

## CITY'S CRIME GRAPH RISING

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** Crime cases in the Capital city went northward, while they declined in neighbouring Cuttack last year compared to 2023, said twin city police commissioner Suresh Dev Datta Singh Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters, Singh said 21,613 cases were registered in the twin cities in 2024 as against 19,410 in 2023.

While murder, swindling, motor vehicle-related cases saw an increase, other crimes like dacoity, robbery, burglary, theft, rape, and rioting declined in the twin cities, he said.

The increase is attributed to "the implementation of free registration policies, encouraging victims to report incidents without hesitation, and the rise in miscellaneous cases or petty crimes," he said.

Singh said a total of 14,392 cases were registered in Bhubaneswar urban police district (UPD), as compared to 11,975 in 2023.

"Murder and swindling cases in the Capital city increased by 26.92 per cent and 30.75 per cent, respectively. However, the crime graph for incidents like dacoity, robbery, burglary, theft, and rioting showed a decline in Bhubaneswar," the police commissioner said.



**MOMENT TO CHERISH:** Girls take a selfie at the entrance of State Museum, decked up by decorative flowers, in Bhubaneswar on the New Year's Day, Wednesday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

## HEAVY RUSH AT SRIMANDIR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Jan 1:** The Srimandir here witnessed unprecedented rush as lakhs thronged the 12th century shrine on the first day of the New Year. A chaotic situation arose when a large number of devotees tried to storm into the shrine for darshan of the Trinity.

According to reports, some people broke the barricades installed in front of the Lion's Gate and pushed past the police to enter the temple. However, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan rubbished the reports about devotees breaking the barricades.

In order to ensure safety of devotees, the administration had made special arrangements for the New Year, said sources. Barricades have been set up from Market Square to regulate the crowd. Devotees are only allowed to enter the temple through the Lion's Gate. For entry through the other three gates, devotees have to go through a different route. To manage the crowd, 60 platoons of forces have been deployed.

More than a kilometre-long queue of devotees was seen on the Grand Road leading to the temple from Market Chhak to Singha Dwar (Lion's Gate) of the 12th century shrine.

## AYUSHMAN BHARAT IN FEBRUARY

# ₹10 lakh health cover for women

The BJP-led NDA government at the Centre had introduced Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) September 23, 2018. The BJD government, however, was implementing Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) in Odisha. After coming to power in the state in June, the BJP government July 25, 2024 replaced the BSKY with Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY), citing flaws in the BJD's flagship health insurance scheme. Meanwhile, Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling Wednesday reiterated about implementation of Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY along with GJAY in Odisha in February this year. While female beneficiaries were receiving cashless treatment up to ₹10 lakh per annum, their male counterparts were availing treatment up to ₹5 lakh per annum under BSKY. However, in other states, there is a provision of ₹5 lakh health cover per family per year under Ayushman Bharat. Once the two schemes - Ayushman Bharat and GJAY - are implemented in the state, women members of a family can avail benefits up to ₹10 lakh per annum and males ₹5 lakh per annum, said Mahaling. It is understood that with the implementation of the twin schemes, the GJAY will merge with the Central scheme



Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling

ciaries, Mahaling added.

He said a Central team has already visited the state to ensure smooth implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme and that the state government is committed to increasing the number of medical colleges and nursing colleges in the New Year to strengthen the healthcare sector.

He said a memorandum of understanding (MoU) is likely to be signed between the Centre and the state for implementation of the two schemes.

Significantly, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who also holds the Finance portfolio, had allocated 500 crore for execution of Ayushman Bharat in the Budget for financial year 2024-25.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** The state government has decided to implement Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in the state by the end of February 2025, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling said Wednesday.

The minister said that women beneficiaries of the state will receive health insurance cover of 10 lakh per annum under the flagship scheme while male beneficiaries can avail

cashless treatment at empanelled hospitals up to 5 lakh.

He also said the state's Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) will be integrated with Ayushman Bharat scheme.

The insurance coverage will be linked to the e-KYC database, ensuring a seamless issuance of health cards. This integration will facilitate access to healthcare services in approximately 30,000 empanelled hospitals in the state and outside, the minister added. The twin health schemes will cover around 3.5 crore benefi-

## Agra man kills 4 sisters, mom

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Jan 1:** A 24-year-old man from Agra took his mother and four sisters to a hotel room here and allegedly killed them by slitting their throats and wrists on Wednesday, after which he recorded a video to say he did it because of "helplessness and despair" following "unimaginable atrocities" by people of his locality.

Central Lucknow Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Raveena Tyagi said the incident took place at Hotel Sharanjeet in the busy Naka area of the city.

"The accused, identified as Mohammad Arshad, 24, allegedly killed five members of his own family. Following the gruesome act, the local police apprehended the accused from the crime scene," she said.

The deceased were identified as Alia, 9, Alshia, 19, Aksa, 16,



Accused Mohammad Arshad

and Rahmeen, 18, - all sisters of Arshad - and his mother Asma, according to the police.

The DCP said Arshad's family lived in Agra and preliminary inquiry has revealed that he took the step because of domestic disputes.

The purported video surfaced on social media shortly after the shocking incident came to light in which Arshad confessed to slitting the wrists and throats of his sisters and mother.

In the 6.5-minute selfie vid-

eo, Arshad claimed his father was also involved in the killings. Assistant Commissioner of Police Dharmendra Kumar Singh told PTI: "Searches are underway for the father and his role in the killings."

Forensic teams have been deployed at the spot to collect evidence while a detailed probe has been launched into the matter, Tyagi said. Arshad said, "I, along with my entire family, am forced to take this step in helplessness and despair... I have killed my sisters and myself. When the police get this video, I request that they hold the people of the locality responsible for all of this."

He said his family originally hailed from Budaun and possessed documents dating back to 1947 through his aunt, proving their identity. Despite this, they were being falsely accused and labelled as Bangladeshi migrants.

## GOVT EXTENDS DAP FERTILISER SUBSIDY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 1:** The Union Cabinet Wednesday extended a one-time package to subsidise key fertiliser DAP at the cost of up to ₹3,850 crore and approved a one-year extension of two crop insurance schemes, decisions that Prime Minister Narendra Modi said were dedicated to farmers.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA),

chaired by the Prime Minister, extended two crop insurance schemes - PMFBY and RWBICIS - for one more year till 2025-26 and created a separate ₹824.77 crore fund for technology infusion in the implementation of flagship schemes. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBICIS) have been extended to align it with the 15th Finance Commission period. **P8**

## SHORT TAKES

### Projects worth ₹4,222cr get nod

**Bhubaneswar:** In a significant step towards augmenting state's industrial growth and employment opportunities, the state government Wednesday approved 25 projects with a cumulative investment of ₹4,222.24 crore. The projects were approved during the 133rd State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja. These projects, spanning several high-impact sectors, are expected to generate more than 14,497 job opportunities, contributing to the socio-economic development of Odisha, the meeting revealed. **P3**

### Driver rams truck into crowd; 10 killed

**New Orleans:** A driver wrought carnage on New Orleans' famed French Quarter early on New Year's Day, killing 10 people as he rammed a pickup truck into a crowd before being shot to death by police, authorities said. More than 30 people were injured as the attack Wednesday turned festive Bourbon Street into macabre mayhem. The FBI is investigating it as an act of terrorism. The driver was killed in a firefight with police following the attack around 3.15 am in an area teeming with New Year's revellers, the FBI said. Investigators recovered a handgun and an AR-style rifle after the shootout, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. Investigators were also combing the French Quarter for potential explosive devices, another law enforcement official told the AP.

# Warm January likely in most parts of India: IMD

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 1:** Minimum temperatures are expected to be higher than normal in most parts of India in January, except in some areas of eastern, northwest, and west-central regions, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Wednesday.

Maximum temperatures are also likely to be above normal for most parts of the country, except in parts of northwest, central and eastern India, and central parts of the southern peninsula, director general of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), said during a virtual press briefing.

Western and northern parts of central India are expected to experience more cold wave days than usual during January, he said.



The IMD said rainfall in north India during January to March is likely to be below normal, with less than 86 per cent of the long-period average (LPA).

The average rainfall for north India during this period, based on 1971-2020 data, is about 184.3 mm.

Northern and northwestern states like Punjab, Haryana,

Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh grow rabi crops, including wheat, peas, gram and barley, in winter (October to December) and harvest them in summer (April to June).

**Warmest year since 1901** Meanwhile, the IMD said

2024 was the warmest on record in India since 1901, with the average minimum temperature settling 0.90 degrees Celsius above the long-period average.

The annual mean temperature in 2024 was 25.75 degrees Celsius, 0.65 degrees above the long-period average.

The average maximum temperature stood at 31.25 degrees Celsius, 0.20 degrees above normal. The average minimum temperature was 20.24 degrees Celsius, 0.90 degrees above normal, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD)

Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra.

The year 2024 surpassed 2016, which had recorded a mean

land surface air temperature 0.54 degrees Celsius above normal, making it the warmest year since 1901.

The average minimum temperature was the highest on record for July, August, September and October, and the second highest for February, the IMD chief said.

According to the European climate agency Copernicus, 2024 likely ended as the warmest year globally and the first with average temperatures 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial (1850-1900) levels.

According to a yearly review by two independent groups of climate scientists - World Weather Attribution and Climate Central - the world experienced 41 additional days of dangerous heat in 2024.

Mohapatra said the rise in minimum temperatures in 2024 was "quite high".

"Long-term data shows most parts of the country are witnessing a rising trend in minimum temperatures, particularly in post-monsoon and winter seasons," he said.

The IMD said La Nina conditions, characterised by cooler ocean surface temperatures in the central Pacific Ocean and usually associated with colder winters in north India, were expected to develop in January but would be short-lived.

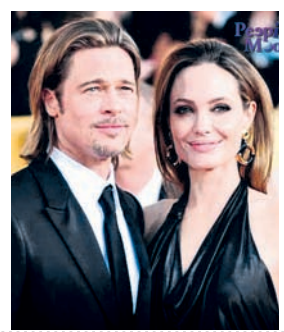
"It is unlikely to significantly impact the warming trend," an IMD scientist told PTI.

June 2023 marked the first instance of a monthly global temperature crossing the 1.5-degree threshold, a trend that persisted throughout the year, except for July 2024.

Under the Paris Agreement, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree limit refers to sustained warming over 20-30 years.

**Experts warn that the world is now entering a phase during which temperatures will consistently exceed this threshold**

# leisure



## BRANGELINA ARRIVES AT DIVORCE SETTLEMENT

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, known as Brangelina to their fans, have reached a settlement in their divorce, eight years after she filed to end their marriage of two years. Angelina claimed Brad was abusive to her and their six children but authorities did not charge him after investigating.

## HUGH GRANT RECALLS GHOSTLY ENCOUNTER

British actor Hugh Grant believes he had an encounter with a ghost. He recalled seeing a mysterious "shimmering light" in the middle of the night while staying in an English castle, only to be told by the owner the following day that everyone was aware of the supernatural presence.



## FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

### ARIES

At times it is a good thing to be under pressure, because it brings out your potential to the fullest. You will outsmart all your colleagues in the work you do. However, results may not match your expectations. Ganesh advises patience as results don't come overnight.

### TAURUS

This is a great day for expressions your ideas and feelings. Ganesh urges you to open up and share hopes and concerns, dreams and aspirations with your others. Romance is in the air. You could be flying deliciously high on the wings of love, in the company of your sweetheart. You are likely to spend some intimate moments with children and youngsters.

### GEMINI

A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesh. You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do. Some of you, who want to go for further studies, may take a well-informed decision today.

### CANCER

Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

### LEO

Some promises are like whispers in the wind — never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesh advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser. Remember, every day is not Sunday; also, you cannot win each time.

### VIRGO

Don't dilly-dally when it comes to matters of health, says Ganesh. You look lean and mean to take on those old wounds today. But peace and prosperity are the flavours of the day. Ganesh advises you to invest time in fun and entertainment today — just to get those batteries charged.

### LIBRA

If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal. The hard work of the morning and the pressure of the afternoon will give way to pleasure in the evening. Just enjoy what you do, says Ganesh.

### SCORPIO

Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesh.

### SAGITTARIUS

Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesh. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them. Your day will get even better when perhaps, news from an overseas friend reaches you.

### CAPRICORN

Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesh. This, of course, may also eat into your savings and force you to be thrifty by the end of the day, but you won't regret this once-in-a-while extravagant outing. It's all for a reason, after all.

### AQUARIUS

A romantic liaison is headed towards you. Quite naturally, you don't want to be caught dead in a ratty old tee. Today, you want to keep everyone happy and amused, both at home and at work. And you manage wonderfully, says Ganesh.

### PISCES

Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a generous winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesh.

# TRIPTII'S YEARNING

**Mumbai:** This New Year, actress Triptii Dimri is yearning for a clear sky, symbolizing a fresh start and boundless possibilities.

As 2025 unfolds, she embraces the hope for peace, clarity, and new beginnings. Taking to her Instagram stories, the Animal actress, who is holidaying in Finland, posted a picture of herself posing against the beautiful backdrop of snow-capped mountains.

Alongside the photo, Dimri wrote, "Drove from Finland, 3 hours into Sweden to get clear skies." She looked stunning in a black outfit. The actress had earlier shared glimpses of her winter getaway, capturing the serene beauty of the snowy surroundings and her peaceful moments with the animals.

