25: Incessant rains dampened the Christmas celebrations in most parts of the state, Wednesday.

Prayer services, candle processions and community feasts were held as usual in churches of various denominations across the state.

Streets were decked up with decorative lights in various parts of Kandhamal, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts, which have large Christian populations.

To mark the day, cultural programmes were also held in these places, besides Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Balasore, Berhampur, Rourkela, Jeypore, Sambalpur and Rayagada. Security was heightened in Kandhamal, which witnessed large-scale riots in 2007 and 2008.



Christmas celebrations began in the district December 23 but the continuous rain dampened the festive spirit. However, prayer services were held in the churches in G Udayagiri, Raikia, Phulbani, Daringbadi, Tumudibandha, and Kotagarh. Intensive checking was being carried out at the entry points of the district with patrolling

being done in the vulnerable areas, officials said.

Armed forces were deployed in some churches and peace committees were constituted at the block level, they added.

Superintendent of Police Harisha BC said flag marches have been conducted at Baliguda and Raikia, among others.

Leader of the Opposition

Thousands throng City churches

Bhubaneswar: Despite heavy rain, thousands of residents, including families and children, visited St Vincent's Church in Satyanagar and other churches across Bhubaneswar to celebrate Christmas. The festive spirit remained strong, with people joining prayers, taking pictures by the Christmas tree, and sharing joyful moments. In a unique twist, the Bakul Foundation introduced a green initiative. Volunteers led by Santa Claus and Dedi Loku (Tree Man), distributed saplings to passers-by, promoting environmental sustainability. Santa explained, "I've chosen to gift trees instead of bouquets, as plants live and grow, offering a meaningful gift for the New Year," emphasising the significance of lasting gifts.

Naveen Patnaik visited a church in Satyanagar and another one in Sachivalaya Marg in Bhubaneswar.

Meanwhile, acclaimed sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik created a Santa Claus using 550kg of different types of chocolates and sand at the Blue Flag beach in Puri.

Governor Ragubar Das and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi greeted the people

on the occasion. The Governor said Christmas is a festival of peace, harmony and humanism.

"On this occasion, I extend my heartiest greetings and wishes to all the people of Odisha, especially the Christian brothers and sisters," Das said.

Majhi also greeted the people of the state on the occasion and sought their cooperation in building a developed Odisha.

Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth

**THE MOTHER**



# Call To Philanthropy

At this time of year, many people pause to reflect on the true meaning of philanthropy, asking themselves: What is the best way to give? To whom should I give? And, perhaps most importantly, why should I give?

Fifteen years ago, I published *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*. I argued that government-to-government aid, rather than fueling economic growth, inadvertently harms the very countries it is meant to help. Since then, philanthropists have often sought my advice about their desire to grapple with seemingly intractable challenges, such as extreme poverty or climate change.

In this season of giving, donors should ask themselves twelve key questions when considering how, where, and why to give. The first question is relatively straightforward: What motivates you? Are you looking to spread joy – for example, by supporting the arts – or alleviate suffering by aiding communities affected by war or natural disasters? Both approaches are vital and commendable.

Second, how can you use your time and financial resources effectively? In a world of competing needs, it's not just how much we give but how we do it that ultimately determines our ability to effect positive change. For example, consider a philanthropist with \$100 million to donate. While allocating the entire amount to improving education could result in better-resourced schools, students might still struggle to attend due to poor health, inadequate transportation, or malnutrition.

Recognising this, the philanthropist might choose to divide the \$100 million among initiatives supporting education, health, food, and transportation. Yet splitting the funds equally – allocating \$25 million to each cause – will inevitably dilute the impact. Such an approach might be enough to prevent conditions from getting worse, but it is unlikely to drive transformative change.

The third question to consider is whether to delegate decision-making to an established organisation or create your own philanthropic foundation. Both strategies come with tradeoffs. Delegating enables you to harness the skills and expertise of teams with proven track records, but there is always a risk that the organisation you support will fail to achieve its goals – or worse, exacerbate the problem.

Building and managing an organisation gives you the freedom to pursue your personal goals and vision. But over time, this entity's culture, norms, and bureaucratic processes can diverge – and even conflict – with its founding mission. As employees become focused on advancing their own careers, the problem the organisation was created to address may become a justification for its existence rather than something to be resolved.

Fourth, what is your time frame? Do you expect immediate results, or are you willing to wait for years, perhaps even decades? After all, philanthropy can lay the groundwork for breakthroughs that donors may never live to see.

Fifth, what kind of impact do you want to make? You could spread your resources widely or focus on a single goal – a “moonshot” with a low likelihood of success, such as curing cancer or Alzheimer's. Though risky, supporting groundbreaking research could have far-reaching consequences.

Sixth, should you collaborate with governments or operate independently? There is a strong case for working with policymakers to provide public goods like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. After all, government budgets dwarf even the wealthiest philanthropist's resources. For example, while Bill Gates' estimated net worth is \$105 billion, it amounts to less than six months of California's annual state budget.

Seventh, how should you approach innovation? Should you harness technology and data to make your organisation operate more efficiently and maximize the impact of your giving? Alternatively, you could use your philanthropy to drive the development of revolutionary technologies designed to address societal challenges at scale.

Eighth, should you partner with fellow philanthropists or go it alone? Pooling capital could enhance your impact, but working independently allows you to avoid disagreements over who and what to fund. That said, confronting complex challenges rarely allows for a solitary approach.

Ninth, should your giving be public or private? Both approaches offer unique advantages. Public actions, such as signing the Giving Pledge, facilitate the sharing of best practices, inspire others to support important causes, and enable you to compare your efforts to your peers through platforms like GuideStar.

On the other hand, private giving is arguably the purest form of altruism. “Stealth” philanthropy also provides the freedom to trial and error without the pressure of public scrutiny. Although experimentation is essential for tackling complicated problems, public failures can invite criticism and be dismissed as a waste of money.

Tenth, how should you structure your giving? Financial support can take many forms beyond traditional cash donations. While grant-making remains the most common approach, there are compelling alternatives. Loans, for example, can be structured with extended maturity periods and below-market interest rates, encouraging discipline and accountability by requiring recipients to repay the funds.

Eleventh, should you establish a board of directors to oversee your philanthropic endeavour, and if so, will you reserve seats for family and friends? Opting for a more formal structure – for example, by designating permanent seats for prominent public figures, such as religious leaders or university presidents – can help ensure impartial oversight.

Lastly, what is your exit strategy? Are you planning to wind down your philanthropic efforts by a specific date, or will you establish mechanisms to sustain them indefinitely? The “run down the clock” approach is exemplified by businessman and philanthropist Chuck Feeney, who donated billions of dollars to academic and technical institutions during his lifetime and died in 2023 after successfully giving away his money. By contrast, the Rhodes Trust and Nobel Prize are designed to exist in perpetuity.

Whether you're a wealthy donor, a politician, a CEO, or simply a concerned parent, the call to philanthropy resonates with us all. I hope these questions encourage deeper reflection on how to maximise the effectiveness of generosity.



Dambisa Moyo

**Whether you're a wealthy donor, a politician, a CEO, or simply a concerned parent, the call to philanthropy resonates with us all**

**FOCUS DIPLOMACY**

# ELEVATING TIES



The strategic partnership, signed during the visit, aims at enhancing bilateral relations in all possible and potential sectors

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on a two-day visit to Kuwait on the invitation of the Emir. It was a historic event inasmuch as an Indian Prime Minister was visiting the country after a long gap of 43 years; Indira Gandhi had visited Kuwait in 1981. During this visit, bilateral relations between the two countries were elevated to a strategic partnership. Prime Minister Modi was conferred with the highest honour of Kuwait, “The Order of Mubarak AL-Kabeer.”



DK Giri

**AMONG GCC COUNTRIES, KUWAIT HAS BEEN FRIENDLY WITH INDIA, BARRING A DOWNTURN IN TIES DURING THE GULF WAR**

Kuwait holds the Chair of six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). India is negotiating an FTA Agreement with GCC. Modi impressed upon the Emir, the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister of Kuwait for moving towards an early conclusion of an FTA with GCC. Notably, GCC countries hold 1/6th of India's total trade and one third of India's diaspora, about 9 million Indians. A close cooperation with GCC is essential for India's growth.

Among GCC countries, Kuwait has been friendly with India, barring a downturn in ties during the Gulf War, to be more precise, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. More on that, a bit later. Kuwait remains important to India. It has 6.5 per cent of world's oil reserves, is the sixth largest crude oil and LPG supplier to India, meeting 3.5 per cent of India's energy needs. Indians constitute 21 per cent of Kuwait's population and 30 per cent of its workforce. Indians are the largest expat group in Kuwait. While meeting with the Indian diaspora in Kuwait, Modi lauded their contribution in talent, technology and traditions to the growth and development of Kuwait.

In addition to one-to-one meeting with the Emir, Modi attended the inauguration of the Arabian Gulf Club football tournament. This was part of a cultural diplomacy allowing time for informal exchange of pleasantries between Heads of

States. It is a popular tournament among eight countries, Kuwait having won the trophy more than any other teams. People-to-people exchange and cultural diplomacy enrich bilateral relations. Also, an MoU was signed for 2025-28 to promote cooperation in sports.

The strategic partnership, signed during the visit, aims at enhancing bilateral relations in all possible and potential sectors. This includes defence, wherein it would translate into joint military exercises, training of defence personnel, coastal defence, maritime safety, and joint development and production of defence equipment. It will also include counterterrorism operations and sharing of intelligence and information. The cooperation will deepen in pharmaceuticals, IT, fintech, infrastructure, solar energy, health, digital, innovation, and textiles. It was decided to gradually move the focus from fossil fuel to trading in renewable energy, wherein it will be easier to step up cooperation as Kuwait is a member of the International Solar Alliance.

Modi appreciably noted that ‘Made in India’ products were finding their way into Kuwait including automobiles, electronics, mechanical and telecom. He suggested that the petrochemical sector could be another big trade bridge between both countries as it is likely to grow up to \$300bn by 2025. At

the same time, Modi stressed that India has the technology and skills to contribute to making of a ‘new Kuwait.’

On international politics, both leaders discussed Gaza and Ukraine. Modi reiterated his commitment to finding a negotiated solution to the Ukraine war. On Gaza, he reaffirmed India's commitment to the two-state solution by recourse to dialogue and diplomacy. He said ‘no’ to terrorist action that provokes retaliation causing deaths and destruction.

It is necessary to recall that relations between India and Kuwait go back to millennia, as evidenced by discovery of artefacts of pottery and jewellery from the Kuwaiti Island of Failaka. Before oil was found in Kuwait, trade between India and Kuwait consisted of dates and pedigreed horses. After trading on horses stopped at the end of the Second World War, pearls and teak wood were the items traded.

As Kuwait got independence in 1961, India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic contacts. In 1962, Kuwait supported India in its war with China. Ever since, the relations between the countries have remained friendly. Kuwaitis concentrated in Bombay for their trade and commerce. The even had a house in Marine Drive, Mumbai.

The bilateral relations plummeted by India's pro-Iraq stance

during the Gulf War. New Delhi refused to condemn Iraq for invading and annexing Kuwait. India was the first country to shift her embassy from Kuwait to Basra, Iraq. It was surly bad diplomacy by New Delhi. It has often fumbled in condemning the aggression in balancing the principle of international law and national interest. It faltered in condemning Soviet occupation of Hungary in 1956, Afghanistan in 1979, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and the Ukraine war in 2022. New Delhi gets away with such diplomatic faux pas as it has not attacked any country, nor has it incurred into territories of other countries.

Talking of Kuwait, New Delhi almost repeated the mistake in Afghanistan. One statement, made during the Gulf War, indicates its confusion, “We regret that it had not been possible for Iraq and Kuwait to resolve their differences, we hope for Iraqi withdrawals (instead of calling for them).” There was not a word of disapproval of Iraqi action. It is perhaps India's policy of non-alignment in the past and strategic autonomy now that makes it tentative and vulnerable and thus New Delhi does not want to provoke enmity with anyone, even if it is an invader.

The demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 had thrown another spanner in the fragile relationship. However, that is history. Modi's visit and Kuwait's highest honour to him have put those two bad patches into the dustbin of history. Let it be said and realised that India, in quest for a world role and a big power status, should stand up for international law in keeping with her tradition for peace, non-violence, and non-aggression, unless it endorses a Darwinian world and lives by the logic of survival.

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism.

**SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE**

# Give farmers what they actually need



Sudhansu R Das

**IT IS VERY ESSENTIAL TO INCREASE FARMERS' PROFIT MARGIN WITHOUT PASSING ON THE PRICE BURDEN TO CONSUMERS**

A parliamentary panel has recommended legal guarantee to procurement of crops at minimum support price (MSP), a debt waiver scheme for farmers and farm labourers and doubling of financial support under PM-Kisan from ₹6,000 to ₹12,000 per annum. The panel also suggested that the financial support given to landholder farmers under PM-Kisan should be extended to tenant farmers and farm labourers. It has also recommended the formation of a National Commission for Minimum Living Wages for farm labourers. The committee is for the increase in the budget allocation to the agriculture sector and compulsory universal crop insurance for small farmers. It seems the parliamentary panel has repeated many of the recommendations of earlier committees. The root of the farmers' problems in fact lies somewhere else.

