



## Media buzz

Actor Triptii Dimri sparks dating rumours with Sam Merchant as she wishes him on his birthday

LEISURE | P2



## 'Birthright citizenship'

A group of Republican Senators introduces a Bill in the US Senate to restrict birthright citizenship to illegal immigrants

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## AI ambition

India outlines plans to build 'foundational model' that could take on the might of ChatGPT, DeepSeek R1 and others

BUSINESS | P11



## Kohli's aura

Thousands of fans scream and cheer as Virat Kohli's unmatched aura dominates the Ranji Trophy match in New Delhi, Thursday

SPORTS | P12

## Rural Odisha sees maximum rise in consumer spending

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 30: The maximum increase in monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) in rural areas was recorded in Odisha while Punjab topped the chart in urban areas during August 2023 to July 2024, a government survey stated.

There has been increase in average MPCE for all the 18 major states in rural and urban areas in 2023-24. In a statement, the statistics ministry said the maximum increase in average MPCE in the rural areas has been observed in Odisha (about 14 per cent from the level of 2022-23) while in urban areas, Punjab witnessed the maximum increase of around 13 per cent from the level of 2022-23.

The least increase in average MPCE has observed in Maharashtra (about 3 per cent) and Karnataka (about 5 per cent) in rural and urban areas, respectively. P3



**HOPE IN SIGHT:** A drone view shows people gathering near vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the day Palestinian Militants hand over hostages held in Gaza since the deadly October 7, 2023 attack to members of the ICRC as part of a ceasefire and a hostages-prisoners swap deal between Hamas and Israel, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip

## Ration card e-KYC verification deadline extended to Feb 15

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: The state government extended the deadline for e-KYC (know your customer) verification of ration cards to February 15, Food Supplies Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said Thursday.

Speaking to reporters, Patra said the e-KYC verification of ration cards was supposed to end January 31. "However, considering the requests of people, the government has decided to extend the deadline till February 15," he said. The government's e-KYC process requires Aadhaar-based biometric authentication for each family member through e-PoS machines. Each beneficiary of the PDS will need to visit the nearest fair price shop for the purpose.

Earlier, the government had extended the deadline from December 31 to January 31. A total of 3.26 crore people are beneficiaries of the NFSA and 10.03 lakh people have been covered under the SFSS. More than 38 lakh of them have not completed their e-KYC verification.

## Trump's plan to abolish income tax

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 30: Pitching a monumental and potentially controversial proposal to his Republican allies, President Donald Trump is seemingly floating the idea of scrapping federal income taxes altogether.

"We had no income tax. The income tax came in...1913. As I said in my speech last week, instead of taxing our citizens to enrich foreign nations, we should be tariffing and taxing foreign nations to enrich our citizens," Trump said during his conference address in Doral, Florida.

"It's time for the US to return to the system that made us richer and more powerful than ever before," he said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I didn't have much of a choice. They told me either I could come here or go to Pakistan

# Kumbh tragedy could rock Parl

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 30: Parliament's Budget Session is likely to get off to a stormy start Friday with Opposition parties demanding a discussion on the alleged mismanagement in the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, where 30 pilgrims were killed in a stampede Wednesday.

The Opposition made its intentions clear at the all party meeting Thursday, on the eve of the Parliament session, by demanding a discussion on issues like Maha Kumbh tragedy and controversial UGC draft guidelines and raising complaints about the functioning of the Parliamentary panel on Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

The Budget Session will begin Friday with President Droupadi Murmu addressing both the Houses assembled together in the Lok Sabha. After the President's address, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will table the Economic Survey in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha separately. Sitharaman will present the Union Budget Saturday for the eighth consecutive time.

At the all party meeting, the Opposition accused the BJP-led government of politicising the Kumbh congregation and prev-

alence of VIP culture at the cost of the common man.

The Opposition parties also alleged that the government is steam-rolling its agenda in Parliamentary panels and having disregard for procedure of finalising House business at the meetings of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC). "We expressed our concerns over the biased manner in the conduct of Parliament proceedings," Gaurav Gogoi, Deputy Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, told reporters here.

A section of the Opposition leaders questioned the government over the publication of a parliamentary bulletin on the number of days allotted for discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, contending that this was the prerogative of the BAC.

"We have taken note of their concerns. The BAC will decide which issues will be taken up for discussion. We hope for a smooth and productive Budget Session. Cooperation from all parties is essential for a meaningful and constructive Parli-

amentary session," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said. The government has listed 16 Bills, besides the financial business, for the Budget Session which will be held from January 31 to February 13 before breaking for recess to examine the Budget proposals. The session will reconvene March 10 and continue till April 4.

Asked about the Opposition's demand for a discussion on the stampede at the Maha Kumbh, Rijiju said the decision will be taken by the committee. "There are many important issues...the Kumbh was also mentioned," he said.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Pramod Tiwari said Opposition leaders have decided that the INDIA bloc will raise all issues together during the Budget Session. Emerging from the all-party meeting, Tiwari also slammed the 'politicisation' of the Kumbh, saying VIP movement during the event was creating difficulties for the common man.

IUML leader ET Mohammed Basheer said he raised the issue of the weakening of the law-making process in the country. "The JPC on Waqf was constituted to have discussion. But members were not given enough opportunity to speak," Basheer said.

## ODISHA CANCELS BUS SERVICE FOR KUMBH

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: The state government Thursday cancelled the special bus service for Maha Kumbh Mela till February 4, an official notice said.

"Due to unavoidable circumstances, the special bus service for Maha Kumbh Mela stands cancelled with immediate effect till February 4," the notice said. It also said that further updates will be shared with the public on the official social media handles and website. Earlier, it was decided to operate special bus service to Maha Kumbh Mela till February 26.

The state government's decision to cancel the special bus service for Maha Kumbh Mela came a day after at least 30 people were killed in a pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh Wednesday as millions of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of one of the most auspicious days of Mauni Amavasya.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had flagged off the special bus service for Maha Kumbh Mela from four locations of the state here January 12. The Transport and Commerce department regretted the inconvenience caused to passengers due to the cancellation of the special bus service. The Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) will refund the money to people who had booked tickets for the visit to Maha Kumbh Mela, it said.

## Trump: No survivors in US plane-copter collision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 30: A commercial American Eagle plane about to land at the Reagan National Airport collided with a US Army Black Hawk helicopter Wednesday night, in one of the worst aviation disasters in recent US history.

"Both aircraft crashed instantly and were immediately submerged into the icy waters of the Potomac. (A) real tragedy. The massive search and rescue mission was under way throughout the night, leveraging every asset at our disposal... The work has now shifted to a recovery mission. Sadly, there are no survivors," US President Donald Trump told reporters at a White House news conference.

The incident happened just before 9pm, he said. An American Airlines regional jet carrying 60 passengers and four crew collided with an Army Blackhawk helicopter carrying three military service members over the Potomac River in Washington, DC while on final approach to Reagan National Airport.

The American Eagle plane was coming from Wichita in Kansas.

Washington DC Fire Chief John Donnelly told reporters Thursday morning that the rescue teams so far have recovered



27 bodies from the plane and one body from the helicopter.

Trump said there were nationals from other countries, including Russia, who are being notified.

"We have a Russia contingent, some very talented people, unfortunately, were on that plane, very, very, very sorry about that," he said, adding that the US is in touch with Russia to transfer these bodies to their near and dear ones.

"There were a couple of others. We're going to be announcing it in about an hour. We have some very specific information. We're calling the countries. We've spoken to most of them, but there were some other countries represented," Trump said.

"We are one family and today we are all heartbroken we're all searching for answers and say that icy Potomac was a cold, night cold water. We're all overcome with the grief for many who have so tragically perished who no longer be with us together," he said.

# Taranaki Maunga: NZ's mountain granted personhood

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wellington, Jan 30: A mountain in New Zealand (NZ), considered an ancestor by Indigenous people, was recognised as a legal person Thursday after a new law granted it all the rights and responsibilities of a human being.

Mount Taranaki - now known as Taranaki Maunga, its Maori name - is the latest natural feature to be granted personhood in NZ, which has ruled that Whanganui river and Te Urewera, a stretch of sacred land, are people before. The pristine, snow-capped dormant volcano is the second highest on NZ's North Island at 2,518 metres and a popular spot for tourism, hiking and snow sports.

The legal recognition acknowledges the mountain's theft from the Maori of the Taranaki region after NZ was

colonised. It fulfils an agreement of redress from the country's government to indigenous people for harms perpetrated against the land since.

## How can a mountain be a person?

The law passed Thursday gives Taranaki Maunga all the rights, powers, duties, responsibilities and liabilities of a person. Its legal personality has a name: Te Kahui Tupua, which the law views as a living and indivisible whole. It includes Taranaki and its surrounding peaks and land, incorporating all their physical and metaphysical elements. A newly-created entity will be the face and voice of the mountain, the law says, with four members from local Maori iwi, or tribes, and four members appointed by the country's Conservation Minister.



A man takes a picture of his wife with Mount Taranaki in the background in New Plymouth, New Zealand

## Why is this mountain special?

"The mountain has long been an honoured ancestor, a source of physical, cultural and spiritual sustenance and a final resting place," Paul Goldsmith, the lawmaker responsible for the settlements between the government and Maori tribes, told Par-

liament in a speech Thursday.

But colonisers of NZ in the 18th and 19th centuries took first the name of Taranaki and then the mountain itself. In 1770, British explorer Captain James Cook spotted the peak from his ship and named it Mount Egmont.

In 1840, Maori tribes and representatives of the British Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi - NZ's founding document - in which the Crown promised Maori would retain rights to their land and resources. But the Maori and English versions of the treaty differed - and Crown breaches of both began immediately.

In 1865, a vast swathe of Taranaki land, including the mountain, was confiscated to punish Maori for rebelling against the Crown. Over the next century hunting and sports groups had a say in the mountain's management - but Maori did not. "Traditional Maori practices associated with the mountain were banned while tourism was promoted," Goldsmith said. But a Maori protest movement of the 1970s and '80s has led to a surge of recognition for the Maori language, culture

and rights in NZ law.

Redress has included billions of dollars in Treaty of Waitangi settlements.

## How will the mountain use its rights?

"Today, Taranaki, our maunga, our maunga tupuna, is released from the shackles, the shackles of injustice, of ignorance, of hate," said Debbie Ngarewa-Packer, a co-leader of the political party Te Pati Maori and a descendant of the Taranaki tribes, using a phrase that means ancestral mountain.

The mountain's legal rights are intended to uphold its health and wellbeing. They will be employed to stop forced sales, restore its traditional uses and allow conservation work to protect the native wildlife that flourishes there. Public access will remain.

## Headmistress suspended as 15 students flee hostel

AGENCIES

Rourkela, Jan 30: The headmistress of a primary school in Bonai sub-division of Sundargarh district has been suspended for negligence after 15 students fled the boys' hostel January 28, officials said Thursday.

Officials said the Bonai BEO suspended the headmistress of Sishidiha Primary School, Draupadi Sahu, for negligence. The students, all boys aged 7-10, escaped around midnight following a punishment allegedly given to one of them by the warden. The boy, upset by the punishment, led the others to leave the hostel and return to their village, Balan, they added.

Barkote police in Deogarh district, bordering Bonai, were notified and they quickly took the boys into safe custody. The following morning, Mahulpada police contacted Barkote police and brought the boys back.

# leisure



## BALDONI'S LAWSUIT AGAINST BLAKE A PUBLICITY STUNT: LEGAL EXPERTS

Justin Baldoni's \$400 million lawsuit against Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds is viewed skeptically by legal experts, who see it as a publicity stunt rather than a serious financial claim. Lively has also filed a counter-lawsuit alleging sexual harassment.

## SELENA OPENS UP ABOUT HER STRUGGLES WITH PREGNANCY

Selena Gomez, engaged to Benny Blanco, revealed her inability to carry a baby due to health issues but remains hopeful about surrogacy and adoption. Gomez, who has Lupus, is thankful for these options and cherishes the love she shares with her fiancé.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
 You probably have a big circle of friends, and though most of them may be casual friends, they may sometimes prove to be favourable. They may help you overcome some dejections. It will also help you figure out the importance of the role friends can play.

**TAURUS**  
 Ganesha sees you acting very possessive about people and things. You are, consequently, likely to feel suspicious, uncertain and insecure about everything, particularly people. It's even possible that you may even suspect the feelings and intentions of those who are close to you.

**GEMINI**  
 You are likely to make a list of your daily chores that take most of your time. Then you will find a way to outsource these activities or eliminate them from your routine altogether. You will also devote a lot of your time to meditation.

**CANCER**  
 Ganesha predicts an excellent and exceptional day for you at work. You are likely to need all your business acumen while negotiating deals. Your leadership skills are likely to come to the fore during the final stage of a deadline, be it about completing an order or launching new products and marketing them, says Ganesha.

**LEO**  
 Sometimes, it takes courage to be honest and admit to your failures. Doing so only goes a long way in establishing your credentials as a real person, feels Ganesha. So understand that, while it is only human to make mistakes, it takes more than that to accept them. Also, today is a good day to reconnect with old contacts. Make the effort to do so.

**VIRGO**  
 A sudden bend in the journey of life is important to understand it better, says Ganesha. Excellence will drone on throughout the day today. Top on the list are money matters and your loved ones - not necessarily in that order! Much of your time may be spent in appeasing the Gods.

**LIBRA**  
 Good news! You will be a people's person today. Close friends, relatives and family - you seem to want to spend your time with all of them today, says Ganesha. Better news? Your romantic brilliance will be at its peak today as your fancy takes wings and creativity flows freely in manners that seem irresistible.

**SCORPIO**  
 Audacious. Adventurous. Aquarius. The three As will go hand-in-hand throughout the day, feels Ganesha. Entrepreneurs will joust with the idea of launching new products or will make daring business plans. At work, you will impress your colleagues and peers and win the trust of your boss with your convincing skills.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Unnecessary expenditure might clog your bill today, feels Ganesha. Organising and detailing will be a time-sink as you will spend hapless hours trying to discipline things. The vibrant evening will be a contrast to your hectic day as you kick back and relax while socialising.

**CAPRICORN**  
 You may not get as popular as Romeo did, but your exceedingly romantic nature will earn you quite a reputation, not to forget the hypnotic effect it will have on your sweetheart, says Ganesha. On the flip side, troubles will chase you everywhere; you are likely to face problems with your business rivals and health condition, but your mind will be on guard always, giving you an edge over your opponents.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Finally, you've decided to clean up the mess! And you will do a fine job, whether it's your workspace, your bills, your finances, or even your closet. And now that you're inspired, you might as well sort out your mental clutter too, chuckles Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
 Financially, you have bright prospects awaiting you today. You will be able to deal with the mind-numbing financial jugglery required to take stock of your monetary matters with precision. You might be dealing with people who secretly have an axe to grind against you, cautions Ganesha.

## SIDDHANT REFLECTS ON GROWTH, DREAMS



**Mumbai:** Actor Siddhant Chaturvedi recently took to social media to share a reflective post about personal growth and aspirations.

The *Gully Boy* star posted an image of himself, accompanied by a thoughtful caption that read, "We all are a work-in-progress reflecting the dreams of a sky we'd fly in one day. #SoulWindow #Siddychats." In the image, Siddhant is seen posing with his back to the camera, gazing thoughtfully at a stunning mountain landscape.

A few days ago, the actor also shared a video in which he was seen relaxing during an ice bath. The video captured Chaturvedi unwinding in what appeared to be a hot tub while taking the ice bath. He captioned it, "Ice...Ice...Baby."

On the professional front, the 31-year-old actor made his film debut with a supporting role as a street rapper in *Gully Boy*, which starred Ranveer Singh. He has since appeared in the romantic drama *Gehraiyaan*, alongside Deepika Padukone and Ananya Panday, as well as the coming-of-age film *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*.

Siddhant is reportedly in talks to collaborate with director Prakash Jha for his upcoming political love story.

IANS

## Buzz over Tripti's b'day wish for rumoured beau

**Mumbai:** Triptii Dimri has once again sparked dating rumours with Sam Merchant as she wished him on his birthday. The *Animal* actor took to Instagram to share an unseen picture with Sam, along with a heartfelt message. In the photo, both were seen wearing sunglasses and smiling for a selfie. She also shared a collage featuring Sam driving and admiring silver jewellery. Captioning the post, she wrote, "Happy Birthday Sam Merchant (heart emoji) wishing you all the love and joy you spread, right back to you."

Triptii and Sam have been rumoured to be dating for a while, though neither has confirmed their relationship. Their social media posts of ten hint at

spending time together. The rumoured couple even celebrated New Year in Finland, sharing similar photos and videos of their getaway, including glimpses of their meals and the Northern Lights.

On the work front, Triptii was last seen in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3* alongside Kartik Aaryan, Vidya Balan and Madhuri Dixit. The horror-comedy was a box office success, earning 389 crore globally. Up next, she will star in Vishal Bhardwaj's film with Shahid Kapoor, produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, set for release December 5, 2025.

AGENCIES



## Shruti's NY hope

**Chennai:** Actress and singer Shruti Haasan, who celebrated her birthday recently, has said that she senses this year to be a magical one and that she intends to learn more about herself this year.

Taking to Instagram to pen a long note of gratitude for all the birthday wishes that came her way, the actress wrote, "2025 is that magical year and I can feel it in my bones. As a January baby, I get to start my year with celebration and joy and I never take that for granted - I'm so thankful to all the beautiful people who surround me with love and good wishes."

Stating that her birthday this year was extra special as she celebrated it with the unit of Lokesh Kanakaraj's *Coolie*, featuring Superstar Rajinikanth in the lead, the actress wrote, "It was extra special this year to celebrate with the wonderful *Coolie* team which consists of the sweetest people ever. Threw a birthday party after so long and was so glad to celebrate with so many lovely souls."