Triptii posted a couple of photos and videos from Lapland, Finland, featuring charming snow-covered huts and reindeer peacefully grazing outside her window.

Alongside one of the videos, the actress wrote, "Snowflakes and Smiles... Today feels like one of the happiest chapters of my life."

The *Qala* actress embarked on a snowy adventure, sharing glimpses of her scenic holiday on Instagram. Fans have started speculating that she's spending time with her rumoured boyfriend, Sam Merchant, as both have posted similar photos from the trip.

On the professional front, Triptii is preparing for an exciting new project with renowned filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj and actor Shahid Kapoor.

**Mumbai:** Shabana Azmi, is one of India's most celebrated actresses, who gave powerful performances by challenging societal norms through her roles for decades. Born September 18, 1950, into a family steeped in cultural excellence, Shabana is the daughter of renowned poet Kaifi Azmi and celebrated actress Shaukat Azmi. Despite her privileged background, her early life was marked by emotional challenges and struggles for acceptance.

Shabana's personal life has also drawn public attention, particularly her relationship with lyricist Javed Akhtar. Their bond began when Javed visited her father to share poetry, and despite initial opposition from Shabana's family due to Javed's previous marriage and children, they married in 1984 after his divorce.

Despite all the personal issues she has been through, such as two suicide attempts because of the feeling of inferiority compared to her brother, Shabana has excelled in life.

Her journey in Indian cinema began with



## Shabana tried to die by suicide twice

her debut in *Ankur* (1974), where she portrayed a strong, independent woman. Throughout her career, Shabana has taken on roles that show the complexities of women's lives. In *Arth* (1982), she portrayed a woman trapped in a toxic marriage. Her role in *Masoom* (1983) as a mother dealing with her past further solidified her reputation as an actress capable of delivering impactful performances.

Shabana has multiple awards to her name, including five National Film Awards. Her commitment to portraying strong female characters has left an indelible mark on the industry, making her a true icon of grace and talent.



# All about Aryan's mystery girl

**Mumbai:** Despite staying away from the limelight, Shah Rukh Khan's eldest son Aryan Khan manages to frequently make headlines. This time the star kid garnered eyeballs due to his rumoured girlfriend Larissa Bonesi.

Recently Aryan was clicked by the paparazzi as he was headed towards a New Year's event. However, he was not alone. Aryan was accompanied by his speculated girlfriend, Larissa Bonesi. The video doing rounds on social media has Aryan entering the venue in his car. While he was seated in the front, Larissa accompanied him in the backseat, along with some of their other friends.

As rumours of Aryan dating Larissa have been doing rounds for some time now, the netizens have been wondering about his mystery girl. For those who do not know, Larissa Bonesi is an actress and



model. Born on 28 March 1990 in Brazil, she has been a part of many Bollywood and Tollywood. She appeared in Raj and DK's 2013 action comedy *Go Goa Gone*.

Besides this, she has also been a part of the advertising campaigns for some top brands like Olay, Lancôme, and Levi's. While neither

Aryan nor Larissa have commented on their relationship, the two are often seen spending time with each other, adding to the speculations.

As far as Aryan's professional commitments are concerned, he will be stepping into the entertainment industry soon with his initial venture as a director.

# Kangana shares key to success

**Mumbai:** Actress and politician Kangana Ranaut wished her fans and followers Happy New Year with an inspiring Instagram post.

The *Queen* actress took to the stories section of the photo-sharing app and dropped a few words of wisdom, acquired by her over the years. The diva posted about things like a key to happiness, peace, success, and love according to her.

Kangana shared, "Key to happiness- think more about/ for others than yourself. Key to peace- Better to get manipulated than to manipulate, Key to success- fix yourself don't try to fix the world, Key to love- it's always good to lose in a fight with someone you love, so that the love could win, Key to anxiety free breathing- close your eyes and say Krishna...As the new year begins sharing some of my learnings with you all."

The actress added a red heart emoji at the end. At the moment, Kangana is busy promoting her forthcoming drama, *Emergency*.

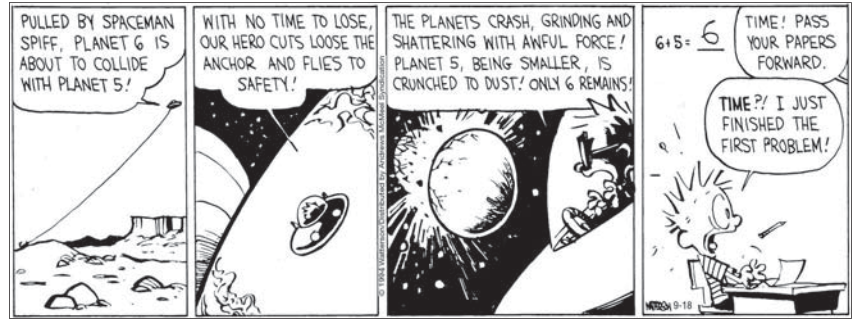
She will be seen reprising the role of the former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. With her as the lead, the drama will also see Anupam Kher, Shreyas Talpade, Vishak Nair, Mahima Chaudhry, Milind Soman, and Satish Kaushik in pivotal roles.



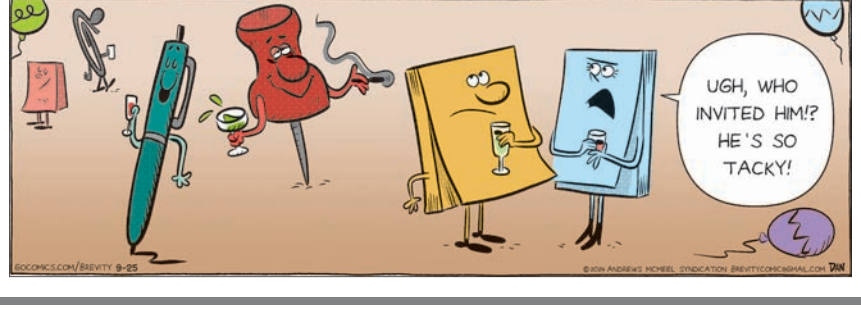
## PEANUTS



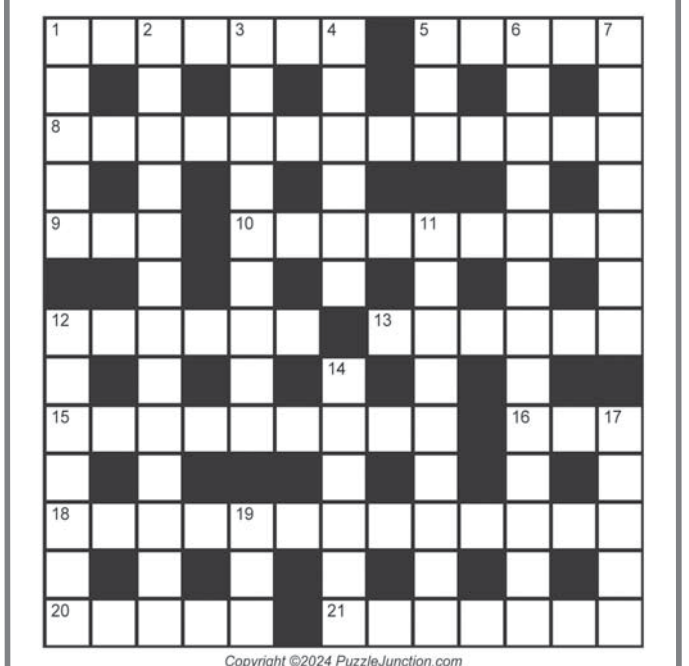
## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY



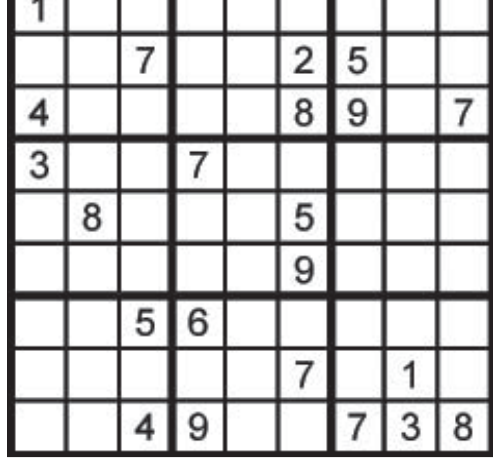
## CROSSWORD



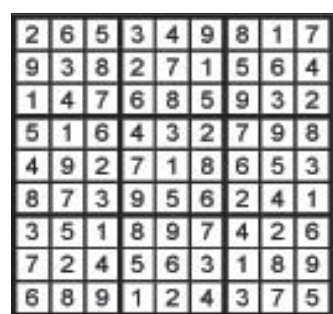
- Across**
- 1 Glazed and salted cracker
  - 5 Tropical lizard
  - 8 More or less
  - 9 Shade
  - 10 Forget to set the alarm?
  - 12 Blackcurrant liqueur
  - 13 Weightlifter's pride
  - 15 Game room item (4,5)
  - 16 Wapiti
  - 18 Continuous
  - 20 Bulldog ant
  - 21 Eternal
- Down**
- 1 Juicy nectar fruit
  - 2 Early 20th century art movement
  - 3 Animal scientist
  - 4 Hang around
  - 5 Supermodel
  - 6 Carangi
  - 6 Mint-flavoured liqueur (5,2,6)
  - 7 Mountain in Greece
  - 11 Measuring devise (5,4)
  - 12 Seize
  - 14 Spain and Portugal
  - 17 Compliments
  - 19 Youngster

## SUDOKU

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



## SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

**Bhubaneswar:** Three senior Odisha cadre IPS officers were promoted to the rank of Director General of Police (DGP), the General Administration and Public Grievance (GA&PG) department said Wednesday. "1993-bath IPS officers Vinaytosh Mishra and RP Koche have been promoted to the rank of DGP," said the GA&PG department notification. 1993-bath Odisha cadre IPS officer Susanta Kumar Nath, who is now on Central deputation, is allowed to avail the promotion to the grade of DGP, it added. Mishra is currently working as the Additional Director General (ADG) of Police, CID and Crime Branch in Odisha, while Koche is the Director, Intelligence. Nath is now posted as Inspector General (IG) of Police at the BSF.

# downtown

## LAKHS THROUNG PURI ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

**Puri, Jan 1:** Lakhs of devotees visited Srimandir here to seek blessings of the sibling deities - Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath - on New Year's Day Wednesday, an official said.

More than a kilometre-long queue of devotees was seen on the Grand Road leading to the 12th century temple from Market Chhak to Singhadwar (Lion's Gate) of the temple.

"Puri Police is dedicated to ensure a safe and smooth experience for all devotees," said Puri SP Vineeth Agarwal.

The SP said that the temple has been placed under strict security arrangements. As many as 70 platoons (one platoon comprises of 30 personnel) were deployed for smooth movement of devotees and hassle-free darshan of deities. The police personnel were deployed both outside and on the temple premises, he said.

While devotees were allowed to enter the temple only through the Lion's Gate, they were guided to exit through three other gates, said Shree Jagannath Temple Adminis-

tration (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee.

He said that keeping in view the ever-growing size of the crowd, the temple gate was opened at 1.05am.

Servitors performed the daily rituals of the deities, beginning with Mangal Arati, Mailum, Tadap Lagi, Abakash, Rosa Homa, Surya Puja, and Dwarpal Puja. Pahili Bhog, along with Gopal Bhog, was then offered to the deities.

Servitors dressed the deities in new clothes, and devotees were allowed darshan. However, darshan was briefly paused during the offerings of Sakala Dhupa, Madhyahna Dhupa and Sandhya Dhupa.

Ambulance services were also available to handle any medical emergencies. The entire pilgrim city was under surveillance with CCTV cameras installed at key locations.

The district administration and the SJTA have made elaborate arrangements to manage the crowd and ensure a smooth darshan by the devotees. Apart from tight security measures, the police have made several traffic regulations.



SRIMANDIR



LINGARAJ TEMPLE



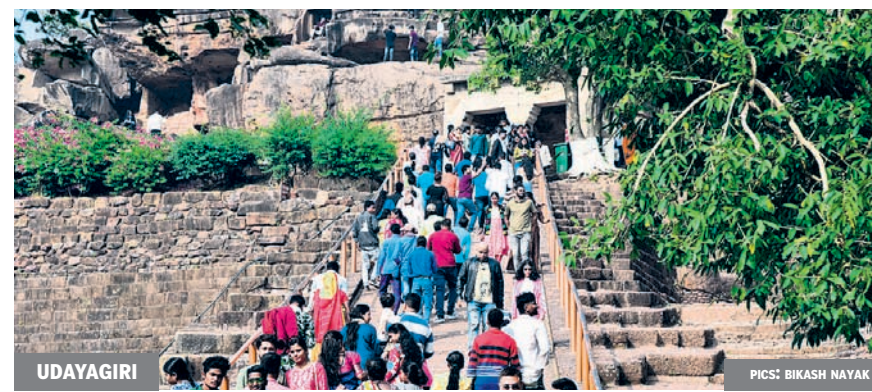
DHAULI



ODISHA STATE MARITIME MUSEUM



KHANDAGIRI



UDAYAGIRI

### HUGE FOOTFALL AT TOURIST DESTINATIONS

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** Major tourist destinations across the state like Hirakud Dam in Sambalpur, Pradhanpat Waterfall in Deogarh, Sanaghagara and Badaghagara waterfalls in Keonjhar and Daringbadi in Kandhamal witnessed a large footfall on the first day of 2025 Wednesday.