A legal guarantee to procure food grains at MSP is not sustainable; it will give a huge financial burden to the government. The food grains will pile up and rot in FCI godowns as

it is happening now. There is no guarantee that the MSP benefits will percolate to genuine farmers until the government ensures complete transparency while procuring crops at MSP. The lure of MSPs and lack of quality check at procurement centres will let farmers sell substandard produce; it also triggers cultivation of mono crops which leads to loss of crop diversity.

The government while collecting quality food grains from genuine farmers should ensure that traders and middlemen in the government market yards and private mandis do not compel the farmers to sell their produce at a throwaway price. The farmers should get the share of profit they always deserve. Over decades, the farmers and the consumers have become losers while the traders and middlemen have thrived on farmers' hard work and investment. If the government succeeds in establishing transparency in the purchasing network, farmers will not require MSPs. It is very essential to increase farmers' profit margin without passing on the

price burden to the consumers; this can be done in a transparent marketing network.

Any number of debt waiver schemes for farmers and farm labourers will not help as a series of debt waiver schemes have failed to benefit farmers in the past; it has created willful defaulters, idle farmers and led to deprivation. A large number of non-farmers have got the benefits while genuine farmers who work sincerely do not get the benefits. Instead of spending huge amounts on loan waivers, the government can revive the water bodies, ensure crop diversity, transportation facility, crop insurance, schools and health facilities in villages which will prevent erosion of farmers' income.

Compulsory universal crop insurance to small farmers will also not help farmers. Increase in the frequency of natural calamities, politics, corruption and delay in payment of the insured amount add to the farmers' woes. Many times, the insurance companies fail to meet the farmers' demand for insured amount at the time of crop failure. The government

should have a state of the art mechanism to assess the actual damage of crops during natural calamities; some states inflate the cost of damage to crops.

The revival of community capitals like rivers, lakes, ponds, canals, ground water, extension services, healthy socio-cultural life and transparent marketing facility will provide better insurance to farmers. The village institutions should be de-politicised as those institutions have become political tools and are detrimental to farmers' interests. It is good that India has vast farm land, crop diversity and millions of farmers unlike the developed nations which have almost ruined their farmyard with mono crops, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The farmers there heavily depend on government subsidies. Today more than 50% of the world population does not have adequate food to eat as per a World Bank report. The Indian farm sector can tap this growing food shortage in the world.

The writer is a senior journalist.

**Neighbourhood first**

Sir, India's “Neighbourhood First” policy was formulated to prioritise and strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries. However, in 2024 the country faced daunting challenges in the relations. Tense political situations developed in South Asia with political changes in Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The ouster of Sheikh Hasina and violence against minorities in Bangladesh, political instability in Nepal, Maldives' gravitation towards China, Sri Lanka's attempts to achieve economic recovery and political change in that country, continuing animosities with Pakistan, border disputes between India and China, disengagement of the two troops from border and strategic dialogues between the two countries - all these impacted India's relations with neighbouring countries. The influence of China in Sri Lanka and the Maldives remains a concern for India. Frequent changes of government in Nepal impacted bilateral relations.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

**China's chip gambit**

Sir, The ongoing chip war between Washington and Beijing is evolving into a tale of two fronts. While the US maintains a decisive lead in cutting-edge technology, China is gaining momentum in the production of more mature, so-called legacy chips—an area that, though less glamorous, holds strategic significance. Despite US export restrictions stifling China's progress in advanced semiconductor technology, Beijing has aggressively ramped up its output of legacy chips, essential for products like automobiles and household appliances. These chips played a critical role during the pandemic when shortages disrupted global car markets. In 2024 alone, China spent \$41 billion on wafer fabrication equipment, a 29% increase from the previous year and accounting for about 40% of global spending, according to Morgan Stanley. This marks a sharp rise from \$24 billion in 2021. China's investment is driven by a mix of stockpiling tools before further restrictions tighten and ramping up production capabilities through domestic giants like Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC) and Hua Hong Semiconductor. For example, SMIC boosted its capital spending to \$7.5 billion in 2023, compared to just \$2 billion annually before the pandemic. This strategy mirrors China's previous successes in industries like solar panels, combining significant state support, aggressive pricing, and a long-term approach that outpaces competitors.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

The writer, an international economist, is the author of four New York Times bestselling books.

**WISDOM CORNER**

- In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy  
WILLIAM BLAKE
- Wonder is the feeling of the philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder  
PLATO
- There's no use doing a kindness if you do it a day too late  
CHARLES KINGSLEY

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



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# Nylon fence for wandering 'Zeenat'

PNN & AGENCIES

**Baripada/Kolkata, Dec 25:** Apprehending that the marauding tigress 'Zeenat' may stray into the Rahamada village, flanked by Raikia and Bharadi hills, the Forest department of West Bengal has set up nylon nets on three sides of the village. They have also erected the fences around the houses close to forests.

This has sparked fear among the residents as they apprehend that the animal might stray into the village to hunt goats for food. The forest personnel are planning to capture the big cat as soon as it enters the village.

Villagers have stopped venturing into the forest to graze their livestock for fear of the animal. Purulia DFO Anjan Guha said the animal has started returning back on the route which it had taken to reach Purulia. STR, field direc-

tor Prakash Chand Gogineni said that the animal's return can be assured only after it returns back for 20 km to 30 km. Meanwhile, the tigress has stopped accepting live baits (goats) and was found killing the moving animals.

The fully-grown big cat was last seen in the thorny shrubs adjacent to a hill within the Bandwan forest range, "moving a short distance in the past couple of days," chief conservator of forests S Kulandaivel said.

"We have put a nylon net over a 1-sqkm-area to prevent the tigress from entering nearby human settlements and informed local villagers about its presence at the current location for their safety," he said.

He added, "The tigress has moved a short distance in the past two days, and its movement is constantly being tracked with the help of a radio collar."



"Three tranquilising teams have been placed at strategic locations, while three live baits (goats) have been placed along the possible path of the animal," he said.

However, the big cat has not yet shown any intent to touch the bait despite several attempts.

Forest squad members cannot go inside and face the wild animal for fear of attack and must continue the waiting game until it either gets

caught or returns to the Similipal habitat.

The half-eaten carcass of a goat found in a nearby spot triggered panic among the villagers as the tiger continued to evade forest personnel.

The fencing was set up by personnel from Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, who have expertise in the matter, as tiger straying into human habitats from the mangrove forest is more common in villages there, Kulandaivel said.

"Teams from Odisha Forest department are also monitoring the movement of Zeenat," he added.

"Smart cameras are being installed at various points in the area to monitor her movement and behaviour," chief wildlife warden Debal Roy said.

The hilly terrain with thorny bushes has made it convenient for Zeenat to escape, with disruptions in the continuous transmission of signals from her radio collar, another forest official said.

Zeenat had crossed over to West Bengal from Jharkhand six days ago, and after roaming in Jhargram and Paschim Medinipur districts for three days, she reached Purulia. She has shown no signs of heading back to her original habitat in Similipal so far. The tigress has covered over 100 km, roaming the forests at the tri-junction of West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha.

# Educationist & orator Sanjay Satapathy dies

POST NEWS NETWORK



**Bhawanipatna, Dec 25:** Professor Sanjay Kumar Satapathy, Vice-Chancellor of Maa Manikeswari University, Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district, passed away at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar Wednesday. He was 63.

He had been admitted to the hospital a few days ago in critical condition. Satapathy was battling cancer and had also suffered a brain stroke. He was on leave since October 1 due to his deteriorating health condition.

A pall of gloom descended on the university premises as soon as his death news reached the campus. University employees and officials, including acting Vice-Chancellor Nibedita Nath expressed their condolences. Satapathy had joined the University April 16, 2021. His teaching career began as a lecturer at Cuttack College in 1984. Over the years, he served in various

prominent colleges across the state as a lecturer and professor. Known as an educationist orator, and distinguished essayist, Prof Satapathy left an indelible mark in his field.

During his tenure as VC, he initiated several plantation drives and cleanliness campaigns in various locations of the university, reflecting his love for nature. He was a compassionate individual, greatly admired by students and colleagues alike and was actively involved in various religious and community activities for years.

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	25.1°	23.4°
Min Temp	17.9°	16.2°
Humidity	92%	98%
Rainfall	4.6	14.6

**FORECAST**  
Cloudy sky with light rain

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Notary Public, Soro, dated 24.12.2024, I Sri Jitendra Kumar Mohanty, S/o. Late Dambarudhar Mohanty, Vill./P.O.-Attapur, P.S.-Soro, Dist.-Balasore (Odisha) declare that my wife Smt. Pranati Mohanty whose D.O.B. is 20.07.1966 as per B.S.E. certificate. In advantly her D.O.B. was mentioned in my service document as 20.07.1968. Henceforth her actual D.O.B. is 20.07.1966 for all purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Bhubaneswar Judicial Stamp No. 73AA830740 on dt.17.12.24 declare that, I Smt. Meenakhi Patnaik, 62, D/o. Surya Narayan Patnaik, resident Plot No.72 (P), Ekamra Road, Ganga Nagar, Unit-6, Bhubaneswar do hereby solemnly affirm and State as that my actual & correct name is Meenakhi Patnaik in document, but my name wrongly mentioned as Meenakhi Kumari Patnaik in my Passport bearing No. L8337591 instead of Meenakhi Patnaik. Henceforth both Meenakhi Patnaik and Meenakhi Kumari Patnaik is one and same person for all purpose.

## LOST

I, Sri Dayanidhi Sahoo, S/o Gobinda Sahoo, residing At/Po- Balugaon, PS-Sadar Nayagarh, Dist- Nayagarh, Pin-752070. I do hereby declare that I have misplaced my original "Kabala" sale deed No-11371401500 and other documents. If any one find these documents kindly contact Mob No.9777056892. Dayanidhi Sahoo, Balugaon, Nayagarh

# Robbers set OGB branch afire

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Simulia, Dec 25:** Miscreants allegedly set afire the Purushottampur branch of Odisha Gramya Bank (OGB) at Balikhanda Bazaar under this police limits in Balasore district after reportedly looting cash and gold late Tuesday night, officials at the district administration said Wednesday.

The incident came to light when locals spotted a plume of smoke billowing out from the bank Wednesday morning and informed the bank officials and police. Soon after, three fire tenders from Ada and Charampa fire offices were rushed to the spot to douse the blaze.

On being informed, a police team headed by Balasore Superintendent of Police (SP) Raj Prasad,



along with sniffer dogs, reached the spot Wednesday afternoon and began an investigation. The miscreants allegedly entered the bank after breaking the back window of the building, said the police.

The robbers allegedly took away five CCTV cameras and hard discs from the bank. "Details will be made public only after the investigation is completed," said Regional Bank Officer Sanjaya Kumar Behera.

Meanwhile, the incident in the busy stretch has raised questions about the safety and security of residents and businesses establishments near the bank.

# Out on bail for wife's murder, man kills friend

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, Dec 25:** In a shocking incident, a man, who was sent to jail for killing his wife and was out on bail recently, committed another murder Tuesday night when he bludgeoned his friend to death over a petty issue at Bachu hutting under ward no-6 in Joda Municipality area of Keonjhar district.

The deceased was identified as Bhagabat Beshra, 40, and the accused Durga Naik. Their friend Dasharath Karua also sustained critical injuries while trying to rescue Bhagabat. Police have arrested Durga and launched an investigation.

Police said the deceased and his wife had a fight two weeks



back following which Bhagabat left his house and started staying with the accused at the latter's residence. Durga and Bhagabat had a heated exchange of words over preparing dinner Tuesday night. Later,

Durga went out to bring liquor. Bhagabat and Dasharath were cooking when Durga returned home with liquor and suddenly assaulted the former with a hammer. Durga also assaulted Dasharath when the

latter tried to save Bhagabat. Dasharath sustained severe injuries in his head and mouth but he fled the spot to save himself.

A profusely bleeding Bhagabat died on the spot.

On being informed, Bhagabat's wife lodged a complaint with Joda police Wednesday morning. A police team led by Barbil additional superintendent of police (ASP) Pratyush Mohapatra reached the spot and launched an investigation. They also arrested the accused from nearby Jharan jungle. The body was sent for post-mortem.

Notably, Durga was arrested five years back on charge of murdering his wife and was released on bail recently.

# Odisha Research Conclave at FM University from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasore, Dec 25:** The Odisha Research Conclave (ORC) 2024 will be held from December 26 to 28 at Fakir Mohan University here in association with Odisha State Higher Education Council (OSHEC) of the Higher Education department.

The three-day mega conclave will be inaugurated by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in the presence of State Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj (chief guest of the inaugural session), and Secretary Aravind Agrawal (guest of honour), Central University of Jharkhand Vice-Chancellor Kshiti Bhusan Das (guest of honour), in presence of Fakir Mohan University Vice-Chancellor Santosh Kumar Tripathy.

Later, the patent and product corner will be inaugurated by the ministers at the conclave. Following this, seven technical sessions, including four round table discussions, will be conducted during the three-day conclave. The inaugural day's plenary talk will be given by Tripathy and Kameshwar Nath Singh, VC of Central University of South Bihar, Gaya.

The technical sessions will discuss research and innovation in state universities of Odisha,



contemporary research in commerce and business management, research and development in science and technology for the higher education system, research and National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and research and development for the sustainable growth of industries.

