



## Rakul's treasures

Actor Rakul Preet Singh reveals what she considers to be the two greatest assets of her life

LEISURE | P2



## No relief for Hindu monk

Chattogram court denies bail to Hindu monk and former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das in a sedition case

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Mfg growth dips

Manufacturing sector growth falls to a 12-month low in December

BUSINESS | P11



## Uncertain future

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma is likely to be dropped from the fifth and final Test against Australia starting today

SPORTS | P12

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## Freedom fighter pension doubled

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Freedom fighter pension would be doubled in the state, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said during an event held to mark the 38th Freedom Fighters' Day here, Thursday.

"Acknowledging freedom fighters' role in India's struggle for Independence, the state government will enhance their pension amount. The freedom fighters, who were imprisoned, will get an increased pension of Rs 20,000 a month from earlier Rs 10,000 a month," he said.

Freedom fighters who actively participated in the Independence struggle but were not imprisoned would now get Rs 15,000 a month, instead of Rs 9,000 monthly, he said.

Majhi said those who were arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during the Emergency will now be eligible for a monthly pension of Rs 20,000.

Several people were arrested during the Emergency while fighting for re-establishment of democracy, the CM said.

"This was also called the second struggle for Independence and the pension amount is a step to honour their efforts," he added.



**GREETING CM:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi being presented a portrait at the 38th Freedom Fighters' Day celebration in Unit-IX area of Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

## Arindam Daku removed as CM PS

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** In a bureaucratic reshuffle, the state government Thursday appointed Arindam Daku, Private Secretary (PS) to the Chief Minister (CM), as the Director of Municipal Administration and ex-officio Additional Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department.

Daku was appointed as PS to the CM in July last year.

According to a GA&PG department notification, NBS Rajput, Principal Secretary to Governor, has been given additional charge of Principal Secretary of Public Enterprises department.

Temjenwawang Ao, Commissioner-cum-Secretary of Public Enterprises department, was appointed Special Secretary of Planning and Convergence department.

IPICOL Managing Director Bhupendra Singh Poonia, with additional charge of Special Secretary of Industries department and Managing Director of IDCO, has been given additional charge of Commissioner-cum-Secretary of Skill Development and Technical Education department.

Agriculture and Food Production Director Prem Chandra Chaudhary has been appointed Director of Textiles and Handlooms. He also holds additional charge as Managing Director of Odisha Agro Industries Corporation Limited, it added.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Trump wants smart immigrants. Who's smarter than us? We made it here without a visa!

## Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission in Odisha soon: Min

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The state government is set to roll out the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) soon, Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling said here Thursday.

The state administration would also create Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs for people so that a person's medical records can be accessed from anywhere in the country from one account, Mahaling said.

Speaking to media, he said, "We're raising awareness among people to create ABHA IDs under the National Health Authority (NHA) at common service centres."

With ABHA, citizens can store their medical and health records in a centralised account and access them through their unique ID. "This initiative is going to be a major achievement for the health sector under the Digital India programme," the minister said. On implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Odisha, the minister said the process has started to issue new health cards to beneficiaries.

About 3.5 crore members of one crore families of Odisha will be covered under the Ayushman Bharat and state-sponsored Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY), he said.

## Nitrate hazard in 15 dists

High nitrate and fluoride levels have been detected in groundwater of 15 and 10 districts of Odisha. The revelation was made in the Annual Groundwater Quality Report 2024 by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) after it carried out a nationwide survey on groundwater quality. While nitrate concentration exceeding 45mg/l can cause health issues like blue baby syndrome in infants besides its serious implications on ecology, long-term exposure to fluoride more than 1.5 mg/l can result in fluorosis, such as dental and skeletal fluorosis

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** In what raises significant health concerns among the people, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has found high nitrate levels in groundwater of 15 districts of the state.

The 'Annual Groundwater Quality Report 2024' released by the CGWB also found excessive fluoride content in the groundwater of 10 districts.

High nitrate levels (above



45mg/l) have been found in the groundwater in Angul, Bolangir, Bargarh, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Khurda, Koraput, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Nuapada, Puri, Sambalpur, Subarnapur and Sundargarh districts, the report said.

Nitrate contamination is a significant environmental and health concern, particularly in agricultural regions using nitrogen-based fertilizers and

animal waste. High nitrate levels can cause health issues like blue baby syndrome in infants and are unsafe for drinking.

"High nitrate levels in groundwater can be a result of excessive irrigation which can push nitrates from fertilizers deep into the soil," the report said, adding that poor management of animal waste in livestock farming adds to the problem as it releases nitrates

into the soil. Urbanisation and population growth increase wastewater and sewage which often contain high nitrate levels, while leaking septic systems and poor sewage disposal worsen contamination.

The report said high fluoride concentrations (more than 1.5 mg/l) were found in the groundwater of Angul, Bolangir, Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Nayagarh, Nuapada, Puri, Sambalpur, Subarnapur and Sundargarh districts.

"High fluoride contents in groundwater used for consumption are harmful to human health. Long-term intake of groundwater with excessive fluoride concentrations often leads to waterborne fluorosis, such as dental and skeletal fluorosis," it said.

A total of 15,259 monitoring locations were chosen nationwide to check groundwater quality in May 2023. High nitrate levels were found in groundwater of 440 districts across India, with 20 per cent of the samples collected exceeding the permissible nitrate concentration, the report said.

## Manu, Gukesh among 4 Khel Ratna awardees

RECORD 17 PARA-ATHLETES TO RECEIVE ARJUNA

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker and world chess champion D Gukesh were among the four who will be honoured with the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award, the Sports Ministry announced, Thursday. It also named an unprecedented 17 para-athletes in the list of 32 Arjuna awardees to honour their resounding success at the Paris Paralympics.

The other two who will get the Khel Ratna honour were men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and para-athlete Praveen Kumar.

The awards will be conferred on the athletes by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan January 17.

Bhaker, 22, became independent India's first athlete to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics with her bronze-winning show in the 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team events in Au-

gust. In the same Paris Games, Hamranpreet led the Indian hockey team to its second consecutive bronze medal.

Gukesh, on the other hand, became the youngest-ever world champion while also helping the Indian team win a historic gold in the Chess Olympiad last year.

The fourth recipient, para high-jumper Praveen, was crowned the T64 champion in the Paris Paralympics.

The athletes selected for this year's Arjuna award include Paris Olympics bronze medal-winning lot of wrestler Aman Sehrawat, shooters Swapnil Kusale and Sarabjot Singh and the men's hockey team players Jarmanpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Sanjay and Abhishek.

The Khel Ratna awardees receive a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh along with a citation and a medallion. The Arjuna awardees are given Rs 15 lakh as cash reward, a statuette of Arjuna and a citation. P12

## New Orleans attacker inspired by IS group

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**New Orleans (US), Jan 2:** A US Army veteran who drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year revellers in New Orleans, killing 15 people, had posted videos to social media hours before the carnage saying he was inspired by the Islamic State (IS) group and expressing a desire to kill.

The FBI said it was investigating early Wednesday's attack in which the driver steered around a police blockade and slammed into revellers before being shot dead by police as a terrorist act and did not believe he acted alone.

Investigators found guns and what appeared to be an improvised explosive device in the vehicle — which bore the flag of the IS group — along with other explosive devices elsewhere in

the city's famed French Quarter. President Joe Biden said Wednesday evening that the FBI found the videos the driver posted to social media. He called the attack a 'despicable' and 'heinous act'.

The rampage turned festive Bourbon Street into a macabre scene of maimed victims, bloodied bodies and pedestrians fleeing for safety inside nightclubs and restaurants. In addition to the dead, dozens of people were hurt. Zion Parsons, 18, of Gulfport, Mississippi, said he saw the truck barreling through, throwing people like in a movie scene, throwing people into the air.

"Bodies, bodies all up and down the street, everybody screaming and hollering," said Parsons, whose friend Nikyra Dedeaux was among the people killed. "This is not just an act of



terrorism. This is evil," New Orleans Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick said. The attack is the latest example of a vehicle being used as a weapon to carry out mass violence and the deadliest IS-inspired assault on US soil in years.

The driver 'defeated' safety measures in place to protect pedestrians, Kirkpatrick said, and was hell-bent on creating the carnage and the damage that he did.

The FBI identified the driver as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, 42, a US citizen from Texas, and said

## Driver acted alone: FBI

The FBI now says that the pickup truck driver responsible for a deadly rampage in New Orleans acted alone. Officials said Wednesday that they were seeking additional potential suspects in an attack being investigated as an act of terrorism. But Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, said Thursday that the evidence now shows that Shamsud-Din Jabbar was solely responsible for the attack and professed allegiance to the Islamic State. New Orleans pressed ahead with plans to reopen the city's famed Bourbon Street Thursday as investigators kept digging into the background of the US Army veteran who drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year revellers, killing 15 people.



## Montenegro: Gunman kills 12, shoots self

AGENCIES

**Cetinje (Montenegro), Jan 2:** Shock and dismay prevailed in Montenegro Thursday after a gunman fatally shot 12 people, including two children, in a western town before killing himself.

At least four others were wounded in the shooting rampage in Cetinje Wednesday that followed a bar brawl, officials said. This was the second such incident in the town in the past three years.

The shooter, identified as 45-year-old Aco Martinovic, killed the owner of the bar, the bar owner's children and his own family members, officials have said.

The attacker, who first fled after the rampage, was later located and surrounded by police. He died after shooting himself in the head, Interior Minister Danilo Saranovic said.

# leisure



## HIDDEN LOVE STAR ZHAO LUSI REVEALS FIGHTING DEPRESSION

Chinese actor Zhao Lusi, best known for her globally popular romance series *Hidden Love*, has opened up about battling depression as well as facing mental and physical abuse in a social media post following her recent hospitalisation.

## MILLIE BOBBY BROWN SHUTS DOWN AGE-SHAMING TROLLS

Millie Bobby Brown addresses criticism on Instagram after posting a mirror selfie in a floral dress, facing comments about her looking older than her age. In response, Brown, who turns 21 next month, remarked, "Women grow!! Not sorry about it."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Nourishing high ambitions is a good thing if they can drive you to achieve your potential. You make plans and execute them with utmost care. You may focus all your attention on attracting a member of the other sex.

**TAURUS**  
A trip to the mall with your beloved may end with a trunk loaded with shopping bags, suggests Ganesha. Purchase is on the cards and a home or a vehicle may be on your list. Financial gains and family joys will make this day one to remember. The day will end with a feeling of gratitude and satisfaction.

**GEMINI**  
Your mind will be seized with tension on some account. You will be nervous and uneasy as a result. A grave illness may strike some member of your family. However, things should ease out during the later part of the day, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Today you may behave quite aggressively for most part of the day, predicts Ganesha. You may spend the afternoon with your business associates, and if you can use your aggression in a controlled manner, you can secure a very important deal today. In the evening, you will be on cloud nine, with your partner blowing you away with his/her love.

**LEO**  
You will complete your tasks courageously today. You will have the patience to wait for the fruits of your labour to fall into your lap, so as to say. You will redo those tasks that you are unable to complete to your expectations. Owing to this attitude of yours, you do not need to worry about a thing, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Opening up to your beloved about your whims and fancies, as well as your goals, is the key today. Energy levels will hit the sky today. Pay due reverence to higher education and social customs. People will look up to your epicurean tastes, especially in the performing kinds.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that you will gain popularity and prestige with certain people today. Today you may be in a situation where you are amongst strangers in a strange situation but you will be able to handle it perfectly well without getting scared or tensed.

**SCORPIO**  
Today is one of those days when you will go through tremendous highs and lows, predicts Ganesha. There are chances of heated arguments with your peers, so keep a check on your tongue. However, evening will be cheerful as you sit back and relax with your group of friends, go for dinner or watch a movie.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
A day full of highs and lows, predicts Ganesha. Heaps of work is likely to keep you on toes today. You experience a stressful day at work. In the evening, you may spend quality time with your beloved and treasure small joys of life.

**CAPRICORN**  
Whether or not your business will prosper will depend on how decisive you are, says Ganesha. Besides, it's time to test the potential of subordinates you have appointed, and see if they can deliver their best. And if they meet your standards, you can expect quick returns by the end of the day.

**AQUARIUS**  
You may not want to, but you have to pay the bills! Okay, so you can't even remember what you bought, and are cursing the loony credit cards. However, this may persuade you to be a bit more organised. There is no harm in taking ideas from others, suggests Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You will find yourself experiencing problems with taking critical decisions urgently. You will need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of every alternative, before you pronounce your verdict. This is a better practice than to take decisions on a whim, even if slow. You will also plan on making some changes to your personal life.



## Armaan ties knot with Aashna

**Mumbai:** Singer Armaan Malik is finally married to his longtime girlfriend and influencer, Aashna Shroff.

The couple took to Instagram to share the joyful news, posting dreamy wedding photos accompanied by a heartfelt caption. Armaan and Aashna got engaged in August 2023. Thursday, Armaan and Aashna shared photos from their nuptials on their respective Instagram handles, writing in the caption, "tu hi mera Ghar."

In the photos, the couple radiates pure happiness, dressed in stunning traditional wedding attire in shades of orange. Aashna looks beautiful as a bride in an orange lehenga, while Armaan opts for a pastel-shaded sherwani.