Popular tourist and picnic spots in and around the twin cities, including Dhauli hills, Nandankanan Zoological Park, Jayadev Vatika, Udayagiri and Khandagiri, and Odisha State Maritime Museum, also attracted large crowds. These apart, major shrines like Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar, Baladev Jew temple in Kendrapara, Maa Biraja temple in Jajpur, Maa Tarini temple in Keonjhar and Taratarini peeth in Ganjam also saw a huge footfall of devotees.

### State govt eyes 1.5 lakh appointments in 5 yrs

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday said the state government has set a target for 1.5 lakh appointments in the public sector over the next five years. Of these, 65,000 government posts will be filled up in two years.

"If the government's manpower increases, we can provide better services to the people," Majhi said during a discussion with the chairpersons of various recruitment commissions at Lok Seva Bhawan here.

Majhi emphasised on making the recruitment process in the state flawless, impartial and speedy. He also advised them to fill the posts of essential service delivery departments, such as Health, Housing, Education and Agriculture, without leaving them vacant. Currently, 1,10,557 posts are vacant in various departments in the state, official sources said.

The Chief Minister directed all the departments to submit proposals to the recruitment commission for filling the vacant posts by March 31, 2025.

He also asked to conduct special recruitment drives within a specified time frame to fill up the vacant posts of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in various departments.

The Chief Minister directed that the approval of the empowered committee is not required for filling the posts in Group B category. It has been decided to reconstitute the empowered committee working in the Finance department to check and protect the employment in differently-abled categories.

The Chief Minister proposed to set up an examination centre of the public service commission in Jaipur for the convenience of the candidates of the undivided Koraput district. At present, the public service commission has five examination centres.

## SLSWCA NOD FOR ₹4,222CR PROJECTS



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** The State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) approved 25 projects across various sectors with a combined investment of Rs 4,222.24 crore, Wednesday.

Addressing media after chairing the 133rd SLSWCA meeting here, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said these projects are expected to generate over 14,497 jobs.

These projects are in sectors such as green energy equipment, pharmaceutical, textile, plastics, food processing, and downstream aluminium, among others.

Eleven districts - Angul, Ganjam, Khurda, Nabarang-

**Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said these projects are expected to generate over 14,497 jobs**

pur, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Puri and Kandhamal - will benefit from these projects, strengthening the industrial base and driving sustained economic growth.

The SLSWCA approved the proposal of Shyam Metals

Specialty Alloys Pvt Ltd to set up a titanium slag unit in Sambalpur. With an investment of Rs 710.50 crore, the facility is expected to generate employment opportunities for 350 people.

Hetro Labs Limited's proposal to set up a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Ganjam got a go-ahead from the SLSWCA. The project, with an investment of Rs 700 crore, is expected to create jobs for over 2,600 individuals.

Shalimar Glass Works Private Limited will be establishing a packaging container glass manufacturing unit in Khurda with an initial investment of Rs 530 crore. The unit will create over 400 jobs.

Ganesha Ecopet Private Limited's proposal to set up a manufacturing unit of rPET granules with annual capacity of 45,000MT in Ganjam got the approval. With an initial investment of Rs 520 crore, the unit is expected to generate jobs for over 500 individuals.

The SLSWCA approved the proposal of Swaji Nutritionals Private Limited to set up a food processing unit in Khurda with an investment of Rs 433.41 crore. The facility will create jobs for over 1,030 persons.

Among others, Sova Solar Limited's proposal to set up a solar cell manufacturing unit in Angul also got the Authority's nod. With an initial investment of Rs 380 crore, the facility will generate around 850 jobs.

### 'Should take benefit of PM Modi's all-out support to Odisha'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday said Odisha should take advantage of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's all-out support to the state.

Presiding over a high-level meeting with the state's top bureaucrats, Majhi said PM Modi has a special focus on the development of Odisha and is scheduled to visit the state twice in January after visiting thrice in the last six months.

"We have many challenges and opportunities. If we can face all the challenges with collective responsibility, all the work can be done successfully," he said.

"The Centre is supporting Odisha in various fields. Therefore, we should utilise this opportunity and move towards achieving the goal of a developed Odisha," he added.

The CM said the state could

successfully conduct mega events like Navy Day, and DGP/IGP conference in 2024 due to collective responsibility.

"All the work can be done successfully and there is a need for everyone to work together. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas programme will establish Odisha's prestige at the international level," he said.

Majhi said the promises made by his party to the people ahead of the elections have mostly been fulfilled.

He urged the bureaucrats to focus on how Odisha can perform better than other states.

Deputy CM Kanak Singh Deo and Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling said 2025 will be a year of progress for Odisha.

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said the officers of the state were efficient, and all employees of the state were working with commitment to achieve the goals of the government.

### Ration card e-KYC verification by Jan 15



**BHUBANESWAR:** The state government has set January 15 deadline for completing Aadhaar-based e-KYC verification of ration cards in circulation. Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said Wednesday. "Government officials have been instructed to visit people, especially elderly and those keeping unwell, for e-KYC verification within the state and also those residing elsewhere in the country. Recently, a team

travelled to Goa to facilitate the process after the department received a call from some labourers there," he said. Patra said that e-KYC verification has been completed for 85 per cent of ration card holders. "More than 50 lakh individuals are yet come for verification," he said.

# Special trains for Maha Kumbh Mela launched



pilgrims to board directly on their way to the Kumbh Mela.

Similarly, the Puri - Tundla - Puri Special Train will depart at 12:30 pm January 6, 20, and February 17, while the Titilagarh - Tundla - Titilagarh Special Train will operate January 9, 16, and 23, and again February 6, 20, and 27.

These trains are being operated with the specific purpose of easing the travel burden for pilgrims heading to the Mela, ensuring that they can reach their destination in comfort and safety.

ECoR has assured passengers that all necessary arrangements have been made to provide smooth and safe travel, with ample connectivity, especially during this peak period of travel.

The railway department has emphasised its commitment to offering a seamless travel experience for all passengers, with carefully planned schedules and added facilities.

For those planning to travel, the ECoR encourages them to visit the official website for detailed information on train schedules, booking procedures, and other travel-related queries.

Passengers can also reach out to the enquiry counters at various railway stations for additional assistance.

scheduled to begin January 13.

East Coast Railway (ECoR) has arranged for these services to run on key routes from Odisha to Prayagraj, ensuring that pilgrims have a hassle-free journey. The special trains will operate on three major routes: Bhubaneswar - Tundla - Bhubaneswar, Puri - Tundla - Puri, and Titilagarh - Tundla - Titilagarh, with stops at important stations along the way.

The Bhubaneswar - Tundla - Bhubaneswar Special Train started from the Capital city at 12:30 pm January 1 and is scheduled to run on select dates, including January 8, 22, and February 5, 19, and 26. This train will travel via Kendujhargarh, Bokaro, and Gaya and will pass through Prayagraj Station, allowing

enhanced connectivity to the holy city of Prayagraj, where the grand religious event is

**ECoR has asked passengers to visit official website for detailed information on train schedules and booking procedures**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** As part of the efforts to facilitate easy travel for the thousands of pilgrims heading to the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, the Indian Railways launched special trains from various cities in Odisha Wednesday.

These trains will provide enhanced connectivity to the holy city of Prayagraj, where the grand religious event is

## Work with dedication, efficiency: H&UD Min



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra called upon the department's officers and staff to work with dedication and efficiency to make the department a model of excellence.

Speaking at a New Year gathering at Kharavela Bhawan Wednesday, Mahapatra emphasised the department's pivotal role in building a developed state, contributing to the vision of a developed India.

Extending his heartfelt greetings, the minister wished the department's members happiness, peace, and prosperity in 2025.

Stressing the importance of showcasing state's urban her-

itage and progress on a national platform, the minister urged the team to deliver exceptional results, making the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas a benchmark of success.

Principal Secretary Usha Padhee joined the occasion and welcomed the minister.

Padhee provided a detailed overview of the department's achievements and urged the team to work with sincerity, discipline, and a mission-oriented approach to meet the goals.

Among others, department's special secretary Rajesh Prabhakar Patil, municipal administration director Debashish Singh and senior officials reaffirmed their commitment to achieving excellence in urban development initiatives.

## 17 held for flouting fishing ban

**Kendrapara:** The forest personnel of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, on the wee hour of Wednesday, arrested 17 fishermen, and seized a trawler from their possession on the charges of catching fish inside the "No Fishing Zone" of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. ACF of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary Manas Kumar Dash said the forest personnel also seized 5 of VHF sets, 1 GPS set, one fish finder, fishing nets and 50 kg of miscellaneous marine fish from the arrested fishermen. All the arrested fishermen were booked under Section 27, 29, 31 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and later produced before the JMFC court of Rajnagar which remanded them into jail custody.

## TAC rejects tribal land rule change

**Bhubaneswar:** The newly-constituted Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) rejected a proposal of the previous BJD government to amend the Odisha Scheduled Areas Transfer of Immovable Property Amendment Regulation for allowing tribals in scheduled areas to sell and mortgage their land to non-tribals. In the first meeting of the TAC chaired by chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi recently, it was resolved to explore an alternative mode to facilitate loans for tribal people for essential purposes such as marriage, higher education and business initiatives, an official statement issued by the CMO said.



**NO BUSINESS:** Flower shops in the Capital city remained quiet on New Year's Day, Wednesday, due to 7-day state mourning in honour of former PM Manmohan Singh

## ROAD SAFETY MONTH KICKS OFF IN STATE

*Special enforcement teams to monitor picnic spots and tourist locations, while patrols will be intensified in critical areas in the month-long campaign*

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** In a bid to curb road accidents and fatalities, Odisha launched a month-long Road Safety Month Wednesday. The campaign, running until January 31, aims to raise awareness about road safety and enforce stricter traffic regulations.

In this regard, a preparatory meeting under the chairman-

ship of the Chief Secretary Mihan Ahuja was held where the whole month plan and layout was discussed.

As the Road Safety Week is celebrated every year, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India has requested all the state governments to expand awareness and various programmes related to road safety this year.

Ahuja directed authorities to address road construction errors contributing to accidents. He emphasised identifying and fixing accident-prone areas, also known as black spots, and leveraging digital campaigns to increase awareness. NCC cadets, volunteers, and students will participate in spreading road safety messages.

Strict enforcement of traffic



laws will be a major focus of the campaign. Joint operations with the police will target violators, including drunk drivers and those parking illegally on highways. Special enforcement teams will monitor picnic spots and tourist locations, while patrols will be intensified in critical areas. Traffic violators will also be counseled by student volunteers and NGOs to en-

courage safer driving practices.

The campaign will run under slogans like "Road Safety, Family Protection" and "Return Home Safely," with efforts to involve citizens, government agencies, and volunteer organisations.

Odisha has recorded over 47,000 road accident deaths in the past decade, with approximately 5,000 fatalities annually. Speeding, drug use, wrong-side driving, and flouting traffic rules are cited as major causes. Globally, road accident deaths surpass fatalities from many natural disasters.

The Road Safety Month initiative seeks to make a significant impact by combining awareness, enforcement, and community involvement to ensure safer roads for everyone.

## Law min distributes fruits, blankets at shelter home

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** On New Year's Day, Law, Works, and Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan paid a visit to the Odisha Patita Uddhar Samiti shelter home here in Andharua and distributed fruits and blankets to the residents of the shelter.

During his visit, Harichandan also took the time to meet with the differently-abled individuals residing at the shelter home, engaging in heartfelt conversations and offering his support. The minister expressed his best wishes for the well-being and prosperity of all the inmates.

In his address, Harichandan emphasised the importance of respect and dignity for those living in shelter homes. "These individuals are not to be seen as objects



of pity or sympathy but as deserving of respect. If we improve their living conditions, we can move towards building a more developed Odisha and a more prosperous India," he stated.

The minister's visit was accompanied by Abharani Choudhury, the founder of the shelter home, as well as other staff members who were present to assist during the distribution of the gifts.

## Min Khuntia visits NZP, stresses conservation

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** Forest, Environment, and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia visited Nandanakan Zoological Park (NZP) here Wednesday to mark the New Year.

Arriving at 9 am, Khuntia interacted with visitors, journalists, and forest officials, spreading a message of environmental conservation and sustainable development.

Highlighting the govern-

ment's commitment to biodiversity preservation, the minister emphasised ongoing efforts to combat climate change, expand forest cover, and promote eco-tourism in Odisha. "Nandanakan is not just a zoo but a symbol of our dedication to safeguarding nature. On this New Year, let us pledge to work together for a greener and more sustainable Odisha," he said.

Khuntia expressed his delight at the growing interest among citizens, especially children, in wildlife and conservation. During his guided tour of the park, he commended the staff for their efforts in maintaining its world-class standards.

The Minister also unveiled plans for new initiatives aimed at enhancing the visitor experience and improving animal welfare.

The event concluded with Khuntia extending his New Year wishes to all, urging collective efforts toward preserving nature for future generations.