Two poster sessions will be held on the first two days of the con-

clave. After the poster sessions, cultural programmes will be conducted in the evenings of the first and second days of the conclave.

The FM University VC said, "Vice-Chancellors of state public universities from Odisha will take part in a round table discussion to present their views on research and the requirement of research works in the present scenario. The ORC, for the first time, will conduct a round table at the conclave with directors of 11 research institutes like Institute of Physics, Institute of Life Sciences, CIFA, CIFRI, and IMMT Bhubaneswar. They will present their papers on the requirement of research in the science and technology.

Keeping the necessity of the NEP in mind, he said they have invited some industrialists to keep their views on the industry's need for research and development works. "We received 420 research papers from scholars and researchers working on different projects of govt and private agencies," he added.

Tripathy said they will showcase FM University's research works like 'Paan, Dhan, and Meena', horseshoe crab research centre, and outreach programmes connecting the university with society during the conclave.

# ISED int'l conference concludes at NIT



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Dec 25:** The 12th International Conference on 'Intelligent Systems and Embedded Design (ISED-2024)' organised by the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at NIT Rourkela concluded recently.

The three-day conference, held in a hybrid mode from December 20 to 22 brought together researchers, ac-

ademics, industry professionals, and students from across the globe. Ideas on high-performance and low-power circuits, embedded AI, algorithms, robotics, and cutting-edge technologies were exchanged. The topics included pollution and environmental monitoring, embedded AI and machine learning, medical and healthcare embedded devices, drone technologies, robotics, autonomous systems, and embedded systems security etc.

Director in-Charge of NIT Rourkela Pradip Sarkar congratulated the department on organising the 12th series of the conference and said, "The field of intelligent systems and embedded design holds immense potential for solving societal challenges and integrating diverse branches of science."

Vice Chancellor, NIST University and ISED-2024 Steering Committee Chair Priyadarsan Patra detailed the conference's evolution since its inception in 2010 and its contributions to advancing the state-of-the-art in electronic system design.

## Rain lays bare poor NH repair

**BERHAMPUR:** The recent untimely rains followed by monsoon showers have exposed the substandard work of the National Highway 16 in Ganjam district. Standard operating procedures in construction of the NHs are considered one of the robust and best models in India, according to sources. However, during the monsoon and untimely rains, some repair works done on Chhatrapur-Berhampur stretch of the NH-16 have peeled off, reportedly due to poor quality work. According to sources, the NH had undergone repair around 10 months ago. However, substandard work has resulted in potholes at several places of the said stretch. National highways in India are the backbone of transportation. Thousands of trucks ply on NH-16 everyday to ensure the safe and timely arrival of goods at their respective destinations. Meanwhile, the size of the cesspools is growing by the day, due to lack of timely repair. So, locals have demanded immediate repair of the stretch as it has become vulnerable to mishaps.

**SEBI** भारतीय प्रतिभूति और विनियम बोर्ड  
Securities and Exchange Board of India

### SHOW CAUSE NOTICE & HEARING NOTICE

It is hereby informed that Show Cause Notice(SCN) and Hearing Notice(HN) was issued to the Noticee mentioned in the Table below. The SCN(s) and HN(s) could not be served on the last known addresses available on record. The details of the SCN is provided in the Table below.

S. No.	Name of Noticee	[PAN of noticee]'	Address of Noticee	Scrip/Case Name	Notice Date & No.
1.	Jadunath Jena	ANUPJ8465D	1. S/o Mr. Bishnu Jena Vill- Sarashankha, PS.- Soro, Dist. - Balasore. Sarashankha, Orissa - 756045	Weird Infrastructure Corporation Limited	SEBI/NRO/SCN/SR/OWP/2024/266 01/1 Dated August 22, 2024

An opportunity of hearing has been granted to the Noticee on January 21, 2024, at 11.30 A.M. at Securities and Exchange Board of India, SEBI Bhavan II, Plot C-7, 'G' Block, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai - 400051.

The Noticee is hereby advised to collect the SCN(s) and HN(s) from Securities and Exchange Board of India, Northern Regional Office NBCC Complex, Office Tower -1, 8th Floor, Plate B, East Kidwai Nagar, New Delhi -110023. Noticee may also download a copy of the SCN and HN from the official website of SEBI ([www.sebi.gov.in](http://www.sebi.gov.in)) under the head "Unserved Summons/ Notices" or obtain a copy of the SCN by sending a request to [gyanendran@sebi.gov.in](mailto:gyanendran@sebi.gov.in) / [suchishmitar@sebi.gov.in](mailto:suchishmitar@sebi.gov.in). If the noticee desires for a hearing through online platform, the same may be informed on the email mentioned above.

In case reply is not received, or the Noticee or the authorised representative fails to appear for hearing, SEBI shall proceed therein the matter on the basis of material available on record.

**Gyanendra Niraj**  
Deputy General Manager,  
Northern Regional Office

Date: December 20, 2025  
Place: New Delhi  
CBC 15204/11/0196/2425

**Bank of India** E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-auction of the following property "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for realization of the debts due to the Bank.

Sl. No.	SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH, PH.: 9438456140 / Name & Address of the Borrower / Total Dues	Description of the Property	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	<b>Borrower : Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Swain, S/o.: Fakir Charan Swain, At: Sorbha, P.S.: Gop, Dist.: Puri, PIN- 752107 / Total Dues: ₹25,59,487.57 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid.</b>	Land and Building over Khata No.: 240/1678, Plot No.: 583/1921, Plot Area: Ac.0.041 Dec. i.e. 1786 sqft., Mouza: Nijagarh Kurki, P.S.: Pipili, P.S. No.: 04, SRO/Tahasil: Pipili, Dist.: Puri, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Swain, S/o.: Fakir Charan Swain, Bounded by East: Internal Road left by Land Owner, West: Plot No.: 581, North: Sub Plot No.: H-6, South: Sub Plot No.: H-8	₹36,20,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹3,62,000/- ₹ 50,000/-

**Date & Time of E-Auction: 27.01.2025 From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.**  
with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

**Last Date & Time for submission of EMD & Documents: 27.01.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.**

**Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 24.01.2025 with prior appointment of the authorised officer**

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

This is also a 30 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://banknet.com>

Place: Bhubaneswar  
Date: 26.12.2024

Authorised Officer  
Bank of India

Rest in memory

**Shyam Benegal**  
Veteran filmmaker Shyam Benegal, known for his remarkable contributions to Indian cinema, passed away at the age of 90 December 23 in Mumbai.

**Zakir Hussain**  
Legendary tabla maestro, passed away from complications of pulmonary fibrosis in December at a hospital in San Francisco.

**Ameen Sayani**  
Legendary broadcaster Ameen Sayani, known for Binaca Geetmala, passed away in February at 91 after suffering a heart attack.

**Pankaj Udhas**  
Renowned ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas, known for hits like 'Chinhi Ayeen Hai', died at 72 after prolonged illness.

**Sadhu Meher**  
Renowned actor and director Sadhu Meher, whose touching portrayal of a hearing and speech impaired potter in Shyam Benegal's Ankur (1974) earned him the national award for Best Actor, passed away at his Mumbai residence February 3. He was 84.

**Rituraj Singh**  
Rituraj Singh, a familiar face in television serials, passed away in February following a cardiac arrest.

**Suhani Bhatnagar**  
Child artist Suhani Bhatnagar best known for playing the role of a young Babita Puri in Pangal passed away due to rare medical complications.

**AR Rahman-Saira Banu**  
Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman and actor Saira Banu announced their separation in November 2024 after 29 years of marriage.

**Atul Parchure**  
Veteran star Atul Parchure, known for his contribution to both Bollywood and Marathi cinemas, breathed his last on October 14 at the age of 57.

**Rohit Bal**  
Renowned fashion designer Rohit Bal passed away at 63 due to a severe heart condition, leaving the fashion world in mourning.

**Sharda Sinha**  
Popular folk singer Sharda Sinha died in November at the age of 72 due to complications from cancer.

# Glitz 'n' Glam

In 2024, the entertainment business was dominated by live events, concerts, high-profile releases, and re-releases. Pan-Indian projects shattered box office records, whereas big-budget Bollywood movies, expected to hit jackpots, performed below par. Similarly, some celebrity weddings brought joys for the fans while a number of icons bade adieu during the year, leaving cinegoers in sorrow. As the year draws to its close, Orissa POST takes a glance at some significant events that hogged the limelight

## PROUD PARENTS

**Anushka Sharma-Virat Kohli**  
Power couple Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli embraced parenthood once again with the arrival of their baby boy, Akaay, in February.

**Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh**  
Bollywood's beloved couple, Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh, stepped into parenthood in September, welcoming their adorable baby girl, Dua Padukone Singh.

**Varun Dhawan-Natasha Dalal**  
In June 2024, Varun Dhawan and Natasha Dalal welcomed their first daughter, Lara.

**Yami Gautam-Aditya Dhar**  
Actress Yami Gautam and filmmaker Aditya Dhar welcomed their first child, a son named Vedvadi, in May.

## SPLITS

**Dhanush-Aishwarya Rajinikanth**  
Another high-profile split this year was that of South Indian film star Dhanush and filmmaker Aishwarya Rajinikanth. The couple, who had been married for 18 years, officially divorced in 2024, following an announcement in February.

**Hardik Pandya-Natasa Stankovic**  
Ace cricketer Hardik Pandya and Natasa Stankovic are a former couple who announced their separation in July 2024 after four years of marriage. The duo continue to co-parent their son Agastya.

**AR Rahman-Saira Banu**  
Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman and actor Saira Banu announced their separation in November 2024 after 29 years of marriage.

## NUPTIALS

**Rakul Preet-Jackky Bhagnani**  
Bollywood actor Rakul Preet Singh and Jackky Bhagnani got married. Both had a destination wedding in Goa February 21, 2024.

**Sonakshi Sinha-Zaheer Iqbal**  
Bollywood actors Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal registered their marriage June 23, in the presence of close friends and family members after dating for almost 4 years.

**Naga Chaitanya-Sobhita Dhulipala**  
December 4, South Indian actors, Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala started a new life. He married actress Sobhita Dhulipala with traditional rituals. The actors, who were dating for more than two years, had a South Indian wedding at the prestigious Annappa Studios, Hyderabad.

**Diljit Dosanjhi**  
Renowned singer and actor Diljit Dosanjhi made history by becoming the first Indian to feature on the cover of Billboard magazine in Canada—a major milestone for an artist from South Asia.

**Vir Das**  
Stand-up comedian and actor Vir Das has been steadily gaining recognition on the global comedy circuit, and 2024 marked a landmark achievement. He became the first Indian to host the prestigious Emmy Awards.

**Payal Kapadia**  
Payal Kapadia scripted history at the 82nd Golden Globe Awards. For her debut fiction feature, All We Imagine As Light, she bagged two nominations for Best Motion Picture - Not in English Language and Best Director.

**Anushika Sen**  
At just 22, actress and influencer Anushika Sen became the first Indian artist to perform live at New York's Times Square, a venue synonymous with international stardom. She also featured on billboards in Seoul, South Korea, where she has a significant fan base.

**Ayushmann Khurrana**  
The suave and romantic Indian actor, made waves at the prestigious TIME100 Gala held in New York City. Rubbing shoulders with global luminaries like the sensational Dua Lipa, acclaimed actor Dev Patel, Hollywood star Uma Thurman, and the iconic Kylie Minogue, Ayushmann exuded charm and elegance.

**Year of re-releases**  
Several films have been re-released since summer with some making unprecedented profits. Imtiaz Ali's Rockstar, the 2011 star-crossed love story that catapulted Ranbir Kapoor to superstardom, raked in ₹10 crore, becoming the highest-grossing re-release in Bollywood's history. Other under-appreciated gems that didn't perform well at the box office when they were first released but found a new lease of life this time around include: Laila Majnu (new) (₹5.8 crore), Rehna Hai Terre Dil Mein (₹6 crore), and Soham Shah's cult horror film Tumbhadi, which has collected ₹12.1 crore in India alone within six days.

It's been a year unlike any other for the Indian film industry. Three years after the pandemic, cinema halls are still struggling to ensure sustained footfall. With streamers growing roots beyond metros, there seems to have emerged a greater clarity over the correlation between screen size and content type.

Of the top 10 grossing films across all Indian languages this year so far, seven had mammoth superstars front and centre. Pushpa 2 (Rs 1508 crore), Kalki 2898 AD (Rs 1,042.16 crore), Bhooh Bhoohaiya 3 (Rs 417 crore) The Greatest of All Time (Rs 425 crore and counting), Fighter (Rs 359.88 crore), Singham Again (Rs 281 crore) and Shaistaan (Rs 213.79 crore) all had big names doing the heavy lifting. Meanwhile, films such as Stree 2 (Rs 804.15 crore), Hanu-Man (Rs 295 crore), and Manjummale Boys (Rs 240.5 crore) also climbed up to the fabulop-top-10 bracket.

The list of big-budget fares that bombed terribly is long this year. The most notable entries in this nefarious category are Ajay Devgn and Tabu's overlong, sappy romance Auron Dum Tha. Siddharth Malhotra's Yodha, Janhvi Kapoor's Ujlah, and John Abraham and Shavari's Vedaa. As the Hindi film industry battles its most severe creative crisis in recent memory, streaming giants have

emerged as a formidable alternative to cinemas. Several OTT originals—both movies and series—have found resounding resonance with audiences, making, reviving, and cementing careers.