The wedding appeared to be an intimate outdoor affair, attended by close family and friends. Soon after the couple announced their wedding, the comments section was flooded with congratulatory messages. Pranutan shared a series of red heart emojis, while Sophie Choudry wrote, "Oh my goodness! Congratulations, you guys." Aahana Kumra simply wrote, "Congratulations." Varun Dhawan also liked the post.

Armaan and Aashna announced their engagement on social media in August 2023. The singer posted a series of romantic pictures. In one of the photos, he was seen on one knee with a ring in his hand. In the other pictures, the couple posed adorably together. Armaan captioned the post, "And our forever has only just begun."

## Rakul's twin treasures

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Rakul Preet Singh has recently revealed what she considers to be the two greatest assets of her life — health and time.

In her latest social media post, the actress emphasized the importance of prioritizing physical and mental well-being, as well as the value of time in both personal and professional life.

Thursday, Rakul took to her Instagram handle to share a positive note that read, "Your two greatest assets in life: Health and time. Invest in your health. It will buy you more time." Along with the image, she wrote in the caption, "Kuch gyaan ki baat ho jaye," which roughly translates to "Let me share some wisdom."

In addition to her motivational post, Rakul also shared an exciting announcement about her upcoming film, *Mere Husband Ki Biwi*, which also stars Arjun Kapoor and Bhumi Pednekar.

Directed by Mudassar Aziz, the film is slated to hit theatres in February. Sharing the post, the *Thank God* actress wrote, "Yahaan pyaar ki geometry thodi twisted hai—kyunki ye love triangle nahi, pura circle hai! #MereHusbandKiBiwi In Cinemas 21st February, 2025 @arjunkapoor @rakulpreet @bhumpednekar #MudassarAziz @vashubhagnani @jackkybhagnani @deepshikhadeshmukh @pvrpictures @jjustmusicofficial."



## PeeCee bats for movie theatres

**Mumbai:** Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas has consistently expressed her passion for cinema and the diverse platforms it encompasses. In a recent interview, the *Bajirao Mastani* actress shared her thoughts on the ongoing debate between OTT platforms and traditional movie theatres.

Priyanka firmly believes that while OTT has certainly transformed the entertainment industry, the experience of watching a film in a theatre remains unparalleled. "I think it will always be special. There's nothing quite like entering a darkened theatre and watching a movie, not just with friends and family, but by a room full of strangers, all connected by the viewing experience. The big screen's scale, sound, and immersive atmosphere add to make it a special experience. I don't think the magic of movie theatres will ever fade," she affirmed.

In addition, the 42-year-old actress revealed her plans to make a return to Indian cinema, exciting her fans. Although specific details are still under wraps, sources within the industry suggest that this upcoming project could redefine cinematic storytelling. Fans are eagerly awaiting official confirmation, with hopes of seeing Priyanka join forces with director S.S. Rajamouli this year.

Currently, Priyanka is preparing for the next season of the highly-anticipated international series *Citadel*. Her performance in the first season garnered widespread critical acclaim and the second season promises to escalate the stakes. Priyanka's involvement in the show is expected to add further depth and intrigue to the storyline.



## Krystle starts NY with self-love

**Mumbai:**Television actress Krystle D'Souza has welcomed the New Year with a serene beachside photoshoot and a reflective post.

Sharing her stunning photos on social media, the actress appeared calm and content, soaking in the beauty of nature as she bid farewell to 2024 and embraced the new year. In her heartfelt caption,

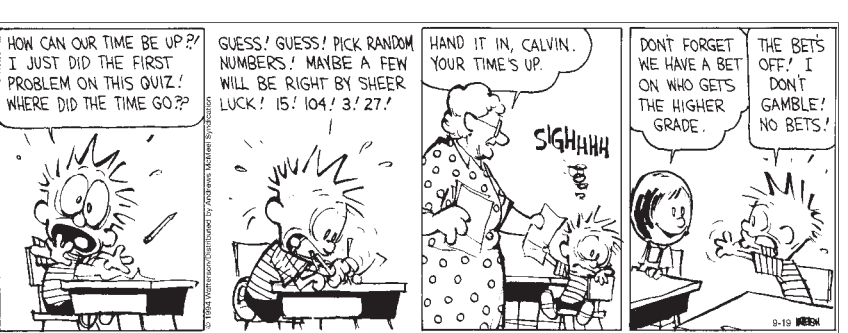
the *Ek Hazaaron Mein Meri Behna Hai* actress wrote, "New year, same old me, just with some new experiences, lessons, and a lot of self-love. 2024, you were beautiful in your own chaotic way, you've left with learnings, realizations, and a lot of amazing memories. Dear 2025, waiting to see what you have in store."

In the images, Krystle is seen striking different poses in a stylish outfit that she paired with sunglasses. She also dropped photos and videos from her gateway on her Instagram stories.

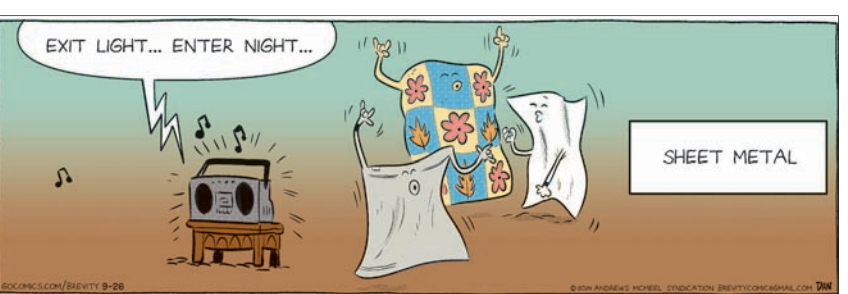
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

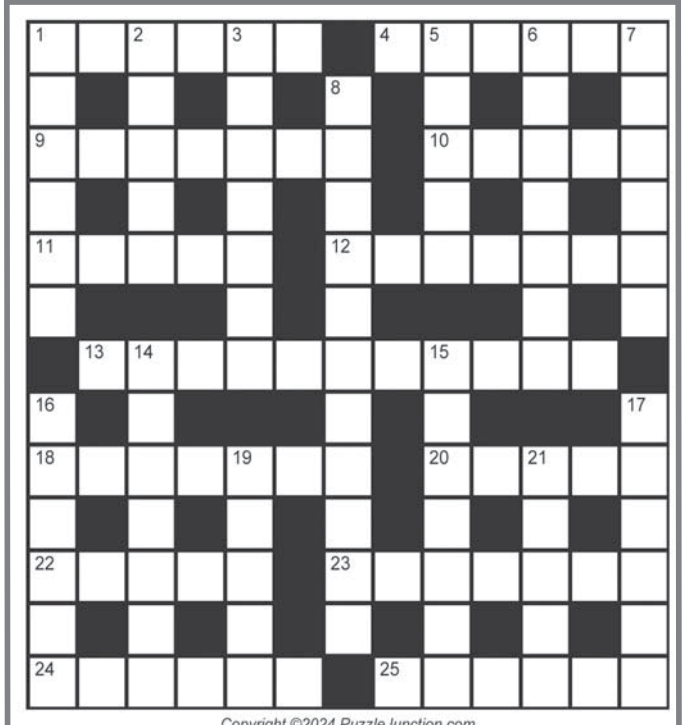


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

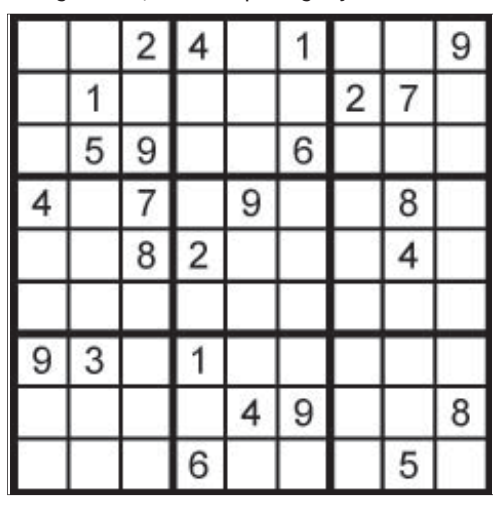
### CROSSWORD



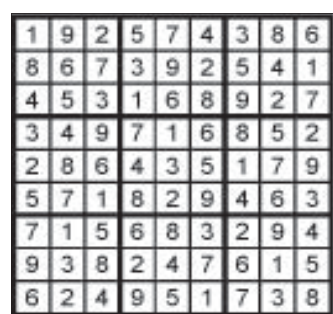
- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Gad about
  - 4 Thinly spread
  - 9 Doctor's clue
  - 10 Guinness product
  - 11 Garlicky mayonnaise
  - 12 Kind of band
  - 13 UN workers
  - 18 Triumph
  - 20 Knock over
  - 22 Defeats mightily
  - 23 Genghis Khan, e.g.
  - 24 Concedes
  - 25 Greek capital
- Down**
- 1 Mischievous one
  - 2 Latin dance
  - 3 Riga native
  - 5 Cannelloni, e.g.
  - 6 Nature's alarm clock
  - 7 Inveigle
  - 8 Overstates
  - 14 Hermit
  - 15 Brass instrument
  - 16 Sea eagle
  - 17 Baby birds?
  - 19 Relaxed
  - 21 Tennis starter

### 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.

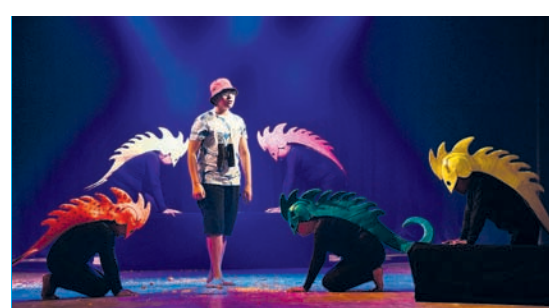


### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Artistes from Dhenkanal Alternative Rhythm Theatre stage drama 'GIRGIT' during a cultural programme organised by Natyadhara at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar Thursday



# downtown

## Tiger relocation plan deferred

The plan to relocate three Royal Bengal Tigers from Madhya Pradesh was put off owing to erratic behaviour of tigress Zeenat which crossed the STR boundary and wandered into the forests of Jharkhand and West Bengal



Officials said Odisha is focused on providing a well-managed and sustainable environment for the RBTs and is taking measures to increase the big cat population in the state while involving local communities in conservation efforts.

Two days ago, state's principal chief conservator of forests (Wildlife) PK Jha mentioned that the Forest department would reassess the situation before deciding whether to proceed with the relocation of the tigers from MP.

Odisha forest officials had visited MP's Bandhavgarh National Park in October after the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) gave in-principle approval to bring three more RBTs.

An official said this is not the first time Odisha has faced setbacks in tiger relocation. In 2018, two tigers (one male and one female) were released into Satkosia Tiger Reserve after being brought from Madhya Pradesh. However, tigress "Sundari" was poached, while the male tiger "Mahavir" fell ill and was sent back to Bandhavgarh National Park.

According to the All Odisha Tiger Estimation 2023-24, conducted by the state government, there are currently 30 tigers and eight cubs, with 27 tigers found in STR.

haya Pradesh will be released in Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary. However, the state is closely monitoring the acclimatisation of the two tigresses, Zeenat and Jamuna. Once they adapt to the new climate of STR, the state will proceed with the next steps."

Sources said the relocation of the three RBTs from MP, initially planned for December, was delayed after three-year-old tigress Zeenat crossed the STR boundary and wandered into the forests of Jharkhand before entering West Bengal.

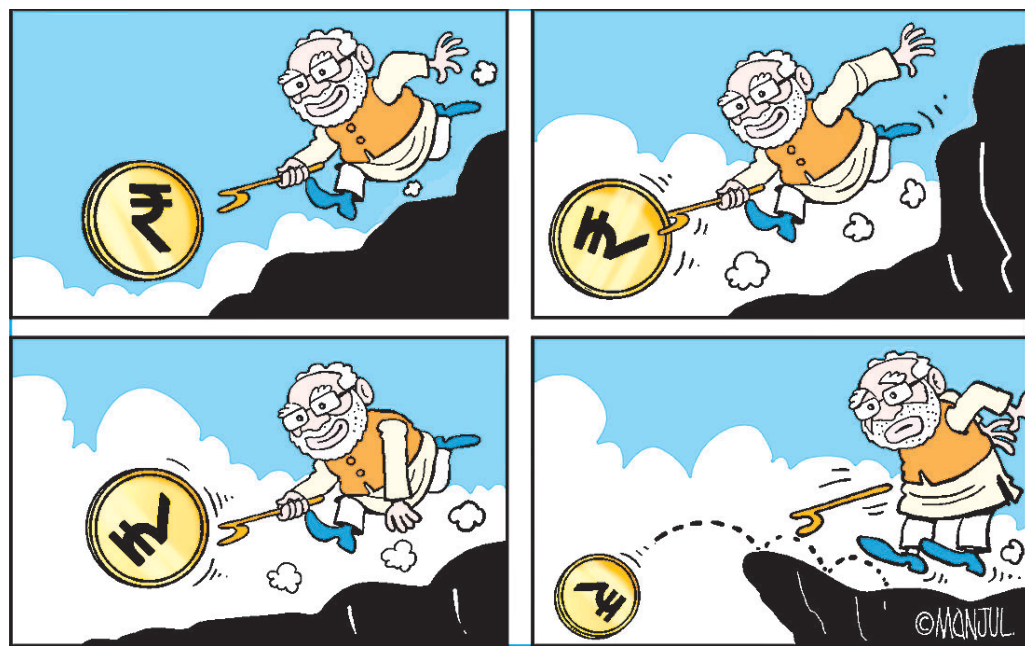
After 23 days, she was captured, tranquillised, and brought back to STR, suggesting that she had not yet adjusted to the STR environment, a

senior forest official said. Zeenat is currently kept in a soft enclosure in Jenabil range of STR's southern division.