*Minister underscores government's dedication to preserving biodiversity, tackling climate change, and boosting eco-tourism*

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	26.6°	25.6°
Min Temp	16.4°	15.2°
Humidity	70%	78%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	VAR.
SENSEX	78507.41	↑ 368.40
NIFTY	23742.90	↑ 98.10
DOLLAR	85.84	↓ 0.04
EURO	98.10	↓ 0.31
GOLD	₹76,893	↑ ₹54
SILVER	₹87,550	↓ ₹28

## 181 govt officials held on corruption charges in 2024

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 1:** The Odisha Vigilance department arrested 181 government officials on the allegations of corruption in the state in 2024.

This was revealed Tuesday by the vigilance department in its annual report card for 2024 highlighting significant actions taken against government and private persons engaged in corrupt activities.

As per the report, the anti-corruption sleuths arrested 181 corrupt government officials including 37 class-I, 27 class-II and 85 class-III employees in 2024. As many as 21 private persons involved in corrupt practices were also apprehended during this period.

The vigilance department also registered 200 cases against 308 persons including 50 Class-I



officers, 36 Class-II officers, 131 Class-III employees and 72 private persons in 2024.

"Out of 200 cases registered in 2024, 60 cases were instituted for the acquisition of disproportionate assets against 66 public servants and 36 private persons. The total disproportionate assets in all the 60 cases crossed over ₹131 crore. 29 DA cases were registered against

Class-I officers and 15 DA cases were registered against Class-II officers," revealed the vigilance department in its report.

As many as six Chief Engineer rank officers were booked by Odisha Vigilance for possession of huge disproportionate assets in 2024. The anti-corruption sleuths also unearthed 229 plots and 32 buildings/ flats in Bhubaneswar and district

AS PER THE REPORT, THE ANTI-CORRUPTION SLEUTHS ARRESTED 181 CORRUPT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INCLUDING 37 CLASS-I, 27 CLASS-II AND 85 CLASS-III EMPLOYEES IN 2024

THE VIGILANCE DEPARTMENT ALSO REGISTERED 200 CASES AGAINST 308 PERSONS INCLUDING 50 CLASS-I OFFICERS, 36 CLASS-II OFFICERS, 131 CLASS-III EMPLOYEES AND 72 PRIVATE PERSONS

headquarters and outside Odisha during raids against corrupt government officials during this period.

The vigilance department also registered 96 trap cases against a total of 115 persons including 13 Class-I officers, for accepting bribes amounting to ₹19.25 lakh during 2024.

As many as 44 cases were

registered in 2024 against 91 persons, including 65 public servants and 26 private persons, on the charges of misappropriating public funds amounting to about ₹14.87 crore.

"As far as prosecution is concerned, we had 105 convictions in 2024 at 50 per cent conviction rate. Further, conviction in DA cases stood at 80 per cent. Of the 105 convictions, 18 were Class-I officers, 18 Class-II officers, 74 Class-III employees, six Class-IV employees, 16 other public servants and 15 private persons. Thus, altogether 147 accused persons were convicted during the period," added the vigilance department.

As many as 25 government officials were dismissed from services in 2024 after the court found them guilty of engaging in various corrupt practices.

IAN

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoword-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.



FOCUS SOCIETY

# THE RUSH HOUR



**With rising competition and relentless pursuits of success, modern economies are giving rise to a work culture where longer durations of work are not only encouraged but also expected**

With the rapid advancement of science and technology, the modern world promises to offer, on the one hand, a large set of work opportunities with enhanced dexterity and convenience, while millions of people, on the other hand, are not able to cope up with the tasks to be done in a day/week thereby experiencing "time poverty." Recently, time poverty has emerged as a trending concept - it refers to the scarcity of "free time" or the pervasive feeling of not having enough time for rest and leisure after allocating time to day-to-day work activities.

Overtime work and/or scarcity of free time leads to increased stress and fatigue, decreased well-being, and diminished quality of life which, in turn, hamper the overall progress of an economy. One of the primary contributors to time poverty is the economic compulsion to work overtime. Workers belonging to poverty-ridden (income/consumption) households struggle to meet the subsistence requirements and are forced to work longer hours. Hence, income/consumption poverty and time poverty go hand-in-hand. The higher-income households enjoy the option of buying time for home production, through outsourcing for domestic services with the help of time-saving machines or keeping maid-servants, thereby relegating time for recreational activities. Therefore, they are less susceptible to experiencing time poverty. Specifically, income/consumption poverty forces and reinforces the time poverty of the poor.

With rising competition and relentless pursuits of success, modern economies are giving rise to a work culture where longer durations of work are not only encouraged but also expected. Glorification of business and productivity, in urban industrial workplaces, pressurises individuals to pursue professional success at the cost of sacrificing a substantial amount of personal and family time. The rapid pace of urbanisation exacerbates the situation in contemporary India. In the bustling streets of metropolitan cities, congested traffic eats away a significant amount of productive time each day. Consequently, commuters put effort into adjusting for income-earning tasks by cutting down their daily required free time. Service workers, from street vendors to domestic helps, work long hours to sustain and maintain their livelihoods. Given the competitive urban landscape, public services, poorly managed, often demand lengthy queues and bureaucratic processes constraining further the time required for rest and leisure.

Overtime work and/or scarcity of free time impede individuals' ability to expand their human and social capital; time required for education and skill development is hindered significantly which limits the economic contributions they would make in the marketplace. Time-poor women are indeed forced not to participate in the wage employment and labour market. Such kind of deprivations can also result in the daughter's education being sacrificed, in the family, since they are expected to carry out domestic duties. Nonetheless, acute time poverty strengthens men's control over women thereby fuelling the oppression of women.

With the increasing incidence of dual-earner families in today's society, the issue of time poverty is poised to escalate in coming years. We acknowledge that addressing this challenge requires a multifaceted approach involving policymakers, development practitioners, employers, and communities alike. Flexible work arrangements like adjustable work hours and telecommuting options can enhance work-life balance and reduce time stress. Research consistently demonstrates that shorter working hours or compressed workweeks increase the productivity of workers and hence, overall economic output. It is time to introduce policy measures like paid parental and sick leave which allow workers to engage in domestic responsibilities without jeopardising their income or job security. Countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand and Germany provide paid parental leave and allowances for caring for sick household members and thus, tend to have lower instances of time poverty. Subsidised childcare and elder care programmes can go a long way in balancing work and care-giving responsibilities. Furthermore, public investments in leisure and recreational activities, for instance through construction of community parks and sports complexes, can foster relaxation and social engagement, counteracting the effects of time pressure on individuals and families.

*The writer is a Senior Research Fellow (Ph.D.), Jawaharlal Nehru University.*

**RESEARCH CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATES THAT SHORTER WORKING HOURS OR COMPRESSED WORKWEEKS INCREASE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF WORKERS AND HENCE, OVERALL ECONOMIC OUTPUT**



Dakrushi Sahu



Michael Froman & Charles A. Kupchan

**A subjugated Ukraine would be a victory not only for Russia, but also for China, Iran, and North Korea. With these countries supporting Russian military aggression, the war represents the first joint venture of an emerging Axis of Autocracies**

## Geopolitical Necessity

Even before taking office, Donald Trump has launched a diplomatic effort to end Russia's war against Ukraine, calling for an "immediate ceasefire" after meeting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Paris in early December. Trump is right to seek an end to the war. Despite a recent surge in US military assistance and a greenlight for the Ukrainians to strike targets deep inside Russia, Ukraine continues to lose ground in the east, while suffering withering air attacks across its territory. Even if Russia cannot defeat Ukraine's forces, a war that drags on indefinitely could eventually turn Ukraine into a failed state.

Still, as Trump tries to push Ukraine and Russia toward a ceasefire, he should recognise that it is in his own political interest (as well as America's national interest) to continue providing significant support to the Ukrainians, and only to accept a deal that produces a sovereign, secure Ukraine. He should stop talking about ending assistance, and start making the case to a reluctant but generally obedient Republican Party that continued aid is essential to getting a durable ceasefire and ultimately defeating the Kremlin's effort to subjugate Ukraine. Any other outcome would pose a significant threat to US interests worldwide and to Trump's standing as a world leader.

Securing a durable ceasefire will require pledges of long-term US assistance to Ukraine; if Russian President Vladimir Putin thinks that American support is coming to an end, he will have every reason to keep fighting. If Ukraine's defenses were to collapse, the sight of Russian forces taking ever more territory, with Russian tanks potentially rolling into Kyiv, would dash Trump's hopes of being seen as a great peacemaker. Instead, he would end up with his own version of Afghanistan.

In contrast, if Putin knows that US aid will flow to Ukraine for the indefinite future, he will understand that he can't win, making it much more likely that he will engage in sincere efforts to end the war.

So, too, will the continued flow of US aid be necessary to ensure that a ceasefire leads to an outcome that is in the long-term interests of Ukraine and the West. Trump cannot afford to throw Ukraine under the bus by signing off on a deal that leaves the country permanently subjected to Russian predation and coercion.

A subjugated Ukraine would be a victory not only for Russia, but also for China, Iran, and North Korea. With these countries supporting Russian military aggression, the war represents the first joint venture of an emerging Axis of Autocracies

Instead, Trump should accept only a settlement that ensures that the roughly 80 per cent of Ukraine that is still under the control of the government in Kyiv emerges as a sovereign and secure success story. That outcome will require a commitment to provide Ukraine, for years to come, with the arms and financial assistance it will need to defend itself and rebuild its economy.

Securing a deal that produces a stable and secure Ukraine could be more difficult than Trump thinks. Dividing up territory is the easy part. Who controls what territory will be determined by the disposition of forces at the time of the ceasefire. The front line on the battlefield is likely to become the new border between a rump Ukraine and the roughly 20 per cent of the country occupied by Russian forces.

But Russia is unlikely to leave it there. Putin could well demand Ukrainian neutrality and limits on the size of its armed forces - just as he did in 2022. Trump must understand that these conditions are non-starters; they would leave Ukraine intolerably exposed and vulnerable. Whether Ukraine's future lies as a member of NATO or as a party to other security guarantees, Trump cannot give Putin a veto over Ukraine's geopolitical alignment.

Putin also may insist on formal US recognition of the occupied parts of Ukraine as Russian territory, and on the removal of Western sanctions against Russia. Again, Trump cannot afford to acquiesce; doing so would grant legitimacy to Russia's forcible annexation of another country's territory.

As he did just before his invasion, Putin may demand broader revisions to the European security order and a reduction or withdrawal of allied forces from NATO's eastern flank. Here, too, Trump must stand firm. Given the ongoing threat that Russia poses to the West, the US cannot afford to weaken NATO's defenses.

Finally, Trump needs to understand that he cannot strike a deal with Putin without getting America's European allies on board. Whether he likes the European Union or not, he needs a strong, secure, and unified Europe as a capable ally. At a time when many countries are questioning US leadership and flirting with alternative alignments, the US and its European allies must remain in lockstep.

A ceasefire deal in Ukraine that comes at the expense of allied unity would be a grave mistake. A divided Atlantic alliance and a fractured EU would leave the US without the strong European partner it needs not only to counter Russia, but also to promote stability in an increasingly unruly world.

Trump is right to try to end the war and stop the death and destruction. But he should launch that effort with eyes wide open about how challenging it will be to get a deal that leads to a secure and sovereign Ukraine. Anything short of that outcome would embolden adversaries, split the Atlantic alliance, and constitute a grievous failure of US diplomacy. And it would all happen on Trump's watch.

*Michael Froman is President of the Council on Foreign Relations. Charles A. Kupchan is Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.*

PROJECT SYNDICATE

### WISDOM CORNER

**The world is the great gymnasium where we come to make ourselves strong**

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

**Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold**

LEO TOLSTOY

**Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need**

KAHLIL GIBRAN

### SPECTRUM ECONOMY

## Reorienting development strategy

With the arrival of the New Year, there are obvious challenges considering the not-so-favourable global geopolitical situation as well as problems such as concerns over growing protectionism, subdued investment climate, low consumption and a large public debt. Recently, Prime Minister Modi held a high-level meeting with leading economists and experts to formulate the government's strategy for maintaining the growth momentum. He underscored the need for a fundamental shift in mindset to achieve 'Viksit Bharat', emphasising structural reforms and inclusive growth as essential pillars of this transformation.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

**INVESTMENT MUST BE GEARED UP, ESPECIALLY FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

These are often talked about, and the word structural reforms has become more of a jargon while inclusive growth is often heard being said by political leaders, which may not be anything tangible. Several economists do not trust that the present government has been following a strategy of inclusive growth as policies and programmes are by and large tilted towards the upper echelons of society. It is understood, the meet-

ing decided that specific measures to support sectors such as MSMEs, agriculture and manufacturing were discussed with an emphasis on addressing global challenges and domestic structural issues.

Meanwhile, keeping in view Donald Trump's rhetoric on tariffs, India can benefit so long as it is prepared to play the game by the American President's terms. This means offering some trade or political concessions in return for favourable policies towards India. Most expect the Union budget to follow the same pro-business focus with expansion of physical infrastructure to favour the industry. Stock markets will mirror global trends though there is a possibility of the Nifty moving up. However, there is very little possibility of a shift towards the rural sector as also the struggling unorganised working class and this will result in widening the disparity. The upper echelons of society, including a section of the middle class may continue to prosper while the marginalised sections will struggle for a dignified existence. It is, however, significant to mention that the Finance Min-

istry recently told Parliament that the Centre's thrust is on improving the quality of public spending while strengthening the social security net for the poor and the needy. In the statement on deviation from the Fiscal Responsibility & Budget Management Act targets, the ministry also pointed out that the government remained committed to pursue the path for fiscal consolidation and lower fiscal deficit under 4.5% by the next financial year.