Among most watched films include Diljit Dosanjh-Parineeti Chopra's Amar Singh Chamkila, Tapsee Pannu-Vikrant Massey's Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillwala, the ensemble whodunit Murder Mubarak, and the crime thriller Sector 36. Talking about the star powers, Not Deepika Padukone, it was not Shah Rukh Khan nor Alia Bhatt, but Triptii Dimri who won millions of hearts with her performance in Animal was IMDb's Most Popular Indian Star of 2024.

It has been a terrific year for web shows too. The audiences have responded warmly to a myriad of genres, from the slow, immersive village politics of Panchayat - S3 to the opulent splendence of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Heeramandi. They also finally got a sense of the ending they'd been waiting for in Kota Factory S3. Rohit Shetty's Indian Police Force, Anubhav Sinha's 1084: The Kandahar Hijack, and Collin 'D' Cunha's recent Call Me Bae have also been successful in stirring up a storm on the small screen.

The year also redefined entertainment as thousands of Indians attended music concerts and live events and watched year-long series of iconic movies at theatres.

## Winners on OTT

**Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar (Netflix)**  
Sanjay Leela Bhansali's period drama dazzled with its grandeur and storytelling. Exploring courtisans' lives, topped IMDb's list and became the most talked-about web series of 2024.

**Mirzapur Season 3 (Amazon Prime Video)**  
The third instalment of this gritty crime drama, packed with revenge and power struggles, thrilled fans. The high-voltage drama and evolving characters kept the Mirzapur saga alive.

**Panchayat Season 3 (Amazon Prime Video)**  
Returning to Phuleera's rustic charm, this season deepened its humour and heartfelt moments. The beloved characters ensured its consistent ranking as a fan-favourite web series.

**Gyaarah Gyaarah (ZEE5)**  
This sci-fi mystery explored time travel with finesse. Its innovative plot and strong performances kept audiences hooked and firmly placed it among the year's most exciting series.

**Taaza Khabar (Shyva+ Hotstar)**  
Sheva Bhat impressed fans with his mix of humour and drama. The fresh concept and gripping storyline solidified its position as a unique offering in Indian web content this year.

**Murder in Mahim (JioCinema)**  
Murder in Mahim follows a police officer investigating a series of murders targeting young men from Mumbai's LGBTQ community in the Mahim area.

**Not Shah Rukh Khan or Alia Bhatt, it was Triptii Dimri who was IMDb's Most Popular Indian Star of 2024**

**Aman Devgan**  
Aman Devgan, the nephew of Ajay Devgn, is creating quite a stir in Bollywood circles. Aaman, who comes from a family with a legacy of successful actors, will make his debut in a film directed by Abhishek Kapoor.

**Ahaan Panday**  
Ahaan Panday, the cousin of Bollywood actress Ananya Panday, is another star kid who is gearing up for his big break. Ahaan is set to debut under the prestigious Yash Raj Films banner. The details of his debut project are still under wraps.

**Shanaya Kapoor**  
Shanaya Kapoor, daughter of actor Sanjay Kapoor and Maheep Kapoor, has already bagged several projects even before her debut film hits the screens. Shanaya will star in her first film opposite Lakshay Lalwani and Gurtaar Paritad.

**Maamla Legal Hai (Netflix)**  
A courtroom comedy with quirky cases and hilarious exchanges. This legal satire turned heads for its creative storytelling, offering an enjoyable blend of laughs and courtroom antics.

**Taaza Khabar (Shyva+ Hotstar)**  
Sheva Bhat impressed fans with his mix of humour and drama. The fresh concept and gripping storyline solidified its position as a unique offering in Indian web content this year.

**Rasha Thadani**  
Rasha Thadani, the daughter of the 90s actress Raveena Tandon, is already a familiar face on social media, with a growing fan following. Rasha has signed a film with director Abhishek Kapoor's Azaad, where she will be making her debut alongside another star kid.

**Ibrahim Ali Khan**  
Ibrahim Ali Khan, the son of Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh, has been in the media spotlight for quite some time. Ibrahim is all set to make his acting debut in Sarameen, a film produced by Dhama Productions, which will also star Kajol.

**Poonam Pandey**  
In February 2024, Poonam Pandey shocked the world with an Instagram post announcing her death from cervical cancer. Tributes poured in until she revealed it was a hoax aimed at spreading awareness about cervical cancer prevention.

**Salman Khan**  
Salman Khan's conflict with the Bishnoi gang remained in the spotlight throughout the year. Stomping from the poaching incident, the situation escalated after reports of new death threats.

**Shah Rukh Khan**  
Shah Rukh Khan received a threat message targeting Shah Rukh Khan's Ghatisgarh-based advocate.

**Allu Arjun**  
The much-anticipated premiere of Allu Arjun's Pushpa 2 in Hyderabad took a tragic turn when over-crowding led to a stampede, resulting in the death of a woman.

**Diljit Dosanjhi**  
During a Chandigarh concert, Punjab's superstar Diljit Dosanjhi announced that he will no longer host concerts in the country unless the government improves its concert infrastructure. Diljit's concerts also faced criticism after his concert tickets were being resold at exorbitant prices.

**Kalki 2898 AD**  
Budget: ₹550 cr  
Worldwide gross: 1052.5Cr

**SARFIRA**  
Budget: ₹90cr  
Worldwide gross: 30.02Cr

**STREE 2: SARKATE KA AATAK**  
Budget: ₹100cr  
Worldwide gross: 858.4Cr

**MAIDAAN**  
Budget: ₹150cr  
Worldwide gross: 68Cr

**BADE MIYAN CHOTE MIYAN**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 102.16Cr

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
Budget: ₹50cr  
Worldwide gross: 26.02Cr

**DEVARA**  
Budget: ₹90cr  
Worldwide gross: 30.02Cr

**THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME**  
Budget: ₹350cr  
Worldwide gross: 460.3Cr

**DEVARA PART 1**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**JIGRA**  
Budget: ₹90cr  
Worldwide gross: 55.05Cr

**DEVARA PART 2**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 3**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 4**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 5**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**30,687 live events in 319 cities**  
MyShow, an entertainment and ticketing platform, has published a report highlighting what dominated Indian entertainment this year. The company offered about 30,687 live events in 319 cities, clocking a 18 per cent growth in India's live entertainment consumption in 2024. The year began with Anus Bruthers' debut music show at Lollapalooza India 2024, which was met with chants of 'Jiju, Jiju,' for band member Nick Jones, who is married to actor Priyanka Chopra. Musicians Ed Sheeran and Diljit Dosanjhi's collaboration 'New records' raised the bar for global-meets-local performances, said the report called #BookMyShow: Throwback.

**Hollywood Roundup**  
Hollywood's finest were rewarded with golden statuettes at the Oscars in Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre. The most prestigious awards in the film industry were presented across various categories, with Jimmy Kimmel serving as the host for the evening. The night concluded on a grand celebratory note for the team of Oppenheimer, which bagged numerous wins. Meanwhile, Barbie, which earned eight nominations, failed to take home any big awards.

**Megan Fox-Machine Gun Kelly**  
Megan and MGK ended their relationship just months before the arrival of their baby. The couple ended things over Thanksgiving weekend while they were together in Vail, Colorado.

**JLo-Ben Affleck**  
After two years of marriage, JLo filed for divorce August 20 'pro per' (aka "by herself and without an attorney").

**Britney Spears-Sam Asghari**  
While Britney and Sam filed for divorce in August 2023, it was reportedly settled in May 2024.

**Cardi B-Offset**  
Cardi B filed for divorce from Offset in July 2024 after six years of marriage, following an on-again, off-again pattern for the stars.

**Ellie Goulding-Caspar Jopling**  
In February 2024, Goulding announced their separation in an Instagram story, saying they had been separated for "some time."

**Best director: Christopher Nolan**  
**Best picture: Oppenheimer**  
**Best actor: Cillian Murphy (Oppenheimer)**  
**Best actress: Emma Stone (Poor Things)**

**Olywood highlights**  
Every year, numerous movies hit theatres in Odisha, but only a few manage to resonate with the audience. A slew of films released in 2024 too. Orissa POST picks top five of them that not only were money-spinners, but also won millions of hearts

**Kuhudi**  
Sagar Mishra, enacted by acclaimed performer Dipanwit Dasnaha, faces grave accusations of a horrific act against his daughter. Understated, advocate Anshuman Pattnaik (yet another noteworthy show by Anubhav), embarks on an unwavering crusade for justice, risking everything.

**Karma**  
Stranded in a remote graveyard, special investigation officer Amar Pattnaik played by top actor Anubhav Mohanty, uncovers chilling secrets, only to realise he's caught in a gripping tale of Karma and Fate.

**Dasama**  
The movie follows a close circle of friends in a tiny village school. It seamlessly flashes between their past and present, highlighting the camaraderie and enthusiasm of their adolescence. Actor Sailerndra Samantray and Nialakshi Patra garnered lost of appreciation for their performance.

**Parab**  
Set in a village caught in a border dispute between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, Parab follows IAS officers Aditya and Ananya as they navigate resistance and long-held grudges. Actors Sidhant Mohapatra, Anu Chaudhary, Chaudhary Jayprakash Das and Dipanwit Dasnaha held audience interest till end with their effortless performance.

**Pabar**  
Benudhar Kandil, hailing from a little village of Gumargah in Odisha, does not have big expectations until circumstances force him into local politics. But after that there was no looking back. Babushan Mohanty put his superlative acting skills once again on display for this home production.

**Elina walks down the aisle**  
Elina Samantray married her longtime boyfriend, Anurag Panda in November. The duo got married at a lavish ceremony in Bali, India.

**Elina and Anurag**  
Elina and Anurag were close friends for years. Despite several reports of their marriage, the couple remained tight-lipped about their relationship and finally surprised fans with the marriage announcement.

**Worldwide gross: ₹1600 cr and counting**

**HITS & MISSES**

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
Budget: ₹50cr  
Worldwide gross: 26.02Cr

**DEVARA PART 1**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 2**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 3**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 4**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr

**DEVARA PART 5**  
Budget: ₹250cr  
Worldwide gross: 443.8Cr



Uttarakhand owes a special debt of gratitude to Atal Bihari Vajpayee as it was during his tenure as Prime Minister that it attained statehood

BUS FALLS INTO DEEP GORGE; FOUR KILLED Four people, including a woman and a child, died and 23 got injured after a roadways bus fell into a 1,500 ft deep gorge in Bhimtal's Saldi area Wednesday



of the day note

Today, I see that farmers are worried about certain issues. If any section of society is worried, it is necessary to resolve it positively and without delay



Cooperation is a mantra that can bring prosperity to our farmers. Only when farmers thrive will the nation reach economic heights



People of Jharkhand might have had to wait and struggle for many more years, may be give more sacrifices, had the BJP government under Atal ji's leadership not formed Jharkhand state, particularly considering the stance of previous Congress government over the demand



SNIPETS

Shah, Naidu meet at BJP chief's residence

New Delhi: Leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), including Home Minister Amit Shah and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, met here at BJP president J P Nadda's residence Wednesday on the birth centenary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Four held for alleged attack on Christmas party

Pathanamthitta (Kerala): Four people have been arrested for allegedly attacking a Christmas carol party from a church in this district in the early hours of Wednesday, the police said here.

MBBS student transfers ₹8L to Chinese gang

INDORE: Police have arrested a 23-year-old MBBS student in Madhya Pradesh's Indore for sending around Rs 8 lakh of cyber fraud money to a gang of Chinese youths by converting it into cryptocurrency, an official said Wednesday.



Youths take part in a competition during 'push mela' at santiniketan in Birbhum district of West Bengal

SHORT TAKES

Sarpanch murder: Cong demands fast-track trial

Beed: Maharashtra Congress senior leader Balasaheb Thorat Wednesday demanded the strictest punishment for attackers and masterminds in the murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh after visiting his family.

BSF shoots dead Pakistani intruder

Jaipur: A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar district when he was attempting to cross over to Indian territory near a village in the Kesarisinhpur area.

3 Bangladeshi nationals held

Thane: Police arrested three Bangladeshi men from Thane city for illegally staying in India with forged documents such as Aadhaar and voter ID cards, an official said Wednesday.

Three workers crushed to death

Devbhumi Dwarka: Three workers were killed after a crane fell on them at a jetty construction site at the Okha port in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district Wednesday, police said.

Punjab AAP leaders meet Dalalwadi

Chandigarh: Extended their support to the farmers' demands, a delegation of Punjab's ruling AAP Wednesday met farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dalalwadi at Khanauri protest site and urged him to take medical treatment saying that his health is 'important'.

Manipur needs immediate peace: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Dec 25: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh Wednesday said the state, which has been in the grip of ethnic violence since May last year, needs immediate peace and appealed to two communities to reach an understanding.



GUNFIGHT ERUPTS

IMPHAL: Gunfight broke out between two armed groups in Manipur's Imphal East district Wednesday morning, police said. Armed men fired from the hills of Kangpokpi district, targeting the Sinam Kom village.

"What is happening in Manipur today has many reasons. Today, those who have been trying to divide the state are asking what the government is doing...they are hungry for power," Singh said.

"We are not against any particular community. The stand of the BJP is clear. We believe in the idea of living together. We have already started to build relations between the police and the people," he said.