Similarly, tigress Jamuna (two-and-a-half years old), released into STR in October, displayed similar behaviour. She crossed the national park boundary and entered Kuldha Sanctuary in Balasore district, but later returned to STR without much difficulty.

Both Jamuna and Zeenat were translocated to Similipal from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra to improve the gene pool and were released into the core area in October and November, respectively.

### POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Naveen writes to Majhi for quick crop loss aid

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik wrote to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday, urging him to take immediate steps to compensate farmers who have been hit hard by unseasonal rains.

Patnaik undertook an extensive tour of rain-affected Ganjam, Puri, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara districts December 30 and 31.

"The farmers have suffered huge losses due to unseasonal rains and they are in severe distress. The rains have caused extensive damage to both paddy and non-paddy crops during the harvesting period," he said.

"They were not aware about the intensity of rains as the government advisory was not issued on time. Patnaik said it was "disturbing" and "unfortunate" that several farmers died in the last 10 days.

"During my visit to Jagattinghpur district, I had gone to the house of a young farmer, Krutibas Swain of Balikuda



### BJP leadership upsetting BJD: Majhi

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday launched a veiled attack on Patnaik and said, "The leaders who were once living in ivory towers are now forced to visit muddy and dusty villages because of the BJP's style of functioning. Seeing our party leaders and ministers' style of working, they are now getting upset." Majhi alleged that those who had ruled the state for a long period were distant from the people. "I want to tell them, who were once confining themselves in ivory towers, that they don't need to get upset seeing our style of working," he added.

block who allegedly committed suicide December 30 due to crop loss. It is indeed deeply shocking," he said.

"The farmers of Odisha and their families have faced a huge calamity. Their confi-

dence is shattered. In the present circumstances, I would like to demand that the government must work hard and provide timely and adequate compensation so as to boost the confidence of farmers," he said.

## Kambhampati to take oath as Guv today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Governor-designate Hari Babu Kambhampati, who arrived in the City by a special flight Thursday afternoon, will take oath as the Governor Friday.

On his arrival at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), Kambhampati was received by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravati Parida, Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and Director Gen-



eral of Police (DGP) YB Khurania, among others.

From the airport, Kambhampati went to the Raj Bhavan where he received a guard of honour.

"Landed in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, where I was warmly received by the Hon'ble Chief Minister and officials. A Guard of Honour was presented before proceeding to Puri for the sacred darshan of Lord Jagannath," he posted on X.

Kambhampati went to Puri where he went for a darshan of the sibling deities at Srimandir in the evening.

He was scheduled to spend the night at Puri Raj Bhavan and return to Bhubaneswar Friday to take oath as the new Governor of Odisha.

He will be administered the

oath by Orissa High Court Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh at 10:15am.

Kambhampati was appointed as the Governor of Odisha December 24 after Raghubar Das resigned from the post.

Das, the former BJP CM of Jharkhand, resigned after staying in office for barely 14 months amid public outcry over his son allegedly assaulting an on-duty government officer.

Kambhampati, a teacher-turned-politician, was the Governor of Mizoram in his last assignment.

## Fake cement unit busted; 2 arrested

**Bhubaneswar:** Badagada police Thursday busted a duplicate cement manufacturing unit near Tankapani Road in Old Town area and arrested two persons in that connection. 140 bags of fake cement have been confiscated, officials said. Badagada IIC Trupti Ranjan Nayak said acting on a tip-off about the operation of the fake cement factory, a police team made a snoop at 'Stutee Enterprises' Thursday. They rounded up accused Durga Charan Sasmal, 53, and Sanjay Routray, 52, who were running the factory for the past few months. During questioning, the duo failed to give any satisfactory answer about the making of cement. Preliminary investigations revealed that Nayak said Sasmal sourced used concrete sand and hardened cement from several shops near Jeypore in Koraput. Later, they engaged manual labour to crush them into fine particles and repackage them under various cement brands.

## Body found near tracks; family cries murder



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Family members of a 23-year-old man whose mutilated body was found lying beside the railway tracks near Poonama Gate level crossing here Thursday alleged that he had been murdered, and the body had been dumped near the tracks to make it look like an accident.

The allegations reportedly stemmed from the multiple injuries on the deceased's abdomen

and back when the family members found the body.

Government Railway Police (GRP) IIC Ashok Kumar Gocchayat said the deceased has been identified as Swaraj Kumar Behera who lived with his parents in Kunjapatna Sahi area under the jurisdiction of Lingaraj police station.

Swaraj's family members claimed that he had been done to death by some of his rivals over

past enmity. They alleged that Swaraj had a running feud with the miscreants since past few days. "On Wednesday night he (Swaraj) left home around 11 pm for the New Year's eve celebrations. Few hours later, when his parents tried to contact him over phone, the calls went unanswered. They grew anxious and made frantic calls to his friends to know his whereabouts", Gocchayat added.

He said GRP was alerted about the body by locals in the wee hours of Thursday. The police later sent it to the Capital Hospital for autopsy.

However, later in the day, irate locals, including Swaraj's family members, staged a protest near Gosagareswar Square in Old Town area, demanding a fair police probe, and immediate arrest of the murderers. Personnel from the Lingaraj police station intervened and normalised traffic on Ratha Road by pacifying the agitators.

## No Odisha tableau at R-Day Parade this yr

State's tableau was adjudged the best among states at the national-level Republic Day Parade last year

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** After bagging first prize at the 75th Republic Day Parade last year, the Odisha tableau will not feature during this year's Republic Day Parade in New Delhi January 26.

Official sources said that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) rejected the state's tableau proposal for the January 26 parade at Kartavya Path after five rounds of the selection process.

Instead, it will be showcased at 'Bharat Parv', which is part of the Republic Day celebrations, being organised from January 26 to 31 near the Red Fort.

Tableaux of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana,



Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Union Territories of Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu and Chandigarh will

participate in the Republic Day parade, sources added.

A total of 34 states and Union Territories had sent their proposals to the expert committee, comprising eminent persons in

the field of art, culture, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, choreography, constituted under the MoD for consideration. Mizoram and Sikkim had expressed their inability to participate this time, while officials of Andaman and Nicobar Islands along with Lakshadweep did not turn up for the expert committee meeting.

Notably, Odisha tableau was adjudged the best among states at the national level Republic Day Parade last year for highlighting women's involvement in the handicraft and handloom sector, empowering themselves.

Odisha tableau had rolled on R-Day Parade last year after a gap of three years.

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# Capital gears up to host Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

[City is set to welcome thousands of overseas Indians with warmth and tradition starting January 8]



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mashapatra Thursday visited various places in the Capital to inspect the preparations for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to be held here from January 8. The minister conducted a comprehensive inspection from Airport Chowk to Nandankanan and Janata Maidan. Mahapatra closely reviewed the City's sanitation, road conditions, and beautification efforts, emphasising that no detail is too small. During the field visit, he directed engineers to immediately address any potholes, uneven surfaces, or unkempt areas and ensure the City maintains its aesthetic appeal. He also instructed that trees and fences be painted to enhance the City's visual charm. Mahapatra has urged corporate entities, businesses, and residents to actively participate in the cleanliness drive by maintaining their premises.

This collaborative effort is intended to reflect the City's hospitality and community spirit. Teams from the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), and other departments are working round the clock to ensure the city is ready to host this prestigious event. Speaking to media persons, the minister said, "Our goal is to create an unforgettable experience for our overseas guests. Bhubaneswar is not only a city of heritage and culture but also one of warmth and hospitality. I urge all stakeholders to contribute to presenting our City in its best light." "Bhubaneswar is set to welcome the world with open arms, celebrating the spirit of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and the rich cultural heritage of Odisha," he said. With more than 7,500 guests, the majority of them overseas Indians expected to attend, the Odisha government is working tirelessly to ensure a seamless and memorable experience

for all participants, an official said. Traditional Odisha wall paintings now adorn the streets, while roadsides and public areas have been meticulously cleaned and beautified. Both sides of the major roads in the capital city have been decked up with colourful lights. Iron barricades have been put up on both sides of the roads leading to Janata Maidan, the venue where the mega event will be held. Bhubaneswar is organising the flagship event for the first time for its 2025 edition. The City civic authority along with key departments of the state government has planned several events coinciding with the conclave such as Night Flea market, Adivasi fair and a food festival. To provide a unique cultural experience, the City will host a food festival and tribal fair at the exhibition grounds, offering guests a taste of traditional Odia cuisine. Additionally, special arrangements have been made to transport NRIs to Puri in newly introduced double-decker buses for a spiritual visit to the Srimandir, where they will enjoy Jagannath 'darshan' and partake in the temple's sacred offerings, the officials said. As per schedule, the convention will kick off with the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas January 8. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on the second day. The convention will culminate with the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards ceremony on the third day, which will be graced by President Droupadi Murmu.



**FINISHING TOUCH:** A tribal woman paints her house, Thursday, ahead of annual Adivasi Mela to be organised at Unit-III IDCO Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar from January 5 to 16

PIC- BIKASH NAYAK

## Adivasi Mela to kick off in City Jan 5

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department is all set to host the annual Adivasi Mela from January 5 to 16 at Unit-III IDCO Exhibition Ground. This year's event coincides with the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, which is being hosted for the first time in the state. The state-level fair will transform a part of the City into the illusion of a tribal village this year. The main attractions of this year's event include a tribal village, a tribal haat, art and craft stalls, tribal food courts, live demonstrations, and the



Bhagwan Birsa Munda Pavilion. A total of 20 tribal huts and 147 stalls for selling of tribal goods are being constructed at

the venue. In addition, 40 stalls are being prepared to feature art and craft, and 15 stalls will facilitate live demonstrations of different items.

The Bhagwan Birsa Munda Pavilion will feature five galleries dedicated to themes such as the life and journey of Birsa Munda, galleries of national and state freedom fighters, a mini theatre, and painting exhibition and photo exhibitions. Tribal dance and music performances will take place every evening, accompanied by a laser show based on the life and journey of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Highlights of the event also include, a drone show depicting the different tribes, light and sound show focused on lesser known tribal freedom fighters of the state, fashion show, and fireworks display.

## Govt ramps up paddy procurement efforts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** Procurement process of paddy in the state has been intensified for the current kharif season. At present, paddy procurement is going on in 1591 mandis from 18 districts including Bargarh, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Balasore, Boudh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Keunjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Subarnapur and Sundargarh districts. Extensive preparations are underway for procurement in other districts soon. Prior advance information and tokens are being issued to registered farmers for the procurement process. Similarly, in each mandi, a nodal officer is appointed to monitor the procurement process. A strict vigil is being kept on paddy carts from outside the state and traders reserves paddy more than required at the time of procurement.



**ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE:** A hydraulic crane deployed by BDA removing an illegal shop near Vahi Vihar Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## Krushsi Odisha 2025 to begin today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 2:** The Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment department will host the three-day 'Krushsi Odisha 2025' event from January 3 to 5 at Biju Patnaik Playground, an official said Thursday. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will inaugurate the event, with Deputy Chief Minister and Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, along with other dignitaries, in attendance. The theme of Krushsi Odisha 2025 is "A Step towards Sustainable Food System," focusing on three sub-themes: Climate Smart Agriculture, Organic Farming, and Water Governance. The first day will address Climate Resilient Food Systems and Climate Smart Horticulture, the second day will focus on Soil Health, Natural Farming, and its value chain,



while the third day will center on Pani Panchayat Pakhya Palan and Sustainable Water Governance. The event aims to promote a sustainable food system in Odisha by improving local economies, environmental health, and food security. It will highlight investment opportunities in agriculture, horticulture, food processing, and fisheries. Around 10,000 participants, including farmers,

SHGs, FPOs, NGOs, agri-entrepreneurs, students, and researchers are expected to attend. The event will feature 13 technical sessions in coordination with state and Central government departments, ICAR, CGIAR institutes, and NGOs. There will also be over 200 stalls showcasing advanced agricultural technologies and farm produce. To make the event more engaging, activities such as quizzes, debates, storytelling, skit competitions, a virtual experience zone, and a Farmer Facilitation Centre will be organised. The event will also recognise progressive farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, and SHGs/FPOs for their contributions to successful farming.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.7°	24.8°
Min Temp	13.2°	13.0°
Humidity	71%	80%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST		
Fog /mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later		

# Former Norwegian min lauds Cuttack station makeover

AGENCIES

**Cuttack, Jan 2:** Former minister of Climate and Environment of Norway Erik Solheim Thursday praised the transformation of Indian Railways, saying, "Indian rail is improving day by day." Solheim posted a video of Cuttack railway station on his social media handle and said, "This is not an airport; this is a railway station opened in Cuttack, Odisha." Previously, Erik Solheim has praised India several times under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Notably, the Central government has kept it focus on

modernising the Railways. As of December 2, 2024, 136 Vande Bharat trains with chair car coaches were operating across the country. The introduction of 136 Vande Bharat trains, a hallmark of Make in India, showcases nation's capability to deliver world-class, indigenously manufactured rail technology. The Kavach system, designed to enhance train safety, has already been deployed on 1,548 route kilometers (Rkm) on South-Central Railway and North Central Railway. At present, about 97 per cent of the total broad gauge network of the Indian Railways has been electrified.