IANS

## Tinaa open to idea of single motherhood

**Mumbai:** Actress Tinaa Datta, known for her roles in popular TV shows like *Uttaran*, has shared her open-

ness to the idea of becoming a single mother in the future.

During a recent interview with the news agency, the actress revealed that while she hasn't specifically planned for single motherhood, she is open to the possibility through adoption or surrogacy. Tinaa expressed, "Yes, I believe I would make a great mother when the time comes. While I haven't specifically planned to be a single mother, I am open to the idea, whether through adoption or surrogacy."

The actress also shared her admiration for women who have embraced single motherhood. "I admire women like Sushmita Sen, who adopted two beautiful daughters. My parents, despite coming from a small town and a Bengali background, have always been progressive. They fully support my choices, whether I decide to adopt or have a child through surrogacy. I strongly believe in being independent—if I can take care of myself and my family, I can take care of a child too. It's not necessary to rely on a husband for that responsibility," Tinaa said.

Tinaa was recently seen in the crime thriller series *Personal Trainer*, set against the backdrop of Mumbai's elite gym culture.

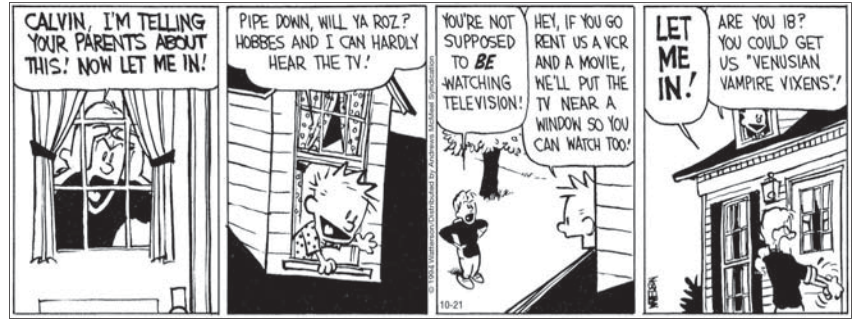
IANS



### PEANUTS



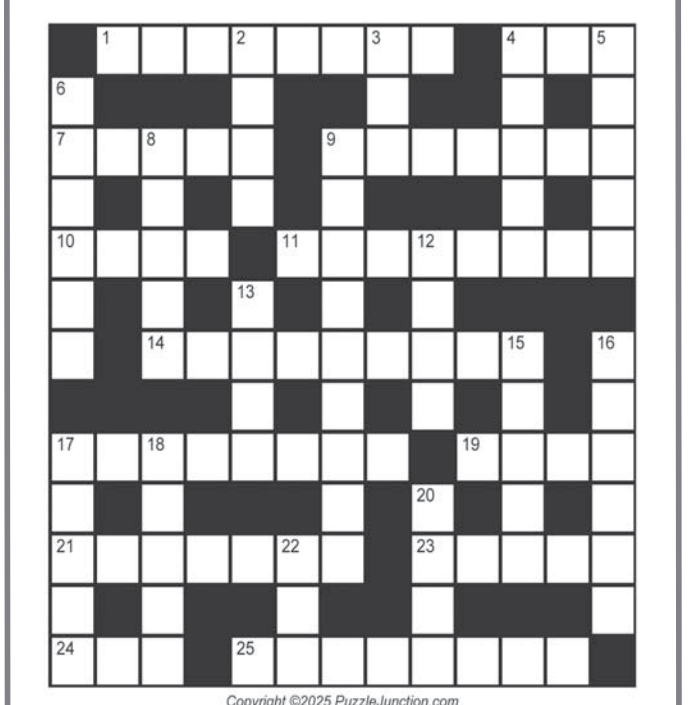
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2025 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Chemin de fer kin
  - 4 Jamaican export
  - 7 Panorama shows (4-4)
  - 9 Take aback
  - 10 Pride member
  - 11 Beautiful
  - 14 Drag out's pal (5,4)
  - 17 Second-rate
  - 19 Snake's warning
  - 21 Wreath
  - 23 Sports stadium
  - 24 Low island
  - 25 Some TV shows (4-4)
  - 9 Duped
  - 12 Radiate
  - 13 Extinct bird
  - 15 Headache intensifier
  - 16 Bahamas capital
  - 17 Wizardry
  - 18 Churchill
  - Downs event
  - 20 Tropical tuber
  - 22 Forty winks
- Down**
- 2 Gossip
  - 3 Pantry pest
  - 4 Proportion
  - 5 Chances upon
  - 6 Develop
  - 8 Baby bird?

### SUDOKU

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

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

### SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

C	U	B	I	C	L	E	D	R	A	F	T
A	A	A	N	U	V	H					
M	I	N	E	R	A	R	C	H	E	R	
P	J	A	M	A	R	M					
H	O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A	T	E
O		A	L	G							
R	E	S	I	S	T	S	N	E	E	Z	E
P		B	A			X					
P	R	O	T	A	G	O	N	I	S	T	
A	N	L	A	N	R	R					
R	U	S	S	I	A	N	O	B	E	S	E
C	O	E	E	B	A	M					
H	E	R	O	N	T	H	I	S	T	L	E

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## 'Bikashita Gaon, Bikashita Odisha' guidelines out

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The state government has issued guidelines for the recently announced scheme—Bikashita Gaon Bikashita Odisha (BGBO) - for taking up various sustainable developmental projects for inclusive growth in rural areas.

The BJP government has announced the BGBO scheme replacing the 'Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha' (AONO) scheme launched by the previous BJD government. The government has made a budgetary provision of ₹1,000 crore under the scheme for the financial year 2024-25.

Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department Secretary Girish SN has recently issued the guidelines to Collectors, which was shared with media Thursday.

As per the guidelines, the new scheme has the provision to take up various sustainable rural infrastructure developmental projects including roads, bridges, school buildings, civic amenities and sports.

A maximum of 35 per cent of the total allotted funds can be utilised for road projects, while 40 per cent of the allocation will be earmarked for blocks that come under the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), it said.

The incomplete projects under the AONO scheme in which a minimum 20 per cent expenditure has been incurred can also be taken up and will be completed under the new scheme, the secretary said.

Gram Sabha will prepare a need-based five-year perspec-



The new scheme has the provision to take up various sustainable rural infrastructure developmental projects including roads, bridges, school buildings, civic amenities and sports

A dedicated web-based MIS and mobile app will also be developed for real-time monitoring of projects

pective plan by February 14 and on the basis of which, an annual action plan for each financial year will be prepared by the blocks by February 18.

The project submitted by the Gram Panchayats will be scrutinised by a technical committee at block level and the Panchayat Samiti will recommend the scrutinised project list to the district collector for final approval before February 20.

A dedicated web-based MIS and mobile app will also be developed for real-time monitoring of projects, he said.

Commenting on the new scheme, senior BJD leader Badri Narayan Patra said, "There is no point in changing the name of the previous government's scheme and issuing

other guidelines. The same work could have been taken up under the previous scheme."

The BJP government is now seven months old. So, it should launch new schemes and programmes to move forward instead of blaming the previous one, he said.

Congress MLA Nilamadhab Hikaka said both BJD and BJP are two sides of the same coin and they were running coalition governments for nine years (2000 to 2009). "Like the BJD, the BJP government is also hoodwinking the people of Odisha by making false promises," he alleged.

Reacting to the statements of Opposition leaders, BJD legislator Saroj Padhi said, "They have become flustered as the BJP government has been launching new schemes. So they are making such statements."

The previous BJD government was "deep in corruption" in the name of 5T (transformative initiative) and did nothing for the development of rural people, Padhi alleged.

### Chimpanzee Durga delivers healthy baby

**Barang:** After chimpanzee Rakhi, now Durga has become a major attraction for visitors at Nandankanan Zoological Park as she delivered a healthy baby for the first time, Thursday. Following the birth, the newborn was separated from the mother, who is residing in enclosure number 60 (A). Interestingly, 7-year-old Durga herself was born in Nandankanan. The father of the newborn is Julu, a male chimpanzee brought from Singapore Zoo May 16, 1994. Durga and Julu were first introduced for mating between May 26 and 29 this year, followed by another introduction from June 2 to 6. A blood test confirmed Durga's pregnancy, after which she was given special care by the zoo authorities. After a gestation period of 238 days, Durga delivered a healthy baby. Following the birth, both the mother and baby have been kept in isolation for proper care, as confirmed by the authorities.

### MUSICAL EVENING

Artistes perform during annual cultural musical programme organised by Delight Entertain at Bhanjakala Mandap in Bhubaneswar Thursday



### POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## PPL inks pact with govt for ₹4K-cr investment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Paradeep Phosphates Limited (PPL) Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the state government for an investment of ₹4,000 crore.

The investment will be made during the next five years to increase the phosphatic fertiliser manufacturing capacity in both intermediate and final products including port/jetty and infrastructure development. This will help generate 100-150 employment opportunities directly and 700-1,000 indirectly, according to a release issued by the company.

The MoU was signed between Hemant Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary of Industries department and Suresh Krishnan, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Paradeep Phosphates Limited. Subhendra Kumar Nayak,



Special Secretary to Industries department Bijoy Kumar Biswal and Corporate Affairs Head of PPL Sudhi Ranjan Mishra were present during the event.

The strategic investment will increase production capacity, reduce environmental impact, and contribute to agricultural growth, the release stated.

PPL, a leading fertiliser manufacturer, aims to be self-sufficient in fertiliser production and improve crop

yields, farmer prosperity and soil health. It has accelerated its production to contribute to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it added.

Apart from its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the company said, it uses state-of-the-art techniques to help its core customers - farmers. To further accelerate this, the company will enhance fertiliser production capacity, integrate key raw materials, and

PPL will invest ₹4,000 crore during the next five years to increase the phosphatic fertiliser manufacturing capacity in both intermediate and final products including port/jetty and infrastructure development

This will help generate 100-150 employment opportunities directly and 700-1,000 indirectly

invest in renewable energy and sustainability.

Its two manufacturing units in Paradeep (1.8 million tonne), and Zuarinagar, Goa (1.2 million tonne), produce a wide range of fertilisers, including DAP and various NPK grades (N-10, N-12, N-14, N-19, N-20, N-28), as well as urea. PPL caters to over 9 million farmers through 70,000 retail points across 15 states and supplies industrial products such as gypsum, HFSA, sulphuric acid, and ammonia.

## Guv, CM pay tributes to Gandhiji

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Governor Kambhampati Hari Babu, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Naveen Patnaik Thursday paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary on the Assembly premises here. Deputy Chief Ministers Pravatī Parida and KV Singh Deo, Assembly Speaker and other ministers also paid their respect to the father of the nation on the Assembly premises.

"On the occasion of Martyrs' Day, today, I paid homage to the statue of revered Mahatma Gandhi at the Odisha Legislative Assembly premises along with the Hon'ble Governor, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Hon'ble Speaker, other ministers and MLAs. Gandhi's thought, which is based on the foundation of morality, contains the solution to many problems. Therefore, even today, there is a need to keep Gandhi's thought alive in our thoughts, consciousness and experiences and work for the development



of society. #MartyrsDay #MahatmaGandhi," Parida said in a post on X.

Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly Naveen Patnaik also paid his tributes to the Father of the Nation in a social media post and said that Gandhi ji's timeless ideals of Ahimsa, truth and peace have inspired people from across the world.

In a post on X, Patnaik said: "Humble tribute to the father of

the Nation, #MahatmaGandhi on his death anniversary, observed as #MartyrsDay. His timeless ideals of #Ahimsa, truth and peace have inspired people from across the world. Salute to the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for our country's independence."

Gandhi, the most prominent face of India's freedom movement, was assassinated by Nathuram Godse January 30, 1948.

## Girl killed in jumbo attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Jan 30:** An 8-year-old girl was killed when a wild elephant broke into her house and trampled her in her sleep at Handiphuta village under Motanga police limits in Dhenkanal district, late Wednesday night.

The victim was identified as Priyanka Nayak alias Pihu, daughter of Pramod Nayak in the village. Her parents narrowly escaped death in the attack, sources said.

The incident sparked tension in the area as locals and family members of the deceased staged a road blockade at Handiphuta on Gudiakateni-Hindol Road from 7am to 6pm, Thursday.

Protesters demanded compensation, a new house for the bereaved family, electrification of the village, and immediate measures to drive away elephants from the area. The blockade caused heavy traffic congestion, leaving numerous vehicles stranded on both sides of the road. Hindol Tehsildar Dilip Kumar Sethi,

BDO Kalyan Saurabh Das, SDPO Nalita Modi, Forest Ranger Gautam Pradhan, and Motanga police station In-Charge Jitendra Mallik reached the scene and convinced the protesters to withdraw the blockade. The girl's body was later sent for post-mortem, and an unnatural death case (1/25) was registered at Motanga police station.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Dhenkanal, Sumit Kumar Kar said that the deceased's family would receive ₹6 lakh compensation as per norms. An initial 10 per cent payment would be made within 24 hours, while efforts are underway for electrification of the village, he said.

A total of 48 elephants are currently holed up in the affected region, and Forest officials have started efforts to drive them away.

Shaadi, Utsav ya Tyohar...  
Lijjat Papad Ho Harbar...  
Karram Kurram...  
Kurram Kurram...  
Karram Kurram...  
Lijjat PAPAD  
Website : www.lijjat.com Email : enquiry@lijjat.com

## Rural Odisha sees max rise in consumer spending

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) in rural areas of Odisha registered the maximum rise while Punjab topped the chart for urban areas during August 2023 to July 2024, a government survey stated.

There has been increase in average MPCE for all the 18 major states in rural and urban areas in 2023-24.

In a statement, the statistics ministry said the maximum increase in average MPCE in the rural areas has been observed in Odisha (about 14% from the level of 2022-23) while in urban areas, Punjab witnessed the maximum increase of around 13 per cent from the level of 2022-23.

The least increase in average MPCE has observed in Maharashtra (about 3%) and Karnataka (about 5%) in rural and urban areas, respectively.

It stated that a wide variation in urban-rural difference in average MPCE is observed across the 18 major states in 2022-23 as well as in 2023-24.

Among these major states, there has been a decline in urban-rural gap in 11 states in 2023-24 from the level of 2022-23.

The lowest urban-rural gap in 2023-24 is observed in Kerala (about 18%) and highest in

### HIGHLIGHTS

There has been increase in average MPCE for all the 18 major states in rural and urban areas in 2023-24

The least increase in average MPCE has observed in Maharashtra (about 3%) and Karnataka (about 5%)

The lowest urban-rural gap in 2023-24 was observed in Kerala (about 18%) and highest in Jharkhand (around 83%)

Jharkhand (around 83%). About the share of various food and non-food item groups in total expenditure, the survey stated that in 2023-24, in rural India, food accounted for about 47 per cent of the value of the average rural Indian households' consumption.

Among the food items, the contribution of beverages, refreshments and processed food has been the highest (9.84%) followed by milk & milk products (8.44%) and vegetables (6.03%) in rural India.

The contribution of cereals and cereal substitutes in the expenditure has been about 4.99 per cent. Among non-food items, the maximum contribution has been of conveyance (7.59%) followed by medical (6.83%), clothing, bedding & footwear (6.63%) and durable goods (6.48%).

## Report reveals lapses in state's school education

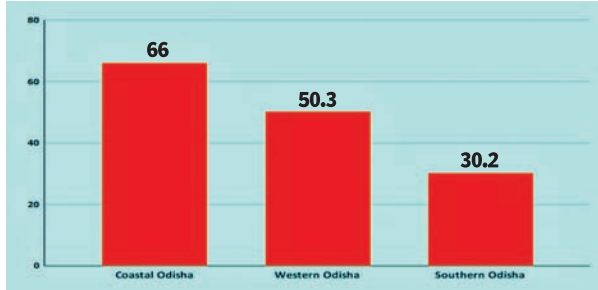
DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2024 has exposed the lacunae in the state's elementary and primary education.

The report, published recently, has revealed that just 59.4 per cent fifth-grade students in state's schools can read textbooks meant for second graders, while the same can be performed by only 40 per cent third-graders.

While these figures bring to the fore the existing challenges, they also highlight a significant recovery from the pandemic period when the situation was even grimmer. In 2022, only 29.8 per cent of third-graders and 52.5 per cent fifth-graders were able to handle second-grade textbooks.

The ASER survey, released once in two years, by Pratham Foundation, highlights that only 32.6 per cent of fifth-grade stu-



Percentage of school students who can read grade-II textbooks

dents can perform a three-digit division, while the same can be done by just 48.4 per cent eighth-grade students.

When it comes to two-digit subtractions, just 37.7 per cent of third-grade students can ace it. Of the 37.7 per cent pool, government school students comprise 34.6 per cent, while private school students fare better at 63 per cent. Reportedly, this year, the ASER survey collected esti-

mates from 600 districts across India, with a sample size of 600 households per district. Those households were chosen from districts after selecting 20 of those from 30 villages under it for the purpose of the study.

A total of 6.5 lakh children in pre-primary group (3-5 years) and elementary (6-14) were taken into consideration from these households.

Furthermore, the report states

that only 30.2 per cent students between third-grade and fifth-grade in districts such as Boudh, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, and Rayagada can manage to read second-grade textbooks.

The situation looks better in districts such as Angul, Bolangir, tBargarh, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, and

Only 1 in 3 students can do simple division

Third-graders and fifth-graders struggling with basic skills

Sundargarh where 50.3 per cent students can perform the task.

In Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, and Puri districts the figure stands at 66 per cent. Similarly, at 63.1 per cent, students in coastal Odisha top the chart among third and fifth-graders who can manage to do subtractions. This is followed by western Odisha at 46.9 per cent and southern Odisha at 30.3 per cent.