We only wanted to save future generations. The two communities need to be calm. Instead of looking at the past, we need to focus on the upcoming NRC process, capturing biometrics and 1961 as the base year of the Inner Line Permit."

"We will continue our work democratically and constitutionally. This will take time. What we need now is immediate peace and reach an understanding between the two communities which have misunderstood each other," Singh said.

Murmu, Modi pay tributes to Vajpayee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among the dignitaries who joined a prayer ceremony at "Sadaiv Atal", the memorial of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Wednesday to pay tributes to him on his birth centenary.

Union ministers, including Amit Shah and J P Nadda, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge besides BJP allies such as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Union ministers Lal Singh of the JD(U) and Jitan Ram Manjhi of HAM(S) also paid homage to the BJP stalwart. Kharge, Nadda, who is also the BJP president, besides many parliamentarians, including ministers, visited the Central Hall of the old parliament building, now called Samvidhan Sadan, to offer floral tributes to Vajpayee's portrait.



They were also present in the prayer ceremony at Sadaiv Atal where Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla besides the members of Vajpayee's adopted family joined as well.

Atishi may be arrested in a fake case: Kejriwal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal claimed Wednesday that Delhi Chief Minister Atishi may be arrested in a "fake" case by the central investigative agencies at the behest of the BJP.

Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal, who was flanked by Atishi, said, "We got to know from our sources that a meeting was held and investigative agencies have been ordered by the BJP to arrest CM Atishi in a fake case."

The BJP is trying to distract AAP from campaigning for Assembly polls, he alleged. "We came to know that they are preparing a fake case on Atishi in the transport department, and they want to halt the scheme of free bus rides for women," the AAP chief said.

Centre appoints Arunish Chawla as revenue secy

NEW DELHI: Senior bureaucrat Arunish Chawla has been appointed the revenue secretary as part of a top-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre Wednesday. Chawla, a 1992 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Bihar cadre, is currently the pharmaceuticals secretary. He has been appointed secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, according to a personnel ministry order.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS GRIP COUNTRY

The festive spirit started with special midnight masses in various churches, pealing of church bells and singing of carols. Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted people on the occasion, wishing them peace and prosperity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: Yuletide spirit gripped the nation as people thronged churches across states for special prayers on Christmas and families came together to celebrate the joyous occasion.

The festive spirit started with special midnight masses in various churches, pealing of church bells and singing of carols. Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted people on the occasion, wishing them peace and prosperity.

He said on X, "Wishing you all a Merry Christmas. May the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ show everyone the path of peace and prosperity." The Prime Minister also shared highlights from his participation at the Christmas celebrations hosted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India Monday.

sang carols in praise of Jesus Christ. In Christian-majority Mizoram, Christmas was celebrated with religious enthusiasm and traditional fervour.

Traditional congregational singing services called 'Zaikhawm' were held by all churches to sing Christmas songs and hymns.

Christmas celebration began Tuesday evening locally known as 'Uralaw zan' or pre-Christmas night during which worship service, dedication of Christmas halls and congregational singing were held by churches.

Chief Minister Lalduhoma greeted the people on the occasion. In Mizoram, which celebrated the centenary of the arrival of Christianity back in 1994, Christmas is a blend of religious and traditional fervour. Notwithstanding an English way of celebration, the proselytised Mizos follow their own way of celebrations in tune with their historic traditions.



celebration. In Arunachal Pradesh, prayers for peace and prosperity were held in churches across the state. People from other religions also joined their Christian friends to celebrate the occasion.

Governor Lt Gen K T Parinaik (Retd) and Chief Minister Pema Khandu extended their greetings to the people on the occasion. In neighbouring Assam, Christmas was celebrated with religious fervour.

tian-majority state, celebrated Christmas with fun and frolic, as people took part in special prayer services and feasts. Decorative lights and Christmas stars lit homes, streets, government offices and commercial buildings while revelers moved around in groups on Christmas eve Tuesday night singing carols and wishing people 'Merry Christmas'.

At the stroke of midnight, fireworks lit the sky and the air was filled with tolling of



**DEFENCE MINISTRY LAUNCHES 'RASHTRAPARV' WEBSITE, APP**

To honour the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee Wednesday, the Central government has launched the 'Rashtraparv Website' along with its mobile application, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement



**of the day** **QUOTE**

A sense of security is essential for good governance and this cannot be possible without public participation. It has to be created from within the home. If a person is safe inside the home, then a sense of security will be seen arising spontaneously in the community

**YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM**

Atalji's good governance took the country to new heights. During his government, the growth rate reached 8.4 per cent, which was a historic achievement in independent India

**RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER**

We also plan to make sure houses provided to the poor under different government schemes do not get electricity bills. These homes will be covered under solar energy

**DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM**

**POST OF THE DAY**

**BIG NEWS**  
 Delhi Congress launched 'Mauka Mauka Har Ghar Dhoka' booklet on wrong deeds of AAP & BJP

Congress working extremely hard in Delhi & will surprise everyone

**@mr\_mayank**

**SHORT TAKES**

**Assam : 2 terror suspects arrested**

**Guwahati:** Two suspected members of a 'sleeper cell' of a terror network have been arrested along with a huge cache of arms and ammunition in Assam's Kokrajhar district, police said Wednesday. Addressing a press conference here, special director general of police Hammet Singh said, "The Special Task Force (STF), along with Kokrajhar district police, carried out an operation in the district's Namapara area Tuesday night and arrested the duo."

**Four killed in road accident**

**Haveri (Karnataka):** Four members of a family died in an accident after the car they were travelling in allegedly collided with another vehicle near the Haveri-Dharwad border on the highway Wednesday, police said. The accident was reported within the Tadas police station limits near Belligatti village in Timmapur, close to the Haveri-Dharwad border.

**Tanker fire: Death toll climbs to 18**

**Jaipur:** The death toll in the tanker fire incident happened on last Friday here has risen to 18 with one more death at the SMS Hospital, an official said. Earlier today, two people who suffered critical burn injuries succumbed during treatment while 15 others are undergoing treatment. SMS Hospital Superintendent Sushil Bhati Wednesday said that a man and two women have died.

**Class XI student stabbed to death**

**Faridabad:** Ten people have been apprehended for allegedly stabbing a Class XI student to death in a market here, police said Wednesday. The victim's family staged protests and accused police of inaction and "laughing off" the matter when they had complained of Anshul receiving death threats on Instagram a few days ago.

## Cold wave leaves North India shivering

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 25:** North India continued to reel under severe cold wave conditions Wednesday though tourists in favourite destinations such as Srinagar and Shimla remained deprived of witnessing a "white Christmas".

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 7.3 degrees Celsius while Tabo in the Lahaul and Spiti district was the coldest place in Himachal Pradesh, recording a night temperature of minus 10.6 degrees Celsius. Cold weather conditions persisted in states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 22.4 degrees Celsius on Christmas Day, two notches above the season's average. The minimum temperature in the national capital was recorded at 8.4 degrees Celsius, 1.5 notches below normal.

Minimum temperatures decreased at most places in Kashmir as the valley continued to reel under intense cold conditions, leading to the freezing of several water bodies and water supply lines in many areas.

The Met office has predicted a dip of two to three degrees in the minimum temperatures in Kashmir over the next two days. Except in Gulmarg, the



● Srinagar recorded a low of minus 7.3 degrees Celsius while Tabo in the Lahaul and Spiti district was the coldest place in Himachal Pradesh, recording a night temperature of minus 10.6 degrees Celsius ● Cold weather conditions persisted in states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and parts of Uttar Pradesh

night temperatures plummeted across all other weather stations in the Kashmir valley. Currently under the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan', the harshest winter period of 40 days that started December 21, the Kashmir valley is experiencing below-normal maximum as well as minimum temperatures for this time of the season, the officials said. The fall in the mercury has led to the freezing

of water supply lines even as a thin layer of ice covered the surface of several water bodies, including the Dal Lake. The city was colder than Gulmarg, a tourist resort town known for skiing activities in north Kashmir, where the mercury settled at a low of minus 6.6 degrees Celsius, up from minus 7.4 degrees Celsius the previous night, the department added.

However, tourists lamented not witnessing snow fall in Srinagar on Christmas. The summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir has had no snowfall so far this season. Snowfall in Himachal has led to closure of 226 roads, including three national highways, officials said. People shivered under piercing cold wave conditions as mini-

mum temperatures dropped by a few notches in Jot, which received 10 cm of snow in the past 24 hours. According to the state emergency operation centre, a maximum of 123 roads were closed in Shimla district, 36 in Lahaul and Spiti and 25 in Kullu. Additionally, 173 transformers were disrupted, affecting power supply across the state. The hopes of locals and tourists to experience a white Christmas in the Queen of Hills, Shimla, were dashed as the city was greeted by bright sunshine Wednesday morning.

## Modi lays foundation stone of Ken-Betwa project, slams Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Khajuraho (MP), Dec 25:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday accused Congress of ignoring Dr B R Ambedkar's contribution to the development of water resources in the country as he laid the foundation stone of the Ken-Betwa river linking project in Madhya Pradesh.

Speaking at the programme at Khajuraho in Bundelkhand region, Modi said that in the 21st century, only the nations with adequate and well-managed water resources can advance. The PM's comments about Ambedkar came amid the controversy over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent remarks about the iconic leader and the Congress's nationwide protests over the issue. Ambedkar's vision and farsightedness contributed significantly to the strengthening of the country's water resources, their management and dam construction, Modi said.

Ambedkar played a crucial role in the development of major river valley projects and formation of the Central Water Commission, he added.

"Ask anyone...after the country got independence, who thought about the visionary subject of Jal Shakti? Even my journalist friends will not be able to answer because the truth was suppressed to give credit to one person....water resources of India, construction of dams, the vision for all this - it was of one great man - Babasaheb Ambedkar," he said.



Sanitary workers take part in 'Swachata Kumbh' rally, a cleanliness drive campaign ahead of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

## STAMPEDE ROW Allu Arjun to give ₹2cr aid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, Dec 25:** Actor Allu Arjun and makers of the film 'Pushpa' Wednesday announced financial assistance of ₹2 crore for the family of the woman who died in a stampede during the film's screening at a theatre here December 4.

Meanwhile, Telangana State Film Development Corporation (FDC) chairman and leading producer Dil Raju said a delegation of film personalities would call

on Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy Thursday to foster healthy relations between the government and the film industry.

Allu Arjun's father and veteran producer Allu Aravind, along with Dil Raju and others, visited a private hospital where a boy injured in the stampede is undergoing treatment.

Allu Aravind expressed relief after speaking to the doctors, who informed them that the boy is recovering and can now



«Allu Arjun was arrested by the city police in connection with the death of the woman December 13

«The Telangana High Court granted him a four-week interim bail on the same day and he was released from a prison here December 14 morning

pede at the Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad December 4 where 'Pushpa 2' movie was screened and her eight-year-old son was hospitalised.

## Tsunami still haunts people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Port Blair, Dec 25:** Even after 20 years of the deadly tsunami of December 26, 2004, the devastation which killed more than 400 people and left nearly 3,000 missing, still haunts the residents of Campbell Bay and Car Nicobar in Nicobar district of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Located nearly 535 km away from Port Blair, Nicobar district suffered the maximum damage during the 2004 tsunami. Till today debris of damaged houses, defence quarters, schools, church and government establishments can send shivers down the spine of people. At Tamaloo village at Car Nicobar, signs of the large-scale devastation is still visible and every year Nicobarese tribes gather at 'Death House' - a sep-

arate community house where Nicobari tribes as a part of their ritual remember their friend, family and relatives who passed away.

Tamaloo village headman, Paul Benjamin, recalled, "Post Christmas celebration, we were getting ready for prayers at the local church. It was a festive mood. Around 6 am, December 26, 2004, we noticed the sea started receding nearly 3 km followed by high-impact tremors. The entire island was shaking. We have never seen such nature's fury before. There was no warning system and minutes later I saw a monstrous wall of sea waves rushing towards us. We started running towards hilly areas to save our lives."

As per government statistics, 269 people died while 583 went missing at Car Nicobar (nearly



274 km away from Port Blair), at Teressa Island, 54 died and six missing, at Chowra, 41 died and 17 missing, at Campbell Bay, 20 died and 520 went missing. At Katchal Island (in Nicobar district), the maximum number of persons went missing and the figure stands at 1,635. Only one person died in Katchal in the tsunami. At Kamorta and Trinket Islands (both in Nicobar district), 295 and 75 people are still missing. One each died from these two islands.

In Nicobar district alone, nearly 387 people died and 3,131 went missing (presumed dead) in 2004. Speaking PTI, Prahlad Singh, Gram panchayat Pradhan of Laxmi Nagar, Campbell Bay, said, "I lost some of my close friends in the tsunami. I was standing outside my house when I felt strong tremors. There was a jungle in front of our house and we could not see the sea. Then, I climbed up on a coconut tree and saw huge waves with ferocity gushing towards our

island." A similar impact was also felt in South Andaman and Little Andaman which reported seven and 34 deaths respectively. No one went missing from South Andaman but 13 people went missing (presumed dead) from Little Andaman. That ill-fated day also abruptly ended Meghana Rajshekhhar's playful world. She was the daughter of an IAF officer posted at Car Nicobar when the 'Tsunami' took her parents and little brother away. Then, she was 12 years old and her father was a meteorologist with the Indian Air Force. She drifted in the sea on a wooden plank before she was rescued after two days.