Earlier, in an exclusive interview with IANS, Solheim said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clean energy policies are creating some wonderful opportunities, which will not only help India achieve its Net

## New rly line to boost connectivity in Odisha

**Bhubaneswar:** A new 138.32km railway line connecting Bargarh Road to Nuapara Road is set to enhance connectivity, promote regional development, and generate employment. Sanctioned by the Railway Board September 10, 2024, with a total cost of ₹2,621.92 crore, the project has received full support from the state government, including land allocation and a grant of ₹300 crore. The project will require the acquisition of 924.64 hectares of land, including private, government, and forest land. The electrified broad gauge line, passing through Padmapur, will bypass the congested Jharsuguda-Bilasapur-Raipur route, reducing travel distances by 53km compared to Sambalpur-Jharsuguda-Raipur and 87km compared to Sambalpur-Titlagarh-Raipur. With 13 stations planned, including 11 new ones, the project will improve regional accessibility, foster economic growth, and streamline both passenger and freight transport.

Zero goal but also pull millions more out of poverty. He also said, "PM Modi is now working on making renewable energy mainstream, which would create several economic opportunities in

years to come." "I'm very optimistic when it comes to governments and industries talking about the green economy. For PM Modi, the green economy is another way to move more people out of poverty, help the middle class create more wealth and let the country shine on the global arena by tapping into the potential of solar, wind, hydropower and all other green assets," the veteran diplomat emphasised.

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

**THE MOTHER**



# Climate & Inflation

Global inflation in recent years has pushed the prices of food, energy, and basic goods to unprecedented levels. As a result, the rising cost of living has dominated political discussion around the world, but especially in G20 countries. Ahead of last year's presidential election in the United States, for example, 41 per cent of Americans cited inflation as their top economic issue.

High inflation risks overshadowing another urgent crisis: global warming. But rising prices and climate change are closely linked. Extreme weather damages crops, spoils harvests, and drives up food prices, and its impact is growing more pronounced as heatwaves, droughts, and floods become more frequent and intense. These events also disrupt supply chains and energy production, pushing up the price of other essential goods.

Climate-induced inflationary pressures are especially acute in Africa and Latin America, where food accounts for a significant share of household spending. For example, an extensive drought exacerbated by El Niño raised the price of staples in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe earlier this year, creating a hunger crisis. By contrast, households in wealthier countries tend to spend a smaller share of their income on food and are thus better insulated.

Discussions about climate change often overlook its economic toll on vulnerable populations and how it deepens inequality, focusing instead on green growth and emissions reductions. But as inflation increasingly disrupts economic stability, this toll can no longer be ignored. Shifting weather patterns have raised the prices of oranges in Brazil, cocoa in West Africa, and coffee in Vietnam. A recent study by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the European Central Bank estimates that rising temperatures could drive up food inflation by 3.2 percentage points per year, with overall inflation increasing by 1.18 percentage points annually by 2035.

Rather than being treated solely as an environmental issue, climate change must be central to economic policy. Fiscal and monetary authorities should incorporate both immediate and long-term climate-related risks into their inflation forecasts and policies—as they already do with the “transition risks” of shifting to a low-carbon economy. Some institutions have begun to adapt. The South African Reserve Bank has acknowledged the importance of understanding climate risks. Since 2018, the Central Bank of Costa Rica has integrated the impact of global warming into its economic models.

Central banks and finance ministries should also work with climate organizations to create practical solutions that help cushion economies from the interrelated shocks of extreme weather, soaring inflation, and food insecurity. For example, the African Climate Foundation (where one of us works) has developed Adaptation and Resilience Investment Platforms (ARIPs), which use advanced analytics that combine climate and weather data, biophysical models, and economy-wide models to facilitate investment and policy prioritisation—a more comprehensive approach to building resilience.

The ACF used an ARIP in Malawi last year, after the country was devastated by Cyclone Freddy, the longest-lasting tropical cyclone ever recorded. Using this financial tool enabled policymakers to identify lasting solutions that would mitigate the economic damage caused by the cyclone while protecting key industries and strengthening financial stability.

Other climate think tanks are pursuing similar goals. Iniciativa Climática de México is pushing policymakers to consider climate risks in economic planning, while the Institute for Climate and Society in Brazil has called for social-protection plans and climate-sensitive policies to shield low-income communities from the economic consequences of extreme weather.

Equally important is regional collaboration, which would allow countries in Africa and Latin America to develop and share economic policies that are specifically tailored to their climate vulnerabilities and support the most exposed communities. Initiatives like the Inter-American Development Bank's Regional Climate Change Platform of Economy and Finance Ministries can serve as a blueprint for such efforts.

At the global level, greater coordination between climate and economic institutions is crucial. Tools like the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism highlight the need for careful policy design to mitigate adverse effects—in this case, higher costs for consumers in developing countries. Brazil, as the host of this year's BRICS Summit and United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), and South Africa, as the current G20 president, have a unique opportunity to redefine the global economic agenda, championing policies that address the twin crises of inflation and global warming.

Failure to act collectively and decisively could deepen inequality, erode economic stability, and jeopardise climate goals. But if policymakers develop innovative solutions that bridge the gap between climate and economic strategies, they can reduce the immediate risks of extreme weather and foster long-term stability and resilience. As both inflation and the planet heat up, the need for integrated, equitable policies has never been more urgent.

*Mónica Araya is Director of the Governing Board of the Natural Resource Governance Institute. Salim Fakir is Founder and Executive Director of the African Climate Foundation.*

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Mónica Araya & Salim Fakir

**CLIMATE-INDUCED INFLATIONARY PRESSURES ARE ESPECIALLY ACUTE IN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA, WHERE FOOD ACCOUNTS FOR A SIGNIFICANT SHARE OF HOUSEHOLD SPENDING**



Nikunja Bihari Sahu

**THE PARKER PROBE WILL MAKE TWO MORE CLOSE APPROACHES TO THE SUN IN 2025**

## SPECTRUM DIPLOMACY

# India and the world

At the end of 2024, and in the beginning of a New Year, it is useful to reflect on the year gone by, the highs and lows, successes and disappointments. Such an exercise helps to re-strategise our actions for the next year. Thinking people across the world do this in their respective domains, so do we in this column on India and the world.



DK Giri

**ONE CAN TRUST TRUMP TO BE UNPREDICTABLE, SURPRISING THE WORLD WITH DRAMATIC POSTURING AND POSITIONS THAT HE IS CAPABLE OF TAKING**

To me, two events highlighted the past year—the re-election of Narendra Modi in India, and the bouncing back of Donald Trump to the White House. Modi's third consecutive term as Prime Minister meant maintenance of continuity in India's foreign policy and resumption of Trumpism in US and the world, albeit with a bit of difference. One can trust Trump to be unpredictable, surprising the world with dramatic posturing and positions that he is capable of taking. For Modi and India's foreign policy, it is sticking to the conventional strategy of 'continuity and change', although, admittedly, more change and less continuity. These are subjects for analysis in 2025.

Trump may be precise in his public articulations, but he is definite and decisive in his actions. Besides, the Trump-Modi inter-personal equations, supposed to be close, will determine India-US ties, especially with regard to China and Russia. Modi will be nudged to take an emphatic and unwavering position in regard to these two countries.

India pursued its strategic autonomy in her response to the wars and other developments in world politics. It continued to expect the onset of multi-polarity as Ministry of External Affairs articulated. Both the strategy and assumption would be put to test in 2025 with Trumpism lurking around the world. Foreign policy has not been deeply debated in the public discourses in India, nor has it been a focus in parliamentary debates. Although it is a non-partisan subject in many countries, in a democracy, it is expected to be contested by those disagreeing with the government line.

Despite Modi's open support to Trump in 2019 in the American presidential elections, the ties between India and the US under Joe Biden remained normal, or rather improved. This is largely because of huge

convergence of strategic interests between both countries. At the same time, Indian-Russian relations experienced a voluntary dilution, mainly due to the mess Russia has got into in unwisely invading Ukraine, and failing diplomatically to deal with the West. Russia may have fallen to a Chinese trap of making Moscow vulnerable and more dependable on Beijing. Modi managed to keep both the US and Russia on friendly terms. Although the stance of neutrality may not be viable in practical terms in the long run.

Despite several negotiations between Chinese and Indian armies, New Delhi has not been successful in pushing Beijing back from the borders and containing its predatory approach in claiming Indian land. Some patrolling and grazing rights in the friction areas of Depsang and Demchock have been retrieved.

In the neighbourhood, it has been a mixed bag. Sri Lanka seems to be making up with India while partially shedding its China fascination. The new president Anura Dissanayake has a left background, but in the office, he is displaying pragmatism in pursuing his

country's national interest. His maiden overseas visit to New Delhi went off well. The Sri Lankan President publicly acknowledged India's timely support and made relevant promises on regional security. He committed not to allow his country to be used against any anti-India activity.

Bangladesh gave quite a bit of tension with a political upheaval in the country that brought unprovoked violence against Hindu minorities and anti-India posturing by the current government. This shift took place following the flight of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina into India where she is being sheltered. Nepal has not moved away much from India last year perhaps because of the instability of governments.

India managed to hold its own in world politics, despite a few challenges and broke new grounds in certain areas and countries. The economy did not grow as it should have in keeping with New Delhi's targets and aspirations, but did not do badly.

*The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism.*

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## WISDOM CORNER

**To complain is always nonacceptance of what is. It invariably carries an unconscious negative charge. When you complain, you make yourself into a victim. When you speak out, you are in your power. So change the situation by taking action or by speaking out if necessary or possible; leave the situation or accept it. All else is madness.**

**ECKHART TOLLE**

**Your only obligation in any lifetime is to be true to yourself. Being true to anyone else or anything else is not only impossible, but the mark of a fake messiah.**

**RICHARD BACH**

**A man can be himself only so long as he is alone, and if he does not love solitude, he will not love freedom, for it is only when he is alone that he is really free.**

**ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER**

## 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)



## Lone bright spot

Sir, At a time when Team India's morale is at an all-time low, following another humiliating defeat against Australia at Melbourne, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been a lone bright spot, offering some solace. In four Tests so far, the peerless fast bowler has scalped a staggering 30 wickets. Bumrah's rise in international cricket has been astonishing. Even if you keep aside the number of wickets he has taken so far across formats and talk about the diversity of his skill sets alone, hardly any fast bowler in present day international cricket comes close to him. No matter the format or the game situation, Bumrah will be at you with his skill, mind, and everything that helps him get a wicket. The whippy action and his bent back help him to hit the deck consistently, and his seam position extracts every ounce of lateral movement off the pitch. With the old ball, the extra moment that Bumrah gets becomes deadly, especially when reversing. Bumrah is a bona fide great and the most complete modern day fast bowler.

**Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI**

## Financial future

Sir, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released its bi-annual Financial Stability Report (FSR). The report provided a comprehensive overview of the Indian financial system and insights into challenges and opportunities for 2025. A major highlight was the 12-year low in gross non-performing assets (GNPA), which stood at 2.6% in September 2024, driven by lower slippages, write-offs, and robust credit demand. However, the FSR cautioned that GNPA could rise to 3% by March 2026 under a baseline scenario, requiring close monitoring. Net non-performing assets stood at 0.6%, reflecting improved bank balance sheets capable of supporting private investment and growth. Retail lending trends were a focal point in 2024. Following the RBI's decision to increase risk weightings for specific consumer loans in late 2023, retail lending by banks and to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) moderated. Banks' retail portfolios remained stable, with a GNPA of 1.2%, though unsecured retail loans recorded a slightly higher GNPA of 1.7%.

**Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH**

# Police, AIIMS to ensure child's identity kept secret: Delhi HC

The court took into account the provisions of Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, IPC and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and pointed to the prohibition on the public disclosure of a child's identity



POCSO CASES

Protection of Children) Act and pointed to the prohibition on the public disclosure of a child's identity.

"A copy of this order be sent to the commissioner of police and the medical superintendent, AIIMS, with directions to issue appropriate guidelines ensuring all necessary measures are to be taken to protect the identity of the victim in such cases and such violation does not take place in future. The compliance report be placed before the court," it said.

The matter pertained to an appeal against the conviction of man in a case of "aggravated penetrative sexual assault" under the PCOSO Act. The convict was awarded 20 years rigorous imprisonment in 2021.

The high court brought down the jail term to 10 years, along with a ₹5,000 fine, after holding him guilty under Section 18 of the PCOSO Act.