If spending is increased, which obviously is a necessity and without higher taxation or a wealth tax of the super-rich, keeping the fiscal deficit below 5% may be rather difficult.

It's worth mentioning here the Reserve Bank of India's 'State of the Economy' report (published in December) stated that the slowdown in domestic economic activity bottomed out in the second quarter and has "since recovered aided by strong festive demand and a pick-up in rural activities." Co-authored by Michael Partra, RBI Deputy Governor, the report urged the need to exorcise inflation and revive investment with bright prospects for private consumption.

The report rightly expressed concern about the slowdown in government capital expenditure and suggested that fiscal spending, including on capital expenditure, could be hindered by the slowing rate of nominal GDP. It would be better if the government reoriented its development strategy towards the unorganised sector, the small trader and the small farmer and evolve some way of ensuring a regular income for them.

The rupee is under great pressure, hitting a record low of over ₹85 per dollar with global economic uncertainties and domestic macro-economic challenges very much evident. In such a situation, investment must be geared up, especially from the private sector. Moreover, with wages not increasing significantly for a major section of middle class, not to speak of low-income groups, compared to inflation, consumption is down as affordable surplus is not available to these sections. These need to be thoroughly examined before presentation of the Budget and remedial action taken by planners and economists, close to the powers that be, to redress the situation from getting worse.

INFA

### Security concern

Sir, In the wake of the toppling of the Sheikh Hasina government and worsening relations between India and Bangladesh, a defence agreement between Pakistan and Bangladesh armies on giving Bangladesh army training has caused serious security concern for India. The proposal put forward by Pakistan was accepted by Bangladesh as the latter sees it as an opportunity to improve relations with India's western neighbour. The new deal between the two armies was made against the backdrop of close alignment between the two countries and India's strained relations with Bangladesh. Reliable sources said that top Pakistani army officers will train Bangladeshi army officers. India is worried that the Pakistani officers may instil anti-India ideology in the Bangladeshi soldiers. India has always held the opinion that Pakistan is plotting terrorism against India. On the other hand, China has been building pressure on north-eastern states. So, Pakistan, a major ally of China, may pose security challenge to north-east India..

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)

### Too little, too late

Sir, The Manipur Chief Minister's apology to his people on New Year's Day is a classic example of too little and too late. Biren Singh ought to have resigned well over a year ago. The apology, coming from an Indian politician, though rare by all means, is akin to locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. Under his watch the state has effectively been divided on ethnic lines, with each group guarding its turf from the other. That one engine of the double-engine government has tendered an apology is of little or no consolation to the two communities who are still suffering as their lives have been torn to shreds. If the Chief Minister is really contrite, he should resign immediately and press upon the Prime Minister to visit the state at least once. The Prime Minister's inexplicable "hands off Manipur" attitude has only added anxiety and uncertainty to the precarious scenario.

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

TMC  
FOUNDATION  
DAY

# Committed to service over power: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 1:** The TMC Wednesday observed its 28th foundation day, with party supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee asserting that after over two decades of protests, victories, and challenges, the party's core belief remains that politics is not about power, but about service to people.

Banerjee said the party's struggle for the rights of the people of the state is ongoing and will continue in the future.

In her message, Banerjee extended her New Year greetings and highlighted the dual significance of the day — the dawn of the New Year and the 28th anniversary of TMC's formation.

Reflecting on the party's formation January 1, 1998, the TMC supremo emphasised the party's commitment to the welfare of the country's people. "Our struggle for the rights of the people of Bengal is ongoing and will continue in the days ahead," she said.

She also posted a song that she wrote and composed herself, which was sung by renowned artist Indraneel Sen, adding a personal touch to the celebration.

In the afternoon, Banerjee shared a message on X, "Roshni chand se hoti hai, sitaron se nahi, Mohabbat Trinamool Congress se hoti hai, aur kisi se nahi!" (Light comes from the moon, not from stars, love is for



Trinamool Congress and no one else), as she expressed gratitude to every single member of the party and thanked them for their dedication and resilience, highlighting the importance of unity and service.

Reflecting on the party's core principles, Banerjee wrote, "On Trinamool Congress Foundation Day, I wholeheartedly thank every single member of our extended family. Over the course of two decades, every protest, every victory, and even every challenge has reaffirmed our core belief: politics

is not about power but about SERVICE. As we celebrate this milestone, I urge every Trinamool soldier to renew their pledge to fight for the people, and remember that the soul of our party is rooted in the ethos of 'Maa, Mati, Manush'."

TMC's national general secretary and MP Abhishek Banerjee also took to social media to express gratitude toward the party's workers. He emphasised the critical role of TMC workers, calling them "the backbone of our party."

"TMC is dedicated to the wel-

fare of the people of the country and the state. I salute the hard work and sacrifices of all the TMC workers," Abhishek wrote, encouraging them to face the future with renewed vigour as the party prepares for upcoming struggles.

Across the state, the TMC Foundation Day was celebrated with cultural programmes, flag-hoisting ceremonies, and public gatherings.

In Kolkata, the party's headquarters was a hub of activities where senior leaders hoisted the TMC flag, paid tribute to the party's martyrs, and addressed party workers. Youth wings organised rallies, and women supporters showcased Bengal's rich cultural heritage through music and dance performances.

The celebrations in districts like North 24 Parganas, Nadia, and Purulia included traditional dance performances, sweets distribution, and interactive sessions, where party leaders and workers discussed the future course of action.

Streets were adorned with TMC's signature blue and white colours, as party workers took part in these grassroots celebrations, reinforcing the party's message of unity and progress.

Founded January 1, 1998, as a breakaway faction of the Indian National Congress, the TMC gradually gained prominence, particularly after its historic victory in the 2011 West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections.

ROPEWAY PROJECT STIR

# Katra returns to normalcy after weeklong shutdown

EIGHTEEN PEOPLE DETAINED BY POLICE DURING THE PROTESTS WERE RELEASED, SPARKING OVERNIGHT CELEBRATIONS IN THE HOLY TOWN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Katra/Jammu, Jan 1:** Katra -- the base camp for pilgrims visiting the Mata Vaishno Devi temple in Jammu and Kashmir -- resumed normal business activity Wednesday after a week-long shutdown protesting a proposed ropeway project in the Trikuta hills of Reasi district.

Eighteen people detained by police during the protests were also released, sparking overnight celebrations in the holy town.

"All shops, restaurants, and business establishments reopened after a week-long closure due to the shutdown, while traffic movement was also restored, bringing much relief to the pilgrims," an official said.

With the return of normalcy, hundreds of pilgrims thronged the holy town on the first day of the year to pay obeisance at the cave shrine, with long serpentine queues seen at the entry points in Katra and Bhawan.

"We are very happy that the bandh has ended. It was causing huge inconvenience to us. We have come here to pay obeisance on the first day of the new year," Suresh Kadam, a resident of Pune, said.

The 'bandh', which began December 25, disrupted normal life in one of the country's busiest pilgrimage towns which



draws thousands of devotees daily.

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangharsh Samiti, which called for the shutdown, had announced that all activities in Katra would remain suspended during this period.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration announced the release of the detainees Tuesday night and constituted a four-member committee to hold talks with the protesting civil society members.

"Eighteen detained individuals, including some leaders, were released at around 1 am from Reasi and Udhampur jails. They arrived in Katra with jubilant celebrations, where hundreds of people welcomed them," a spokesperson for the Samiti said.

The Samiti initially called for the shutdown December 25. It

extended the bandh by 72 hours December 27 night to press its demands, including shelving the proposed ropeway project and releasing the detained protesters.

Eight youths had gone on a hunger strike, demanding the release of the detainees which included two Samiti leaders -- Bhupinder Singh and Sohan Chand.

Last month, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) announced plans to install a ropeway to facilitate access to the temple for senior citizens, children, and others who find it challenging to climb the 13-km-long track to the cave shrine.

The proposed Rs 250-crore ropeway project will connect Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat, leading to the cave shrine in Reasi district.

STRUGGLING TO MEET TARGET

# B'desh turmoil gives Bengal BJP's membership drive a fillip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 1:** The violence against Hindus in Bangladesh has provided a fillip to West Bengal BJP's membership drive, as the party struggles to meet its ambitious one crore target, while campaigning against the atrocities on minorities across the border to consolidate Hindu support in the state.

Attacks on the minority community on the other side of the border has provided the party with a rallying point, as it seeks to counter challenges posed by organisational gaps, internal discord, and the ruling Trinamool Congress's (TMC) political dominance.

Both TMC and BJP are leveraging the Bangladesh issue to shape the political narrative ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

"The Bangladesh turmoil, where Hindu minorities have been at the receiving end, has accelerated the membership drive, as people see the BJP as the only party capable of ensuring stability and are afraid



of similar events under TMC's rule, which is known for its minority appeasement," state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar told PTI.

Top BJP leaders have launched an aggressive campaign across West Bengal for the last one month, focusing on the plight of Hindus in Bangladesh. They have accused the TMC of providing shelter to jehadists and fundamentalists as part of its vote-bank politics.

"West Bengal's future is at stake under TMC rule. If we allow the TMC to continue its appeasement politics, we are inviting the same crisis we see unfolding in Bangladesh. The BJP is the only party capable of providing true security for our people," Leader of the Op-

position Suvendu Adhikari had said at rallies.

The BJP has been charging the TMC with overlooking the suffering of persecuted Hindus across the border.

"The attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh directly affect Bengal. The Hindus in Bengal know that as long as BJP is here, they are safe as, left to the TMC, they would meet the same fate like Bangladesh," BJP MP and general secretary Jyotirmay Singh Mahato said.

The BJP has linked the crisis to its push for the CAA, which promises citizenship to persecuted minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had set a one-crore membership target during his visit to Kolkata October 27, intending to galvanise the BJP's organisational base in Bengal.

However, the party is still far from the target, with around 35 lakh members enrolled in the last week of December, days before the drive's deadline was extended to first week of January 2025.



Children play on the first day of new year 2025, at Kolkata maidan, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

# WESTERN DISTURBANCE TO BRING SNOWFALL IN KASHMIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 1:** Cold conditions have tightened their grip on Kashmir, with the valley bracing for fresh spells of snowfall as two back-to-back western disturbances are likely to affect the region starting Wednesday, officials said.

According to the Meteorological Department, a feeble

western disturbance is expected to affect Jammu and Kashmir from January 1-2, with light snow at scattered places from Wednesday evening to Thursday morning.

From January 3-6, a moderate western disturbance is expected to bring light to moderate snow to most places in the state, with peak activity from January 4-6. The MeT

Office added that there is a possibility of heavy snow at a few places in the higher reaches during the second spell.

Meanwhile, the night temperature dropped at most places in Kashmir as cold conditions tightened their grip on the valley. Gulmarg, a tourist resort town known for skiing activities in north Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 8.8 degrees

Celsius, up from the previous night's minus 11.5 degrees Celsius, the Met Department said. Gulmarg was the coldest recorded place in the valley.

Pahalgam, one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra in south Kashmir, registered a minimum of minus 7.6 degrees Celsius, slightly up from minus 8.4 degrees Celsius, it said.

# Livestock census deadline extended in Bengal

The census is to be conducted at households in the city, all urban areas, and villages, including those inhabited by defence personnel, paramilitary forces, and police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Jan 1:** The West Bengal Animal Resources Development department has extended the deadline of the livestock census in the state for some more time, an official said Wednesday.

The country-wide survey was supposed to be concluded December 31, but the deadline was extended in West Bengal for some more time to complete the process, the official of the Animal Resources Develop-

ment department told PTI.

"The livestock census deadline was December 31 but it had been extended for some more time. I can speak about Bengal, but to my knowledge, the enumeration drive has been extended elsewhere in the country as well to make it foolproof and successful," the official said.

Additional Chief Secretary, Animal Resources Development department, Vivek Kumar, had said in a notice earlier that the census is to be conducted at households in the city, all urban areas, and villages, including those inhabited by defence personnel, paramilitary forces, and police.

The data from the census will be uploaded on the union government portal by a mobile app.

Managing Director of the West Bengal Livestock Development Corporation (WBLDC) Utpal Kumar Karmakar said in West Bengal the exercise will be over by February.



The data from the census will be uploaded on the union government portal by a mobile app

Another official in the animal resources development said the extension was necessitated due to the reluctance of a large section of owners of domesticated animals - from pet dogs particularly pedigree ones, cats,

buffalo, cow, goats, horses in shed - to help the enumerators list their animals for a database uploaded in the all India portal of the central government.

The reluctance is more prevalent in both cities like Kolkata and Siliguri and district towns including Durgapur, Asansol and Baharampur among others, the official said.

"The owners apprehend their animal will be taken away by the team or they will be heavily

fined but we don't go from house to house to conduct raids for confiscating purposes. We just enlist and want to see valid papers from the owners," he said.

The official said municipal corporations, municipalities and panchayats are being involved in the enumeration process to make it more broad-based and effective "as the local councillor or panchayat representative can have better reach to the residents of his area and know about their possession of any animal."