**Located nearly 535 km away from Port Blair, Nicobar district suffered the maximum damage during the 2004 tsunami**

**Till today debris of damaged houses, defence quarters, schools, church and government establishments can send shivers down the spine of people**

## RG KAR CASE

## Medicos stage protest over CBI 'delay' of probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Dec 25:** Agitating junior doctors Tuesday staged a protest outside the CBI's Salt Lake office here, accusing the agency of unnecessary delay in investigating the RG Kar case and collusion with the Kolkata Police to protect the criminals.

As part of their protest, the junior doctors symbolically locked the gate of the CBI office at the CGO Complex, demanding that the agency expedite the probe. A confrontation took place when security personnel removed the symbolic lock from the gate, leading to a scuffle between the doctors and policemen deployed at the spot.

One of the protesting doctors expressed his frustration, saying, "We are losing hope in the way the CBI is handling the investigation. If this continues, it would be better if they shut down their office in Kolkata."

Another doctor added, "Even after so many days, our sister 'Abhaya' has not received justice. The CBI detectives are working with Kolkata Police to protect the perpetrators. We don't want this type of CBI." Meanwhile, representatives

from the Abhaya Mancha and the Joint Platform of Doctors continued their protest at Dorina Crossing in central Kolkata's Esplanade area, demanding speedy justice for the deceased doctor. Around 8 pm, they lit candles near their make-shift stage as part of their 'Droher Alo Jalan' initiative. The protesters were also joined by a good number of people from different parts of the city.

"We would like to extend our protest demonstration till December 31. We shall again move the court seeking permission for that," one of the agitating senior doctors said. The agitators also formed a human chain at the Dorina Crossing.

The Calcutta High Court Monday upheld a December 20 order allowing doctors to hold demonstrations. The state had challenged the single bench order by Justice Tirthankar Ghosh, which permitted the Joint Forum of Doctors to stage a sit-in "50 feet away from Dorina Crossing at Esplanade in central Kolkata from December 20-26."

Police had discovered the body of the woman doctor inside the RG Kar hospital August 9.

## Anna varsity girl sexually assaulted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Dec 25:** An Anna University girl student was allegedly sexually assaulted and a 37-year old man, who sells biryani on the pavement, has been arrested for the crime, police said Wednesday.

The victim, a student of the varsity's College of Engineering, Guindy in her complaint said that while she was speaking to her male friend December 23, 2024 at about 8 pm, behind a building on the college campus, they were intimidated by an unknown person, who sexually assaulted her.

She lodged the complaint with the Kotturpuram All Women's Police Station and a case was duly registered and a probe was on, a Greater Chennai city police statement said.

"During investigation, based on scientific evidence, Gnanasekaran of Kottur (a neighbourhood near the college) has been arrested for this crime. The suspect has given a confessional statement. He is doing business by running a biryani shop on the pavement."

Further, the police said they were probing whether he had been involved in other crimes. "On the university campus, CCTV cameras have been installed and security officials have been appointed."

Police said appropriate action will be taken to enhance security for the students following consultations with university officials and that a 'joint security review,' will be undertaken.



# international



I invite every individual, and all people of all nations to become pilgrims of hope, to silence the sounds of arms and overcome divisions  
POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## BALD EAGLE BECOMES NATIONAL BIRD OF US

The bald eagle, a symbol of the power and strength of the United States for more than 240 years, earned an overdue honor Tuesday: It officially became the country's national bird. President Joe Biden signed into law legislation sent to him by Congress



### of the day quote

Joe Biden just commuted the Death Sentence on 37 of the worst killers in our Country. When you hear the acts of each, you won't believe that he did this. Makes no sense. Relatives and friends are further devastated. They can't believe this is happening!  
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT-ELECT, US

As part of the experimental regime, it is possible to use bitcoins, which we had mined here in Russia (in foreign trade transactions)  
ANTON SILUANOV | FINANCE MINISTER, RUSSIA

Immigration has always been a cornerstone of Canada's success, and we remain committed to welcoming the best and brightest to Canada so that everyone has access to the quality jobs, homes and supports they need to thrive  
MARC MILLER | MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION, CANADA

# Hasina's son denies graft in \$12.65bn nuclear deal

Bangladesh's Anti Corruption Commission has alleged that there were financial irregularities worth about \$5 billion involving Hasina, her son Sajeed Wazed and her niece and British treasury minister Tulip Siddiq, through offshore accounts



New Delhi, Dec 25: Ousted Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son and adviser Tuesday described allegations of corruption involving the family in the 2015 awarding of a \$12.65 billion nuclear power contract as "completely bogus" and a "smear campaign".

The Commission said it had launched an enquiry into allegations of corruption, embezzlement and money laundering in the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project, backed by Russia's state-owned Rosatom

Rosatom, the world's largest supplier of enriched uranium, refuted the allegations, adding that it was committed to combat corruption in all its projects and that it maintains a transparent procurement system and reputation in court," it said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

Bangladesh's Anti Corruption Commission said Monday it had launched an enquiry into allegations of corruption, embezzlement and money laundering in the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project, backed by Russia's state-owned Rosatom.

A deal for two power plants, each with a capacity of 1,200 megawatts, was signed in 2015. The commission has alleged that there were financial irregularities worth about \$5 billion involving Hasina, her son Sajeed Wazed and her niece and British treasury minister Tulip Siddiq, through offshore accounts.

Siddiq did not respond to a request for comment. A spokesperson for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Siddiq had denied any involvement in the claims and that he had confidence in her. Siddiq would continue in her role, the spokesperson added.

Rosatom, the world's largest supplier of enriched uranium, refuted the allegations, adding that it was committed to combat corruption in all its projects and that it maintains a transparent procurement system.

Wazed, speaking on behalf of the family, said they were the targets of a political witch hunt in Bangladesh. "These are completely bogus allegations and a smear campaign. My family nor I have ever been involved or taken any money from any government

# Imran Khan demands meeting with party team

Khan, 72, founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), put forth the demands of his party and said if the government agrees, he will postpone the civil disobedience movement announced earlier



Islamabad, Dec 25: Jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan has sought a meeting with his negotiating team that is in talks with the Pakistan government saying it will make the process "meaningful."

Khan, 72, founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), also put forth the demands of his party and said if the government agrees, he will postpone the civil disobedience movement announced earlier. He nominated Sahibzada Mohammad Hamid Raza, chairman of PTI alliance partner Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), as the spokesperson for his party's negotiation committee.

tion team so that I can have a proper understanding of the issues," Khan said in a post on X after that meeting.

Earlier Monday, the Pakistan government and Khan's party, in their maiden meeting, agreed to continue talks to address contentious issues, including Khan's release from jail.

The long-anticipated talks between the committees representing the government and the PTI were chaired by the National Assembly (NA) Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, who had last week announced to facilitate the two sides in their effort to defuse the prevailing political tension.

The PTI leader's announcement came during a meeting with his lawyers' team Tuesday in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, where he has been incarcerated since last year.

The Monday's meeting took place a day after the Shehbaz Sharif-led Pakistan government was prompted to form a negotiation committee to start formal talks with Khan's PTI after it threatened to give a call for civil disobedience.

The PTI leader's announcement came during a meeting with his lawyers' team Tuesday in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, where he has been incarcerated since last year.

After nominating Raza as the spokesperson for the PTI's negotiation process, Khan also forwarded demands of his party for the success of negotiations with the government.

"The efforts of the party's negotiation committee are a good thing. To make the negotiation process meaningful, it is important that I meet with my nominated negotia-

These include the release of all under-trial political prisoners of his party and the formation of a judicial commission to probe the events May 9, 2023 and November 26 this year.

### SHORT TAKES

#### China, Japan foreign ministers agree visit

Beijing/Tokyo: Talks between China and Japan's foreign ministers in Beijing have paved way for Japan to host China's foreign affairs chief next year, and mutual agreement to hold a security dialogue as soon as possible, Japan said Wednesday. No details were given for when the events will take place but Japan's Takeshi Iwaya told reporters after his meeting and a working lunch with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that both agreed on continued high-level talks, including potentially an economic dialogue during the 2025 visit. The one-day visit is Iwaya's first to the Chinese capital since becoming Japan's foreign minister in October, to discuss thorny issues with his country's largest trading partner. It follows an agreement between leaders of both countries to work towards a mutually beneficial strategic relationship.

#### Turkish military kills 21 Kurdish militants

Ankara: The Turkish military killed 21 Kurdish militants in northern Syria and Iraq, the defence ministry said Wednesday. In a statement, the ministry reported that 20 Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and Syrian Kurdish YPG militants, who were preparing to launch an attack, were killed in northern Syria, while one militant was killed in northern Iraq. "Our operations will continue effectively and resolutely," the ministry added. The PKK, designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union, and the United States, began its armed insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984. The conflict has claimed more than 40,000 lives.

#### 13 TTP terrorists killed in Pakistan

Peshawar: At least 13 terrorists linked to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed by the security forces Wednesday during an intelligence-based in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said. According to a statement by the military's media wing, security forces conducted an operation in Sararogha, South Waziristan District, on the reported presence of TTP militants December 24-25. The operation ensued a heavy exchange of fire that led to the killings of 13 militants. A large cache of weapons and ammunition was recovered from the militants, the statement said.

## 'INHUMAN' CHRISTMAS DAY ATTACKS

# Russia targets Ukrainian energy infra

REUTERS

Kyiv, Dec 25: Russia attacked Ukraine's energy system and some cities with cruise and ballistic missiles plus drones Wednesday in an "inhuman" Christmas Day assault, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.



Today, (Russian President Vladimir) Putin deliberately chose Christmas to attack. What could be more inhuman? More than 70 missiles, including ballistic missiles, and more than a hundred attack drones  
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

Nearly three years into the war, the strikes wounded at least six people in the northeastern city of Kharkiv and killed one in the region of Dnipropetrovsk, the governors there said. Half a million people in Kharkiv region were left without heating, in temperatures just a few degrees Celsius above zero, while there were blackouts in the capital Kyiv and elsewhere. "Today, (Russian President Vladimir) Putin deliberately chose Christmas to attack. What

could be more inhuman? More than 70 missiles, including ballistic missiles, and more than a hundred attack drones," he said. Russia's Defence Ministry confirmed it had conducted a "massive strike" on what it said were critical energy facilities supporting the work of Kyiv's "military-industrial complex". "The aim of the strike was achieved. All facilities have been hit," it said in a statement. Ukraine's military said its air defences downed 59 Russian

missiles and 54 drones overnight and Wednesday morning. Ukrainians were marking their second Christmas Wednesday, according to a new calendar in another step towards erasing Russian influence. Most Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians and the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine, set up in 2018, agreed in 2023 to move away from the traditional Julian calendar used in Russia where Christmas is Jan. 7.

## 3 shot dead at hospital reopening in Haiti

Port-au-Prince (Haiti): Haiti's online media association said two reporters were killed and several others were wounded in a gang attack Tuesday on the reopening of Port-au-Prince's biggest public hospital. Street gangs have taken over an estimated 85% of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and they forced the closure of the General Hospital early this year. Authorities had pledged to reopen the facility Tuesday but as journalists gathered to cover the event, suspected gang members opened fire in a vicious Christmas Eve attack. Robest Dimanche, a spokesman for the Online Media Collective, identified the dead journalists as Markenzy Nauthou and Jimmy Jean. Dimanche said an unspecified number of reporters had also been wounded in the attack, which he blamed on the Viv Ansanm coalition of gangs.



## SK's Yoon defies second agency summons over martial law



Gwacheon, South Korea: South Korea's suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol did not respond Wednesday to a second summons by anti-corruption authorities who, along with prosecutors, are investigating his short-lived martial law decree issued early this month. Yoon had not appeared for questioning as of 10 am on Christmas Day as requested by the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), after ignoring its first summons last week. An agency official said it would continue waiting for Yoon Wednesday, adding it would need to review the case further before seeking an arrest warrant, Yonhap news agency reported. An official with a joint investigation unit, which the CIO is part of, told reporters later in the day that it had neither heard back from Yoon nor received a document for the appointment of his legal counsel as of 6 pm. The unit would conduct a review and decide on further moves, the official said.

# Spice tins for Indian soldiers in Christmas truce of WW-I

The spice tins ended up in the hands of German soldiers when the Western Front fell silent as soldiers walked across no man's land to exchange handshakes, gifts and a game of football 110 years ago

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 25: A UK historian has highlighted further evidence of the widespread contributions made by Indian soldiers to the First World War effort as part of the British empire army with the discovery of spice tins that were used during the Christmas truce in 1914.

ern Front fell silent as soldiers walked across no man's land to exchange handshakes, gifts and a game of football 110 years ago.

Doyle organised an exhibition about the truce, including details around these spice tins, at the Great War Huts Museum in Bury St Edmunds, eastern England. "The truce was not just a case of 'Anglo-Saxon' to 'Saxon' fraternisation," Doyle is quoted as saying. "Up until recently, people didn't really believe or expect Indian soldiers took part in the truce, though they may have been observers," he said. The spice tins were part of



morale boosting Christmas gifts to soldiers in the war by Princess Mary, the daughter of Britain's King George V. For British soldiers, her gift was made up of a smoking kit, which was deemed inappropriate as many members of the Indian army were non-smokers. Instead, their tins were filled

Doyle, the author of 'For Every Sailor Afloat, Every Soldier at the Front: Princess Mary's Christmas Gift 1914', documents how Princess Mary aged just 17 set out to send a Christmas gift to all those on active service.