It considered the minor's statement made to the doctor and statement made by her mother to the police to conclude there was only an attempt to commit aggravated penetrative sexual assault.

For the prosecution, the threshold to prove its case beyond any reasonable doubt in cases of "graver" offence was higher, but testimonies of its witnesses was not "wholly reliable" in the present case, the court said.

"If there is even slightest of doubt the benefit must go to the accused," it said.

**Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma while dealing with a POCSO case also brought down the jail term of a man convicted for a minor's sexual assault saying there was only an attempt made**

for concerned," the judge said December 23, 2024.

Taking a stern view of the failure on the officer's part, the court ordered the authorities to ensure no such violation of the law took place in future.

The court took into account the provisions of Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, IPC and the Juvenile Justice (Care and



'Mahila Batuk' along with priests perform Ganga Arti on the first day of new year, at Sangam in Prayagraj Uttar Pradesh

# Romance leads Aligarh man to Pakistan jail

The family appeals to the Indian government, particularly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to intervene and negotiate with Pakistan for Babu's release

any legal documents, the officials said.

The shockwave from this unexpected incident reached Babu's village through the media. His parents, who had believed their son was working in a factory in Delhi, were shocked to learn of his arrest through a report sourced from a Pakistani news portal.

Babu's father, Kirpal Singh, who lives in Khitkari village under Barla police station area, told media that the family learned of their son's arrest via social media.

"We couldn't believe it. For us, till this moment we knew that he was working in Delhi, but the next moment we are shocked to discover that he's in a Pakistani jail. It's like something out of a movie," he said, in disbelief.



The family has now appealed to the Indian government, particularly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to intervene and negotiate with Pakistan for Babu's release.

"We want our son back and we don't know how to bring him home. We are calling on the prime minister to help us," Babu's mother said, speaking to reporters.

"He was a simple boy. He never did anything like this

before," she added.

Aligarh Superintendent of Police (Rural) Amrit Jain confirmed that they had received a memorandum from the family and would be taking the matter up with the Ministry of External Affairs.

"We will approach the proper channels to provide whatever assistance is necessary and work towards establishing contact with Babu. Our primary goal is to secure his release from custody in Pakistan," Jain said in a statement.

According to family sources, Babu was very active on Facebook, where he reportedly connected with a girl from Pakistan. After informing his parents that he would be heading to Delhi for work, Babu left his village after Raksha Bandhan in August.

# Delhi pollution body collected over ₹112cr in compensation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** The Delhi Pollution Control Committee collected over ₹112 crore in environmental compensation between April, 2015 and November 20, 2024, the NGT was recently told.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board the environmental compensation (EC) was a policy instrument for the protection of the environment and worked on the "polluter pays" principle.

In other words, fine was levied on violators of environmental laws and used for restoration.

The green body had sought details on the EC imposed and its utilisation from the DPCC.

In a report dated December 26, the committee said, "DPCC has received ₹11,208.15 lakh (₹112.08 crore) as EC fund from April 2015 till November 20 (2024), and ₹3,605.66 lakh (₹36.05 crore) has been utilised so far."

Giving a break-up of the utilisation, the report said the highest amount, about ₹10.11 crore, was spent on information, education and communication activities, followed by an expenditure of ₹8.77 crore on strengthening monitoring systems, including installation and running continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations and noise monitoring stations.

It further said about ₹6.79 crore was spent on laboratory strengthening; ₹5.11 crore on NGT-directed studies; ₹2.16 crore on research and development activities; ₹2.03 crore on the hiring of experts and consultants for specific purposes and for paying honorarium besides about ₹1.05 crore for other scientific and technical purposes.

The report, however, said no amount was spent on categories such as "remediation of contaminated sites", "specific investigations and studies regarding environment and ecology", "carrying capacity assessment", "capacity building" and "specialised studies on accidental, spill areas, health impact assessment, recalcitrant pollutants, etc".

# 'Centre preparing to implement 3 black laws'

The AAP supremo charged that the BJP-led Centre accepted farmers' demands three years ago but is now reneged on it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal Thursday said the BJP would be responsible "if something happens" to the protesting farmers in Punjab who are on an indefinite fast over a set of demands, including a legal guarantee on MSP.

Kejriwal, in a post on X, also claimed that the Centre is preparing to implement the now-revoked three farm laws "through the backdoor" by calling it a "policy". He said copies of the new "policy" have been sent to all states for their views on it.



May God keep the farmers who are on an indefinite protest safe, but if something happens to them, the BJP will be responsible for it  
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP CONVENER

Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on an indefinite fast for over a month and has refused medical aid.

The AAP-led Punjab government has termed the newly announced draft policy on 'National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing' as an attempt to backdoor entry to the three central agril laws passed in 2020. After a yearlong protest by farmers, the Centre repealed

the laws.

Kejriwal posted on X that while the farmers were on a fast unto death in Punjab, the BJP, due to its arrogance, was

not talking to them. The AAP supremo charged that the BJP-led Centre accepted farmers' demands three years ago but is now reneged on it.

"Why do the BJP have such arrogance that it does not even talk to anyone," Kejriwal asked.

"May God keep the farmers who are on an indefinite protest safe, but if something happens to them, the BJP will be responsible for it," he said in a long post in Hindi.

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, when asked about holding talks with the protesting farmers to end the logjam, said Wednesday that the government will act as per instructions by the Supreme Court on the ongoing farmers' protest at the Punjab-Haryana border.

The Supreme Court is hearing a matter against the AAP-led Punjab government for not complying with directions to hospitalise farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.

# Rudraksh, Tulsi garlands being sourced from Nepal, U'khand

As the city prepares to host millions of devotees, the excitement is palpable among sadhus, Kalpvasis, pilgrims and local residents alike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mahakumbh Nagar, Jan 2:** Shopkeepers in the Sangam and Maha Kumbh Mela areas are stocking up essential religious items, including puja materials, patra-panchang, Rudraksh, Tulsi garlands and sacred texts sourced from Nepal, Varanasi, Mathura and Vrindavan.

In a statement, the Uttar Pradesh government Thursday said preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025 are in full swing and rapid efforts are underway to ensure the event's success.

As the city prepares to host millions of devotees, the excitement is palpable among sadhus, Kalpvasis, pilgrims and local residents alike, it said. This year, an estimated 40 to 45 crore devotees are expected to visit Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh, which is set to take place from January 13 to February 26.

The government said the Mela Authority is enthusiastically preparing for the arrival, stay and spiritual needs of the

devotees.

"Shopkeepers in the Sangam and Mela areas are stocking up on essential religious items, including puja materials, patra-panchang, Rudraksh, Tulsi garlands and sacred texts, sourced from Nepal, Varanasi and Mathura-Vrindavan," it said.

"The people of Prayagraj, along with shopkeepers and traders, are equally excited about the Maha Kumbh, viewing it as an opportunity for both spiritual enrichment and economic growth through business and employment opportunities," it said.

Puja materials, religious books, garlands and flowers are being decked up across the city, hotels, restaurants, food stalls and shops selling these items to cater to the needs of visitors, it added.

Wholesale traders are stocking up on goods from various



MAHA KUMBH

cities, anticipating the high demand during the event.

"Rudraksh garlands are being sourced from Uttarakhand and Nepal, Tulsi garlands from Mathura-Vrindavan and puja items like roli and sandalwood

from Varanasi and Delhi's Paharganj," the government said in the statement.

Sanjeev Tiwari, a religious book seller in Daraganj, Prayagraj, said books from Gita Press, Gorakhpur, are in

highest demand, especially the Ramcharit Manas, Bhagwat Gita, Shiv Puran and collections of bhajans and aartis.

Priests performing rituals are also purchasing Patra and Panchang printed in Varanasi.

Puja materials, religious books, garlands and flowers are being decked up across the city, hotels, restaurants, food stalls and shops selling these items to cater to the needs of visitors, it added

Wholesale traders are stocking up on goods from various cities, anticipating the high demand during the event

Additionally, brass and copper bells, lamps and idols from Moradabad and Varanasi are being ordered in large quantities, according to the statement.

Devotees, sadhus and sanyasis participating in Kalpavas at the fair are demanding havan samagri, aasan, Gangajal, plates, urns and other items for worship, it noted.

Shopkeepers are stocking these items in large quantities to meet the anticipated demand, ensuring they are well-prepared to serve the spiritual and practical needs of the visitors, it added.



All the demands of the farmers pertain to the Centre, whether they come from the two forums leading the ongoing agitation at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders or from other farmers' unions

RAJENDRA VISHWANATH ARLEKAR TAKES OATH AS KERALA GOVERNOR

Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar took the oath as the 23rd Governor of Kerala at a function held at Raj Bhavan Thursday. Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court, Justice Nitin Jamdar, administered the oath at 10.30 am



of the day quote

All departments have been asked to actively identify and implement innovative ways to boost revenue. Significant focus was placed on addressing under utilisation of allocated budgets

My doubt remains whether the government at the Centre will survive till 2026. Modi will not complete his term, and when that happens, there will be changes not only in Maharashtra but also in other places (states)

The BJP-led government has been using the SHGs to influence women for political purposes

AAP, BJP lock horns over farmers' issues



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: The BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party clashed over farmers' issues Thursday, with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan accusing the AAP government in Delhi of denying peasants the benefits of central schemes, an allegation that comes ahead of the Assembly polls in the capital.

The Centre stands ready with funds, but their release hinges on state proposals. Unfortunately, Delhi's government has not submitted any proposals, leaving farmers unable to access scheme benefits," Chouhan said in the video message.

The Supreme Court Thursday asked the Centre why couldn't it say its doors were open and it would consider the genuine grievances of farmers protesting over various demands, including the legal guarantee of minimum support price for crops

Responding to Chouhan's accusations, Atishi lashed out at the BJP, saying it should ask the Prime Minister to hold talks with the farmers sitting on a fast unto death in Punjab instead of giving sermons.

She said the condition of farmers was never as bad as it is under the BJP regime. "The BJP talking about farmers is like Dawood Ibrahim sermonising about non-violence," Atishi said, asking the saffron party to stop politics over farmers.

Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on an indefinite fast for more than a month and has refused medical aid.



Artistes perform during the 'Chavni Pravesh' by 'sadhus' of 'Shri Panchayati Akhada Mahanirvani', the royal entry procession for Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

Modi govt ended terror in J&K: Shah



Shah said Article 370 gave the false impression that Kashmir's integration with India is temporary and that sowed the seeds of separatism which later turned into terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ism in the minds of the youth of the valley. "There are Muslim populations in many other parts of the country. Why are those areas not affected by terrorism?" he said.

The home minister said some people say Kashmir is close to the border with Pakistan and hence, the problem came. Shah said Article 370 gave the false impression that Kashmir's integration with India is temporary and that sowed the seeds of separatism which later turned into terrorism.

Unfortunately, over 40,000 people lost their lives due to terrorism in Kashmir, he said. The home minister said Kashmir's development was delayed by decades and for years, there was bloodshed in Kashmir and the country had to watch it in silence.

"After the abolition of Article 370, there has been 70 per cent reduction in incidents of terrorism in Kashmir and it has proved that Article 370 fuelled the fire of terrorism. In 2018, there were 2,100 incidents of stone pelting in Kashmir but in 2024, not a single incident of stone pelting took place," he said.

Since then, he said, the process of development in Kashmir has started like any other part of India. The home minister said local bodies elections successfully concluded in Jammu and Kashmir following which more than 25,000 people got elected as panch, sarpanch or district council members.

Survey report of Shahi Jama Masjid submitted in Court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhal (UP), Jan 2: The court commissioner Thursday submitted in the Chandausi court a detailed survey report on Sambhal's Jama Masjid. The report, which includes videography from all angles, was compiled during the survey conducted November 19 and November 24.

Court Commissioner Ramesh Singh Raghav, appointed as the advocate for this case by the court, told reporters after submitting the report that the survey covered the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, which has been at the centre of a legal dispute following claims that Harihar temple stood at the same location earlier.

"The survey was conducted according to the directions of the court and the complete report, including videography, has been submitted today to the Civil Judge Senior Division in a sealed envelope," Raghav explained.

The report, which is believed to run into 40 to 45 pages, has been submitted in a sealed envelope in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Court.

The case has drawn considerable attention since November 19, when the court ordered the survey of the centuries-old Mughal-era mosque. Another survey was conducted November 24 when violence broke out. Protesters gathered near the Shahi Jama Masjid and clashed with the security personnel. Four people were killed and several people including police personnel injured in the violence. A case was registered against Samajwadi Party (SP) MP from Sambhal, Zia Ur Rahman, for inciting people to violence. A case of electricity theft has also been registered against him.

SP president Akhilesh Yadav accused the BJP of deliberately instigating the last month's violence in Sambhal and called it a "conspiratorial" party.

He charged that the BJP government and its chief minister have no vision. The BJP is destroying the democratic system. It misuses power. It uses the administration for its political gains, he said.

SHORT TAKES

Kota coaching student found dead on rly track

Kota (Rajasthan): An eighteen-year-old coaching student from Maharashtra fell off a passenger train and died, police Thursday said. The body of Keshav Das Amol was found on the Delhi-Mumbai railway track in Bundi district Wednesday morning with a wound to the head. Amol carried no papers on him nor anything in the way of a suicide note, police said.