Already Kolkata Municipal Corporation and Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation have been approached and the process has begun.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation Mayor-in-Council member Debashis Kumar told PTI, "We have received the communication from the state department. We are activating our local network to reach out to pet owners in our areas. We don't foresee any problem."

# 3-decade-old security bunker dismantled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 1:** Three decades after it was constructed, one of the oldest security bunkers in Srinagar city has been dismantled -- underlining the improvement in the Kashmir valley's security situation.

The security bunker, constructed by the Border Security Force (BSF) in the early 1990s, at Braripora in the city's Safakadal area is in the process of being removed.

"The CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), which was occupying the bunker and my property adjacent to it, has left the place. The bunker was built in early 1990s," said Jayiz Ahmad Alaie.

Locals also welcomed the decision to remove the bunker.

"While most security bunkers were removed from the city in the previous decade, this continued to remain operational. This was probably the biggest bunker in the city and occupied most of the road," said



Tanveer Ahmad, a local.

Claiming that the bunker's presence used to create frequent traffic jams during peak hours, he said vehicular movement would become more fluid following its removal.

A senior security official said the process of removal and construction of security bunkers was constantly reviewed.

"If a bunker is needed, we will construct it. If an existing bunker is no longer needed, we will remove it," the official said on the condition of anonymity.



Is Priyank Kharge's name mentioned in the suicide note? His name is not mentioned anywhere. The Minister has said that he is ready for any inquiry

MAN ATTEMPTS SELF-IMMOLATION

An e-rickshaw owner attempted self-immolation at the office of the senior superintendent of police in Uttar Pradesh's Badaun Wednesday alleging police harassment and threats of false cases, officials said



of the day quote

(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi has gone to Kuwait. He was hugging the Sheikhs of Kuwait. You call and show the Sheikhs what your government is doing here (in Sambhal)

Assam is now an aspirational state and the media, too, should be aspirational. It should not remain imprisoned in the decades of '70s, '80s and '90s of the last century and reflect the hopes and thoughts of the new generation

Reality of judicial appointments is much murkier and much more non objective than originally conceived. Mutual Back scratching, uncle judges, family lineages etc demoralise others and bring disrepute to institution

Govt extends DAP fertiliser subsidy

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister, extended two crop insurance schemes -- PMFBY and RWBCIS -- for one more year till 2025-26 and created a separate ₹824.77 crore fund for technology infusion in the implementation of flagship schemes



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 1: The Union Cabinet Wednesday extended a one-time package to subsidise key fertiliser DAP at the cost of up to ₹3,850 crore and approved a one-year extension of two crop insurance schemes -- PMFBY and RWBCIS -- for one more year till 2025-26 and created a separate ₹824.77 crore fund for technology infusion in the implementation of flagship schemes.

tonne for the period from January 1, 2025, till further orders. On social media platform X, the Prime Minister said, "(Govt's) first decision of the New Year is dedicated to crores of farmer brothers and sisters of our country. We have approved increasing the allocation for the crop insurance scheme. This will provide more security to farmers' crops and will also mitigate their concerns about any damage".

April 1, 2010. In spite of geopolitical constraints and volatility of global market conditions, the government said it has ensured the availability of DAP to farmers at affordable prices for Kharif and Rabi 2024-25. The Centre has provided Rs 11.9 lakh crore fertiliser subsidy during the 2014-24 period, which is more than double the subsidy of ₹5.5 lakh crore during 2004-14.

SHORT TAKES

Bus overturns; student killed

Kannur (Kerala): In a tragic incident, a 10-year-old girl student died and 18 other students were injured when a school bus overturned at Valakkai in Kerala's Kannur district here Wednesday, police sources said.

Ex-Punjab BSP chief joins AAP

Chandigarh: Bahujan Samaj Party's former Punjab unit president Jasvir Singh Garhi joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) along with his supporters Wednesday. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann welcomed him into the party and assured him of AAP's dedication to social justice and inclusive governance, said an AAP statement here.

4 associates of JeM terrorist outfit held

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police Wednesday arrested four associates of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist outfit from Awantipora area of Pulwama district. "Police in Awantipora along with security forces have arrested four terrorist associates of proscribed terror outfit JeM in Tral area," a police spokesperson said.

Delhi Police books 35 bikers

New Delhi: The Delhi Police have booked 35 motorcycle riders under their "Operation Bullet Raja," a focused crackdown on bikers creating a nuisance with modified silencers and stunt performances, in the Jamia Nagar area of southeast Delhi, an official said Wednesday. "The operation started on the evening of December 31 and ended in the early hours of January 1," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Ravi Kumar Singh said.

Four killed in road mishaps

Bangalore: At least four people were killed and eight others injured in separate road accidents in areas surrounding Bengaluru during New Year celebrations, police said Wednesday.

3-yr-old girl pulled out of borewell after 10-day rescue operation, dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Jan 1: A three-year-old girl, who fell into a 150-foot-deep borewell in Rajasthan's Kotputli-Behror district, was brought out in an unconscious state Wednesday after a 10-day rescue operation carried out by NDRF and SDRF teams and rushed to hospital, officials said. However, the girl, Chetna, was declared dead by doctors at the hospital, they said. NDRF team in-charge Yogesh Meena said that when the girl was taken out, there was no movement in her body. Chetna was immediately taken to Kotputli's BDM hospital by ambulance where a team of doctors declared her dead, the officials said. The child had fallen into the borewell December 23 while playing in the agriculture farm of her father in Badiyali Dhani under the Sarund police station area.

India, Pak exchange list of nuclear installations

The exchange of the list took place under the provisions of an agreement on the prohibition of attacks against nuclear installations and facilities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 1: India and Pakistan Wednesday exchanged a list of their nuclear installations under a bilateral pact that prohibits the two sides from attacking each other's atomic facilities, in continuing an over-three-decade practice.

The exchange of the list took place under the provisions of an agreement on the prohibition of attacks against nuclear installations and facilities, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. It was done simultaneously through diplomatic channels in



New Delhi and Islamabad. "India and Pakistan today exchanged, through diplomatic channels, simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, the list of nuclear installations

and facilities covered under the agreement on the prohibition of attack against nuclear installation and facilities," the MEA said. The exchange of the list came amid frosty ties between the two countries over the Kashmir issue as well as cross-border terrorism. The agreement was signed December 31, 1988 and entered into force January 27, 1991. The pact mandates the two countries to inform each other of the nuclear installations and

facilities to be covered under the agreement on the first day of January every year. "This is the 34th consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries, the first one having taken place January 1, 1992," the MEA said in a statement. The ties between the two countries came under severe strain after India's warplanes pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Pakistan's Balakot in February 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack.

Maha govt to draft its AI policy soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 1: Maharashtra will soon draft its independent Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy to position the state as a major player in the sector and a leader in technological advancements, a minister has said.



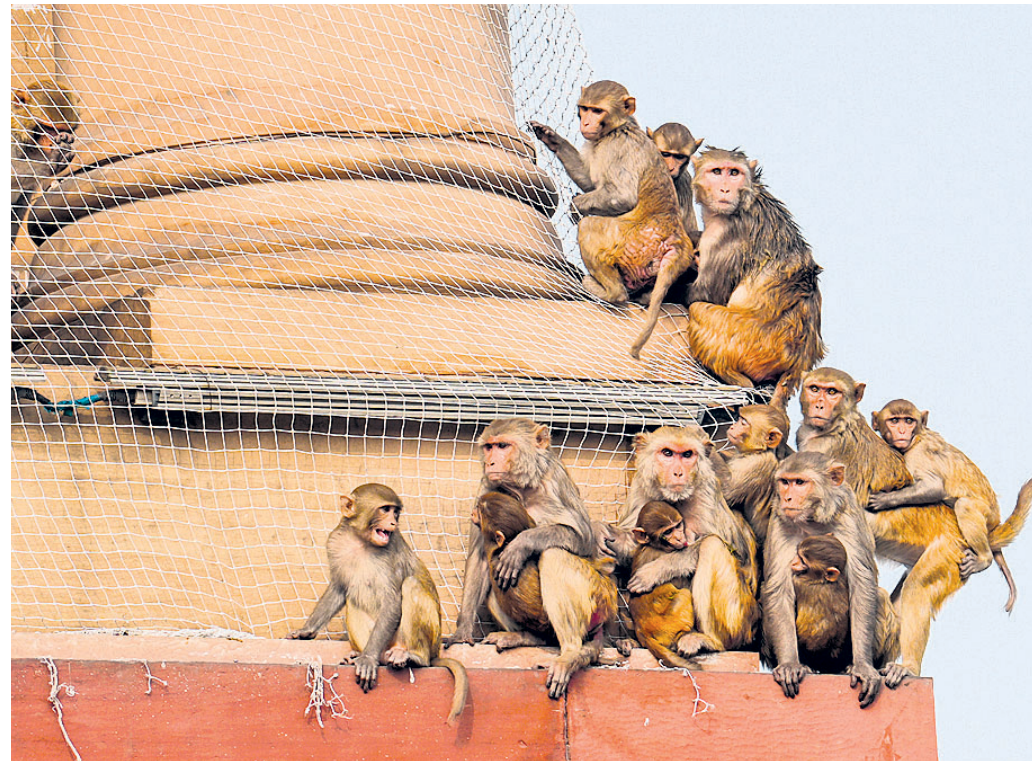
Managing Director Jayshree Bhoj, and senior officials from the departments concerned. During the meeting, Shelar stressed the importance of leveraging AI to boost industries, attract businesses, cre-

The India AI Mission, launched by the central government earlier this year with a budget of ₹10,372 crore, aims to enhance AI capabilities across the nation

ate employment opportunities, and establish Maharashtra as a major player in the AI sector, an official statement said. He said the AI era has begun and that the state must seize this opportunity. "By adopting AI, we can drive economic growth, generate jobs for the youth, and strengthen our position in the global AI

landscape," he said. The India AI Mission, launched by the central government earlier this year with a budget of ₹10,372 crore, aims to enhance AI capabilities across the nation. It includes initiatives such as the India AI Datasets Platform, application development programmes, graphic processing units, innovation

centres, skill development and support for startups in the field of AI, the statement said. Shelar underscored the need for Maharashtra to align its AI ambitions with this national programme to remain competitive. From January 2025, the central government will begin collecting and aggregating non-personal datasets to build a comprehensive database for the India AI Datasets Platform. This will provide seamless access for startups, companies, academics, and researchers to develop AI applications and specialised services, it said.



Monkeys, seen atop the North Block building on the first day of new year 2025 in New Delhi





It is too cold. Keep yourselves warm but do not make any wild guesses. The new year will see a new harvest (nai fasal) and a new government that will be sensitive to the people's need for health, education and jobs (padhaai, kamaai, dawaai, sunwai aur karvaayi ki sarkaar)

UNPRECEDENTED RUSH OF DEVOTEES AT AYODHYA

The temple towns of Ayodhya and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh Wednesday witnessed an unprecedented rush of devotees on the first day of the New Year. The Ram temple at Ayodhya was consecrated January 22 last year



of the day quote

The government spends ₹2,200 crore annually on electricity subsidies and ₹200 crore per month on salaries and pensions of electricity board employees. Subsidies should be reserved for the needy, and the well-off individuals must contribute towards building a fairer society



The prime minister has consistently extended all requisite support to the state and the Mahayuti alliance, enabling us to overcome roadblocks and advance stalled projects



The Modi government stands with farmers like a protective shield and today, on the very first day of 2025, it has reiterated this resolve



'India cut GDP emission intensity by 36% during 2005-20'

New Delhi, Jan 1: India's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 fell by 7.93 per cent compared to 2019, while the emission intensity of its GDP declined 36 per cent between 2005 and 2020, according to data submitted to the UN climate change office.

land-use change, and forestry, or LULUCF) in 2020 were 2,959 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO2e). Including LULUCF, emissions were 2,437 MtCO2e.



(BURs) are submitted by developing countries to the UNFCCC every two years, providing updates on emissions, climate action progress, and needs for support in mitigation and adaptation.

2.29 billion tonnes during 2005 to 2021. As October 2024, the share of non-fossil fuel-based power generation capacity in the country stood at 46.52 per cent.

India has committed to creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes through forest and tree cover by 2030.

Five lives lost in rescue attempt

Hazaribag, Jan 1: Five persons died in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district, including four who attempted to rescue a man from a well, a police official said.

'2025 TO BE YEAR OF DEFENCE REFORMS'

New Delhi, Jan 1: India Wednesday declared 2025 as the year of defence reforms and that the focus will be to roll out integrated theatre commands to boost tri-services synergy and ensure simpler and time-sensitive military procurement with a broader aim to transform the military into a technologically-advanced force.



The reforms would lay the foundation for unprecedented advancements in defence preparedness and ensure India's security and sovereignty amidst challenges of 21st century

modern militaries that suit the nation's conditions. The defence ministry said the focus in 2025 will also be on new domains such as cyber and space, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, hypersonic and robotics.

Bizman dies by suicide amid divorce dispute

New Delhi, Jan 1: A 40-year-old man allegedly died by suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan at his residence in Kalyan Vihar area of northwest Delhi, an official said Wednesday.