When it comes to performing a simple division among sixth and eighth-grade students, coastal Odisha logs at 53.8 per cent, while western Odisha and southern Odisha registers 40.5 and 33.5, respectively.

**'Leprosy can be eradicated with awareness'**

**Bhubaneswar:** Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling has emphasized that leprosy can be eradicated, fulfilling the vision of a leprosy-free India envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi, through timely diagnosis, effective treatment, and public awareness. Speaking at the Anti-Leprosy Day 2025 event here Thursday, Mahaling stressed the importance of early detection and treatment, as well as the need for social cooperation and awareness to combat the disease. "Leprosy is a curable disease, and if diagnosed and treated promptly, it can be completely eradicated. Realising the dream of a leprosy-free India by 2030 requires collective efforts and awareness, especially among students," Mahaling said. Health and Family Welfare department secretary Ashwaty S echoed similar sentiments, noting that the earlier leprosy is detected, the easier it is to treat. "There's no reason to panic about leprosy. With timely intervention and social support, it can be defeated," he added. Since the launch of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) in 1983, which introduced Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT), significant progress has been made.

**State's first automated testing station launched**

**The facility aims to enhance vehicle fitness assessments and road safety through advanced technology**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Odisha government Thursday introduced the state's first automated testing station (ATS) in Cuttack, marking a significant advancement in ensuring the transparency and efficiency of motor vehicle fitness testing.

This state-of-the-art facility, set up under the Cuttack Regional Transport Office (RTO), uses advanced machinery to assess the fitness of vehicles without any human intervention.

The newly-launched ATS system is aligned with the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, ensuring that it meets the standards for evaluating various vehicle categories, including two-wheelers, three-wheelers, light vehicles, medium vehicles, and heavy vehicles, both commercial and privately owned.

This system is designed to provide accurate, unbiased results and enhance road safety by eliminating unfit vehicles

from the roads. Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur, who reviewed the operations of the ATS, expressed optimism about the role this technology will play in improving road safety across the state.

He emphasised that the system adheres to the high standards set by the Central government and will contribute to a safer transportation environment by ensuring that only roadworthy vehicles remain in circulation. In line with the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, which mandate the implementation of ATS for vehicle fitness tests, the Odisha government has set its sights on expanding this initiative.

Plans are in place to establish 21 more ATS centers across various RTOs in the state, including in districts such as Boudh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Kendrapara, Sundargarh, Nayagarh, Nabarangpur, Ganjam, Sambalpur, Balasore, Koraput, Nuapa-

da, Jagatsinghpur, Mayurbhanj, Rourkela, Keonjhar, Angul, and Bhubaneswar RTO-2.

The introduction of the ATS system comes as part of the government's efforts to improve vehicle fitness certification, which has traditionally relied on manual inspections. With the recent amendments to the Central Motor Vehicles Act, ATS-based inspections have now become mandatory.

This automated approach is expected to ensure more accurate assessments and a more streamlined process for vehicle owners seeking fitness certificates and registration renewals.

The automated vehicle fitness tests are expected to reduce the risk of road accidents by ensuring that only roadworthy vehicles are allowed on public roads.

The Odisha government is hopeful that this new system will significantly contribute to road safety and help build a safer and more efficient transportation ecosystem in the state.

The certificate issuance event at the Cuttack RTO was attended by several key officials, including Commerce & Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, Additional Transport Commissioners Dipti Ranjan Patra and Lal Mohan Sethi, and Joint Transport Commissioner Samarendra Pattnaik.



**SHOWCASING CAPABILITY:** Students having a close look at a fighter plane model at 'Utkarsh Odisha' - Make in Odisha Expo, which was thrown open for public at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

**OUHS forms Research Ethics Committee**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Odisha University of Health Sciences (OUHS) marked a significant milestone here Thursday with the installation of its Research Ethics Committee (REC), reinforcing its commitment to promoting ethical research practices in medical and health sciences.

"State government is committed to give the best healthcare facilities to its people. In order to achieve the goal, strengthening ethical research practices and innovation in healthcare are very much essential," said Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling.

Joining the occasion, OUHS REC chairperson Justice DP Choudhury delivered an insightful address, emphasising the importance of ethical compliance in medical research and



the responsibility of researchers to safeguard patient rights and scientific integrity.

The programme commenced with lighting ceremonial lamp, followed by a welcome address by OUHS vice-chancellor Manash Ranjan Sahoo, who highlighted the university's progress and its vision for advancing ethical research.

On the occasion, installed

solar panels and OUHS website were formally inaugurated, signifying the institution's commitment to sustainable initiatives and digital transformation.

With the establishment of the REC, OUHS reaffirms its dedication to building a strong ethical foundation for research that upholds integrity, transparency, and scientific excellence.

**CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT**

Sri U. Debraj Patro, S/o. Late Una Sankar Narayan Patro resident of Vill/PO.: Buguda (Main Road), P.S.: Buguda, Ward No. 03, Dist.: Ganjam, PIN - 761118, Odisha declare by virtue of this affidavit before the Executive Magistrate, Buguda, Ganjam, vide No. 140 "2" A on Dtd.22.01.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as U. Debaraj Patro for all purposes.

I, KRISHNA CHANDRA PADHI, S/o - Late Babana Padhi, resident of village - Paligaon, PO. - S. Mahada, PS. - Birmaharajpur, Dist. - Subarnapur, Odisha declare by this Affidavit No.124, Dt. 29.01.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as KRISHNA CHANDRA PADHI for all future purposes.

By virtue of an Affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Simulia, I, Gitarani Sahu (39 yrs), W/o - Purnachandra Sahu, Vill - Dhihasabira, PO - Sabira, PS - Soro, Dist. - Balasore, Odisha declare that I have changed my name in my LIC policy bearing No. - 586578473 from Umamani Sahoo to Gitarani Sahu for all purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Dhamanagar, I, Pooja Sahoo (21 yrs), D/o - Akshaya Kumar Sahoo, Vill - Bidyadharpur, PS - Dhamanagar, Dist. - Bhadrak, declare that I have changed my name in my LIC policy bearing No. - 5862355820 from Tapaswini Sahoo to Pooja Sahoo for all purposes.

**IIM Sambalpur inks pact with WCD**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Jan 30:** IIM Sambalpur recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Women and Child Development (WCD) department to collaborate on the Subhadra Scholars Programme during 'Utkarsh Odisha', held in Bhubaneswar.

The MoU was signed with an objective to drive women's empowerment and improve child and adolescent welfare through evidence-based interventions and strategic support in the state.

With the collaboration, IIM Sambalpur marked a significant step in leveraging research expertise and academic excellence to strengthen policy initiatives that support women-led enterprises and financial literacy programmes.

Moreover, the faculties of the



institute will be responsible to carry out research in order to evaluate policies, along with designing and developing strategic frames for implementing and executing the sub-scheme by 'Subhadra'.

IIM Sambalpur director Ma-

hadeo Jaiswal said, "We are proud to join hands with the WCD department in advancing the objectives of the 'Subhadra' scheme. This initiative aligns with the institution's commitment to fostering sustainable growth and empowering wom-

en entrepreneurs in Odisha. By bringing rigorous research and strategic insights, we aim to drive impactful policy interventions that will uplift communities and create long-term socio-economic benefits."

Under this MoU, IIM Sambalpur will undertake a range of initiatives, including conducting research and real-time assessments to evaluate the impact of the Subhadra scheme, providing policy recommendations to refine the Subhadra scheme's objectives and enhance its delivery mechanisms, and developing monitoring frameworks to track programme performance and beneficiary outcomes.

Through this partnership, IIM Sambalpur reinforces its commitment to Odisha's growth story by contributing its expertise in research, strategy, and policy innovation.

**Min Mahapatra orders swift action on mosquito control**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Housing and Urban Development Minister Krishna Chandra Mahapatra recently chaired a high-level review meeting on mosquito control in the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) area. The meeting, held at the BMC headquarters, focused on identifying mosquito-prone areas and implementing control measures swiftly.

Minister Mahapatra directed officials to identify high-risk zones within seven days and take necessary mosquito control actions within the next two days. BMC Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil reported that the corporation's timely measures had led to a significant reduction in dengue cases this year. "While nearly 4,000 dengue cases were recorded

last year, only around 1,200 have been reported this year," Patil stated.

Currently, BMC operates 20 auto-mounted fogging machines, 30 small hand fogging machines, and two tractor-mounted machines, which are regularly used for mosquito fumigation across various wards. However, Minister Mahapatra emphasised the need for more resources, instructing officials to procure four additional tractor-mounted machines immediately.

The Minister also highlighted the shortage of manpower, noting that fogging must be conducted simultaneously in all areas to prevent mosquitoes from migrating between zones. He recommended doubling the number of anti-larvae workers to ensure effective control.

**KVIC distributes toolkits & machinery under GVV**

*The event, which continues till February 6, aims to promote indigenous products while providing artisans with valuable market opportunities*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, distributed toolkits and machinery under the Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY) scheme and inaugurated the state-level Khadi and PMEGP Joint Exhibition at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium and Christian Sahi Ground in Cuttack recently.

The event was attended by KVIC chairman Manoj Ku-

mar, Cuttack MP Bhartruhari Mahtab, KVIC eastern zone member Manoj Kumar Singh, Cuttack District Collector Dattatraya Bhausahab Shinde, and Odisha Khadi and Village Industries Board Secretary Sanjay Kumar Mishra.

During the event, Kumar distributed 136 electric pottery wheels, 50 honeybee boxes, 40 palm jaggery-making machines, eight paper plate and bowl-making machines, one spice processing unit, one hydra pulper and paper mesh-making machine, and a Sabai grass-making machine.

Kumar emphasised KVIC's commitment to empowering artisans and promoting self-reliance, in line with PM Narendra Modi's vision of 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat' and 'Vocal for Local'. "These tools and machinery will not only simplify artisans' work but also

**Khadi & PMEGP exhibition opens at Cuttack**



livelihood opportunities, contributing to the larger goal of a self-sufficient India," he added. He also highlighted the success of the 'New India's New Khadi' initiative, which has crossed a business milestone of ₹1.55 lakh crore in the last decade, generating employment for over 10.17 lakh individuals nationwide.

Mahtab, in his address, acknowledged Khadi's role as a

crore and achieved sales of ₹94.40 crore over the past five years, providing employment to approximately 2,277 spinners and weavers.

Under the PMEGP scheme, 17,050 new industries have been established in Odisha in the last five years, creating over 1,43,109 job opportunities. Additionally, through the Multi-Disciplinary Training Centre (MDTC) of KVIC Bhubaneswar, 2,444 artisans have been upskilled, with financial assistance provided under the Khadi Development Scheme and SFURTI scheme.

The state-level Khadi and PMEGP Joint Exhibition at Christian Sahi Ground features 50 Khadi stalls and 50 PMEGP stalls showcasing a variety of products from Khadi institutions, village industries units, and enterprises under the PMEGP, REGP, and SFURTI schemes.

Singh shared insights into Odisha's Khadi sector, stating that 88 active Khadi institutions in the state have produced goods worth ₹86.58

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	30.7°	29.8°
Min Temp	19.2°	18.5°
Humidity	91%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
<b>FORECAST</b> Moderate Fog.		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	76759.81	▲ 226.85
NIFTY	23249.50	▲ 86.40
DOLLAR	86.79	▲ 0.08
EURO	90.27	▼ 0.02
GOLD	₹81,301	▲ ₹991
SILVER	₹93,250	▲ ₹1428

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# BJD infighting intensifies in BeMC

# NIT-R develops innovative tech to treat industrial waste water



**Despite Naveen's call for resolution, the discord has worsened as the civic body's Mayor and 20 corporators meet District Collector seeking action**

rupting the meeting.

According to the memorandum, during Wednesday's corporation meeting at the BeMC office, the corporator of Ward 26 allegedly used abusive language and misbehaved with the Commissioner and staff. Additionally, the corporator, along with a few others, locked the BeMC campus gate, preventing access for the general public. This disruption hindered operations of the municipal office.

Notably, the Commissioner had already written to the District Collector, the state Home and Urban Development department, and the Municipal Director, urging action against the Ward 26 corporator for misconduct. Mayor Dalai, Deputy Mayor Reddy, and 20 corporators reiterated their demand by submitting the memorandum during their meeting with the District Collector.

Among BeMC's 36 BJD corporators, a majority reportedly align with former MLA Bikram Panda, while another faction is said to support Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai and district BJD President Ramesh Chandra Chyau Patnaik. The feud, ongoing for the past three months, stems from disagreement over organisational responsibilities within the Berhampur Assembly constituency and is intensifying with each passing day.

Following the disruptions in the corporation meeting, the party's district unit president Chyau Patnaik informed the former chief minister about the situation, urging action against those causing disorder. Notably, corporators from both factions had December 18 visited Naveen Nivas, where Patnaik had emphasised unity and organisational discipline. However, the continued infighting

suggests his directives have been largely ignored.

Supporters of the mayor's faction question why Bikram Panda, who lost the last election as BJD's candidate from Gopalpur, continues to wield influence in Berhampur politics. Nevertheless, Panda reportedly retains the support of a majority of BJD corporators.

Former Union Minister and senior BJD leader Chandrasekar Sahu remarked that ensuring smooth governance is the mayor's responsibility, adding that she has failed to maintain control over the corporators.

Meanwhile, BJD Corporator Surendra Maharana warned that if the crisis escalates further, the present state government might consider dissolving the municipal corporation, necessitating immediate intervention from the party's top leadership.

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

**Rourkela, Jan 30:** Researchers at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela have developed an innovative process for efficiently treating industrial waste water contaminated with persistent dyes such as Bismarck Brown R.

The research, supported by Science and Engineering Research Board of the Department of Science and Technology, has been published in the prestigious Journal of Environmental Chemical Engineering and the team has been granted a patent for the developed technology.

Led by Sujit Sen, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering at NIT Rourkela, the research team includes Madhumita Manna, research graduate, NIT Rourkela and Binay Kanti Dutta, former professor, IIT Kharagpur.

According to Sen, waste water from industries like textiles and dye manufacturing often contains harmful dyes that are difficult to remove with traditional filtration methods.

"Dyes such as Bismarck Brown R are small enough to pass through microfiltration membranes, making them particularly challenging to treat. These dyes can cause signifi-



cant environmental and health issues due to their intense colour and potential carcinogenic properties."

"Conventional treatment methods, such as those relying on ultraviolet light, often struggle with large-scale applications, especially when separating dye particles from water," he said.

Sen explained that to address these challenges, the research team developed a cutting-edge treatment system that combines two advanced technologies.

"The first is a ceramic membrane coated with an industrial-waste derived Zeolite and Zinc Oxide nanocomposite. This photocatalyst can break down dye molecules when exposed to light."

"The second technology incorporates micro bubbles, generated via a simple air diffuser, to enhance mass transfer and improve the breakdown process. A continuous tangential

flow membrane photoreactor was designed and tested using both simulated and real waste water from a local dyeing factory," he said.

Sen said, "Our hybrid system successfully achieved 95.4 per cent decolourisation of Bismarck Brown R and 94 per cent removal of chemical oxygen demand (COD) in just 90 minutes. The nanocomposite performed well under visible light, making this approach suitable for practical wastewater treatment applications."

There are a host of potential applications of this hybrid system, which is more efficient and cost effective in comparison to conventional oxidation methods. This technology could be applied across industries such as textile manufacturing, chemical industries, steel, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals, where robust wastewater treatment is required. It can also be scaled up and integrated into existing wastewater treatment plants to improve the efficiency of treating dye-laden wastewater. Furthermore, the system may prove effective for treating contaminants that are typically difficult to remove using conventional methods, such as those found in hospital and pharmaceutical waste water.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 30:** The internal rift among BJD corporators in the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has been widening despite repeated calls for unity from party supremo and former chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

The discord was evident during Wednesday's corporation meeting, which was disrupted due to unruly behaviour of a faction, forcing an abrupt adjournment.

Meanwhile, in response, BeMC Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai, Deputy Mayor E Vivek Reddy, and 20 corporators visited the District Collector at his residential office in Chhatrapur Thursday. They submitted a memorandum requesting strict legal action against corporators responsible for dis-

## Youth sentenced to 10 years RI for raping minor girl

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, Jan 30:** A brick kiln labourer was sentenced to 10 years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) Thursday along with a fine of ₹50,000 by the Ad-hoc Additional Session Judge (Fast Track Special Court) of Kendrapara for raping a 15-year-old girl.

Public Prosecutor of Additional District Judge -cum-Special Judge (PCOSO) Court Manoj Kumar Sahoo said the 22-year-old youth was convicted by the court for impregnating and making the victim an unwed mother.

The convict has been identified as Pradip Kissan of Kanchanpur village under Kesinga police station in Kalahandi district. According to Sahoo, Pradip, who was staying in a rented house near the victim's house, developed a relationship with the girl.

The accused had raped the minor girl several times and made her pregnant.

The victim's mother, after knowing the incident, lodged an FIR at Marshaghai police station in August 2023.

Marshaghai police had arrested the accused August 14, 2023. Later, the victim girl delivered a baby boy. To establish the identity of the biological father, police also made DNA profiling tests of the child, the unwed mother, and the accused.

While adjudging the under Section 376(3) of IPC and under Section 4 of PCOSO Act, Ad-hoc Additional Session Judge (Fast Track Special Court) of Kendrapara, Tribikram Keshari Chinchara, convicted the youth and sentenced him to undergo 10 years RI and slapped a fine of ₹50,000 on him.

The judge ordered that the convict would be imprisoned for one more year if he failed to deposit the fine amount. The court also recommended to the government to provide a compensation of ₹4 lakh to the victim and ensure steps for proper rehabilitation of the child.