CBI books own DySP

New Delhi: The CBI has booked one of its own deputy SPs posted in the Bank Security and Frauds branch in Mumbai for allegedly taking "undue advantage" from people probed by him, officials said Thursday. The FIR registered by the agency against Meena alleges he was utilising the services of middlemen for transacting the bribe money through a web of accounts and hawala channel, they said.

Two-year-old girl crushed to death

Mumbai: A two-year-old girl died and her parents were seriously injured after their scooter skidded at a spot where road repair work was underway and they were hit by a tempo, city police said Thursday.

K'taka to increase bus fare by 15%

Bangalore: The Karnataka cabinet Thursday decided to increase the bus fares in the state-owned transport corporations by 15 per cent. The decision was taken in view of the substantial hike in operational costs such as increase in spending on fuel prices and staff, Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said.

ED conducts raids at 8 places

Kolkata: Sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) started conducting raids at eight locations across West Bengal Thursday in connection with its probe into cyber frauds involving over ₹1,000 crore in Tamil Nadu, a senior officer said.

Hand grenade found

Imphal: A hand grenade was Thursday found outside the house of Laishram Kamalbabu Singh, who went missing allegedly from the Leimakhong Military Station in November, triggering panic in the area, police said. The grenade was found near the gate of Singh's house at Loitang Khunou in Imphal West district, they said.

SNIPPETS

US NSA Jake Sullivan set to visit India next week

New Delhi: US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is set to visit India early next week to take stock of the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET). The ICET represents a landmark initiative between the two countries in areas of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotech, and defence innovation. Sullivan's trip will be the last high-profile visit to New Delhi from the outgoing Biden administration. The inauguration of Donald Trump as the 47th president of the US will take place January 20.

HC grants 3 weeks' time to ED to respond to Soren's affidavit

Ranchi: The Jharkhand High Court Thursday granted the Enforcement Directorate (ED) three weeks to file a response to an affidavit filed by Chief Minister Hemant Soren. The ED had filed a case before the HC seeking to quash an FIR registered by Soren against the agency officials under the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste (Prevention of Atrocity) Act. Soren had filed the case against ED officials at the SC/ST police station here for conducting searches at his residences in Delhi and Ranchi in January last year.

Bombay HC stops monitoring of Govind Pansare murder case

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court Thursday discontinued its monitoring of the probe in the 2015 murder of communist leader and rationalist writer Govind Pansare while asking the sessions court to expedite the ongoing trial. The trial at the Kolhapur court should be held on a daily basis, the HC directed. A division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and Kamal Khata said the monitoring of the investigation was no longer necessary, noting that a report submitted by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Maharashtra Police indicates that the case has been probed from all angles.

Mamata's close aid gunned down in WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Malda/ Kolkata, Jan 2: Trinamool Congress councillor Dulal Sarkar was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in West Bengal's Malda district Thursday morning, police said. Sarkar, the TMC councillor from Malda, was shot in his head multiple times from close range by bike-borne assailants at Jhaljhalia More area, they said.

"He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he succumbed to injuries. A probe has been initiated and we are trying to identify the culprits," a senior police officer told PTI. West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee expressed shock over the killing of Sarkar, who was popularly known as Babla.

"My close associate and a very popular leader, Babla Sarkar, has been murdered today. From the beginning of the Trinamool Congress, he (and his wife Chaitali Sarkar) worked hard for the party, and Babla was also elected a councillor," she said in a post on X.

India 2nd most targeted by cyber attacks in 2024: CloudSEK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: India emerged as the second most targeted nation in terms of cyber attacks in the world as 95 Indian entities came under data theft attacks in 2024, cyber intelligence firm CloudSEK said in a report.

structure followed by India where data of 95 entities were attacked in 2024.

"India: Rapid digitization exposed 95 entities, making it the second most attacked nation," the report said. Israel was on the third spot where 57 entities faced attacks due to geopolitical tensions.

"The threat actors impacted various sectors in India, with the finance and banking sectors experiencing the highest number of victims at 20. This was followed by the government sector with 13 victims,



Israel was the third most affected country, experiencing attacks on 57 entities, largely due to geopolitical tensions. In India, rapid digitisation made 95 entities vulnerable to cyber threats

telecommunications with 12, and the healthcare and pharmaceutical and education sectors with 10 and 9 victims, respectively," the report said.

The major breaches as per the report comprised 850 million records of Indian citi-

zen data leaked from Hi-Tek Group, Star Health and Allied Insurance customers data, 2TB of data from Telecommunications Consultants India.

According to the report, there were 108 ransomware incidents known in the country. "Lockbit was the most active ransomware group in India, being responsible for over 20 incidents in the country, followed by more than 15 targets by Killsec. Ransomhub ransomware was responsible for over 12 incidents in the country," the report said.





Around 3.45 lakh people will be benefited from this flyover everyday. There was an issue of traffic in the area. We believe that everyday 40,800 hours of the people of Delhi will be saved from the inauguration of this flyover

INDIA ANNOUNCES \$5 LAKH FOR QUAKE-HIT VANUATU

India Thursday announced an assistance of \$500,000 to the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu to help it deal with destruction caused by a 7.4 magnitude earthquake last month



of the day uote

We measure units only in houses where meters are installed. We cannot measure units in houses that do not have proper agreements. This scheme, set to roll out in March or April, will benefit only those consumers with installed meters

We are getting proper documentation and once we get that then we will take action (if there was any corruption involved). If we cancel the MoUs right away then it may lead to legal issues and unnecessary complications

So this overwhelming support in political circles in Switzerland for the TEPA with EFTA is truly a sign of the times to come... and in their statement also, it shows that it has cleared an important hurdle and they are hoping to bring in entry to force by autumn of 2025, before the end of calendar year 2025

Prashant begins fast unto death

Kishor made the announcement at the historic Gandhi Maidan in the state capital, three days after giving a "48-hour ultimatum" to the Nitish Kumar government for acting on the demand, raised by aggrieved candidates

BPSC ROW



Bagh where the aggrieved aspirants have been holding a round-the-clock sit-in for nearly two weeks. The 47-year-old former poll strategist, who hopes his fledgling party to make a big impact in Assembly polls due in less than a year, also made it clear that the demands he is making were just a few of the things on which he expected the government to act.

unemployment allowance". Kishor also demanded a white paper on several competitive exams held in the last 10 years which were marred by question paper leaks and claimed that the government demonstrated its inability to crack down on the education mafia suspected to be behind the malpractices.

CM Mamata accuses BSF of infiltration plot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 2: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday accused the Border Security Force of facilitating infiltration from Bangladesh as part of a central government "blueprint" to destabilise the state, a charge the BSF denied, asserting it diligently guards the country's boundary.



Speaking at an administrative review meeting at the state secretariat, Banerjee alleged that the BSF was allowing infiltrators to enter through areas like Islampur, Sitai, and Chopra

ing of borders is not in our hands. It's the BSF's duty. The Trinamool Congress doesn't guard the border. When people enter, where are they going? The DMs have information on where they are going," she said. A senior BSF official in the eastern region dismissed the allegations, emphasising that the border guarding force was performing its duties with utmost sincerity.

Patna, Jan 2: Upping the ante, Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor Thursday began a fast unto death to press the demand for cancellation of an examination recently held by Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC).

Kishor made the announcement at the historic Gandhi Maidan in the state capital, three days after giving a "48-hour ultimatum" to the Nitish Kumar government for acting on the demand, raised by aggrieved candidates. The administration, however, said the hunger strike at Gandhi Maidan is illegal as it is not the designated site for holding protests.

Striking a populist note, the former JD(U) vice president said he wanted the state's NDA government to "bring in a domicile policy, reserving two thirds of government vacancies for candidates from the state". He added: "The injustice done to the state's youth by the current regime goes long back. Before his ascent to power, the Chief Minister (Nitish Kumar) had toured the state and promised unemployment doles. Not a single person has got the

No pressure from PM Modi or home minister on us: J&K CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Jan 2: Dismissing suggestions that his National Conference was under pressure to join the BJP-led NDA, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday expressed optimism that the promises made by the Centre to restore statehood of Jammu and Kashmir will be fulfilled at the earliest.

Democratic Alliance (NDA) to alter the National Conference's ideology and join the alliance. "There is no pressure from the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), Home Minister (Amit Shah) or the Raj Bhawan on us to change our ideology," he said. The Chief Minister added that he has received assurances from the Prime Minister and Home Minister that the National Conference government would remain stable and that they would receive the same cooperation extended earlier to the lieutenant governor earlier.

"They have stated they will respect the mandate of the people. Those spreading rumours that I will now join NDA and that I have changed my ideology, I cannot help that. I am here to work and I will work," he said at the media interaction held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre. In response to a question whether his government was planning to approach the court for restoration of statehood, Abdullah said that confrontation should be the last resort.



Tourists at Solang Nala after fresh snowfall in Manali, Himachal Pradesh

Mother-son found murdered in home; two teens arrested

Thane: Navi Mumbai police Thursday said it had solved the murders of a 70-year-old woman and her son in Kamote with the arrest of two 19-year-olds. Geeta Bhushan Jaggi and her son Jitendra (45) were found dead in their house in Sector 6 Wednesday evening, after which local police and Crime Branch teams began probing various angles, the official said. "Our probe found that two persons had come to the residential complex with Jitendra. The duo then attacked and killed the 70-year-old woman and her son. Based on a tip-off, we arrested Sanjot Mangesh Dodke and Subham Mahindra Narayani, both 19 years old, from Ulwe," he said. "The two were known to Jitendra, who had called them for a party on the night of December 31. After having drinks, Jitendra made sexual advances towards the two accused. This enraged the two who attacked Jitendra with an extension board. They then strangled Geeta Jaggi," the official said.

POST OF THE DAY

I do not understand what is special about Vande Bharat if it cannot even run at 130kmph. Rajdhani Express was launched in 1969 and has been running at 130Kmph for the last 54 years. Just marketing/looks? Anything else?

SHORT TAKES

Veteran journalist S Jayachandran Nair dies

Thiruvananthapuram: Renowned writer and senior journalist S Jayachandran Nair, known for redefining Malayalam magazine journalism with a focus on literature and culture, passed away Thursday. He died at 2.30 pm while undergoing treatment for age-related ailments at a hospital in Bangalore, sources close to him said.

Police SI dies of heart attack

Jodhpur: The in-charge of the District Special Team here died of a heart attack while he was out for a morning walk Thursday morning, police said. People present on the spot rushed him to AIIMS Jodhpur, where doctors declared him dead, they said.

Man wanted in rape case held

New Delhi: Delhi Police arrested a 24-year-old man wanted in a four-year-old rape case from Bihar's Muzaffarpur, an official said Thursday. The case involved the kidnapping of a 14-year-old girl, who later accused her brother and his friend of raping her and a case was registered against them at Kapashera Police Station October 11, 2021. While the victim's brother was arrested and sent to judicial custody, the accused remained absconding, police said.

45 injured after bus rams into two trucks

Jaipur: Around 45 passengers were injured when a private bus rams into two trucks, which had already collided with each other on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway in Rajasthan's Dausa district Thursday, police said.

Empty gas cylinder found near rail tuck in Kanpur; probe on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanpur/Saharanpur, Jan 2: An empty five kilogram gas cylinder was found placed on the railway tracks near the Barrajpur railway station here, Government Railway police (GRP) said Thursday. In a separate incident, a major accident was averted when a large fragment of a

metal was found lying on the railway track near Tapri on the Haridwar railway line in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district Tuesday, officials said. A safety team found the cylinder on the loopline tracks in Shivrajpur Wednesday during patrolling. It was kept in a sack, the officials said, as a probe was launched into the



matter. "Upon receiving information GRP officials along with the forensic teams from

Kanpur and its neighbouring districts reached the spot and inspected the area as well as the cylinder and found it empty," Superintendent of Police (GRP) Abhishek Verma said. Preliminary information suggested that the cylinder was deliberately put on the tracks with an intent to trigger panic, he added.

Lack of tech transfer slowing climate action in India: Govt

India had also raised the matter at the UN climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November last year and urged developed nations to eliminate intellectual property barriers to technology transfer that hinder climate action in developing countries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 2: A concerning lack of technology transfer from developed countries has forced India to rely heavily on domestic resources and stretch national capacity, slowing its efforts to achieve critical climate objectives, the government has said in a biennial update report (BUR) to the UN climate change office. In its fourth BUR submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) December 30, India said that in the absence of promised technology and financial support, it is forced to divert resources from other essential needs to develop these solutions independently. India had also raised the matter at the UN climate con-

ference in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November last year and urged developed nations to eliminate intellectual property barriers to technology transfer that hinder climate action in developing countries. "India's climate strategy emphasises integrating advanced technologies across key sectors, such as solar, wind, bioenergy, electric vehicles, climate-resilient agriculture, and carbon capture to foster low-carbon development and build resilience." "Despite substantial national efforts and investments, barriers like slow international technology transfer and intellectual property rights (IPR) hinder the rapid adoption of these technologies," the BUR report said. Biennial update reports 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. India's previous BURs have outlined essential technologies required to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the warming world. However, none of the required technologies have been effectively transferred, facilitated, or made available under the current climate change re-

gime, the report said. "This lack of technology transfer has forced India to rely heavily on domestic resources and stretch national capacity, slowing its efforts to achieve critical climate objectives," it said. Technology transfer is a critical component of climate change mitigation and adaptation that faces both demand and supply-side challenges which must be addressed within the framework of the 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' (CBDR-RC) principles. "The Convention, along with subsequent agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement (Article 10), emphasises the central role of transferring financial resour-

es and technology from developed to developing nations for climate action. The establishment of the Technology Mechanism, consisting of the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), was intended to facilitate this process." On the demand side, India said, access to relevant, affordable, and scalable technologies is often limited due to high costs, lack of infrastructure, and regulatory barriers. Addressing both demand and supply side issues is crucial for effective technology transfer, requiring a comprehensive approach that includes policy interventions, capacity building, financial support, and international cooperation, it said.