His book is set against the backdrop of an unofficial "Truce in No Man's Land" during the war and his research led him to the discovery of one of the spice tins - only the second one known to still be in existence. He knew that the 39th Garhwal Rifles were at Givenchy, France, during the Christmas of 1914, which

led him to explore whether the spice tins may have become part of the Christmas truce there, along with the men who carried them.

He approached Robin Schaffer, a German historian, who went into the archives and found references in German newspapers to men receiving the spice tins as gifts during the brief cessation of hostilities 110 years ago.

A soldier named Wilhelm Althoff wrote, "Some Indians gifted us figs [and] a shiny metal box with spices." Doyle and Schaffer hope that more of these tins, which Doyle describes as "unprepossessing", may be found by people in Germany and elsewhere if they go looking. They also hold out hope that some photographs of the event may exist, as picture-taking was initially encouraged in German trenches to boost morale.

# Business



An airline so young expects to welcome over 112 million customers in 2024, after crossing the 100 million annual customers bar last year  
**PIETER ELBERS | INDIGO CEO**

## 1,57,066 STARTUPS

At least 157,066 startups have been recognised by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to date and 759,303 users are registered on the portal (as on December 25), the government said Wednesday.



### of the day quote

The office market has shown strong recovery and consolidation post-pandemic



PEUSH JAIN | MD, ANAROCK

We are confident that improving price realisations and better capacity utilization will drive the industry's recovery and growth. Additionally, the increase in capital expenditure, both from the government and the private players will provide the necessary impetus to India's growth story



NEERAJ AKHOURI | SHREE CEMENT MD

We sit at about 3 per cent of the market share right now and to be servicing every 1 car out of ten would be around 10 per cent by 2027



HIMANSHU ARORA | GOMECHANIC CO-FOUNDER & CEO

## FPI inflows into equities drop sharply in 2024

### The drastic decline in FPI investments stems from a combination of global and domestic factors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: After a robust 2023, foreign investors significantly scaled back their investments in Indian equities in 2024, with net inflows amounting to over ₹5,000 crore, as elevated domestic valuations, coupled with geopolitical uncertainties prompted investors to adopt a more cautious stance.

Looking ahead to 2025, FPI flows into Indian equities could see a recovery, supported by a cyclical upswing in corporate earnings, particularly in domestic-oriented sectors like capital goods, manufacturing, and infrastructure, Vinit Bolinjar, Head of Research, Ventura Securities, said.

However, elevated valuations and cheaper alternatives in other emerging markets, such as ASEAN and Latin America, could constrain these inflows.

Additionally, lingering concerns over a prolonged global recession may weigh on investor sentiment and appetite for risk assets, he added.

On the other hand, Feroze Azeez, Deputy CEO at Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, believes geopolitical escalations, central



bank interest rate cuts, and potential US tariff sanctions could act as tailwinds for FPI inflows into Indian markets.

As of now, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net investment of over ₹5,052 crore in the Indian equity markets and ₹1.12 lakh crore in the debt market (till December 24), as per data available with the depositories.

This follows the extraordinary ₹1.71 lakh crore net investment in equities in 2023, driven by optimism surrounding India's resilient economic fundamentals. In contrast, 2022 witnessed the worst net outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore due to aggressive rate hikes by global central banks.

Prior to the outflow, FPIs invested money in the last three years (2019, 2020 and 2021).

In 2024, FPI outflows were

recorded during the months of January, April, May, October, and November.

The drastic decline in FPIs flow in 2024 stems from a combination of global and domestic factors.

The reduced inflow into Indian equities was primarily driven by elevated valuations, prompting investors to redirect their investment to attractive valued Chinese equities, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director of Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

This shift was further fuelled by a series of stimulus measures introduced by China to bolster economic growth, making its equities increasingly appealing.

In addition, heightened geopolitical tensions, particularly the Israel-Iran conflict, in-

creased risk aversion, pushing investors toward safer assets.

Caution ahead of the US Presidential election and concerns over fewer US Fed rate cuts next year, despite this year's 100 bps cuts, further dampened sentiment, he added.

On the domestic front, factors like high valuations, weak corporate earnings for the September quarter, expectations of subdued results for December, rising inflation, slower GDP growth, and a depreciating rupee have weighed on investor confidence, Narender Singh, smallcase Manager and Founder at Growth Investing, said.

In contrast to equities, FPIs have shown a marked preference for Indian debt markets, investing ₹1.12 lakh crore in 2024, up from ₹68,663 crore in 2023.

This trend has been significantly influenced by India's inclusion in JP Morgan's Govind Government Bond Index, with expectations of further inclusion in other major global bond indices along with anticipated interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve led to enhanced flow from foreign investors into the Indian bond markets, Morningstar's Srivastava said.

Apart from the index inclusion, other key drivers include India's improving fiscal position where deficit reduced from 5.1 per cent to 4.9 per cent further expected to decline to 4.5 per cent next year plus a healthy forex reserves, Singh said.

## EPFO adds 13.41L net members in Oct



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: Retirement fund body EPFO has registered 13.41 lakh net new members addition in October 2024, according to showed latest payroll data.

This signifies increased employment opportunities and heightened awareness of employee benefits, bolstered by EPFO's effective outreach initiatives, a labour ministry statement said Wednesday.

According to the statement, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has released provisional payroll data for October 2024, revealing a net addition of 13.41 lakh members.

As per the data, EPFO enrolled around 7.50 lakh new members in October 2024.

This addition in new memberships can be attributed to

growing employment opportunities, increased awareness of employee benefits, and EPFO's successful outreach programmes, the ministry stated.

A noticeable aspect of the data is the dominance of the 18-25 age group, constituting a significant 58.49 per cent of the total new members added in October 2024.

The net payroll data for the age group 18-25 for October 2024 is 5.43 lakhs.

This is in consonance with the earlier trend, which indicates that most individuals joining the organised workforce are youth, primarily first-time job seekers.

The payroll data highlights that approximately 12.90 lakh members exited and subsequently rejoined EPFO.

This figure depicts year-on-year growth of 16.23 per cent compared to October 2023.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Samsung plans AC comeback

New Delhi: Appliances and consumer electronics maker Samsung India is planning a comeback into the residential air-conditioner market, which witnessed unprecedented sales growth in summer this year. The company is planning to launch over a dozen models of inverter ACs for its 2025 lineup in the next few weeks, expanding the total number of stock-keeping units (SKUs) to 15-16, an industry insider told PTI. Its room air conditioner (RAC) will have Samsung's DNA of smart features such as its proprietary Bespoke AI solutions, targeting consumers looking to buy premium ACs and extra features, he said. A decade back, Samsung was the second-largest player in the RAC segment, having over 15 per cent market share in the 2014-15 fiscal year. However, Samsung lost steam in the segment after the company diverted its resources and energy to high-growth areas such as mobile phones, smart TVs, LED displays, etc.

#### Ola Electric expands network

New Delhi: Ola Electric Wednesday said it has expanded its network to 4,000 stores nationwide, a four-fold increase from its existing network. The company has opened over 3,200 new stores co-located with service facilities. The expansion spans beyond metros and Tier I and II cities into smaller towns and tehsils, Ola Electric said in a statement. "With our newly opened stores co-located with service centres, we have completely redefined EV purchase and ownership experience, setting new benchmarks with our #SavingsWalaScooter campaign," Ola Electric Chairman & Managing Director Bhavish Aggarwal said.

#### 18.89mn int'l tourist arrivals

New Delhi: India recorded 18.89 million international tourist arrivals in 2023 as foreign exchange earnings (FEEs) through tourism last year surged to ₹231,927 crore, the government said Wednesday. Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India during 2023 were 9.52 million and domestic tourist visits (DTV) were 2,509 million, according to data released by the Ministry of Tourism. The ministry sanctioned a total of 76 projects for an amount of ₹5,287.90 Crore under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, out of which 75 projects are physically complete.

## GDP to grow at 6.5% in FY25, FY26: EY report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: India's economy is likely to grow by 6.5 per cent in the current and the next financial year, an EY report said, attributing lower than anticipated expansion in the September quarter to fall in private consumption expenditure and gross fixed capital formation.

Real GDP growth eased to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent in July-September -- the second quarter of the current 2024-25 fiscal year.

This was compared to 6.7 per cent in the preceding quarter.

This was primarily because two domestic demand components -- private final consumption expenditure and gross fixed capital formation -- together accounted for a fall of 1.5 percentage points.

"One outstanding feature of demand is the slowdown in investment, as reflected in the growth of gross fixed capital formation. This growth is estimated at 5.4 per cent in 2QFY25, which is a six-quarter low. Apart from the fact that private investment demand has not picked up, there was a contraction in government of India's investment expenditure growth, which has remained negative at (-)15.4 per cent in first half of

FY25," the report said.

It continued to be negative even in October 2024 at (-)8.4 per cent, implying that in the first seven months government's investment expenditure growth has remained negative at (-)14.7 per cent. "In fact, to meet the budgeted target of Government of India's capital expenditure growth of 17.1 per cent over CGA actuals for FY24, we now require a growth of 60.5 per cent in the remaining five months of the fiscal year FY25."

The EY Economy Watch December 2024 forecasts India's real GDP growth at 6.5 per cent for FY25 (April 2024 to March 2024 fiscal year) and FY26.

"With global conditions remaining uncertain and global trade likely to be fragmented, India may have to continue to rely largely on domestic demand and services exports. In the medium-term, India's real GDP growth prospects can be kept at 6.5 per cent per year provided the Government of India (GoI) accelerates its capital expenditure growth in the remaining part of the current fiscal year and comes up with a medium-term investment pipeline with participation from the GoI and state governments and both their respective public sector entities, and the private corporate sector," it said.

## Govt to cut fiscal deficit to 4.5% in FY26: Finmin report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: The government will continue its focus on improving quality spending, strengthening the social security net and bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of the GDP in FY26, a finance ministry document said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is schedule to present the Budget for 2025-26 in Parliament February 1.

The Union government is committed to pursuing the glide path of fiscal consolidation as announced in the Budget for FY 2021-22 and to attain a level of fiscal deficit lower than 4.5 per cent of GDP by FY 2025-26, according to finance ministry statements on the half yearly review of the trends in receipts and expenditure and deviation in meeting the obligations of the government under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003.

The statements were tabled in the Lok Sabha last week.

"The thrust will be on improving the quality of public spending, while at the same time, strengthening the social security net for the poor and needy. This approach would help further strengthen the nation's macro-economic fundamentals and ensure overall financial stability," it said.



According to the statements, the Budget 2024-25 was presented in the backdrop of global uncertainties caused by the wars in Europe and the Middle East.

India's sound macro-economic fundamentals have cushioned the country from the vagaries afflicting the global economy.

"It has also helped the nation pursue growth with fiscal consolidation. As a result, India retains its pride of place as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. However, risks to growth still remain," it said.

Total expenditure was es-

timated at about ₹48.21 lakh crore, of which, expenditure on revenue account and capital account were estimated at about ₹37.09 lakh crore and ₹11.11 lakh crore, respectively, as per the Budget Estimate (BE) of 2024-25.

As against total expenditure of ₹48.21 lakh crore, the expenditure in first half of FY25 was ₹21.11 lakh crore or about 43.8 per cent of BE.

Taking into account the grant for creation of capital assets, the effective capital expenditure (Capex) was projected at ₹15.02 lakh crore.

Gross Tax Revenue (GTR)

was estimated at about ₹38.40 lakh crore with an implied tax-GDP ratio of 11.8 per cent.

Total non-debt receipt of the Centre was estimated at about ₹32.07 lakh crore. It comprised tax revenue (net to Centre) of about ₹25.83 lakh crore, non tax revenue of about ₹5.46 lakh crore, and miscellaneous capital receipts of ₹0.78 lakh crore.

With above estimates of receipts and expenditure, the fiscal deficit was pegged at about ₹16.13 lakh crore in BE 2024-25 or 4.9 per cent of GDP.

In H1 of FY25, the fiscal deficit is estimated at ₹4.75 lakh crore, or about 29.4 per cent of BE.

## NRI remittances surge to record \$11.9bn in April-Oct: RBI

### India tops the list of recipient countries for remittances in 2024, according to World Bank

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 25: Inflows into non-resident Indian (NRI) deposit accounts surged to \$11.9 billion in April-October during the current financial year, which is nearly twice the corresponding figure of \$6.1 billion for the same period last year, the latest figures compiled by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed.

The total outstanding NRI deposits as of October 2024 has now gone up to \$162.7 billion, compared to \$143.5 billion during the same period last

year.

The NRI deposit schemes include foreign currency non-resident (FCNR) deposits, non-resident external (NRE) deposits, and non-resident ordinary (NRO) deposits.

The figures also show that FCNR (B) deposits attracted the highest flows to the tune of \$6.1 billion which is close to thrice the amount of \$2.1 billion deposited in the same period last year. The total amount in these accounts stood at \$31.87 billion.

These accounts are preferred by Indians working overseas as they can maintain fixed deposits from one to five years that enables them to earn higher interest. Since these accounts are in foreign currency these deposits are safeguarded against fluctuations in the rupee.