## Digital arrest: Teacher couple duped of ₹34.5L

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 30:** A teacher couple from the Kukudakhandi police station area in Ganjam district was defrauded of ₹34.5 lakh through digital arrest by cybercriminals, police said Thursday.

The scam came to the light after the woman lodged a complaint at the Berhampur Cyber and Economic Offenses police station Wednesday.

According to the complaint, the woman's husband received an unknown call January 20. The caller, posing as a TRAI official, claimed that his SIM card would be deactivated within two hours. The victim's phone number is also linked with his Aadhaar card. The caller falsely accused him of involvement in a ₹2.38 crore money laundering case registered at the Kolaba police station in Maharashtra. The caller further alleged that an arrest warrant had also been issued against him.

When the teacher's wife got involved, the fraudsters connected with her via WhatsApp video calls from four different numbers. During these calls, they impersonated police officers and

a Supreme Court judge to convince the couple of the fabricated charges, ultimately coercing them into transferring the money.

Fearing ₹30 lakh from her account at the Ankushpur branch of State Bank of India (SBI) to Bethel Mission School in Madhya Pradesh December 21. The next day, she made another transfer of ₹4.5 lakh via RTGS from the SBI's Bijipur branch in Berhampur to a different account.

Scammers had threatened that all the money in her bank account would be transferred to the Reserve Bank and that she would only get it back after an investigation. They also warned that both she and her husband would be arrested if she failed to deposit the money.

Even after making the transfers, the cyber fraudsters continued to call and intimidate the couple. Finally, the teacher approached the manager of the Ankushpur SBI branch to discuss the issue. Upon realising she had fallen victim to cyber fraud, she filed a complaint at the police station. Police registered a case (12/25) and launched an investigation.

## Poetry fest on tribal themes held at FMU



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasore, Jan 30:** On the second day of the international 'Unurum' festival organised at Fakir Mohan University here, a major event 'Poetry Festival' was held Thursday. The poetry recitation session was presided over by the university's Vice-Chancellor Professor Santosh Kumar Tripathy.

Seventeen renowned poets from Balasore and nearby areas participated in the event and recited their poems on tribal themes. Among the invited poets were Krushna Kumar Mohanty, Abhaya Das, Kalipada Panda, Kalyani Nanda, Debajani Das, Pradeepta Mishra, Bimal Jena, Banshidhar Chaudhury, Manaswini Devi, Yashodhara Das, Ratnakar Singh, Radharajan Pattanayak, Subhendu Das, Shridev, Samarendra

Nath Mahapatra, Harishchandra Behera, and Niranjan Khuntia. Their poetry captivated the audience.

VC Tripathy honored the poets with mementos and tokens of appreciation. Students of the university also had the opportunity to recite their poems. Most of the recited poems were based on indigenous thoughts, tribal lifestyle, and folklore.

On this occasion, VC Tripathy, Professor Debashish Patra, and other faculty members also recited their poems. The session was coordinated by Babulu Padhan and Sasmita Behera. A special art exhibition was also organised by Di-ana Mahapatra and her team.

In the evening's cultural programme, the main attractions were Odissi dance performed by Russian dancer Svetlana Gadlina, Manipuri dance presented by artistes from West Bengal, Rabha Hachang dance from Assam, Santali dance by Fakir Mohan University's troupe, Mundari dance by artistes from Nilgiri region, and Dhemsha dance by artistes from Kendrapara.

## VIG GLARE ON ITDA OFFICIAL

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Rourkela, Jan 30:** Vigilance department sleuths Thursday unearthed assets including a two-storey building, two flats, nine high-value flats and deposits worth ₹61 lakh allegedly belonging to a government official.

The anti-corruption officials raided the properties of the officer working at the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) at Bonai in Sundargarh district for allegedly possessing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income, an official said.

The raids were conducted by seven teams in Bhubaneswar, Balasore, Jajpur and Bonai, the official added. The simultaneous raids were conducted after search warrants were issued by the Special Judge of Vigilance (Sundargarh).

During the operation, the officials discovered a two-storey building and two flats in Bhubaneswar, nine high-value plots in and around the Capital city and Puri, ₹4.5 lakh in cash, bank and insurance deposits of ₹61.42 lakh, and 150 grams of gold ornaments. A four-wheeler, four two-wheelers and household items worth ₹21.14 lakh were found in the possession of the ITDA official.

## EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/ E-Tender/100, Dt. 27.01.2025
(1) Tender No. eTender-CenKUR-295-2024, Dtd.: 17.01.2025
<b>DESCRIPTION</b> : EXECUTION OF CTR(S) FOR A LENGTH OF 1.44 KM ON ROUTE-1 AND ROUTE-4 OF DHENKANAL YARD UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (P-WAY) DHENKANAL OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
<b>Approx. Cost of the Work</b> : ₹ 41.10 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 82,200/-
(2) Tender No. eTender-CenKUR-296-2024, Dtd.: 17.01.2025
<b>DESCRIPTION</b> : EXECUTION OF CTR(S) FOR A LENGTH OF 1.392 KM ON ROUTE-1 AND ROUTE-4 OF SADASHIBPUR YARD UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (P-WAY) DHENKANAL OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
<b>Approx. Cost of the Work</b> : ₹ 39.56 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 79,100/-
Completion Period : 08 (Eight) Months (for Sl. No. 1) and 06 (Six) Months (for Sl. No. 2).
<b>Tender Closing Date and Time</b> : At 1500 Hrs. of 07.02.2025 (for both the Tenders).
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : <a href="http://www.reps.gov.in">www.reps.gov.in</a>
<b>Note</b> : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.
<b>Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) /</b> PR-93/PR/24-25 Khurda Road

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
Office of the Superintending Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No.1, Bhubaneswar  
INSTRUCTIONS FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement  
Date: 27.01.2025

Sl No	Name of the Work	Approximate Estimated Cost put to Tender (Rs. in Lakh)	EMD/ Bid Security	Cost of Bid Document	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion
1	Improvement to Road from Master Canteen to Railway Station (UCO Bank to Railway Station) from On/0/360 Mtr. to 0/630 Mtr. for the year 2024-25.	Rs 15.04	Rs 17,000/-	Rs. 6,000/-	C Class / D Class	01 (One) Calendar Month
2	S/R to Internal Road from Sndeivi Chhaka to Ravi Talkies Road for the year 2024-25 such as laying of SDBC from RD 1/400 Km. to RD 1/800 Km. in Periodical Renewal Cost (Balance).	Rs 14.26	Rs. 15,000/-	Rs. 6,000/- Online	C Class / D Class	01 (One) Calendar Month

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. The website for "ONLINE BIDDING" is <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>. Bid documents will be available in the above website from 11.00 A.M. of 31.01.2025 to 5.30 P.M. of 14.02.2025. Bids of the above work shall be opened at 12.30 P.M. of 15.02.2025. The bidder must possess matching class compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). Further details and other terms and conditions can be seen from DTGN in the e-Procurement website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). N.B. Subsequent Corrigendum/Addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above.

Sd/- Er. Prabhudutta Pradhan  
Superintending Engineer, BSSR (R&B) Division No.1, Bhubaneswar  
OIPR-34076/11/0015/2425

**UCO BANK**  
Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building, 2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751009, Tel: 0674-2620423

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
For Immovable Property

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the UCO Bank, Khandapara Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **POSSESSION** of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Khandapara Branch for an amount plus interest, incidental expenses & charges thereon.

KHANDAPARA BRANCH / Name and Address of the Borrower / Guarantor	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Property
<b>Borrower: M/s. Sai Sanitary &amp; Paints, Prop.: Mr. Tophan Padhiary, S/o.: Mr. Basudev Padhiary / Guarantor: Mr. Basudev Padhiary, S/o.: Hadu Padhiary, Both are AI/PO.: Bodasa, PS.: Khandapara, Dist.: Nayagarh</b>	<b>₹11,81,978.52 as on 30.09.2024 + further interest &amp; other charges thereon</b>	<b>08.10.2024 / 27.01.2025</b>	All that part & parcel of the Land & Building Standing in the name of Mr. Basudev Padhiary, situated at Village: Bodasa, Taluk: Khandapara, SRO: Khandapara, Dist.: Nayagarh, Khata No.: 582/243, Plot No.: 1354 & 1355, Area: Ac.0.030 Dec & Ac.0.030 Dec, Bounded by North: Rabindra Prusty, East: C C Road, South: Baida Padhiari, West: Kumud Padhiari

**Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 30.01.2025** **Authorised Officer, UCO Bank**

**Bank of India**  
Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jaydev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.:0674-2362249

**Gold Auction Notice**

It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, person engaged in the business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/expenses) by **17.02.2025**, their pledged gold ornaments will be auctioned at **Concerned Branch Premises on 18.02.2025 at 11.00 AM**. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reason in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be low or inadequate. Further, if needed be Bank reserves the right to change the date and time of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. Purity and net weight and reserve price of gold ornaments/ coins etc. will be available to interested bidders on auction date and auction venue/auction portal.

Sl. No.	A/c. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)	Gross Wt. in Gram	Net Wt. in Gram	Total Dues as on 31.12.2024 (excluding unapplied interest Charges, Cost & Expenses)
<b>BANK OF INDIA, KHARVELNAGAR BRANCH, 98, KHARVELA NAGAR, KESHARI TALKIES COMPLEX, BHUBANESHWAR-751001, KHURDA, ODISHA, MOB.: 7008010166</b>					
1.	511277610000843	Mrs. Ira Palit, At: Flat No.: HIG 4/6, H.B. Colony, Phase-1, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751016.	66.000	66.000	₹2,47,456.00
2.	511277610000844		29.000	29.000	₹1,11,213.00
<b>BANK OF INDIA, KALPANA SQUARE BRANCH, PLOT NO.: A/88, BJB NAGAR, BHUBANESWAR-751014, MOB.: 9040419287</b>					
1.	513077610000687	Prabhat Moharana, W/o- Kartik Moharana, Gondia, Poruhakhoja, Dhenkanal, Odisha, PIN-750916.	46.560	44.200	₹2,14,175.00
<b>BANK OF INDIA, JAGATSinghpur BRANCH, PLOT NO.: 949, GANDHI CHHAK (OPP. IOCL PETROL PUMP), P.O/DIST. JAGATSINGHPUR, ODISHA-754103, MOB.: 7037344944</b>					
1.	512177610000547	Mrs. Binati Patra, W/o- Mr. Shrikant Patra, At: Deuligrameswar, PO/PS/Dist.: Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, PIN-754103.	74.000	63.600	₹3,61,706.00

**Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 30.01.2025** **Zonal Manager, Bank of India**

## Engg student among 4 held for 9 burglaries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, Jan 30:** Four people, including an engineering student, were arrested Thursday in connection with burglaries at nine places in Ganjam district, police said. Items worth over ₹10 lakh were seized from those arrested, they said.

Among these items were gold ornament, mobile phones, computers, colour printers, a water cooler, a water filter, a scooter, a digital weighing machine, and ₹1.40 lakh in cash, besides house-breaking equipment, they added.

The gold ornaments were recovered from a bank and a private finance company, where the accused had deposited them, police said.

Those arrested were identified as Silu Nayak (21), a fourth-year BTech student, Bikash Bisoiyi (23), Kalia Behera (21) and Sarasa Kumar Nayak (32) of Borosingi, they said.

SP (Berhampur) Saravana Vivek M said a search was underway for other members of the gang who have been identified.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the gang was involved in at least nine burglaries - six in the Gopalpur police station area, two

in Golanthara police station limits and one in the Chamakhandi police station area, he said.

All the burglaries were committed in the last five months, he added.


"We suspect the gang might have been involved in several other such cases in adjoining districts. We are verifying it," he said.

The arrests were made during the investigation of a burglary case registered in the Golanthara police station December 19. The gang robbed gold ornaments weighing 350 grams and over ₹45,000 in cash, among others, by breaking into a house, police said.

**HERE NOW**

**The practice of Yoga brings us face to face with the extraordinary complexity of our own being.**

**SRI AUROBINDO**



# Climate Displacement

Every year, 21.5 million people are forcibly displaced by floods, droughts, wildfires, and storms. This number is set to rise dramatically over the coming decades, with up to 1.2 billion people expected to be driven from their homes by 2050. The unfolding climate crisis is not just a humanitarian disaster but also a global health emergency.

Climate displacement poses both direct and indirect threats to public health. By disrupting care services, it deprives affected communities of access to doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies. Climate-induced migration also exacerbates poverty, overcrowding, and social instability. Food production is often severely affected, while unsanitary living conditions fuel the spread of infectious diseases.

As the climate crisis threatens to derail global efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the health and well-being of hundreds of millions of people across the developing world are at risk. High-income countries are not immune: in the United States, 3.2 million adults were displaced or evacuated due to natural disasters in 2022 alone.

Pharmaceutical companies must play a pivotal role in bolstering global health resilience. Their involvement is particularly critical in conflict zones at the forefront of the climate-displacement crisis, where life-saving medicines and vaccines are often in short supply.

While the pharmaceutical industry has made strides in reducing carbon dioxide emissions and adopting more sustainable practices, its efforts fall far short of mitigating climate-related disruptions to supply chains. These vulnerabilities were on full display in 2017, when Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico's drug-manufacturing sector, which at the time accounted for nearly 10% of all drugs consumed in the US.

Some pharmaceutical companies, such as Novartis and Novo Nordisk, have launched targeted programmes to aid populations displaced by extreme weather events, while others have donated cash or supplies in response to natural disasters. The demand for these donations has risen with increasing climate and humanitarian needs. Hikma, a generic medicine manufacturer founded in Jordan, reported \$4 million in donations in 2020, and \$4.9 million in 2023, mostly serving the needs in the surrounding region.

No company has developed a comprehensive strategy to ensure that displaced communities have sustained access to health products. A more holistic approach is needed. Amid the ongoing climate-displacement crisis, pharmaceutical companies should adopt a four-pronged strategy to strengthen health-care systems.

For starters, they could help deliver medicines to vulnerable communities in remote areas by revamping their supply-chains, from building redundancy into shipping networks to redesigning products to be more stable in hot climates where refrigeration may be unavailable. Moreover, they should include robust systems for the large-scale distribution of generic drugs, which are frequently the most effective tools for managing disease outbreaks.

Second, pharmaceutical companies must invest in research and development to create vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics targeting climate-sensitive diseases. Rising global temperatures are accelerating the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue, malaria, and Zika, as well as waterborne diseases like cholera and shigella, putting displaced populations at even greater risk.

Yet, despite the need for innovation, the 2024 Access to Medicine Index - which ranks the efforts of pharmaceutical companies to improve access to essential drugs in developing countries - shows that the R&D pipeline for emerging pathogens and neglected tropical diseases is drying up. Compounding this problem is the lack of research into new antibiotics to combat the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance, exacerbated by extreme weather and poor sanitation.

Third, pharmaceutical companies should forge long-term partnerships with humanitarian organisations focused on climate displacement. Public-private collaborations have also proven effective in strengthening health resilience. Since 2010, for example, leading vaccine manufacturers like GSK and Pfizer have supplied Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, with billions of vaccine doses, protecting vulnerable populations in some of the world's most resource-constrained countries.

Lastly, pharmaceutical companies must boost efforts to cut greenhouse-gas emissions across their value chains. While the climate impact of pharmaceuticals may get less attention than that of traditional manufacturing industries, the sector emits more CO per \$1 million of revenue than the automotive industry.

The active support and engagement of shareholders, employees, and other stakeholders is crucial. Investors, in particular, must encourage companies to align their business practices with global health and climate goals. This is not only an ethical choice but also one that promises significant long-term financial and reputational benefits.

Climate displacement is not a distant or hypothetical threat; it is a rapidly escalating health emergency. The pharmaceutical industry has a moral responsibility to act. To do so effectively, companies must get ahead of the curve and provide vital, life-saving treatments to those on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

*The writer is CEO of the Access to Medicine Foundation.*  
@PROJECT SYNDICATE

## WISDOM CORNER

**All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.**

WALT DISNEY

**A woman always has her man, but the man unconsciously leans on his roots, his heritage. He feels like an orphan without his parents.**

RAJ KAPOOR

**You cannot catch a child's spirit by running after it; you must stand still and for love it will soon itself return.**

ARTHUR MILLER

## FOCUS UNION BUDGET

# WHO GETS WHAT

What are they going to get in this budget? People want straight and simple answers. It is not difficult to make a close-to-accurate guess if one first addresses the other questions like: What is the budget? Who are its architects? Which segment of people - poor, rich, middle classes, employed, unemployed, farmers, gig workers - is asking this?

First thing first. The budget is the government's estimated income and expenditure for the financial year - a financial statement. The higher the budget size, the higher would be the allocations for the people's welfare. Unfortunately, the size of the union budget as a percent of the GDP has been shrinking over the years; it has come down from 17.43% of GDP in 2009-10 to 14.76% in 2024-25. The upcoming budget is not going to be different given the government's excess concern with fiscal consolidation and lower-than-expected GDP growth.

We can make a rough estimate of the size taking the expected GDP in 2025-26. The GDP was estimated at ₹326 lakh crore in 2024-25 budget; later it was brought down to ₹324 lakh crore with nominal growth 9.7% lower than the budget estimate of 10.5% growth. Presuming the estimate of ₹356 lakh crore nominal again with about 10% increase forecast and assuming that the budget size of some 14.5%, the budget size will be in the range of ₹51.62 lakh crore against the current year's ₹48.20 lakh crore, some 7% increase, not a big sum after adjusting the current inflation.