# international



The shockingly violent attack in New Orleans is horrific. My thoughts are with the victims, their families, the emergency responders and the people of the United States at this tragic time  
KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

**INDIAN GRANT TO DEVELOP SL'S NORTH BOATYARD**  
India will provide Sri Lanka Rupees 290 million to develop the Karainagar Boatyard in the Northern Province of the island nation, the Indian High Commission said Thursday.



## of the day quote

We are preparing to resume diplomatic relations with Syria and cooperation in international organizations  
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

What better than to come first to thank God and to ask God to give me the wisdom, the fortitude and the tools to fulfil everything I promised the people of Puerto Rico  
JENNIFER GONZALEZ COLON | RESIDENT COMMISSIONER, PUERTO RICO

The European Union could submit a proposal as soon as March on the creation of so-called 'return hubs' to expedite the removal of illegal migrants,  
ULF KRISTERSSON | PRIME MINISTER, SWEDEN

## SHORT TAKES

### Khan's party, Pak govt to hold talks

**Islamabad:** The second round of talks between the government and jailed former premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party representatives concluded Thursday with the commitment to meet again next week in a bid to end the prevailing political tension and instability in the country. National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq facilitated the talks held in the parliament house. Later, he told the media that the two sides participated in good spirits and with the commitment to continue the process. "The two sides have agreed to meet again next week," he said, adding that talks were held in a cordial atmosphere.

### May 9 riots: 19 convicts pardoned

**Islamabad:** Pakistan military Thursday said that it has accepted the mercy petitions of 19 convicts involved in attacks on the army facilities May 9, 2023. Former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party supporters allegedly attacked several military installations May 9, 2023, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, to vent their anger against the arrest of their party founder in a corruption case. Hundreds of suspects were arrested in the countrywide swoop. Cases of more than 100 civilians were sent to the military court for trial because they were involved in the attack on military installations. In December, military courts sentenced 85 civilians to prison terms ranging from two to ten years for their roles in the violence. According to a statement issued by the army Thursday, the sequel to the promulgation of punishments to the May 9 tragedy convicts, they have exercised their right to appeal and have asked for mercy and remission in their punishments.

### Fireworks explosion in Honolulu kills 3

**Honolulu:** A New Year's Eve fireworks explosion in a Honolulu-area neighbourhood killed at least three people and critically injured 20 others, authorities said. The accident occurred just before midnight outside a home, the Honolulu Fire Department said in a statement. The neighbourhood is near Honolulu's international airport and a joint US Air Force and Navy base and a little more than 3 km east of the USS Arizona Memorial, which honours sailors who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor that drew the US into World War II.

## NEW ORLEANS RAMPAGE

# Biden, Trump give contrasting reactions

**President cautions against 'jumping to conclusions' while president-elect labels country a 'disaster'**

AGENCIES

**New Orleans, Jan 2:** Joe Biden and Donald Trump have given drastically contrasting reactions to the deadly New Year's Day explosions in New Orleans and Las Vegas that killed at least 16 people.

The US president cautioned against "jumping to conclusions" and expressed empathy for victims and the city of New Orleans, while his incoming successor sought to blame Democrats, "open borders" and institutions that he has vowed to purge, including the FBI, once he returns to office.

Speaking from the White House Wednesday evening, Biden cited FBI reports that identified the suspected perpetrator of the attack in New Orleans's busy Bourbon Street, 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Jabbar, as "an American citizen, born in Texas" who appeared to have been inspired by the Islamic State.

"He served in the United States army on active duty for many years," Biden said in a four-minute address.

The president also said he had been told by the FBI that Jabbar had posted videos on social media hours before the attack, which killed 15 people. The videos "indicated that he's inspired by ISIS, expressing a desire to kill".

"The ISIS flag was found



Our Country is a disaster, a laughing stock all over the World! This is what happens when you have OPEN BORDERS, with weak, ineffective, and virtually nonexistent leadership  
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT-ELECT, US



He served in the United States army on active duty for many years. Thus far, there's nothing to report on that score. No one should jump to conclusions  
JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

in his vehicle, which he rented to conduct this attack," he said. "Possible explosives were found in the vehicle as well, and more explosives were found nearby."

Biden said intelligence and law enforcement agents were working to establish if the suspect acted alone or had co-conspirators, adding that the investigation was "fluid".

The president said investigators were exploring possible links between the New Orleans attack and a later episode outside the Trump hotel in Las Vegas - owned by the president-elect - in which one person was killed after a Tesla electric vehicle, built by the company owned by Elon Musk, Trump's richest supporter, exploded.

"Thus far, there's nothing to report on that score," Biden said, adding that "no one should jump to conclusions".

His measured tone differed markedly from that of the president-elect, who in an early morning social media post, labelled the country over which he is about to preside after his

## FBI investigates link between Tesla blast, New Orleans attack

**Las Vegas:** The FBI is investigating whether there is any connection between the explosion of a Tesla Cybertruck outside the Trump International Hotel Las Vegas and a New Orleans truck attack that killed 15 people on New Year's Day, officials said. Gasoline canisters and large firework mortars were packed into the Cybertruck that burst into flames shortly after a driver intentionally drove a pickup truck into crowds celebrating the new year in the French Quarter of New Orleans, according to officials. The sole occupant of the truck was found dead inside and seven people sustained minor injuries, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said in a statement. Videos taken by witnesses inside and outside the Las Vegas hotel showed the vehicle exploding and flames pouring out of it, as it sat outside the hotel at around 8:40 am local time (1640 GMT) Wednesday. A Trump spokesman did not return a request for comment Thursday on the Cybertruck incident. Eric Trump praised Las Vegas fire and law enforcement officials Wednesday for their quick action on the explosion. The Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas is part of the Trump Organization, the company of President-elect Donald Trump, who will return to the White House Jan. 20. Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab CEO Elon Musk was a key backer of Trump in his 2024 presidential campaign and is also an adviser to the incoming president.

## China-Maldives FTA takes effect

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Male, Jan 2:** Male has described as "a significant milestone" the China-Maldives Free Trade Agreement (CMFTA) under which both nations will benefit from reduced tariffs and improved market access commitments, media reports said.

The CMFTA, which came into effect starting Wednesday, aims to enhance trade volumes, increase exports, increase productive capacity, reduce trade barriers, and create new opportunities for businesses in both Maldives and China, a release from the Maldives' Ministry of Economic Development and Trade said.

"The FTA marking a significant milestone in the economic relations between the two countries," state-run Public Service Media (PSM) said here Wednesday.



Supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stage a rally to oppose a court having issued a warrant to detain Yoon, near the presidential residence in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday. The signs read, "Oppose impeachment"

## Israel's ex-defence chief Gallant quits parliament

REUTERS

**Jerusalem, Jan 2:** Former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, who had often taken an independent line against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right government allies, said Wednesday he was resigning from parliament.

Gallant was fired from the government in November by Netanyahu, after months of disagreements over the conduct of the war against Hamas in Gaza, but kept his seat as an elected member of the Knesset.

"Just as it is on the battlefield, so it is in public service. There are moments in which one must stop, assess and choose a direction in order to achieve the goals," Gallant said in a televised statement.

Gallant had often broken ranks with Netanyahu and his coalition allies of far-right and religious parties, including over exemptions granted to ultra-Orthodox Jewish men from serving in the conscript military - a hot button issue.



## Nepal's kung fu nuns reopen nunnery

The nuns of the hill-top Druk Amitabha Monastery, put on the show of strength to mark the institution's reopening five years after the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to close its doors to the public

REUTERS

**Kathmandu, Jan 2:** About a dozen nuns performed hand chops and high kicks, some of them wielding swords, as they showed off their martial art skills to hundreds of cheering wellwishers at the long-awaited reopening of their nunnery in Nepal.

The nuns of the hill-top Druk Amitabha Monastery, put on the show of strength to mark the institution's reopening five years after the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to close its doors to the public.

The group of kung fu nuns, aged from 17 to 30, are members of the 1,000 year-old Drukpa lineage, which gives nuns equal



status as monks and is the only female order in the patriarchal Buddhist monastic system. Usually, nuns are expected to cook and clean and are not allowed to practise any form of martial art. But His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa, a monk who ranks only slightly below the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, decided to train women in kung fu to improve their health and spiritual well-being. He opened the nunnery in 2009 and it now has 300 members aged between six and 54. "We do kung fu to keep our-

## B'desh court rejects monk's bail petition



A group of 11 lawyers stood for Krishna Das with a bail petition during the hearing for which Das appeared virtually

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Jan 2:** A court in the southeastern port city of Chattogram Thursday denied bail to Hindu monk and former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das in a sedition case.

A group of 11 lawyers stood for him with a bail petition during the hearing for which Das appeared virtually.

"The hearing continued for some 30 minutes when (Metropolitan Sessions) Judge Mohammad Saiful Islam heard both the prosecution and the defence lawyers and then rejected his (Das') bail petition," a court official said.

Das, formerly with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and now a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote organisation, was arrested at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka November 25. He was brought to Chattogram where the court sent him to jail rejecting his bail petition the next day.

He was arrested on sedition charges for allegedly "desecrating" the Bangladesh flag brought to Chattogram where subsequent violence over his arrest left a government prosecutor dead, sparking further tensions.

"The allegation of disrespecting the national flag is baseless, as it was not a national flag. We informed the court that this case cannot proceed," top defence counsel Apurba Kumar Bhattacharya told journalists emerging from the closely monitored hearing.

Public Prosecutor Mofizul Haque Bhuiyan, on the other hand, said, "We opposed the bail during the hearing, and the court has rejected the bail application."

## New textbooks to alter credit of declaration of independence

**Bangladesh** has introduced new textbooks that state that Ziaur Rahman declared the country's independence in 1971, replacing the previous ones crediting founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the declaration, according to a media report. The new textbooks for primary and secondary students have several changes, The Daily Star newspaper said. The textbooks also removed the title "Father of the Nation" for Mujibur Rahman. The new textbooks for the 2025 academic year will state that "March 26, 1971, Ziaur Rahman declared the independence of Bangladesh, and March 27, he made another declaration of independence on behalf of Bangabandhu," the paper quoted Prof AKM Rezaul Hassan, chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, as saying. The information has been included in the free textbooks where the matter of the declaration was mentioned, he added. According to the paper, writer and researcher Rakhil Raha, who was involved in the process of making changes in the textbooks, said they tried to free the textbooks from "exaggerated, imposed history".

Bhattacharya, a former deputy attorney general, was leading the team of 11 Supreme Court lawyers to represent Das.

Police enforced a tight security inside and around the court complex allowing lawyers and others concerned after strict identity checks.

When Das' bail was rejected November 26, the decision had angered members of the Hindu community, who staged a protest around the prison van outside the court leading to violent clashes. It led to the death of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif.

Earlier December 11, the court rejected a plea seeking advanced hearing of his bail petition by lawyer Rabintra Ghose ruling that it would be heard on the previously fixed date January 2, 2025.

Usually, nuns are expected to cook and clean and are not allowed to practise any form of martial art

But His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa, a monk who ranks only slightly below the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, decided to train women in kung fu to improve their health and spiritual well-being

Nepal. The nunnery's website says that the combination of gender equality, physical strength and respect for all living things represents the order's return to its "true spiritual roots".

In the past, the nuns have completed lengthy expeditions on foot and by bike in the Himalayas to raise money for disaster relief, as well as to promote environmentally-friendly living.

Jigme Konchok Lhamo, 30, from India, said her main goal was to achieve enlightenment like Lord Buddha, who founded Buddhism 2,600 years ago.

"But for now as I am a normal person. I think I will be focusing more on helping others," she said. "Helping others is our religion."