POST OF THE DAY

WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2024 Kalpana Soren stood tall against BJP's vendetta politics and handled JMM when her husband served jail

SHORT TAKES

11 Maoists surrender Gadchiroli: A total of 11 Naxalites, including senior cadre Vimla Chandra Sidam alias Tarakka, surrendered Wednesday before Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in Gadchiroli.

PM Modi meets Diljit Dosanjh New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh Wednesday, and lauded his rise from modest beginnings to make a name for himself internationally.

2 dead, 4 injured in tempo-SUV collision Mumbai: At least two persons were killed and four others seriously injured after a sports utility vehicle (SUV) collided with a tempo in Maharashtra's Solapur district Wednesday, police said.



People take a boat ride on the first day of New Year 2025, at Sangam in Prayagraj

Punjab govt team meets Dallewal

Chandigarh, Jan 1: Punjab government Wednesday continued with its efforts to persuade farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal to take medical aid, with former additional DGP Jaskaran Singh saying discussions in this regard were also held with farmer leaders.

ernment seeking an additional three days to comply with SC's December 20 order. The top court had posted the matter January 2 for the compliance of its order on shifting of Dallewal to a hospital.

Centre amends prison manual rules

In a communication to chief secretaries of all states and Union territories, the Union Home Ministry said to address the issue of any caste-based discrimination of prisoners, 'Model Prison Manual, 2016' and the 'Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023' have been amended

Changes have also been made in the 'Miscellaneous' of the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023 with a new heading 'Prohibition of caste-based discrimination in Prisons and Correctional Institutions' as Section 55(A).



and observed that the prison manuals and model prison manual shall be in accordance with the definition provided in the Habitual Offenders legislation enacted by respective state legislatures, subject to any constitutional challenge against such legislation in the future.

The top court further directed that in case there is no Habitual Offenders legislation in the state, the Union and the state governments will make necessary changes in their manuals and rules in line with their judgement within a period of three months.

SARPANCH MURDER CASE Maha forms SIT for investigation

Mumbai, Jan 1: The Maharashtra government Wednesday formed a 10-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the murder of Massajog sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh, officials said.





**In 2025, quick commerce sector will actually start hitting a scale where it will become comparable to e-commerce**  
AADIT PALICHA | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, ZEPTO

**AIR INDIA: FIRST AIRLINE WITH WI-FI**

Private carrier Air India Wednesday rolled out Wi-Fi internet connectivity services on board domestic and international flights on its widebody Airbus A350 and Boeing 787-9 fleet as well as on select Airbus A321neo aircraft. This makes Air India the first airline to offer such services on flights within India, the airline said



**of the day note**

Globally, the last few years have been full of shocks, changes and uncertainties, and the year that is drawing to a close has been no exception. We are seeing a shifting world where interdependencies and a flat world may well be things of the past



Air India's global coverage will further increase in the years ahead, not least because of the recent addition of 100 aircraft to our order book, augmenting the earlier commitment for 470 made in 2023



Looking ahead to 2025, the real estate sector is expected to experience continued growth. This momentum will be driven by a stable economic environment and supportive government initiatives



G HARI BABU | NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NAREDCO

**D-St starts NY on high note**

*Indices snap two-day decline on buying in blue chips*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 1:** Benchmark Sensex and Nifty started the New Year on a high note with the key indices closing higher in a see-saw trade Wednesday on buying in blue-chip stocks.

Snapping its two-day falling streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 368.40 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 78,507.41 on the first trading session of 2025. During the day, it surged 617.48 points or 0.79 per cent to 78,756.49.

The NSE Nifty climbed 98.10 points or 0.41 per cent to 23,742.90 with 37 of its constituents ending higher and 17 closing lower.

Among Sensex shares, Maruti Suzuki rose the most by 3.26 per cent after the carmaker reported 30 per cent rise in total wholesales at 1,78,248 units in December 2024.

Mahindra & Mahindra spurred 2.45 per cent after the automaker reported a 16 per cent rise in overall auto sales at 69,768 units in December 2024.

Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, Asian Paints, Power Grid, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were also among the gainers.

Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Zo-



The markets began the calendar year on a positive note, gaining nearly half a per cent. After an initial decline, buying interest in select heavyweight stocks across sectors quickly erased losses, gradually pushing the index higher

**FIRST SESSION OF 2025**

SENSEX ROSE BY 368.40 POINTS OR 0.47% TO SETTLE AT 78,507.41  
NIFTY UP 98.10 POINTS OR 0.41% TO END SESSION AT 23,742.90

mato, HCL Tech, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.03 per cent and mid-cap index climbed 0.50 per cent. Among sectoral indices,

capital goods surged 1.22 per cent, industrials (1.17 per cent), power (0.94 per cent), telecommunication (0.76 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.68 per cent), financial services (0.51 per cent) and healthcare (0.42 per cent). Metal and realty

**AUTO SECTOR SHINES**

**PV mkt bids farewell to 2024 with record sales**



*Almost all the major automobile players witnessed highest-ever sales last year*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 1:** Indian passenger vehicles market registered record wholesales of 43 lakh units in 2024, with companies like market leader Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, and Kia posting their best-ever annual domestic sales.

The continued growth of SUVs, along with rural markets playing a key role in driving up car sales, helped the industry better the previous best of nearly 41.1 lakh units posted in 2023.

"Last calendar year, it was close to 41,09,000 lakh units, while 2024 is around 43 lakh units. So, it is the growth of around 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent," Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Partho Banerjee told PTI when asked about overall passenger vehicle wholesales in 2024.

Maruti Suzuki itself posted its highest-ever wholesale and retail sales in 2024, he added. "We have broken the record of highest-ever annual wholesales after six years, with 17,90,977 units in 2024, bettering the previous best of 17,51,919 units registered in 2018," Banerjee said.

In retail also, he said the company posted record sales of 17,88,405 units in 2024, breaking the previous record of 17,26,661 units sold in 2023.

In December 2024, MSIL's total domestic passenger vehicle sales stood at 1,30,117 units compared to 1,04,778 units in the same month a year ago, up 24.18 per cent.

Its rival Hyundai Motor India Ltd also recorded its highest-ever yearly domestic sales of 6,05,433 units in 2024, up marginally from 6,02,111 units in 2023. It achieved the

highest-ever yearly domestic SUV contribution of 67.6 per cent, the company said in a statement.

The company's December domestic sales were 42,208 units compared to 42,750 units in December 2023, down 1.3 per cent.

"The PV industry posted moderate growth in CY24 and is expected to touch a sales volume of 4.3 million units, with strong growth in the SUV segment and sustained traction for emission-friendly powertrains," Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd Managing Director Shailesh Chandra said.

**Last calendar year, it (automobile wholesales) was close to 41,09,000 lakh units, while 2024 is around 43 lakh units. So, it is the growth of around 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent**

PARTHO BANERJEE | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER (MARKETING & SALES), MSIL

For Tata Motors, 2024 was the fourth consecutive year of highest-ever annual sales with 5.65 lakh units sold, he said, adding that the company remained "optimistic about the outlook of the PV industry".

In December 2024, the company posted a 1 per cent growth in total PV sales at 44,289 units compared to 43,675 units in the year-ago month.

Another automaker, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) also recorded its best-ever calendar year sales of 3,26,329 units in 2024. This was higher by 40 per cent against 2,33,346 units sold in 2023.

Similarly, Kia India reported a 6 per cent rise in total sales at 2,55,038 units in 2024, recording its highest-ever annual sales. It sold 2,40,919 units in 2023.

Mahindra & Mahindra reported passenger vehicle sales of 41,424 units in December 2024 against 35,174 units in the year-ago period, up 18 per cent.

**GST kitty zooms 7.3% to ₹1.77L-cr in December**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 1:** The gross GST collection rose 7.3 per cent year-on-year to ₹1.77 lakh crore in December.

The Central GST collection stood at ₹32,836 crore, State GST at ₹40,499 crore, Integrated IGT at ₹47,783 crore and Cess at ₹11,471 crore, according to government data released Wednesday.

The total gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue grew 7.3 per cent to ₹1.77 lakh crore in December as compared to ₹1.65 lakh crore in the same month a year ago, it said.

During the month under review, GST from domestic transactions grew 8.4 per cent to ₹1.32 lakh crore, while revenues from tax on imports rose about 4 per cent to ₹44,268 crore.

In November, GST mop-up was ₹11.82 lakh crore with 8.5 per cent annual growth. The highest-ever collection was in April 2024 at over ₹2.10L-cr

During the month, refunds worth ₹22,490 crore were issued, registering 31 per cent increase over the year-ago period. After adjusting refunds, net GST collection increased by 3.3 per cent to ₹1.54 lakh crore.

**TIGHTER LENDING RULES WEIGH**

**BANKS' LOAN GROWTH DIPS FOR FIFTH MONTH**

On the flip side, loans to industry grew by 8.1% year-on-year last month, quicker than the 5.5% growth last year

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Jan 1:** Indian banks' loan growth moderated for a fifth straight month in November, central bank data showed, as lenders continued to rein in unsecured and personal loans after the Reserve Bank of India's crackdown on "exuberant" lending.

Banks' credit increased by 11.8% year-on-year last month, slower than the 16.5% rise in November 2023, excluding the impact of HDFC Bank's merger with its parent Housing Development Finance Corp, according to RBI data released late Tuesday.

Including the impact of the merger, banks' loans grew 10.6% last month, compared with nearly 21% in the year-ago period.

The growth rate had slowed

to 12.8% in October, excluding the merger, and to 11.5% including the merger. Loan growth had also moderated in July, August and September.

Indian banks have consistently reported double-digit loan growth for a while, helped by healthy retail demand and urban consumption.

However, in late 2023, the RBI, worried about the risk of bad loans, imposed higher capital requirements on personal loans and credit cards, which is now translating into slower growth in these segments.

Banks' personal loan growth slowed to 12.2% in November from 22.4% a year ago, excluding

the HDFC Bank merger impact, while growth in outstanding credit card debt dropped to 18.1% from 34.2% a year ago, the data showed.

The RBI has also warned the financial sector against "all forms of exuberance", asked lenders to be watchful of a build-up in stress due to new lending models and flagged concerns about the interconnectedness between banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

Credit growth to the services sector decelerated to 14.4% in November from 22.2% a year ago, primarily due to lower growth in credit to NBFCs.



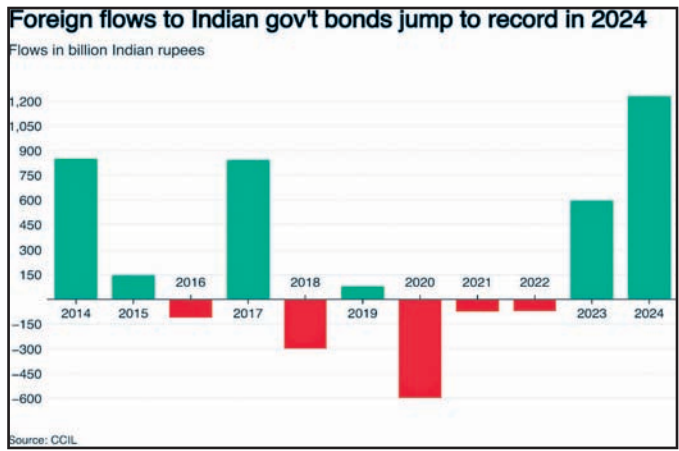
**Foreign flows into bonds to come off record highs in 2025**

Interest rate trajectories in India and US and moves in the rupee will influence the pace of flows

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Jan 1:** Foreign flows into Indian government bonds are set to decline in 2025, after spiking to a record high in 2024 as the debt got added to JPMorgan's emerging market debt index, investors said.

"For 2025, foreign inflows into the Indian government bond market are expected to remain strong but may not match the record levels of 2024," said Wei Li, head of multi-asset investments at BNP Paribas SA. Overseas investors net



bought ₹1.24 trillion (\$14.5 billion) of Indian bonds under the so-called fully accessible route in 2024, clearing house data showed.

Most bonds under the route, which allows unfettered foreign investment, are part of JPMor-

gan's index. Despite the optimistic outlook, inflation expectations and policy adjustments as well as global market fluctuations could affect capital flows, BNP Paribas' Li said. "Therefore, investors should

**₹2000 BANKNOTES WITHDRAWAL ₹6,691cr worth notes still with public**

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Jan 1:** The Reserve Bank Wednesday said 98.12 per cent of the ₹2000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, and only ₹6,691 crore worth such notes are still with the public.

On May 19, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the withdrawal of ₹2000 denomination banknotes from circulation.

The total value of ₹2000 banknotes in circulation, which was ₹3.56 lakh crore at the close of business May 19, 2023, declined to ₹6,691 crore at the close of business December 31, 2024, RBI said.

"Thus, 98.12 per cent of the ₹2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been returned," it said in a statement.

The ₹2000 banknotes continue to be legal tender.

Currency weakness can temper the momentum of bond inflows, especially in case of persistent depreciation pressure. Inflows will continue but at an erratic and less enthusiastic pace as the bonds are still relatively attractive

DHIRAJ NIM | ECONOMIST AND FX RATES STRATEGIST, ANZ

Overseas investors net bought ₹1.24tr of Indian bonds in 2024

Rupee dropped 2.8% in 2024, and hit a record low of 85.8075 Dec 27, while India's benchmark bond yield fell 42bps

Investors expect rate cuts in India to kick off from February but worry that the easing cycle would be a shallow one. The Federal Reserve has already projected fewer cuts for 2025.