The reason for the shrinking budget size is in alignment with the economic policies of the budget architects. The present government's neo-liberal economic policies vehemently oppose the increasing fiscal deficit which means the focus will be on spending cuts and tax increases. The 2024-25 fiscal deficit was 4.9% of GDP. Finance Minister



**A course correction is imminent with a practical approach as we do not expect any ideological shift from the government committed to neo-liberal economic policies**

Nirmala Sitharaman said her aim was to bring it down to 4.5% in 2025-26 budget and to keep on reducing it in successive budgets hereafter.

The same liberal economic policies that have a penchant for a low fiscal deficit that is low spending believe in the theory that economic growth is more important because they believe the growth trickles down benefits to the poor and middle classes. So, the approach is to help the industry and commerce rather than giving sops to the poor.

Based on income levels, the country has 134 million (9.7% of population) poor with less than \$2 a day income as per Pew Research Centre's compilation. Similarly, 1,162 million (84%) are in low-income category with earnings between \$2 and \$10 per day; 66 million (4.8%) middle-income group persons with \$10 to \$20 income; 16 million (1.2%) upper-middle-class persons with \$20 to \$50/day and 2 million (0.1%) high-income individuals with above \$50 a day. Most people's expectations in India are understandable with poor (9.7%) and low-income (84%) categories accounting for 93.7% of the population.

Whatever the claims of growth and prosperity of the country the gap between rich and poor has been widening. The Gini coefficient of 0.410 in 2023 compared to 0.371 in 1955

as per a study of the People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE), shows the present situation, worse than in the 1950s. Undoubtedly there has been growth but its fruits are not trickling down to the bottom but concentrating at the top whereby the number of billionaires and their wealth has been on the rise. Forbes billionaires' data show an increase in their number from just one in 1991 to 52 in 2011 and a further increase to 162 in 2022.

Unfortunately, the government's tax relief is also benefiting the rich and super-rich more than the ordinary. Not going into too many details some recent reputed media reportage showed ₹3 lakh crore worth of tax concessions garnered by the largest corporates since 2019 and the revenue foregone by the government since 2012-13 was ₹8 lakh crore.

A course correction is imminent with a practical approach as we do not expect any ideological shift from the government committed to neo-liberal economic policies. The tax relief to middle classes and low income is a big relief but not a big burden to the government since the revenue coming from the persons with incomes below ₹10 lakh is only 6.22% while those with above ₹50 lakh brought 76%.

Another ground to exclude this segment totally from the tax

fold is the falling consumption expenditure which is not even in the economic interest of the big because low consumption demand leads to lower sale volumes and profits.

Similarly, the middle classes expect no tax on the interest of their bank deposits since they are their poor sources of income. The government should rather encourage more deposits into the system and should learn how to use them productively instead of discouraging them with taxes on the interest earnings.

Naturally the rich want more sops. They want ease of doing business, simplified labour compliance, single window system, and transparency as listed in the CII's ten-point wish list.

As for others, the unemployed youth want employment and quality employment. Although some employment growth is shown what is conveniently forgotten is its quality. Most of the employment generated has been in the informal sector; more than 90% of employment in the country is in the informal sector.

Needless to add the woes of the farmers and their poor incomes. A high 92% of farm holdings are small and marginal. The monthly average of farmers' family income is ₹10,695. Of this, crop production provides ₹5,298 and the rest is coming as wage labour and from allied activities as per the NSS Survey 2019. Similarly, everyone knows about the neglect of health and education, their poor quality and inadequacy.

It may be concluded that the budget, poor in size due to excessive concern of limiting fiscal deficit to 4.5% of GDP, coupled with the government's commitment to neo-liberal economic policies cannot be a pro-poor budget in reality. So, the majority of the population, cannot expect any drastic changes in the tax regime or other concessions except some paltry benefits here and there.

*The writer is a development economist and commentator on economic and social affairs.*



PSM Rao

**UNFORTUNATELY, THE SIZE OF THE UNION BUDGET AS A PERCENT OF THE GDP HAS BEEN SHRINKING OVER THE YEARS**



Jayasree K. Iyer

**RISING GLOBAL TEMPERATURES ARE ACCELERATING THE SPREAD OF MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES SUCH AS DENGUE, MALARIA, AND ZIKA, AS WELL AS WATERBORNE DISEASES LIKE CHOLERA AND SHIGELLA, PUTTING DISPLACED POPULATIONS AT EVEN GREATER RISK**

## SPECTRUM SOCIAL SECURITY

# Health insurance vital for the elderly

Medical insurance is a shield that protects us and our families from financial instability during health emergencies. A good policy offers peace of mind at the time of hospitalization by taking care of our medical expenses. Of late, routine diseases like diabetes, obesity, respiratory problems, heart disease, are on the rise. This coupled with sedentary lifestyle, working environment, eating habits, gadget addiction and ecological imbalances make human lives fraught with increased incidence of ailments. With age, our overall health can decline and we might experience more frequent illnesses. Health insurance companies consider older individuals as higher-risk policyholders because they are more likely to need medical care. This perceived risk leads to higher premium costs.

Many people wonder, "can we get health insurance, if we are over 65," since most health care plans cap the entry age at 65. But today many insurance companies have special health insurance covers for the elder-

ly, especially those above 65 because their health needs to be safeguarded too. While a 70-year-old individual may now have the opportunity to purchase health insurance for the first time, but they are likely to encounter stringent terms, exclusions and possibly high premiums.

To buy a new health insurance policy, senior citizens have to go for a full medical check-up. If they have pre-existing health conditions, the premium of the policies goes up. Senior citizens may also have a longer waiting period to claim the cost of treatment of certain medical conditions. The insurer has the right to reject a health insurance policy, if the underwriting process shows high risk, based on the results of the medical check-up. Usually, for senior citizens, premiums may increase every two to three years, based on the claims. As a rule, an insurer cannot contest any claim on the ground of non-disclosure or misrepresentation after the completion of 60 continuous months of coverage. In that case, if a senior citizen often claims insurance for surgeries or other expenses, the premium will sharply rise ev-

ery few years. Most likely, elder persons frequently visit doctors for check-ups, treatments and follow-ups become common. These OPD services lead to higher insurance premiums, as insurers anticipate more claims of OPD from older individuals.

As per IRDAI data, health insurers collected a total premium of ₹1.1 lakh crore during 2024 and settled claims totaling ₹83,493 crore making a profit of ₹26,507 crore. Still, insurance companies say health insurance is a loss-making business and every year threaten not to renew the policies only to increase the premium amount year after year.

Considering the impact of medical inflation, which is around 15%, and the impact of these policy changes, the overall premiums may shoot upwards by 30% from coming year. Taking into account the advantage of group insurance plans offered by the employer, top-up health insurance plans offer cost-effective options for enhancing coverage by providing additional benefits at a lower premium than comprehensive plans. Family floater plans are a cost-effective option because they provide coverage

for multiple family members under a single policy.

Let us consider porting our insurance policy to another provider, if we find that our current insurer's premiums are too high. Transferring our coverage without losing benefits, is possible with many insurers and we might discover a more affordable plan with similar coverage elsewhere. Regularly reviewing our health insurance plan is important to identify unnecessary coverage or riders that can increase our premium.

It is important to explore government-sponsored health insurance schemes that offer subsidised or free coverage based on our location and income level. Recently the government has launched Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) which aims at meeting the immediate hospitalisation needs of eligible beneficiary families in a cashless manner. Individuals can protect their financial well-being and secure their healthcare coverage by being proactive and making informed decisions.

*The writer is a retired banker.*



Gopabandhu Mohapatra

**INDIVIDUALS CAN PROTECT THEIR FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND SECURE THEIR HEALTHCARE COVERAGE BY BEING PROACTIVE AND MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS**

## A wake-up call

Sir, This refers to "AI Push," Orissa POST, Jan 29. The tremendous performance of the DeepSeek-R1 model from the Chinese startup DeepSeek - achieving the performance comparable to American giants like OpenAI at a fraction of the cost, has redefined AI's financial and technological dynamics. Its success demonstrates that ingenuity can outpace massive investments, but it also raises ethical questions about transparency and freedom in AI systems. DeepSeek's refusal to engage on politically sensitive topics highlights the intersection of technological advancement and censorship. When asked if Arunachal Pradesh is an Indian state, the chatbot responded, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope." Such responses expose the AI's alignment with Chinese government censorship policies, reinforcing concerns about using AI as a tool for state propaganda and control. For India, this holds lessons in both innovation and censorship. Despite its digital progress, its limited R&D spending and fragmented innovation ecosystem hinder its ability to compete globally. It must endeavour to transition from a service-driven tech sector to one rooted in innovation. For world, DeepSeek's rise is a wake-up call to adapt and innovate while ensuring AI systems reflect ethical practices and democratic ideals as it marches faster into the AI era.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

## Crowd management

Sir, Even before the two incidents of stampedes that took place in Hyderabad and in Tirupati in recent months could die away from our memories, the nation has witnessed yet another stampede at Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj where around 30 people have reportedly died when devotees had gathered in large numbers in the wee hours to take a holy dip. Kumbh Mela has witnessed several deadly incidents in the past. In 1954, more than 400 people died in a single-day stampede at the festival, while in 2013, 36 people were crushed to death at Prayagraj's railway station during the event. Deadly crowd crushes are becoming a regular feature in India, especially during religious festivals, and the Kumbh Mela, with its unfathomable throngs of devotees, already had a grim track record of deadly crowd crushes before the latest incident.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

**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)

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POLL PREPS

## Delhi comes alive with jingles, posters, promises

## Launch web portal for live-in relationships: HC

**Polling for the 70-member Delhi Assembly will be held February 5, with the votes set to be counted February 8**



**New Delhi, Jan 30:** As the Delhi Assembly elections approach, the city has come alive with the clamour of campaign jingles, colourful posters and loudspeakers blaring messages from competing political parties.

From the narrow lanes of Chandni Chowk to the bustling streets of Dwarka, each party is pulling out all the stops to make its presence felt. Music has become the lifeblood of the election campaigns.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), known for its glitzy campaigns, unveiled a remixed version of its popular 2017 anthem, "BJP Dil Mein, BJP Dilli Mein," sung by Manoj Tiwari.

The peppy tune resonates in crowded markets and residential colonies, promising "desh ke liye kiya vikas, ab Dilli ki baari hai" (development has been done for the nation, now it's Delhi's turn).

The Congress is countering with a soulful melody titled "Har jarurat hogi puri, Dilli mein Congress hai jaruri" (Every need will be fulfilled, Congress is necessary in Delhi), aiming to revive its connect with voters.

Meanwhile, the Aam Aad-

mi Party (AAP) has stuck to its roots with its catchy track "Phir Layenge Kejriwal" (We will bring back Kejriwal), highlighting the party's welfare schemes in health and education.

Along with striking jingles, campaign posters from competing political parties have also caught the eyes of the voters.

In Seelampur, banners proclaiming "Delhi ka CM kaun? AAP's Arvind Kejriwal or Gali Baloch Party" are hard to miss.

BJP's guarantees for the welfare of women and poor has taken centre stage with the saffron party highlighting their

promises of giving monthly aid of Rs 2,500 to women, Rs 21,000 to pregnant women.

They party is also highlighting the work it has done for poor and its vision for Delhi with posters: "Gareebo ke liye crore pakke ghar banaye, ab Delhi ki baari hai" (Have build crores of permanent homes for the poor, now it's Delhi's turn).

The Congress, though quieter, has posters in Connaught Place highlighting its promises with slogans like "Garib ke liye Sahara, Congress tumhara" (In support of the poor, your Congress).

Delhiites are soaking in the campaign drama with mixed reactions. Shaheen Begum, a resident of Seelampur, said, "I enjoy the music and the energy, but at the end of the day, my vote will go to the party that deliver their promises of providing jobs and women's safety."

Ramesh Gupta, a shopkeeper in Chandni Chowk, said, "All parties make big promises. BJP talks about other states, AAP brags about Delhi, and Congress is barely visible. Let's see who walks the talk."

In the labyrinthine streets of Old Delhi, BJP's campaign stands out with its bold claims about national progress.

"Poore desh mein banaye 60,000 km ki road" (60,000 km of roads built nationwide) screams a poster in Ballimaran. On the other hand, the AAP's grassroots approach focuses on

local welfare.

From food distribution to health camps, volunteers in areas like Shahdara chant slogans about "bijli, paani, and shiksha" (electricity, water, and education).

In New Delhi, BJP MP Parvash Verma leads rallies emphasising the party's work for women, claiming, "From Madhya Pradesh to Odisha, women are getting their due respect and financial aid. Delhi will follow next."

Not to be outdone, Congress counters with street plays in Tilak Nagar, highlighting issues of inflation and unemployment, while AAP's cadre, clad in signature caps, distribute pamphlets in Malviya Nagar, with the tagline, "Kaun kar raha hai mahilaon ka samman?" (Who is respecting women?).

In Jahangirpuri, children play cricket in the shadow of a giant billboard featuring Arvind Kejriwal picture with the message, "Phir Layenge Kejriwal." Nearby, a BJP hoarding takes a jibe: "AAP ka jhooth, na Punjab mein diya, na Delhi mein denge" (AAP's lies, they didn't deliver in Punjab and won't in Delhi either).

With every party leveraging music, visuals, and grassroots outreach, Delhi's electoral battleground is as colourful and chaotic as the city itself.

In the narrow lanes and sprawling markets, the people are bombarded with promises, catchy tunes, and larger-than-life cutouts, leaving them to decide which narrative resonates most as voting day approaches.

The bench noted that the live-in-relationship agreement is liable to be registered by a competent authority or tribunal, which is required to be established by the government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Jan 30:** A single-judge bench of the Rajasthan High Court has directed the state government to launch a web portal to register live-in relationships till the enactment of appropriate legislation.

Hearing a bunch of pleas filed by several live-in couples seeking protection, Justice Anoop Kumar Dhand said that while such relationships may seem appealing, the problems likely to arise are many.

"Several couples are residing in live-in relationships and are facing threat and danger from their families and society for non-acceptance of their relationship status. Hence, they are approaching the courts by way of filing writ petitions under Article 226 of the Constitution, seeking protection under Article 21. As a result, courts are inundated with such petitions," the bench noted.

"The idea of live-in relationship may seem to be unique and appealing but in reality, the problems likely to arise are many and challenging. The status of a woman in such a relationship is not that of a wife and lacks social approval or sanctity," it said.

The bench noted that the live-in-relationship agreement



is liable to be registered by a competent authority or tribunal, which is required to be established by the government.

"Till the enactment of an appropriate legislation by the government, let a competent authority be established in each district to look into the matter of registering live-in relationships that will address and redress the grievances of such partners/couples who have entered into such a relationship and the children being born out therefrom. Let a website or web portal be launched in this regard for the redressal of the issue arising out of such a relationship," the court said.

It directed that a copy of the order be sent to the chief secretary, principal secretary of the department of law and justice and the secretary of department of justice and social welfare, New Delhi to look into the matter and do the needful.

## R-Day 2025: Delhi Police wins 'Best Marching Contingent' trophy



**New Delhi:** The Delhi Police has been adjudged the 'Best Marching Contingent' at the Republic Day Parade 2025 held at Kartavya Path on January 26, an official said Wednesday. The team included three sub-inspectors, 44 head constables and 100 constables, all donned in iconic 'Red Safa' attire. This marks its 17th victory in the parade's history, following the Delhi Police Women's Contingent last year, the official said. The contingent, led by Additional DCP Rishi Kumar Singh, secured the prestigious 'Best Marching Contingent among CAPFs/other auxiliary forces' award under the judges choice. The newly formed All-Women Delhi Police Band, participating for the second time, captivated audiences with its melodious tunes.



In this image released by @rashtrapatibhvn via X Thursday, President Droupadi Murmu with personnel of the Tri-Service Band contingents and Provost Outriders of the three Services who participated in the Republic Day Parade and Beating Retreat Ceremony 2025, poses for group picture at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi

## GRAP-3 curbs back as air quality drops

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** As the air quality in Delhi-NCR worsened and the Air Quality Index (AQI) touched 'Severe' levels Wednesday, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) re-imposed Stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) on Thursday.

The AQI of Delhi, which was recorded at 276 on Tuesday increased exponentially and was recorded at 365 Thursday.

The AQI in the national Capital touched 365 due to smog and slow wind speed Thursday.

The air quality in the National Capital Region was equally poor with Uttar Pradesh's Noida recording AQI of 317 which is in the 'Very Poor' category, Ghaziabad recording 271 in the 'Poor' category, Haryana's Faridabad recording 'Poor' AQI at 279 and Gurugram 'Very Poor' AQI at 310.

With the fluctuating air quality and mild weather conditions, Delhiites and residents of NCR need to stay alert regarding both pollution and the cooler mornings and nights.

## REINSTATEMENT OF DISTRICT STATUS

## Massive protest erupts in Rajasthan's Neem Ka Thana

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Jan 30:** Massive protest erupted in Rajasthan's Neem Ka Thana Thursday, over reinstatement of its district status.

Demonstrators blocked the Kuchaman Didwana-Kotputli highway, forcing the closure of schools and markets across the city.

Protesters burnt tyres and raised slogans against the state government.

In response to the escalating situation, over 300 reserve police personnel have been deployed.

Meanwhile, authorities have rerouted Jaipur and Delhi-bound buses, diverting traffic from affected areas to prevent congestion.

The protesters launched an indefinite agitation demanding the reinstatement of Neem Ka Thana as a district.

At 8 am, the protesters blocked key state highways, including State Highway 13 at Bhudoli Bypass (towards Jaipur) and 37B at Mawanda (towards Jhunjhunu) and Jir

ki Chowki (towards Kotputli).

Protesters have also gathered outside the court premises, bringing commercial activities to a standstill in Mawanda, Patan, Chala, Guhala, and Neem Ka Thana city.