**Exporters are indeed facing significant challenges on the liquidity front, with high interest rates and declining export finance impacting their competitiveness**  
SANJAY BUDHIA | CHAIRMAN, CII NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EXIM

**BLINKIT UPS QUICK COMMERCE GAME**

Quick commerce major Blinkit Thursday launched 10-minute ambulance service in select areas of Gurugram as a pilot project. Users will be able to see the option to call for an ambulance on the Blinkit app, according to a company statement. Each vehicle will be manned by a paramedic, a duty assistant, and a trained driver



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

**Conduct a study on the state of the steel industry in India and assess the impact of proposed and existing import measures on resulting higher costs, economic growth and jobs. Take any new action after this assessment**  
AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

**The implementation process of FTA between India and EFTA is progressing fast and is expected to come into force before the end of this year**  
PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

**We look ahead with hope and confidence, driven by our aspiration to achieve growth at scale. We will continue to lead with purpose, to set audacious goals and work with discipline and determination to achieve them**  
ANISH SHAH | CEO & MD, MAHINDRA

**Factory growth hits 2024 low**



*Manufacturing growth hits 12-month low in Dec amid softer rise in output, new orders*  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a 12-month low in December, as new business orders and production expanded at softer rates, a monthly survey said Thursday.  
The seasonally adjusted HS-BC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index was at 56.4 in December, down from 56.5 in November, indicating a weaker improvement in operating conditions.  
Despite the decline, the headline figure remained above its long-run average of 54.1 thereby signalling a robust rate of growth. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.  
"India's manufacturing activity ended a strong 2024 with a soft note amidst more signs of a slowing trend, albeit moderate, in the industrial sector. The rate of expansion in new orders was the slowest in the year, suggesting weaker growth in future production," Ines Lam, Economist at HSBC, said.  
The manufacturing sector growth was hampered by competition and price pressures.  
Lam said there was some up-lift in the growth of new export orders, which rose at the fastest pace since July.  
"Although new export sales rose at a slower rate than total

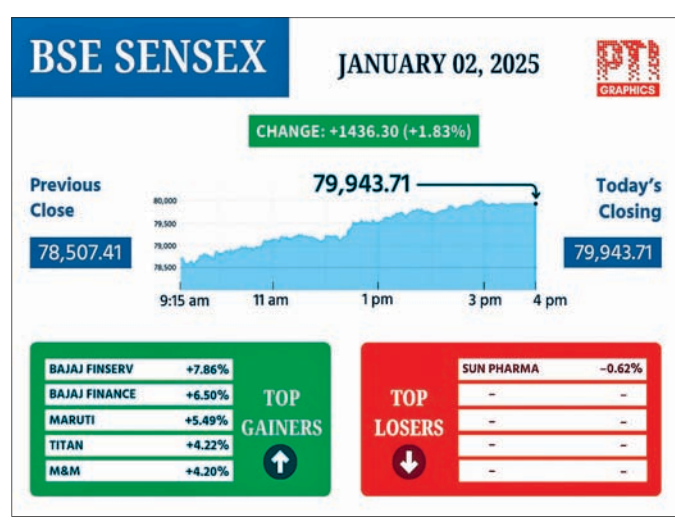
new business, the pace of growth for the former strengthened as firms were able to secure international orders from across the globe," the survey said.  
According to the survey, the "substantial" rate of growth resulted in further expansions in buying levels and employment.  
Ongoing improvements in new work intakes prompted manufacturing companies in India to purchase additional inputs for use in production processes and on the job front, around one in ten companies recruited extra staff, while fewer than 2 per cent of firms shed jobs.  
**India's manufacturing activity ended a strong 2024 with a soft note amidst more signs of a slowing trend, albeit moderate, in the industrial sector. The rate of expansion in new orders was the slowest in the year, suggesting weaker growth in future production**  
INES LAM | ECONOMIST, HSBC

On the price front, with container, material and labour costs reportedly rising since November, Indian manufacturers registered another increase in overall expenses. On a month-on-month basis, however, the rate of input price inflation was moderate by historical standards.  
The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.

**Financial, auto shares power D-St**

**Two days of rally: Investors richer by ₹8.52L-cr**  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 2:** Benchmark Sensex rallied 1,436 points to close at a two-week high Thursday on buying in financial, auto and IT shares, extending gains to the second day of the New Year.  
The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,436.30 points or 1.83 per cent -- its best single-day gain in more than a month -- to settle at 79,943.71. During the day, it soared 1,525.46 points or 1.94 per cent to 80,032.87.  
The NSE Nifty surged 445.75 points or 1.88 per cent to 24,188.65 as 48 of its constituents closed in green.  
From 30 Sensex shares, Bajaj Finserv jumped nearly 8 per cent while Bajaj Finance soared over 6 per cent. Maruti, Titan, Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, HCL Tech, Zomato, UltraTech Cement and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the



**SENSEX JUMPS 1.83% -- ITS BEST SINGLE-DAY GAIN IN OVER A MONTH -- TO SETTLE AT 79,943.71**  
**NIFTY SURGES 1.88% TO END SESSION AT 24,188.65 AS 48 OF ITS CONSTITUENTS CLOSED IN GREEN**

other major gainers. Sun Pharma emerged as the only laggard.  
"Increased momentum was observed in the domestic market, driven by optimism about the upcoming earnings season starting next week. The rally was broad-based, with most sectoral indices posting gains. The auto sector led the way, showing the strongest momentum due to robust December sales that defied the usual sub-

dued demand. Banking and IT stocks also performed well, as the economy bottomed in Q2," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.  
The BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.89 per cent and small-cap index climbed 0.68 per cent.  
All sectoral indices ended in positive territory. Auto surged the most by 3.66 per cent, followed by BSE Focused IT (2.34 per cent), IT (2.31 per cent),

consumer discretionary (2.24 per cent), teck (2.19 per cent), consumer durables (2.02 per cent) and commodities (1.41 per cent).  
As many as 2,395 stocks advanced while 1,574 declined and 117 remained unchanged on the BSE.  
Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,782.71 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.  
Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.09 per cent to \$75.47 a barrel.  
The BSE benchmark climbed 368.40 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 78,507.41 on the first trading session of 2025 Wednesday. The Nifty went up by 98.10 points or 0.41 per cent to 23,742.90.

**SHORT TAKES**

**Textile exports grow**

**New Delhi:** India's textiles and apparel exports, including handicrafts, grew 7 per cent during the April-October period to \$21.35 billion, the government said Thursday. The outbound shipments from the sector stood at \$20 billion in the same period of the previous financial year, FY 2023-24. "The Ready Made Garments (RMG) category with exports of \$8,733 million has the largest share (41 per cent) in the total exports (\$21,358 million) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, followed by Cotton Textiles (33 per cent, ₹7,082 million), Man-Made Textiles (15 per cent, \$3,105 million)," the Textiles Ministry said. Meanwhile, the overall import of textiles and apparel including handicrafts declined 1 per cent during the April-October period of FY 2024-25 (\$5,425 million), compared to the same period of FY 2023-24 (\$5,464 million).

**Sugar output drops**

**New Delhi:** Sugar production fell by 16 per cent to 95.40 lakh tonne in the first quarter of the ongoing current marketing year that started in October, mainly due to a decline in output in Maharashtra, according to industry body ISMA data released Thursday. Mills had manufactured 113.01 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. The production data excludes the diversion of sugar for ethanol making. According to the Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA), crushing rate in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka was better than last year. During the first quarter, 493 mills were operational as against 512 factories a year ago.

**PNB sees loan growth**

**New Delhi:** State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) Thursday said it has posted a credit growth of 15 per cent at ₹11.11 lakh crore for the December quarter. Total advances were ₹9.67 lakh crore at the end of December 31, 2023, PNB said in a regulatory filing. The lender reported a 15.6 per cent rise in total deposits to ₹15.30 lakh crore as against ₹13.23 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of the previous financial year. Total business of the bank rose 15.3 per cent to ₹26.42 lakh crore as compared to ₹22.90 lakh crore at the end of December 31, 2023.

**₹ SLUMPS TO FRESH LOW**

**₹ SLUMPS TO FRESH LOW**  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 2:** The rupee depreciated 11 paise to close at a record low of 85.75 against the US dollar Thursday, as strong dollar demand from importers and foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiments.  
Forex traders said the dollar gained against most currencies during 2024 and continued to remain on a strong footing this year. Moreover, persistent foreign fund outflows further dented investors' sentiments.  
Additionally, global markets are expected to see low volumes as the holiday season is underway in major economies like those in Europe.  
At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note and sank to an intra-day low of 85.79 while registering a high of 85.68 against the American currency. The local unit settled for the day at a record low of 85.75, registering a



**ON DEC 27, THE LOCAL CURRENCY TOUCHED ITS LIFETIME INTRA-DAY LOW OF 85.80 AGAINST THE GREENBACK**

fall of 11 paise over its previous close amid a sharp recovery in domestic equities.  
On Wednesday, the rupee settled flat at 85.64 against the US dollar.  
"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on strength in the US Dollar and dollar demand from importers. Sustained FII outflows may further pressure the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary -- Research Analyst

at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.  
"However, any intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may support the rupee at lower levels. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 85.50 to 86," Choudhary added.  
Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 108.46.

**Job creation gathers further pace**

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** While a massive 4.67 crore additional jobs were created in the Indian economy in the financial year ended March 2024, the fast pace of employment generation has continued into 2024-25 in both the formal and informal sectors, official data shows.  
The total estimated employment in India's Unincorporated Sector recorded a double-digit growth of 10.01 per cent during October 2023-September 2024, compared to the same period of the previous year, according to the annual survey of the Ministry of Statistics released Thursday.  
The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) (ASUSE) shows that among the broad sectors cov-



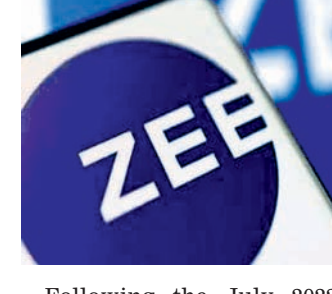
ered, the number of establishments in the "Other Services" employed more than 12 crore additional workers between October 2023 and September 2024, marking an increase of more than one crore workers from 2022-23 and reflecting robust labour market growth.  
Among the broad activities, the "Other Services" sector showed the highest annual growth of 17.86 per cent, followed by 10.03 per cent in the

manufacturing sector.  
The unincorporated non-agricultural sector plays an important role in the Indian economy contributing significantly to employment, Gross Domestic Product, and the overall socio-economic landscape. This sector not only sustains livelihoods for millions but also acts as a backbone for the incorporated sector by supplying goods and services, reinforcing its role in the domestic value chain.  
Similarly, India's employment in the formal sector, which offers better quality jobs, has kept up its growth momentum during the first half of the current financial year with an increase in new additions across the three social security schemes compared to the same period last year.

**Sebi to continue proceedings against ZEEL**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**New Delhi, Jan 2:** Markets watchdog Sebi Thursday said it will slap a fresh show cause notice on ZEEL founder chairman Subhash Chandra, and his son Punit Goenka as it vowed to continue the investigation into alleged violation of listing norms against the media baron and his company.  
The order passed by Sebi's adjudicating officer said the contents of the earlier Show Cause Notice (SCN) issued to them will also be incorporated "in the SCN to be issued in the instant matter".  
The ZEEL and its top management are under Sebi scrutiny for alleged violations of disclosure norms and initially a show cause notice was issued to them in July 2022.



Following the July 2022 show cause notice, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) and Punit Goenka filed settlement applications with the Sebi.  
However, the application to settle the adjudication proceedings was rejected by a panel of whole-time members of Sebi and the matter was referred to the markets watchdog for further investigation.

**Tesla joins top H-1B employers list as Musk pushes for reforms**

*The H-1B program has been a cornerstone for many of the largest tech firms in the US, which rely on it to meet growing demands for skilled workers particularly from countries like India, China, and the Philippines*

**Washington, Jan 2:** Elon Musk, a prominent advocate for the H-1B visa program, is speaking from both personal experience and as a business owner, with his company, Tesla, increasingly relying on foreign talent to fill key roles.  
Tesla, which previously did not make the top 25 list of H-1B visa employers, now ranks 16th in 2024, according to the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP).

The company's increase in H-1B petitions signals a growing reliance on skilled foreign workers, with 742 initial petitions approved in 2024, more than double the 328 approved in 2023. Tesla also had 1,025 petitions for continuing employment approved in 2024.  
Musk, who himself worked in the US on an H-1B visa early in his career, has become one of the most vocal supporters of the program, which allows US companies to hire foreign workers for skilled positions.



"I'm in America along with so many critical people who built SpaceX, Tesla and hundreds of other companies that made America strong because of H-1B," Musk posted on his social media platform X.  
He added that he would "go to war on this issue the likes of

**As the debate over foreign workers continues, Musk's push for H-1B expansion remains a contentious issue, with business leaders advocating for broader access to talent, while critics argue that it undermines opportunities for domestic workers in US**

which you cannot possibly comprehend," highlighting the program's importance to his business success.  
Tesla's rise on the H-1B list follows a broader trend in the tech industry, where companies have long advocated for expanding the number of H-1B

visas granted by the US government. The program, which is capped at 65,000 new visas annually, with an additional 20,000 available for workers holding advanced degrees, has been a critical pathway for skilled workers, particularly from countries like India, Chi-

na, and the Philippines.  
In fiscal year 2024, Amazon led the list with 3,871 approved petitions for initial employment, followed by Cognizant with 2,837 and Infosys with 2,504. Other major players in the tech industry, including IBM, Microsoft, and Google, also ranked high, with Tesla securing its place alongside these global giants.  
With its increased reliance on the program, Tesla's position as a top H-1B employer reflects the ongoing demand for skilled workers in the tech and engineering sectors, and Musk's vocal support underscores the stakes in the larger debate over US immigration policy.