The RBI had raised the interest rate ceilings on FCNR (B) accounts in its monetary poli-



cy review earlier this month to attract more flows to increase

the country's foreign exchange reserves.

An increase in the foreign exchange reserves reflects strong fundamentals of the economy and gives the RBI more headroom to stabilise the rupee when it turns volatile.

A strong forex kitty enables the RBI to intervene in the spot and forward currency markets by releasing more dollars to prevent the rupee from going into a free fall. Conversely, a declining forex kitty leaves the RBI less space to intervene in the market to prop up the rupee.

The RBI figures also show that NRE deposits saw an inflow of \$3.09 billion during this period, up from \$1.95 billion in the same period last year. NRE deposits are a high-interest earning rupee deposit option for NRI remittances.

NRO deposits rose to \$2.66 billion during April-October compared to \$2 billion during the corresponding period of the

previous year.

India tops the list of recipient countries for remittances in 2024 with an estimated inflow of \$129 billion, according to the latest figures compiled by World Bank economists.

The growth rate of remittances this year is estimated to be 5.8 per cent, compared to 1.2 per cent registered in 2023, according to a World Bank blog post.

"The recovery of the job markets in the high-income countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the key driver of remittances. This is especially true for the United States where the employment of foreign-born workers has recovered steadily and is 11 percent higher than the pre-pandemic level seen in February 2020," the report said.

READY TO SPAR ON BOXING DAY

# India fret on Rohit's batting position

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Dec 25: Divine intervention and a wagging tail might have lifted India's sagging spirits in Brisbane but an out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma's batting position will be in focus against a dangerous Australia bracing to deliver the knockout punch in the 'Boxing Day' Test starting here Thursday.

The Indian skipper was the last to hit the nets on Christmas eve and there is speculation doing rounds that he could replace the team's most assured opener, KL Rahul, at the top of the order.

If that happens, Rahul will come in at No 3 while Shubman Gill could either play in the middle order or make way for a Dhruv Jurel in the playing eleven. The series is currently locked 1-1.

The Indian skipper stopped batting in the middle order after being elevated to the opening slot back in 2019. But he chose to come down in Adelaide and Brisbane to accommodate an in-form Rahul and first-Test centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal.

The move was a spectacular failure and it remains to be seen how the team adjusts in case Rohit opens and Gill is either dropped or bats at number five. Asked about his batting position during the pre-match press conference, he was borderline irritated.

"Let's not worry about that. I think who bats where, we should be discussing that with ourselves and I shouldn't be answering this question in every press conference," the skipper just about held his composure.

## HOW TEAMS ARE STACKED

Both captains feel that 1-1 after three games is a fair reflection of the competition between the sides but things can quickly change at the MCG.

## THE SQUAD

### TEAM INDIA

Rohit Sharma (captain), KL Rahul, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Nitish Reddy, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep, Washington Sundar, Prasidh Krishna, Harshit Rana, Tanush Kotian, Sarfaraz Khan, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Dhruv Jurel, Devdutt Padikkal.

### AUSTRALIA (XI)

Pat Cummins (captain), Usman Khawaja, Sam Konstas, Marcus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey (wk), Mitchell Starc and Scott Boland.



The rain-affected draw at the Gabba was like a soothing balm for India after Pink Test debacle in Adelaide.

But now, India is back at one of their favourite Australian venues where they have remained undefeated in Tests since the 2014 series.

The last two (2018-19 and 2020-21) of the three Tests (other being 2014-15) resulted in Indian wins where solid batting played its part. But this line-up, with three young mavericks (Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant and Shubman Gill), one confident opener (KL Rahul) and a couple of ageing stalwarts (Virat Kohli and Rohit) haven't looked very assured.

They will have to put up their best show against a home team which isn't exactly a runaway

favourite either but has shown tremendous resilience.

For under-fire Rohit, it is his own reputation as a Test batter that is at stake while Kohli will need to channelise the inner champion in him which lit up the MCG skyline with the most talked about sixes in his T20 career.

Those sixes required flair; the situation now will warrant loads of patience when Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc tease him with that probing line outside the off stump.

For Rohit, the equation is as simple as it gets. Win the next two Tests and likely head into a potentially memorable swansong at the Lord's in June.

A captain has to score and even without an injured Josh Hazlewood, Australia would be a handful with local hero Scott Boland ready to bowl those uncompromising hard lengths.

Jaiswal, Gill and Pant would like to live up to their own expectations and go into the game with an uncluttered mindset as expected by their skipper.

## INDIAN BOWLING COMBINATION

For the hosts, all eyes will be on teenage sensation Sam Konstas, billed as one for the future with an attacking game to match Jasprit Bumrah.

Konstas would do well to know that Bumrah has already put brakes on his predecessor Nathan McSweeney's career.

The other good news for Australia is that the marauding Travis Head is fully fit and raring to go at Melbourne which is certain to increase the creases on Rohit's forehead.

Head had an extended session Wednesday where he appeared for a fitness test and then looked in good touch at the nets.

# Maheshwari, Anantjeet win skeet national title



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: The duo of Maheshwari Chauhan and Anantjeet Singh Naruka rounded off a good year by winning the skeet mixed team title for their home state Rajasthan in the National Shooting Championship here Wednesday.

In the final played at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, the pair pulled off a tight 44-43 victory over Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Areeba Khan of Uttar Pradesh. Punjab's Ganemat Sekhon and Abhay Singh Sekhon won bronze.

Earlier in the day, three 25-shot round totals of 72 and 71 by Maheshwari and Anantjeet respectively, ensured their path to the gold medal match as toppers of the seven-team qualification round.

Three teams -- Ganemat and Abhay and Haryana's Ishaan Libra and Raiza Dhillon, besides Mairaj and Areeba, finished on the same tally of 141

after which the UP duo won a three-way shoot-off by blasting eight targets on the trot, to earn a right to shoot for gold.

Maheshwari and Anantjeet shot a confident final and were leading throughout the six series of eight birds per team decider, but lapses in concentration and a caution to Maheshwari for overshooting her shot time, made it more closer in the end than it actually was.

In the junior skeet mixed team event, Madhya Pradesh stunned Haryana to bag gold as their pairing of Jyotiraditya Singh and Mansi Raghuvanshi outgunned Ishaan and Sanjana Sood 4-2 in a shoot-off after both teams had tied at 40 hits out of the regulation 48 targets.

Telangana's Muneek Battula and Zahra Deesawala won bronze, getting the better of Rajasthan's Yaduraj Singh and Yashasvi Rathore 42-36 in the bronze medal match.

## SHORT TAKES

### Oscar returns to Sao Paulo

Sao Paulo: Former Chelsea midfielder Oscar is returning to his Brazilian boyhood club Sao Paulo after 14 years, which included a long spell in Chinese soccer. Sao Paulo president Julio Casares posted photos Tuesday on his social media channels which showed him with the 33-year-old former Brazil international.

## Pro Kabaddi League eliminators today

Pune: UP Yoddhas will play Jaipur Pink Panthers, while Patna Pirates will be up against U Mumbai in the eliminators of the Pro Kabaddi League here Thursday. In the fray for the top prize are Haryana Steelers and UP Yoddhas, both of whom have never won the title, and along with them are three-time champions Patna Pirates, season 8 winners Dabang Delhi KC, season 1 and 9 title holders Jaipur Pink Panthers, and season 2 champions U Mumbai, who sealed qualification for the playoffs with the last game of the league stage.

## Valencia hires Carlos Corberan as head coach

Valencia: Relegation-threatened Valencia has hired West Bromwich Albion manager Carlos Corberan as its new head coach till June 2027. Valencia fired Rubén Baraja Monday after another setback in La Liga left the Spanish club stuck in the relegation zone and sparked renewed protests against Singaporean owner Peter Lim.

## Anupati, Raju emerge winners

New Delhi: Young riders Anupati Navayashree Sai and Raju Singh emerged the best performers in the show jumping and dressage categories respectively on the concluding day of the first half of Junior National Equestrian Championships. In the young rider category, Anupati, who was astride Abra ka Dabra, secured 32.60 marks without conceding any penalty in the showjumping two-phase event Tuesday. In dressage freestyle, Raju, who rode Louk, did extremely well in his event, securing 65.18 marks.

# KIIT launches centre of excellence for archery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: A franchise agreement was executed recently between Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Bhubaneswar and Dola and Rahul Banerjee Sports Foundation, Altruistic Initiatives to launch a centre of excellence for archery. ALPHA Sports Academy will be the operational sports partner for the university in this collaborative effort.

The centre of excellence aims to nurture and develop world-class archery talent, offering state-of-the-art infrastructure, cutting-edge coaching methodologies, and a holistic training environment and identification of talent. Spearheaded by Olympians Dola and Rahul Banerjee, alongside the leadership of KIIT, this initiative promises to



set a new benchmark for sports development in India, the collaborators said in a statement.

This programme not only identifies talent at the grassroots level but also develop archers at the university level.

The Olympian duo also extended their expertise to the world university team.

Renowned Indian archer Rahul expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "This centre embodies our lifelong dream to give back to the sport and create an ecosystem where talent flourishes. With KIIT's support and our foundation's expertise, we are confident in shaping champions of tomorrow." The collaboration also highlights Altruistic Initiatives' dedication to driving positive social change through sports, ensuring equitable opportunities for aspiring athletes.

## Asian Junior Weightlifting Championship

### Martina Devi clinches silver



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, Dec 25: Lifter Martina Devi clinched a silver medal in the women's junior +87kg category at the Asian Junior Weightlifting Championship here Wednesday.

The 18-year-old from Manipur lifted a total of 225kg (96kg+129kg) to finish second in the three-lifter field. She also won a silver medal for her clean and jerk effort and a bronze for her snatch.

The performance was, however, far from Devi's personal best. The teenager had lifted a national junior record-breaking 101kg in snatch and 136kg in clean and jerk at the junior world championships earlier this year.

# Djokovic eyes more slam glory

AGENCIES

Brisbane, December 25: Novak Djokovic is confident he can still win Grand Slams, starting at the Australian Open, with the Serbian kick starting his bid for an unprecedented 11th title and record 25th major crown in Brisbane this week. Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, who is gunning for a third Melbourne Park trophy, joins him at the Queensland Tennis Centre from December 29-January 5 in a stellar women's field. The 2025 season gets under way Friday with the mixed-teams United Cup in Perth and Sydney, headlined by world number two Iga Swiatek in her first tournament since revelations that she served a one-month doping suspension.

It is the first season since 37-year-old Djokovic began playing that none of the other so-called 'Big Four' will be on the other side of the net following the retirements this year of Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray.

Roger Federer called it quits in 2022.

As they faded, Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz stepped up to become the new Grand Slam kings, with both men opting against a warm-up tournament leading into the

first major of the year which begins January 12.

As doubts grew over Djokovic's motivation and ability to take down the new guard after a disappointing 2024, he stunned the tennis world by hiring Murray to coach him.

The British three-time major winner is set to miss Brisbane but hook up with his old rival at the Australian Open. "I still will try to go strong because I feel like my body is serving me well. I still have motivation to win Grand Slams, make more history," said Djokovic, who needs one more Slam crown to surpass Margaret Court's 24.



"That's one of the biggest reasons why I asked Andy to work with me, because I still have big plans, so as long as that's the case, I will keep going," he added.

# Australia 'excited to play' at inaugural 'Co Co' WC

The Australians are known for having a rich sporting culture. From cricket to rugby, they have been a force to reckon with and are all set to excel at Kho Kho where they will be featuring in both men's and women's categories

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 25: 'Co Co' is how the Australians call Kho Kho. It just took some googling and training sessions that were held in the cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, and the sport was warmly accepted. They are now gearing up to be a part of the inaugural World Cup scheduled to take place here from January 13 to 19.



We are getting a lot of support from the fans, they've all been so excited to find out that Australia has a team in the World Cup. For those who knew of Kho Kho, it's great and for those who are finding out about the sport, they've all been so excited and proud to learn that Australia has a team

GUS DOWDLE | MEN'S TEAM MEMBER

teams of 15, besides there being a handful of Indians, there are 6 male and 8 female players of Australian origin. Gus Dowdle, one of the members of the team, expressed delight and excitement of coming to India and being a part of history.

"It's an honour to represent Australia as a great sporting nation, we're always willing to try sports that we haven't played before, and it's an amazing opportunity for me to be



able to bring Australia's sporting values of fair play, competitiveness, and perseverance to the World Cup. I've found that it's such a fast and hard game. At the same time, it's so much fun and I'm so excited to play in

the global event," he said.

The sport is getting a lot of support from the fans within the country and are super excited that an Australian team will be competing in the multi-national tournament.

Kho Kho Australia Federation is very keen to develop the sport in the country and develop a team to be reckoned with. The long-term focus is to develop Kho Kho at the grassroots level to ensure sustained

growth of the sport. When an Indian-origin game, such as Kho Kho, is played in Australia opens a space for community exchange and cultural celebration. The teams have been preparing and training intensively for the upcoming World Cup. There's a particular and personalised fitness training plan for each player.

A total of 41 international teams from 24 countries across six continents will compete in the week-long mega event. As many as 21 men's and 20 women's teams from Europe, Oceania, Asia, Africa, North America and the South American continents will compete for the world title, which will be held on a league-cum-knockout basis.