The mining zone has also been completely shut down.

The administration has deployed senior officers as duty magistrates, including SDM Brijesh Gupta at Sirohi bypass, SDM Rajveer Yadav from Bhudoli bypass and others to maintain law and order.

ADM Bhagirath Shakh has instructed police and administrative officials to monitor the situation closely.

ASP Girdharilal Sharma confirmed that mobile patrolling teams are actively working to prevent escalation.

To keep traffic movement smooth, several routes have been altered. Khatri depot buses have been rerouted via Babai, Chanwara, and Manakshas for the Jaipur-bound passengers. Also, Sikar-Delhi buses are operating via Jhunjhunu, Chidawa, and Singhana.



## JLF begins with need to bridge divide between arts, sciences

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Jan 30:** Technologies such as AI demand not just technical expertise but also understanding of human history and values without which any solutions proposed risk being shallow or even harmful, Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan said Thursday while opening the Jaipur Literature Festival.

**Literature and other parts of the humanities like history have a great part in helping to break down these barriers. Scientists and science writers on their part can help communicate complex ideas to the general public while also being sensitive to their social consequences**

VENKI RAMAKRISHNAN | NOBEL LAUREATE

The biggest celebration of literature started its 18th edition at Hotel Clarks Amer in the Pink City with the structural biologist proposing the need to bridge the divide between the arts and sciences.

As diverse streams of art, music, tradition, literature and sciences of India and the world flowed into a vast sea of listeners



across age, race, class and gender at the festival, Ramakrishnan pushed for greater empathy in his keynote address.

Quoting English novelist CP Snow's influential essay "The Two Cultures", he said science and mathematics have become "seemingly unintelligible" and "almost magical" to those outside the anointed few.

"We live in an age dominated by technological advancements from artificial intelligence to gene editing to climate science. Many of these innovations have the potential to reshape human

existence in profound ways. But, as Snow warned in 1959, the general public often lack even basic scientific literacy," Ramakrishnan said.

He added that even scientists can barely grasp these advances outside their "narrow" specialities.

At a time issues such as employment, food security, preparation for future pandemics and increasingly sophisticated weaponry gain centrestage, technologies like AI and genetic engineering carry tremendous promise as well as tremendous risks.

"All of these require more than just technical expertise, they demand empathy and understanding of human history, culture and values. Without that broader context the solutions we propose risk being shallow, shortsighted or even harmful," the 72-year-old noted. "Scientists alone cannot make decisions that affect us all."

According to him, there is need for the humanities, literature, philosophy, and history "to provide us with the framework to grapple with the moral ethical and social implications of the

scientific inventions were making". In his view, instead of making people specialise too early, a broad curriculum that includes both sciences and humanities should be introduced to create a "broadly literate" population.

"Such a population will at least have the basis to debate intelligently about the issues of the day and be less susceptible to being manipulated by demagogues and misinformation," he said.

JLF this year features a lineup of over 300 luminaries such as Nobel laureates, Booker Prize winners, journalists, policymakers, and acclaimed writers. The participants include Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Dufflo, Amol Palekar, Ira Mukhoty, Geetanjali Shree, David Hare, Manav Kaul, Javed Akhtar, Rahul Bose, Yuvan Aves, Shahu Patole, and Kallol Bhattacharjee.

The festival will feature sessions with focus on themes such as democracy and equality to examine the timeless quest for justice and the truths behind constitutional ideals, while the crime fiction segment will bring thrilling narratives of mystery and suspense, and the biographies and memoirs section promises to offer intimate insights into extraordinary lives.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that those involved in a ₹70,000 crore scam would be put behind bars. But where did they put them? In the cabinet

## HC ASKS FOR NIA STAND AFTER RASHID SEEKS INTERIM BAIL

The Delhi High Court Thursday sought the NIA's stand on a plea by jailed Jammu and Kashmir MP Rashid Engineer for interim bail in a terror-funding case to attend Parliament. Justice Vikas Mahajan, posting the hearing next week, said, "Let the needful be done before the next date of hearing"



## of the day vote

After not receiving the MSP for millet crops, farmers are now being forced to sell peanuts, moong and soybean at prices below MSP

Three es-crow agree-ments were signed between the Controller of Coal, Government of India, and the project proponents for mining sites at Pyndeng-shalang in West Khasi Hills district, and Saryngkham and Lumiakhi Wahsarang in East Jaintia Hills district

Those who want to break Manipur have used agents to provoke us. Such agents are in Imphal valley and are siding with those who want to break Manipur. We have to be careful about them

## AP launches 'WhatsApp governance' platform



**Amaravati, Jan 30:** Andhra Pradesh government Thursday launched WhatsApp governance platform 'Mana Mitra' (our friend) offering 161 citizen-centric services, enabling people to procure documents real-time with the touch of a button on their smartphones.

With Mana Mitra, which is available at the phone number 9552300009, people of the state can book a time slot to visit a temple, book an APSRTC bus ticket and download documents such as birth certificate and others.

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh formally launched the platform at Chief Minister's residence in Undavalli in Guntur district. Addressing a press conference during the event, the minister said, "We all believe it is a historical moment in governance initiatives. I believe that this is a true transformation that we are gonna achieve. This is what we call the Mana Mitra".

Hailing the citizen-friendly service, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu shared a short video about Mana Mitra in a post on X and recalled how the buzzword was e-governance in 1995 and WhatsApp governance 30 years later now. Lokesh said Mana Mitra will offer seamless, efficient and citizen-centric public service delivery, adding that this initiative will catapult Andhra Pradesh again to the forefront of e-governance initiatives.

"We will be seeing more and more such initiatives coming. Our entire objective is to keep the citizen as (the) centre of our universe. What are all the touchpoints of the citizen and how do we resolve them," he said.

Powered by Mana Mitra, common people are expected to save time and avoid the need to visit government offices multiple times for procuring documents. Lokesh questioned that why should people go to a government office or meet an MLA for obtaining basic documents.

# Crowd management efforts ramped up

AGENCIES

**Mahakumbh Nagar, Jan 30:** Millions of devotees flocked to the Triveni Sangam and other ghats at the Maha Kumbh to take a dip Thursday with the Uttar Pradesh government ramping up efforts to ensure crowd management and safety of people a day after the stampede tragedy.

More than 2.06 crore devotees took the holy bath till 8 pm, according to the state government. The crowd pressure was relatively lower Thursday and all bridges were reopened, allowing smoother movement within the mela area, officials said.

According to a circular, the government said it had announced the decision on VIP movement before the start of the Kumbh Mela, and now strict implementation of this directive has been initiated.

The government also appealed to the public to exercise patience during the expected large gatherings on Basant Panchami, Magh Purnima, and Mahashivratri and urged them to take necessary precautions while participating in these bathing festivals. DIG Maha Kumbh Vaibhav Krishna said the police are actively working on security arrangements for the upcoming Amrit Snan on Basant Panchami Snan (February 3), ensuring tight measures in the mela area. However, before Bas-



THE STATE GOVERNMENT SAID NO VIP PROTOCOLS WILL BE ENFORCED BY THE ADMINISTRATION ON THE SPECIAL BATHING DAYS OF FEBRUARY 3, 12 AND 26

ant Panchami, new restrictions will be imposed at key locations for better crowd management and more police personnel and security forces will be deployed, Krishna added. Following Wednesday's tragic incident, the 30 pontoon bridges in the mela area were operating under a one-way traffic system. This meant that each bridge allowed movement in only one direction, with a parallel pontoon bridge designated for return routes. In anticipation of the Basant Panchami bathing festival, health services in Mahakumbh Nagar have been further strengthened, the government said on Thursday night.

Following the directives of the chief minister, medical teams have been actively deployed on the ground since Thursday. A total of 23 hospitals, equipped with 360 beds, have been prepared to ensure the well-being of devotees. A special medical team conducted a thorough inspection across the fairgrounds to assess these arrangements. Additionally, 10 first-aid posts with one bed each have been set up to provide immediate medical assistance.

## Judicial commission to visit site today

**Lucknow:** The three-member judicial commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh government to probe the Maha Kumbh stampede will visit the site Friday, panel head Harsh Kumar, a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court, said. Kumar also said that the commission has a month to wrap up its investigation but will try to expedite it. Kumar and panel members former director general of police (DGP) V K Gupta and retired IAS officer D K Singh reached the office assigned to them here and began their work Thursday, an official statement said.

and suction machines would, however, be allowed entry. Meanwhile, the three-member judicial commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh government to probe the stampede will visit the site Friday. Panel head Harsh Kumar, a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court, said the commission has a month to wrap up its investigation but will try to expedite it.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh and Director General of Police Prashant Kumar are also here for a detailed probe into the stampede and also a thorough review of the arrangements in the mela area on the directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

## BJP defeats AAP in C'garh mayor poll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Jan 30:** The BJP Thursday won the post of mayor or while AAP-backed Congress candidates registered victory in the poll for the senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor posts in the high-stakes Chandigarh mayoral elections that took place here.

The contest for the mayoral polls was between the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-Congress combine. AAP was fighting for the post of mayor while the Congress was contesting for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor.

In a jolt to the AAP-Congress combine, BJP's Harpreet Kaur Babla was elected as the new mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation after she defeated AAP nominee Prem Lata.

Babla secured 19 votes while Lata got 17 votes. No vote was found to be invalid. The result for the post of mayor was announced by presiding officer Ramneek Singh Bedi. Congress candidate Jasbir Singh Bunty won the post of senior deputy mayor after defeating BJP's Bimla Dubey. Bunty polled 19 while Dubey got 17 votes. Congress nominee Taruna Mehta was elected as deputy mayor after defeating BJP contestant Lakhbir Singh Billu. Mehta got 19 while Billu secured 17 votes.

## SHORT TAKES

### 9 Naxalites surrender

**Sukma:** Nine Naxalites, mostly women -- carrying a cumulative reward of ₹52 lakh on their heads -- surrendered before security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Thursday, an official said. The surrendered Naxals included two couples, and all of them quit the armed movement citing their disillusionment with its "inhuman and hollow ideology", he said.

### CRPF jawan shoots wife dead, kills self

**Bhopal:** A CRPF constable allegedly shot his wife dead before killing himself at their house in Bhopal in the wee hours of Thursday, police said. Ravikant Verma (35), who was stationed at the Central Reserve Police Force Bangrasia Camp near here, killed his wife Renu (32) around 1.30 am, and then called the CRPF control room, local police and his landlord before shooting himself dead with the same service rifle, station house officer of Misrod police station, M R Bhadouria, told PTI.

### Maha records second suspected GBS death

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra recorded the second suspected fatality of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) with the death of a 56-year-old woman on Sinhagad Road in Pune. The woman died Tuesday following respiratory failure with sepsis and was suffering from oral cancer.

### GP Singh takes charge as CRPF DG

**New Delhi:** IPS officer Gyanendra Pratap Singh Thursday took charge as the director general (DG) of the CRPF. The 1991 batch Assam-Meghalaya cadre officer was till recently serving as the Assam DGP. The new DG took charge at the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) headquarters at CGO complex on Lodhi Road.

### Cong MP held

**Sitapur (UP):** Congress MP Rakesh Rathore was arrested from his residence here in a rape case Thursday, a day after the Allahabad High Court rejected his anticipatory bail plea. Rathore was addressing a press conference when Kotwali Nagar police reached his residence to take him into custody.

## Four dead in slab collapse

**Panna:** Four labourers were killed and 15 others injured Thursday morning in a slab collapse at a JK Cement factory in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district, police said. The incident took place at an under-construction unit of the factory located near Amaanganj town, 350 km from Bhopal, around 10 am. "Four labourers including three from Bihar's Purnia and one from Simaria police station limits (in Panna district) died. Fifteen others were injured," said Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Lalit Shakyawar.

## Dhas raises allegations against Munde

**Mumbai/Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar:** BJP MLA Suresh Dhas Thursday said Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has asked him to submit a written complaint over the withdrawal of funds through "bogus bills" when Dhananjay Munde was the Beed guardian minister. Dhas told reporters in Beed that he raised the matter with Pawar, the current guardian minister, at a district planning and development council meeting. "Pawar told me to submit a written complaint. I have already provided documents in connection with the withdrawal of funds to his personal assistant on Wednesday. Now, I will submit the written complaint as instructed by Pawar," said Dhas.

## AAP slams 'raid' at Punjab CM residence; EC official claims rooms locked

**New Delhi:** A high drama unfolded outside Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's residence in Delhi Thursday as EC officials tried to conduct a search of the premises following allegation that money was being distributed from the property ahead of the February 5 Assembly polls. Mann, who has been campaigning for AAP in Delhi, hit back at the Election Commission (EC) and the Delhi Police, accusing them of trying to "defame Punjabis" at the behest of the BJP. AAP leaders, including party supremo Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, doubled down to defend Mann and accused the poll authority of turning a blind eye to the BJP "openly" distributing money.

## MATRIMONIAL CASE

# Nobody above law in country: Top court

Justices B R Gavai, Augustine George Masih and K Vinod Chandran made the remark after the man's counsel raised an apprehension that he would be made to suffer all his life for the estranged wife was an IPS officer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Nobody is above the law in this country, the Supreme Court Thursday observed in a dispute between a man and his estranged wife, an IPS officer.

Justices B R Gavai, Augustine George Masih and K Vinod Chandran made the remark after the man's counsel raised an apprehension that he would be made to suffer all his life for the estranged wife was an IPS officer.

The bench said the parties should settle their disputes in

the interest of justice. "She is an IPS officer. You are a businessman. Rather than wasting your time in the court, you should settle it. We are here to protect you if there is any victimisation," the bench told the counsel.

"Nobody is above the law in this country," it added. The counsel said his client and his father were jailed in connection with the cases lodged by the woman.

The counsel alleged the estranged wife gave a wrong declaration that no FIR was registered against her but she faced



two FIRs on the day she filed a form at the time of joining the police service. "You are more interested in ensuring that she loses her job," the bench said. The counsel said it was for the Home Ministry to take action

if she had made any wrong declaration in her form. "You are not interested in saving your life. You are interested in ensuring that her career goes. Ultimately, in the process of ruining her life, you will also ruin your life," said the court.

The bench observed it was "very clear" the man wasn't interested in settlement and said, "You are not interested in living your life happily. But you are only interested to ruin somebody else life. It is more than clear to us." The bench noted it couldn't

force a settlement on the parties if they were unwilling and suggested they settled the disputes. The lawyers appearing for both the sides said the parties would sit together and try to find an amicable solution to the disputes. The bench posted the hearing after two weeks.

One of the pleas filed by the woman in the top court challenged the Allahabad High Court's June 2022 verdict. The high court discharged the parents of the man in a criminal case lodged by the woman.

# Yamuna poisoning claim row: Kejriwal slams CEC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal Thursday accused Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar of engaging in politics by issuing him a notice over his claim that the Haryana government was "mixing poison" in the Yamuna.

Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal alleged that Kumar had "destroyed" the credibility of the Election Commission (EC) and was seeking a post-retirement position.

"No one has damaged the Election Commission the way Rajiv Kumar has done. If he wants, he can contest elections from any of the Delhi Assembly seats," the former Chief Minister said at the press conference.

"I will not let the people of Delhi drink poisonous water till I am alive. I know they will arrest me in two days but I am not afraid," he said without naming anyone. Kejriwal's remarks came shortly after the EC expressed dissatisfaction with his response to its notice, and gave him another opportunity to clarify his accusations against the Haryana government.

Targeting the CEC, the AAP supremo said, "If you want to do politics, contest elections. He is eyeing a post-retirement job. No one has damaged the Election Commission as much as Rajiv Kumar has." "I will not let the people of Delhi drink poisonous water as long as I am alive. I know they will arrest me in two days, but I am not afraid," he added.

Taking a potshot at his polit-



ical rivals, Kejriwal alleged the Congress and BJP have teamed up and were putting the health of Delhi's people in jeopardy.

Echoing similar sentiments, senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia, in a post on X, said, "The Yamuna water which had touched 7 ppm ammonia, which is poisonous for the human body, was being sent by the BJP government of Haryana to the people of Delhi." "If the AAP raises its voice, you will file a case against it. I am willing to go to jail for the safety of the people of Delhi but will not compromise with the lives of the people."

"The BJP and Congress leaders, who are creating drama about becoming the leaders of the people of Delhi should try drinking this poisonous water mixed with 7 PPM ammonia. We are sending bottles to your homes. Orink this water in front of the entire media; otherwise, apologise," Sisodia added.

Kejriwal responded to the EC's notice Wednesday, stating that raw water received from Haryana in recent days had been "highly contaminated and extremely poisonous" to human health. He warned that allowing such "toxic water" to be consumed would pose a severe health hazard and could lead to fatalities.



# national



Tourism is a top priority for our government, and we are dedicated to positioning Jammu and Kashmir as a global tourism hotspot

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

## PM MODI PAYS TRIBUTE TO MAHATMA GANDHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary. He said in a post on X, "Tributes to Pujya Babu on his Punya Tithi. His ideals motivate us to build a developed India. I also pay tribute to all those martyred for our nation and recall their service as well as sacrifices"



### of the day quote

I give my word... If you install a BJP engine in the city government, we will free Delhi from traffic jams and air pollution within five years. I am making this promise



NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

Dhananjay Munde and I met during the cabinet meeting in the morning. He is a minister in our government, and there is nothing secret about our meeting. He can meet me anytime, and I can meet him anytime



DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

The upcoming budget is a reflection of our collective ambitions and priorities. For the preparations of the budget, it is necessary that we communicate with all sections of society so that necessary positive efforts can be made to fulfill the needs and dreams of every citizen of Haryana



NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

## Economy in slowdown: Cong

The Congress Thursday came out with a 'Real State of the Economy' report, compiled by AICC Research Department chairperson Professor M V Rajeev Gowda and his team, claiming the Modi government is marching India forward into the middle-income trap, which will make the country uncompetitive, underproductive and unequal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Ahead of the Union Budget, the Congress Thursday slammed the government's handling of the economy, asserting that there is a slowdown with "no jobs, raging inflation, stagnating wages and huge income inequality".