How the rupee moves will also sway foreign investors,

with the dollar set to rise more as Donald Trump takes charge as the US president.

The rupee dropped 2.8% in 2024, and hit a record low of 85.8075 Dec 27, while India's benchmark bond yield fell 42 basis points.

Radhika Rao, executive director and senior economist at DBS Bank, sees a gradual pickup in passive monthly inflows as Indian bonds get added by two more index providers this year. She expects the local central bank to cut rates by 25 basis points in February, and by a total of 75 basis points in the cycle.



# VAISHALI BAGS BLITZ WORLDS BRONZE

## Gambhir gambit: Coach's handling of India's transition raises eyebrows

It is learnt that Gambhir is not on the same page with most of the players in the team and the communication isn't as good as it used to be during the time of Ravi Shastri and Rahul Dravid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Jan 1:** As Indian cricket deals with the fading form of its two stalwarts in captain Rohit Sharma and senior batter Virat Kohli, head coach Gautam Gambhir and his support staff's role in handling a team in transition has also come into focus.

The ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy has been a difficult ride for the side as they have struggled to get the right combination in the face of an aggressive and highly-driven Australian team. The visitors will be playing the must-win fifth and final Test here from Friday.

The on-field roller-coaster is causing some off-field issues as well with murmurs of unrest in the dressing room beginning to grow.

It is learnt that Gambhir is not on the same page with most of the players in the team and the communication isn't as good as it used to be during the time of Ravi Shastri and Rahul Dravid.

Skipper Rohit Sharma has maintained that he speaks individually to the players about selection issues. But after Gambhir took charge in July, Rohit, it is said, hasn't actually given clarity to some of the not-so-junior players about why they were being excluded at times from the side.

His own poor form hasn't helped Rohit's cause. But it is also reliably learnt that Gambhir, who is considered a more assertive person, hasn't earned a lot of confidence from the group of players, who aren't as old as Kohli or Rohit but are also not rookies like Harshit Rana or Nitish Reddy.



There is a Test match to be played and then there is Champions Trophy. If the performance doesn't improve, even Gautam Gambhir's position wouldn't be safe," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Gambhir's equation with the selection committee is also not particularly clear at this point. There are players in the team, who are feeling insecure because of his proclivity to experiment with the playing eleven. In the ongoing BGT, a punt like Nitish Reddy has worked out brilliantly but the handling of Shubman Gill is still being debated.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah has now been elevated to the ICC chief's position and the Board will have his full-time successor only after January 12. Once that administrative stability is in place, the BCCI brass will have some thinking to do.

Till Shah was in-charge of BCCI, he called the shots. Former India seamer Roger Binny, who is the current president of the Board, hasn't been seen taking any policy related calls.

But if India's performance is not drastically better in the Champions Trophy in February-March, Gambhir will certainly have his wings clipped.

"He was never BCCI's first choice (it was VVS Laxman) and some of the well-known overseas names didn't want to coach all three formats, so he was a compromise. Obviously, some other compulsions were also there," the official said.

Gambhir has already been asked a few tough questions after the 0-3 defeat at home to New Zealand and if the Border-Gavaskar Trophy is also lost, it can all go downhill for the feisty former opener from Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar.

Already there is a school of thought that Gambhir should only be given charge of the T20 team, a format in which he has been a successful captain and then mentor for both Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow SuperGiants.

## A new era in chess history as Indians continue to shine at different arenas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New York, Jan 1:** India's R Vaishali clinched a bronze in the women's section of the World Blitz Championship, capping another strong performance by the country's chess players after stalwart Koneru Humpy's title-winning show in the rapid event here.

Vaishali defeated China's Zhu Jiner 2.5-1.5 in the quarter-finals before losing to another Chinese opponent Ju Wenjun 0.5-2.5 in the semi-final.

In an event completely dominated by the Chinese, Ju Wenjun went on to snare the world title defeating compatriot Lei Tingjie 3.5-2.5.

Five-time world champion and International Chess Federation (FIDE) vice president Viswanathan Anand congratulated Vaishali for her efforts, saying it was a great way to end the year.

"Congratulations to Vaishali for taking bronze. Her qualification was truly a power packed performance. Our Waca Chess mentee (WestBridge Anand Chess Academy) has done us proud," Anand wrote on 'X'.

"We are so happy to be supporting her and her chess. What a way to wrap up 2024. In 2021, we thought we would get stronger chess players but here we have it a World Champion (Humpy) and a Bronze medal-

**In the 'Open' section, world number one Magnus Carlsen and Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi shared the Blitz title after three sudden-death games failed to produce a winner. This was the first time that the title was awarded to two players after Carlsen asked whether it could be shared given the deadlock.**

list (Vaishali)" he wrote. In the 'Open' section, world number one Magnus Carlsen and Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi shared the Blitz title after three sudden-death games failed to produce a winner. This was the first time that the title was awarded to two players after Carlsen asked whether it could be shared given the deadlock.

"We were both tired, some will like it some will not," Carlsen said during a media interaction.

"We reached a point where it had been a long day. We played many games, we had three draws and I felt that I could keep playing. But it was a nice solution to share the win, it was a good way to end it," said Carlsen.

This was Carlsen's second big win this week as the world body was forced to bring him back after his withdrawal from the Rapid championship just a couple of days back due to dress code violation.

Carlsen came wearing jeans for the Rapid event and refused to wear formal trousers, prompting FIDE to disqualify him. However, the world governing body allowed him to wear jeans in the Blitz event.

**We are so happy to be supporting her and her chess. What a way to wrap up 2024. In 2021, we thought we would get stronger chess players but here we have it a World Champion (Humpy) and a Bronze medalist (Vaishali)!**  
VISWANATHAN ANAND | VICE PRESIDENT, FIDE

### SHORT TAKES

#### Olmo's Barcelona future uncertain

**Barcelona:** The Spanish league said Tuesday that Barcelona has failed to meet Financial Fair Play rules in the latest blow to the club's hopes of keeping playmaker Dani Olmo. The league said Barcelona "did not present any alternative" on adhering to the regulations, which was required for the club to "register any player beginning on January 2." Barcelona needed to have another financial lever approved by the league in order to register Olmo after a judge ruled against the club Monday in the second consecutive court setback ahead of the end-of-year deadline. Without the court's backing or the league's approval, Olmo's contract can't be registered beyond the end of 2024. The Spain international moved from Leipzig to Barcelona in August. Spanish media said Barcelona was still hopeful of reaching a deal with the league to have Olmo registered even if it misses the end-of-year deadline.

#### US, Kazakh in United Cup tennis semis

**Perth:** Coco Gauff and Taylor Fritz powered the US, tournament winner two years ago, into the semifinals of the United Cup mixed teams tennis event Wednesday. In the first singles match in Perth, Gauff got the ball rolling for her team with a gritty 7-6 (4), 6-2 win over Zhang Shuai. Fritz then made sure of victory by edging a tight contest with Zhang Zhizhen 6-4 6-4. World No 3-ranked Gauff said: "Shuai was playing amazing tennis out there. I was literally on the ground for most of the match. The harder I hit, the harder she was hitting." Kazakhstan also advanced to the semifinals with a 2-1 win over a Germany team playing without the injured world No 2-ranked Alexander Zverev. In Sydney, Iga Swiatek and Hubert Hurcaz won their deciding mixed doubles match over the Czech Republic to qualify Poland for the quarterfinals. Also in Sydney, Katie Boulter's 6-2, 6-1 win over Olivia Gadecki of Australia helped Britain clinch a quarterfinal place.

## HIL great initiative for global hockey, says FIH president



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Rourkela, Jan 1:** After a grand opening on December 28, the Hockey India League (HIL) 2024-25 is in full swing, with eight men's teams delivering spectacular performances at the iconic Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, Odisha. International Hockey Federation (FIH) President Da-tayyab Ikram believes the tournament is a great initiative for global hockey.

"Hockey India League is very close to my heart. It's an athlete-centric initiative. Globally, we need more platforms that provide athletes with opportunities to perform

and receive the recognition they deserve. The Hockey India League has a unique organisation and timing, scheduled within a window specially sanctioned by the FIH, which enables top athletes to come together and compete, making it much more than just a hockey competition. I believe this initiative is a great initiative not just for Indian hockey, but also for global hockey. Significant participation from players along with the involvement of domestic talent will have a profound impact on the sport's growth and development," said Ikram at a press conference on the sidelines of the HIL in Rourkela.

With the men's competition being played at the world's most iconic hockey stadium in the world, Ikram highlighted, "One of the best hockey venues in the world, is in the lime-light alongside some incredible hockey action, thanks to the league's global broadcast and coverage. The response from Rourkela is no surprise—they are an integral part of the process to understand and recognise what Hockey India League truly is."

### HIGHEST-RANKED INDIAN BOWLER IN TEST HISTORY

## Bumrah eclipses Ashwin's record in Test rankings



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Dubai, Jan 1:** Jasprit Bumrah's scintillating performance in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia has elevated him to the highest rating points ever achieved by an Indian bowler in Test cricket as he consolidated his lead as the No 1 bowler in the recent rankings update.

With rating points of 907, Bumrah moved past Ravichandran Ashwin's 904 rating points, achieved in December 2016, and

crucial runs during Australia's stellar win in Melbourne.

South African pacer Marco Jansen continued his rise in the Test arena, moving up six places to claim the fifth spot. His seven-wicket haul against Pakistan in the Centurion Boxing Day Test pushed him past the 800-point mark for the first time.

In the batting rankings, several players made notable strides. South Africa's Aiden Markram climbed back into the top 20, thanks to his resilient knocks of 89 and 37 in the Centurion Test. His efforts were key to South Africa's victory over Pakistan, which secured their spot in the ICC Test Championship final.

India's Yashasvi Jaiswal continued his meteoric rise, moving up one spot to a career-best fourth position. Pakistan's Saud Shakeel also reached a personal milestone, jumping three places to a career-best sixth, while Australia's Steve Smith climbed to seventh after his gritty innings in the Boxing Day Test.

## Vedanta Sports Program's Sanjay Majhi bags bronze at NTPC Archery C'ship



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Lanjigarh, Jan 1:** Sanjay Majhi, a promising young archer from Vedanta Sports Program, has won a bronze medal in the Indian Round category at the prestigious NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) Senior National Archery Championship 2024.

Supported by Vedanta Lanjigarh, India's premier producer of smelter-grade alumina and a unit of Vedanta Aluminium, Sanjay Majhi's achievement concludes Odisha's 21-year quest for a senior category national medal in archery and making it a moment of pride for the state and Vedanta's Sports Program.

Since its inception in 2018, Vedanta Sports Program has been a beacon of hope for young athletes in Odisha's tribal-dominated Kalahandi district.

## From teenager to 40: LeBron makes NBA history

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Los Angeles, Jan 1:** LeBron James became the first player in NBA history to play both as a teenager and past the age of 40 as Los Angeles Lakers lost to the Cleveland Cavaliers 110-122 at the Crypto.com Arena Wednesday. Despite the loss, the legendary forward contributed 23 points in the game, showcasing his continued brilliance in his 22nd season. His longevity and consistency have cemented his legacy as one of the greatest players the sport has ever seen.

While the Lakers celebrated James' milestone, it was Cleveland who emerged victorious, with Jarrett Allen spearheading their efforts. Allen scored 27 points and grabbed crucial

rebounds to help the Cavaliers secure their eighth consecutive win. Cleveland continues to sit atop the Eastern Conference standings, further solidifying their status as championship contenders this season.

The Lakers, meanwhile, are seventh in the Western Conference and face growing pressure to find consistency as the play-off race intensifies.

In Indianapolis, Giannis Antetokounmpo delivered a masterclass to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a stunning comeback victory over the Indiana Pacers. Down by 19 points late in the third quarter, the Bucks rallied to a 120-112 win. Antetokounmpo finished with 30 points, 12 rebounds, five assists, and two steals, showcasing why he re-

mains one of the league's most impactful players. The Bucks' resilience reaffirmed their place among the league's elite.

The Oklahoma City Thunder continued their dominance, securing their 12th straight victory with a 113-105 home win over the Minnesota Timberwolves. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was unstoppable, scoring 40 points while adding three rebounds, two assists, and two steals.

The Thunder remain atop the Western Conference standings and are emerging as serious contenders as the season progresses. In Boston, the Celtics dismantled the Toronto Raptors in a commanding 125-71 victory. Jayson Tatum led the charge with 23 points and eight rebounds, as Boston handed the Raptors their

11th consecutive defeat. Victor Wembanyama demonstrated why he is considered the NBA's next superstar, delivering 23 points, nine rebounds, and five assists in the San Antonio Spurs' 122-86 rout of the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Spurs' dominant performance at home highlighted the immense potential of their young roster, with Wembanyama leading the charge in style. The Memphis Grizzlies defeated the Phoenix Suns 117-112 in a closely contested matchup. Jaren Jackson Jr was the stand-out performer for Memphis,

posting 38 points, 11 rebounds, and four assists.

Kevin Durant fought valiantly for the Suns, contributing 29 points and 10 rebounds, but Phoenix's struggles continued as they suffered their sixth loss in seven games.



**LeBron James, a four-time NBA champion and MVP, also holds the record as the NBA's all-time leading scorer**