The Congress Thursday came out with a 'Real State of the Economy' report, compiled by AICC Research Department chairperson Professor M V Rajeev Gowda and his team, claiming the Modi government is marching India forward into the middle-income trap, which will make the country uncompetitive, underproductive and unequal.

The Opposition party also said that India's GDP growth for 2024-25, as per government data, is expected to be 6.4% but this rate of growth is not a cause for celebration as the country needs a sustained GDP growth of 8 per cent if it wants to encash its historic demographic dividend.

Addressing the press conference after releasing the 'Real State of the Economy 2025' report, senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram said no matter how much the government may try to deny it, the economy is in a slowdown and it has fallen up to two per cent of the previous year's growth.

Asked whether the economy could go into recession, Chidambaram said the economy would not go into a recession even if there is no government in India and it will continue to grow at 4-5% because there are farmers, workers, and small industries that produce food grains and other things and services.

"The real question is how much more than 4-5% the government can grow the economy. This government's policies added about 1.5-2% to the inherent growth rate, but that's not sufficient. "We are indeed the fastest-growing economy in the world, but please remember this: Growing at 2.7% last year, the US



### Sitharaman to table Economic Survey in Parliament today

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will table Economic Survey 2024-25 Friday, providing an official assessment of the performance of the economy in the ongoing financial year, and list out the challenges being faced by the nation. The Economic Survey, tabled in Parliament ahead of the Union Budget, also provides the roadmap for reforms and growth. The document is prepared by a team led by Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran.

added USD 787 billion to its GDP in that one year. Meanwhile, China grew last year at 4.91%, and it added \$895 billion to its GDP. We are growing at a faster rate but we add only \$256 billion to our GDP. So, we actually need to see the addition to the GDP and not compare the growth rates," he said.

Asserting that the economy is indeed facing significant challenges, Chidambaram said the high unemployment rates among youth and graduates, which are nearly 40% and 30%, respectively, are alarming.

"This is exacerbated by stagnant wages, which have remained unchanged for four to five years, making it difficult for people to make ends meet. Meanwhile, inflation is on the rise, with food, education, and healthcare inflation increasing by double digits," he said.

"There is a huge inequality gap, with 70% of the population living on a meagre ₹100-150 per day. The rich-poor divide is growing," Chidambaram said. "The economy is in a slowdown... that cannot be denied at all. However, much the government may try to do

that the economy is in a slowdown and this may be fallen up to two per cent of the previous year's growth."

Chidambaram said wages have stagnated for the last four to five years. "Inflation is raging, with food, education and healthcare inflation in double digits. Inflation has been raging for 2-3 years," the Congress leader said.

Chidambaram said many of the facts mentioned in the report released by the party are conveniently buried by the Union government.

The report titled 'What happened to growth?' said, "GDP growth in the 6% range is insufficient to create jobs for our growing youth population, especially when rapid technological change is disrupting the future of jobs."

"It will keep India stuck in a state of high inequality, where two-thirds of our population remains dependent on free grains from the government, while the prime minister's favoured few accumulate wealth rapidly."

The Congress said such economic under-performance robs millions of the Constitution's promise of a more just, prosperous and equal future.

### BPSK ROW

## Police disperse protesters in Patna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 30: Protesting BPSC candidates Thursday tried to stage a demonstration in front of the commission's office here, only to be dispersed by police who told them that "no gathering was allowed in the restricted area."

The aspiring candidates had gathered demanding cancellation of the 70th Combined (Preliminary) Competitive Examination, held across the state December 13.

Patna district magistrate Chandrashekhhar Singh said "there was no lathi-charge on the protesters, but they have been booked for disrupting road traffic in the area," which is close to the police headquarters, Raj Bhawan, and the Chief Minister's residence. "We have identified those who were behind the protest and instigated BPSC aspirants to gather near the commission's office and disrupted movement of traffic on Bailey Road. All protesters were removed by security personnel," he added.

Police have arrested four persons on charges of instigating protesters and detained 30 others who were involved in creating ruckus in the restricted area. "More people will be arrested on the basis of CCTV footage, which are being analysed", the Patna DM told PTI.

Out of the four arrested, one is Patna-based tutor Ramanshu Mishra. Police have filed two separate FIRs against 350 protesters at the Sachivalaya and Kotwali police stations. All four arrested, who are named in the FIRs, will be presented before the court Friday, the DM said.

"Majority of the protesters were brought from outside the state capital, and some of them came from other states as well," the DM claimed. He said out of the total 30 detained people, 26 are not residents of Patna.

"They wanted to proceed towards the BPSC office, which police and administration officials did not allow. Despite repeated requests by security personnel, they refused to vacate the road. It is a restricted area and not a place where protests are allowed", the DM added.

## Top court allows HC to appoint ad-hoc judges



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Considering a backlog of over 18 lakh criminal cases, the Supreme Court Thursday allowed the high courts to appoint ad-hoc judges, not exceeding the 10 per cent of the court's total sanctioned strength.

A special bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant relaxed and kept in abeyance certain conditions the top court had imposed in its April 20, 2021 judgment on appointment of ad-hoc judges in the high courts. The verdict, which was authored by former Chief Justice S A Bobde, directed retired high court judges to be appointed as ad-hoc ones for a period of two to three years to clear the backlog.

While one condition said the ad-hoc judges couldn't be appointed if a high court worked with 80 per cent of its sanctioned strength, the other said ad-hoc judges could sit separately on benches to deal with cases. Relaxing the conditions, CJI Khanna said, "Having regard to the situation, we are inclined to keep the observations from the conditions...of the order and judgement dated April 20, 2021 that recourse to the appointment of ad-hoc judges under Article 224A should not be made unless 80 per cent of the sanctioned strength is already either recommended or working," said the CJI.

The court said, "In other words, the requirement that vacancies should not be more than 20 per cent of the sanctioned strength for the time being shall be kept in abeyance." The bench said each high court should keep the appointment to two to five ad-

hoc judges and not exceed 10 per cent of the total sanctioned strength.

"The ad-hoc judges will sit in a bench presided over by a sitting judge of the high court and decide pending criminal appeals," said the apex court's order. On the issue of memorandum of procedure on appointment of ad-hoc judges, the bench said it was already in place and would be applied and resorted to for their appointments.

It also kept in abeyance the condition on ad-hoc judges to sit separately on benches and said they would be part of the division bench presided over by a sitting high court judge. The bench said, if needed, it would re-assemble for issuing further directions on the issue.

At the outset, attorney general R Venkataramani said the Centre was in agreement with the proposal mooted by the bench on the last occasion. The bench had suggested that ad-hoc judges could be appointed as puisne judges of a division bench of the high court to deal with criminal appeals.

Referring to the National Judicial Data Grid, the bench said there were over 62 lakh cases pending in high court and of them, more than 18 lakh were criminal in nature. The bench on January 21 asked counsel for parties and attorney general to address the question whether ad-hoc judges could be appointed to sit with the regular high court judges in division benches of high courts.

The bench said it could partly modify the 2021 judgement to ensure ad-hoc judges were appointed to decide criminal appeals by division benches presided over by sitting high court judges.

## Govt likely to introduce Bill for services related to immigration, foreigners

New Delhi: The government is likely to introduce a bill in Parliament for streamlining various services related to immigration and foreigners, including their entry, exit and stay in the country, sources said. The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, is expected to be introduced in the upcoming Budget Session by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The legislation is aimed at streamlining various services related to immigration and foreigners, including their entry, exit and stay in India, the sources said. The entry, stay and exit of foreigners from India are currently governed by the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, and the Foreigners Act, 1946.

## POST OF THE DAY

30 Honest Tax payers lost lives in Mahakumbh due to stampede. Anil Ambani who literally looted 49000 Crores of people's money got VVIP treatment in same Mahakumbh

@DrJain21

### SHORT TAKES

#### Two-year-old girl found dead in well

Thiruvananthapuram: The maternal uncle of a two-year-old girl was arrested Thursday for allegedly killing the child by throwing her in the well at their home near here. He confessed to committing the crime, police said. An officer of Balamaparam police station said that a case of unnatural death was lodged in connection with the death of the child and additional charges would be filed as the investigation progresses. Another officer told reporters that further arrests may also be made in future. The reason for the child's murder is not yet clear, the officer said.

#### Man sets self, woman ablaze

Pratapgarh (UP): A 29-year-old man set himself and his partner ablaze after her wedding was fixed with another man in the Kohndour area here, police said. The woman succumbed to her injuries while the man is in hospital, they said. Vikas Kumar Yadav of Chandoka allegedly ignited a fire after pouring petrol on himself and Neelu Yadav (22) of Lailipokhta Kham. "Preliminary investigations suggest that Vikas Yadav committed the act. The two were reportedly in a relationship but Neelu Yadav's wedding was scheduled for March 2nd," Deputy Superintendent of Police Shivnarayan Vaish said that.

#### Army troops foil infiltration bid

Jammu: Army troops Thursday foiled an infiltration attempt by a group of heavily-armed terrorists along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, security officials said. Alert Army troops picked up the movement of the terrorists trying to sneak into this side from across the LoC in Khari Karmara area, leading to a firefight between the two sides, the officials said.



The tableau of Uttar Pradesh released on Republic Day got the first place. In the award ceremony organised at National Theatre, New Delhi, Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth presented the trophy and citation to the tableau of Uttar Pradesh for securing the first position



## Cannabis in excess could damage working memory: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Heavy use of cannabis could affect a human's working memory, which is how the brain retains and uses just-learned information to perform tasks, according to a new study.

Working memory helps a person follow instructions they've just been given or to mentally visualise and manipulate information, like solving a math problem.

Researchers, including those from the University of Colorado, US, analysed the effects of cannabis use in more than 1,000 young adults aged 22 to 36. MRI brain scans of the

participants were taken while they performed tasks that tested working memory, reward, emotion, among other cognitive functions.

The study, published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open, found that cannabis had a significant effect on brain function during working memory tasks, and a less significant one while performing other tasks.

"In this study of young adults, lifetime history of heavy cannabis use was associated with lower brain activation during a working memory task," the authors wrote.

"As cannabis use continues



to grow globally, studying its effects on human health has become increasingly important. By doing so, we can

provide a well-rounded understanding of both the benefits and risks of cannabis use, empowering people to make

Researchers, including those from the University of Colorado, US, analysed the effects of cannabis use in more than 1,000 young adults aged 22 to 36

MRI brain scans of the participants were taken while they performed tasks that tested working memory, reward, emotion, among other cognitive functions

informed decisions and fully comprehend the potential consequences," first author Joshua Gowin, an assistant professor of radiology at the University of Colorado, said. For the study, young adults

who had used cannabis more than 1000 times were considered 'heavy users'. In the study group, 88 were classified as heavy cannabis users, 179 as moderate and 736 as non-users. While performing working memory tasks, heavy users of cannabis showed a reduced activity in brain regions involved in important cognitive functions, such as decision-making, memory, attention and emotional processing, the researchers said.

"These findings identify negative outcomes associated with heavy lifetime cannabis use and working memory in healthy young adults that may be long lasting," they wrote.

# international



**France should follow U.S. President Donald Trump's hardline stance toward countries unwilling to receive deportees**  
MARINE LE PEN | FAR-RIGHT LEADER, FRANCE

**GUNJAN KEDIA BECOMES FIRST WOMAN CEO OF US BANCORP**  
Gunjan Kedia has been appointed as the next CEO of US Bancorp, becoming the first Indian American to lead the company. This announcement marks a significant moment in the banking sector, with Kedia taking charge of one of the largest financial institutions in the United States



**of the day quote**

**I am ready with good intentions to advance the dialogue so that the country could move forward. The country can not sustain more damage**  
SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN

**The world has been witnessing rapid technological advancement, fundamental demographic changes and various emerging issues, which require "pro-active and bold steps" to prepare humanity for the future**  
ENG. AHMED BIN SULAIMAN ALRAJHI | MINISTER, SAUDI ARAB

**The identification of the most marketable goods and their international trade contributes to increase in exports. The infrastructure development which is gaining pace will be further intensified to ensure Nepal's graduation to the status of a country with mid-level income by 2026**  
KP SHARMA OLI | PRIME MINISTER, NEPAL

## Stuck astronauts take first spacewalk together

Indian-origin commander Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore floated out to perform maintenance work and wipe the station's exterior for evidence of any microbes that might still be alive after launching from Earth and escaping through vents

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Cape Canaveral, Jan 30:** NASA's two stuck astronauts took their first spacewalk together Thursday, exiting the International Space Station almost eight months after moving in.

Indian-origin commander Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore floated out to perform maintenance work and wipe the station's exterior for evidence of any microbes that might still be alive after launching from Earth and escaping through vents.

"Here we go," Wilmore said as he emerged 420 kilometres above Spain.

The pair expected to stay just



a week when they arrived at the space station last June. But their brand new ride, Boeing's

Starliner capsule, encountered so much trouble that NASA decided to return it empty.

That left the two test pilots, both retired Navy captains, in orbit until SpaceX can bring them home. That won't happen until late March or early April, extending their mission

to 10 months because of a SpaceX delay in launching their replacements. Williams performed a spacewalk two weeks ago with another NASA astronaut. It marked Wilmore's first time outside this trip.

The pair expected to stay just a week when they arrived at the space station last June. But their brand new ride, Boeing's Starliner capsule, encountered so much trouble that NASA decided to return it empty.

## Birthright citizenship bill introduced in US Senate

**The legislative move comes after an executive order on the matter, signed by President Donald Trump on the first day of his presidency, has been blocked by a federal judge in Washington state**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, Jan 30:** A group of Republican Senators has introduced a bill in the US Senate to restrict birthright citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants and non-immigrants on temporary visas.

According to Senators Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz and Katie Britt, who introduced the bill, the exploitation of birthright citizenship is a major pull factor for illegal immigration and a weakness for national security.

The US is one of only 33 countries in the world with no restrictions on birthright citizenship, they said.

The legislative move comes after an executive order on the matter, signed by President Donald Trump on the first day of his presidency, has been blocked by a federal judge in Washington state.

The Center for Immigration Studies estimates that in 2023, there were 2,25,000 to 2,50,000 births to illegal immigrants, amounting to close to seven per cent of births in the US.

It is long overdue for the United States to change its policy on birthright citizenship because it is being abused in



so many ways, said Graham. "One example is birth tourism, where wealthy individuals from China and other nations come to the United States simply to have a child who will be an American citizen. When you look at the magnets that draw people to America, birthright citizenship is one of the largest," he said.

"I also appreciate President Trump's executive order to address birthright citizenship. It is time for the United States to align itself with the rest of the world and restrict this practice once and for all," Graham said.

"The promise of American citizenship should not incentivise illegal migration, but that's exactly what has happened for far too long," said Britt.

It's time to fix this, she said. "Senator Lindsey Graham's and my Birthright Citizenship Act would codify President Trump's commonsense stance and end the abuse of birthright citizenship that I do not believe is consistent with the original meaning of the 14th Amendment's Citizenship Clause," she added.

"This will protect our nation's sovereignty, disincite illegal migration, and ensure America's citizenship practices are stronger and better aligned with peer countries around the globe," Britt said.

The three Senators said in September 2024, two individuals from California were found guilty in a "birth tourism" scheme.

**The US is one of only 33 countries in the world with no restrictions on birthright citizenship**

## Israel delays prisoner release

REUTERS

**Cairo/Jerusalem, Jan 30:** Hamas handed over three Israelis and five Thai hostages in Gaza Thursday, but Israel delayed the expected release of Palestinian prisoners after chaotic scenes at one of the handover points, where large crowds swarmed around the captives.

Arbel Yehud, 29, abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz in the Hamas-led assault on Israel Oct 7, 2023, looked fearful and struggled to walk through a surging crowd as armed militants handed her to the Red Cross in a tense scene in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Another Israeli hostage, Gadi Moses, 80, was also released along with five Thai nationals working on Israeli farms near Gaza when the militants burst through the border fence, the Israeli military said.

The mother of one of the Thais watched a livestream of the scene anxiously from her home in the northeastern Udon Thani province.

"Please, let my son walk out now, I want to see his face," Wiwaro Sriaroun, 53, said as the footage on her phone showed a vehicle moving slowly through the crowd.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the sight of their handover amid the swarming crowds was shocking and threatened death to anyone hurting hostages. He urged mediators to ensure the scene would not be repeated.

A total of 110 Palestinian prisoners were expected to be freed Thursday as part of the phased agreement that halted fighting in the shattered coastal territory earlier this month.

An Israeli official involved in the operation said buses carrying the detainees had been



- Three Israeli hostages are being freed in exchange for 110 Palestinian prisoners
- Militants throng Gaza handover sites
- Five Thai hostages also reported to be freed
- Prisoners to be freed later

### HAMAS DEFIANCE

Hamas, which Israel has vowed to obliterate, still has a strong presence in Gaza despite heavy bombardment from the Middle East's most advanced military over more than 15 months and the assassination of Hamas leader Yahya Al-Sinwar.

The release in Khan Younis took place near the bombed ruins of Sinwar's house.

The Palestinian prisoners, who include 30 minors and some convicted members of Palestinian groups responsible for deadly attacks that have killed dozens of people in Israel, were expected to be taken to the West Bank or Gaza.

Israelis gathered in what has become known as Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, cheering and crying as they watched the release on a giant screen. The hostages will be taken to hospital for treatment.

Some people cheered as US President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff arrived at the square, in apparent gratitude for his role in securing the ceasefire deal. He shook hands with family members of hostages and others.

instructed to return to prisons in an apparent response to the chaotic handover.

Netanyahu and the Defence Minister Israel Katz said they had ordered the delay in releases "until the safe exit of our hostages in the next phases is assured". An Israeli official said later that understandings had been reached, and Palestinian prisoners would be released at 1700 (1500 GMT). A Palestinian source said the Red Cross had told Hamas the Palestinian prisoners would be released Thursday.

Earlier, in Jabalia in northern Gaza, an Israeli soldier, Agam Berger, wearing an olive green uniform, was led through a narrow alley between heavily damaged buildings and over piles of rubble before being handed to the Red Cross.

## Philippine president offers deal to China

Manila: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr offered Friday to remove a US missile system from the Philippines if China halts what he called its "aggressive and coercive behaviour" in the disputed South China Sea.

The US Army installed the Typhoon mid-range missile system in the northern Philippines in April last year to support what the longtime treaty allies described as training for joint combat readiness. China has repeatedly demanded that the Philippines remove the missile system, saying it was "inciting geopolitical confrontation and an arms race."

Asked by reporters about China's criticism of the missile system, Marcos said he did not understand the Chinese position because the Philippines does not comment on China's missile systems which "are a thousand times more powerful than what we have."

"Let's make a deal with China: Stop claiming our territory, stop harassing our fishermen and let them have a living, stop ramming our boats, stop water cannoning our people, stop firing lasers at us and stop your aggressive and coercive behaviour, and we'll return the typhoon missiles," Marcos told reporters in central Cebu province.

"Let them stop everything they're doing and I'll return all of those," he said. Chinese officials did not immediately comment on the Philippine leader's remarks.

## QURAN BURNER SHOT DEAD IN SWEDEN

**Swedish PM says shooting of anti-Islam campaigner may be linked to foreign power**

REUTERS

**Stockholm, Jan 30:** The Swedish prime minister said the shooting of an anti-Islam campaigner just hours before a trial verdict was due Thursday over his burning the Quran might be linked to a foreign power, and police arrested five people over the killing.

Salwan Momika, 38, an Iraqi refugee, was shot in a house in Sodertalje town near Stockholm Wednesday. A prosecutor ordered that the five people be detained, police said, without specifying if the gunman was among them. Momika had burned and desecrated copies of the Quran, the Muslim holy book, either in public or in social media broad-



casts in 2023. "I can assure you that the security services are deeply involved because there is obviously a risk that there is a connection to a foreign power," Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said at a news conference Thursday.

Vice Prime Minister Ebba Busch condemned the murder.

"It is a threat to our free democracy. It must be met with the full force of our society," she wrote on X.

A Stockholm court dismissed

- Man who was shot Wednesday was an Iraqi refugee
- He frequently burned the Quran publicly in 2023
- Court postpones verdict in trial to Monday

the case on Momika after his death. It said the verdict for another man in the same criminal trial over "offences of agitation against an ethnic or national group," in connection with Quran burnings would be postponed until Monday. Sweden in 2023 raised its terrorism alert to the second-highest level and warned of threats against Swedes at home and abroad after the Quran burnings, most of them by Momika, outraged Muslims and triggered threats from jihadists.

Burning the Quran is seen by Muslims as a blasphemous act because they consider it the literal word of God.

## NASA's returned asteroid samples hold ingredients of life

**The findings provide the strongest evidence yet that asteroids may have planted the seeds of life on Earth and that these ingredients were mingling with water almost right from the start**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Cape Canaveral, Jan 30:** Asteroid samples fetched by NASA hold not only the pristine building blocks for life but also the salty remains of an ancient water world, scientists reported Wednesday.

The findings provide the strongest evidence yet that asteroids may have planted the seeds of life on Earth and that these ingredients were mingling with water almost right from the start.

"That's the kind of environment that could have been essential to the steps that lead from elements to life," said the Smithsonian Institution's Tim

McCoy, one of the lead study authors.

NASA's Osiris-Rex spacecraft returned 122 grams of dust and pebbles from the near-Earth asteroid Bennu, delivering the sample canister to the Utah desert in 2023 before swooping off after another space rock. It remains the biggest cosmic haul from beyond the moon.

The two previous asteroid sample missions, by Japan, yielded considerably less material.

Small amounts of Bennu's precious black grains — leftovers from the solar system's formation 4.5 billion years ago — were doled out to the two separate research teams

### ARE WE ALL ALIENS?



whose studies appeared in the journals Nature and Nature Astronomy.

But it was more than enough to tease out the sodium-rich minerals and confirm the presence of amino acids, nitrogen in the form of ammonia and even parts of the genetic code.

Some if not all of the delicate salts found at Bennu — similar

to what's in the dry lakebeds of California's Mojave Desert and Africa's Sahara — would be stripped away if present in falling meteorites.

"This discovery was only possible by analysing samples that were collected directly from the asteroid then carefully preserved back on Earth," the Institute of Science Tokyo's

NASA's Osiris-Rex spacecraft returned 122 grams of dust and pebbles from the near-Earth asteroid Bennu, delivering the sample canister to the Utah desert in 2023 before swooping off after another space rock

It remains the biggest cosmic haul from beyond the moon

Yasuhito Sekine, who was not involved in the studies, said in an accompanying editorial.

Combining the ingredients of life with an environment of sodium-rich salt water, or brines, "that's really the pathway to life," said McCoy, the National Museum of Natural History's curator of meteorites. "These processes probably occurred much earlier and were much more widespread than we had thought before."

NASA's Daniel Glavin said one of the biggest surprises was the relatively high abundance

of nitrogen, including ammonia. While all of the organic molecules found in the Bennu samples have been identified before in meteorites, Glavin said the ones from Bennu are valid — "real extraterrestrial organic material formed in space and not a result of contamination from Earth."

Bennu — a rubble pile just one-third of a mile (one-half of a kilometre) across — was originally part of a much larger asteroid that got clobbered by other space rocks. The latest results suggest this parent body had an extensive underground network of lakes or even oceans, and that the water evaporated away, leaving behind the salty clues.

Sixty labs around the world are analysing bits of Bennu as part of initial studies, said the University of Arizona's Dante Lauretta, the mission's chief scientist who took part in both studies.

# Business



**The Indian sugar industry has the potential to contribute 3 per cent in the country's GDP**  
NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

## MADE IN INDIA JIMNY DEBUTS IN JAPAN

Maruti Suzuki India Thursday said the locally manufactured Jimny five-door model has made its debut in the Japanese market. The SUV, which is exclusively manufactured at Maruti Suzuki's Gurugram-based plant, was unveiled in Japan Thursday. The Jimny five-door model has become the second SUV after Fronx to be supplied to the home market of Suzuki Motor Corporation in FY 2024-25



### of the day quote

**India is a priority market for us. For us among the far abroad countries, China ranks at the number one position, followed by India. Indians are also good spenders while travelling, spending around \$2,000 per person per trip**



EVGENY KOZLOV | CHAIRMAN, MOSCOW CITY TOURISM COMMITTEE

**The scheme will significantly enhance the financial accessibility of our micro, small, and medium enterprises, particularly those engaged in manufacturing and exports**



AJAY SAHAI | DIRECTOR GENERAL, FIEO

**India generates over 10.2 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, with more than 40 per cent of this being single-use plastics like grocery bags and flexible packaging. Traditional recycling methods struggle to handle this waste, which often ends up clogging drains, littering streets, or polluting waterways**



AMIT TANDON | FOUNDER AND CEO, POLYCYCL

### Q3 RESULTS

**GAIL profit surges**  
**New Delhi:** State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd Thursday reported a 36 per cent rise in net profit in the December quarter after a one-off gain from compensation received from an overseas LNG supplier for non-delivery of committed cargoes. It posted a standalone net profit of ₹3,867.38 crore in the October-December period of FY25 compared with ₹2,842.62 crore in the year-ago period, India's biggest gas transportation and marketing company said.

**Adani profit plunges**  
**New Delhi:** Adani Enterprises Ltd, the flagship company of billionaire Gautam Adani-led group, Thursday reported a 97 per cent drop in the third quarter net profit as key coal trading volumes were hit. Net profit declined to ₹57.83 crore in October-December 2024 - the third quarter of April 2024 to March 2025 fiscal - from ₹1,888.45 crore earnings a year back, the company said in a statement. Revenue from operations declined 9 per cent to ₹22,848.42 crore.

**Raymond net shines**  
**New Delhi:** Raymond Ltd, which is into real estate and engineering businesses, has posted a 75 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to ₹72.28 crore during the December quarter. Its net profit stood at ₹41.35 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to ₹985.35 crore in the third quarter of this fiscal year from ₹726.91 crore in the year-ago period.

**BoB profit rises 6%**  
**New Delhi:** State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) Thursday reported a 5.6 per cent increase in net profit at ₹4,837 crore in the December quarter. The Mumbai-based bank had earned a net profit of ₹4,579 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to ₹34,676 crore from ₹31,416 crore in the same period a year ago.

**Dabur net rises 1.8%**  
**New Delhi:** Homegrown FMCG major Dabur India Ltd Thursday reported a 1.85 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to ₹515.82 crore in the December quarter, which saw high food inflation and moderation in urban consumption.

## GLOBAL AI RACE

# India to build its own foundational models

*The country's bold move comes at a time when Chinese company DeepSeek has turned heads after its AI model overtook ChatGPT as the top-ranked free app on Apple's appstore, challenging the AI dominance concentrated so far with the US firms, particularly Silicon Valley frontrunner Open AI*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** India Thursday outlined global AI ambitions with plans to build its own 'foundational model' that could take on the might of ChatGPT, Deepseek R1 and others, as it lined up "most affordable" common compute facility powered by 18,693 GPUs to be used by startups and researchers.

IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw exuded confidence that India will build a foundational model that is world-class, and that it will be able to compete with best models across the globe. On Thursday, New Delhi announced the next steps in its AI blueprint, among them, 18,693 Graphics Processing Unit or GPUs on offer by the empanelled bidders (a list that includes Jio Platforms, CMS Computers, Tata Communications, E2E Networks, Yotta Data Services, and others),

and start of AI safety institution, with 8 projects approved under it.

The government is also calling for proposals to develop India's own foundational models that would be aligned to Indian context, Indian languages, culture, basically where datasets are "for our country, of our country and for our citizens" and "biases are removed".

Put simply, foundation models in generative AI are large, pre-trained models that form the base for a variety of AI applications. The common compute facility (powered by 18,693 GPUs) would be made available at a fraction of global cost benchmarks, Vaishnaw assured. The compute facility will be "most affordable" coming significantly less than one dollar (per GPU hour) after 40 per cent cost borne by the government.

"We launched an application proposal and I am happy to say that 18 applications have been selected for the first round of funding. These are in themes of agriculture, learning disability and climate change," the Minister said.

AI safety is in the spotlight across the world, and India AI Mission too emphasises safe and trusted models.

**Algorithmic efficiency matters a lot, it can deliver a model at much lower cost and less time than the world has seen today. India will have a world class foundational model in the coming few months**

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | IT MINISTER

to build foundational models in the next 8-10 months at the outer limit, and 4-6 months at a more optimistic estimate.

The government, under the IndiaAI Mission, had approved ₹10,372 crore outlay to strengthen India's AI ecosystem - a key pillar for that was enabling 10,000 GPUs for AI Compute Infrastructure. The 18,693 GPUs would offer large compute power considering that Deepseek was trained on 2,000 GPUs and ChatGPT version 4 on 25,000 GPUs.

On the applications under India AI mission, India's focus has been about utilising the power of Artificial Intelligence for solving population-scale problems, in areas such as healthcare, education, agri, logistics, weather forecasting and others.

"We launched an application proposal and I am happy to say that 18 applications have been selected for the first round of funding. These are in themes of agriculture, learning disability and climate change," the Minister said.

AI safety is in the spotlight across the world, and India AI Mission too emphasises safe and trusted models.

# Gold prices scale yet another peak

## GOLD & SILVER



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Gold prices rose for the second straight session to hit another fresh all-time high of ₹83,800 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday amid strong global trends.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity edged up by ₹50 to hit another fresh peak of ₹83,800 per 10 grams from the previous close of ₹83,750 per 10 grams Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also advanced ₹50 to hit a lifetime high of ₹83,400 per 10 grams. It had closed at ₹83,350 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Additionally, silver rallied by ₹1,150 to ₹94,150 per kg from the previous market close of ₹93,000 per kg.

Meanwhile, in futures trade, gold contracts for February delivery climbed ₹75 or 0.72 per cent to hit a lifetime of ₹80,855 per 10 grams. For April contracts, the yellow metal advanced by ₹541 or 0.67

per cent to hit a fresh peak of ₹81,415 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

"Gold traded positively in MCX as participants positioned themselves against potential import duty hikes, following the 6 per cent cut in the previous Budget. A significant divergence was observed between Comex and MCX, with domestic gold rallying 2.5 per cent in the past week, while Comex gained only 0.50 per cent," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said. Silver futures for March delivery surged by ₹1,050 or 1.14 per cent to ₹92,916 per kg from the previous close of ₹91,866 per kg Wednesday.

In the international markets, Comex gold futures jumped \$23.65 per ounce or 0.84 per cent to hit an all-time high of \$2,817.15 per ounce.

Comex silver futures in the Asian market hours also traded 2.06 per cent higher at \$32.04 per ounce.

## Markets extend gains for 3rd day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** Extending the winning run to the third day, benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher Thursday on buying in heavy weight stocks Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel and HDFC Bank.

The 30-share Sensex advanced 226.85 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at 76,759.81 in a volatile trade amid the monthly expiry day. During the day, it surged 429.92 points or 0.56 per cent to 76,962.88. The NSE Nifty went up by 86.40 points or 0.37 per cent to 23,249.50.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Bajaj Finance, Nestle, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints, IndusInd Bank, Hindustan Unilever and HDFC Bank were the biggest gainers.

Bajaj Finance climbed nearly 2 per cent after the company reported an 18 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit to ₹4,308 crore for the December quarter.

Tata Motors tanked over 7 per cent after the firm reported a 22 per cent fall in consolidated net profit to ₹5,578 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024, impacted by a decline in revenue from its passenger and commercial vehicles divisions.

ITC Hotels, Bajaj Finserv, Adani Ports, Tech Mahindra, Zomato and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the other laggards. The BSE smallcap gauge closed marginally up by 0.02 per cent, while midcap index dipped 0.04 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, oil & gas jumped 1.59 per cent, energy (1.52 per cent), realty (1.49 per cent), healthcare (1.14 per cent) and telecommunication (1.08 per cent).

## BoB's stall exhibited at Utkarsh Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Bank of Baroda's Bhubaneswar Region exhibited a stall at Utkarsh Odisha - Make in Odisha Conclave 2025 held at Janata Maidan, Bhubaneswar from January 28 to 30.

Bank of Baroda MD & CEO Debadatta Chand was a special invitee in the event. General Manager & Zonal Head, Bhubaneswar Zone, Swapna Bandopadhyaya also graced the event along with SP Nayak, Deputy General Manager (Business Development), Bhubaneswar Zone and VMNS Saibabu Regional Head, Bhubaneswar Region.



The stall aimed at showcasing cutting edge MSME products of Bank of Baroda catering to varied needs of MSME/corporate clients.

A significant number of NTB (new to bank) leads under MSME & Current Accounts segment were generated through this stall.

# Hero MotoCorp launches all-new Destini 125

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Hero MotoCorp, the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters, is set to stimulate the 125cc scooter segment with the launch of the new Destini 125.

Engineered to upgrade urban mobility, the new Destini 125 combines cutting-edge technology with unmatched mileage and unwavering reliability. It delivers a powerful fusion of performance and practicality, setting a new standard for everyday city rides, while reimagining rider expectations.

The new Hero Destini 125 will be available in three variants - Destini 125 VX priced at ₹84,964, Destini 125 ZX priced at ₹93,814 and Destini 125 ZX+ priced at ₹94,814 (introductory ex-showroom price in Bhubaneswar).

Commenting on the launch, Ranjivjit Singh, Chief Business Officer - India Business Unit, Hero MotoCorp said, "We are thrilled to introduce the new Hero Destini 125, a symbol of style, convenience, and advanced technology, designed for the modern rider. This innovative 125cc scooter redefines industry standards and solidifies Hero



The Hero Destini 125 XTEC was unveiled at Rohan Hero, Bhubaneswar, by Neeru Dubey, MD, Shreemayee Mishra, General Secretary, BJD, Laxmi Sha, Zonal Manager, HMCL, and Ujjwal Kohli, Area Manager, HMCL



Sunny Motors unveiled the Hero Destini 125 XTEC at Cuttack. The unveiling was done by Director Umarjit Singh and Managing Partner Arshdeep Singh, along with Debasis Sar, TSM, HMCL and Abhinay Saxena, Sales & Marketing, HMCL

MotoCorp's position. With an impressive segment-leading



Hero MotoCorp unveiled the Hero Destini 125 XTEC at Essen Automobiles, Cuttack. The event was attended by Hemant Thacker, MD and Asha Thacker, Director Essen group and officials



The Hero Destini 125 XTEC was unveiled at JMG Automobile, Cuttack, by Managing Partner Pradip Agarwal, Chairman of JMG Group Satyanarayan Agarwal, and Debasis Sar, TSM, HMCL

company's commitment to innovation, value and an unparalleled riding experience for customers."

# Trademark tussle: Lodha brothers clash in Bombay High Court

*Macrotech Developers has delivered around 100 million square feet of real estate and is currently developing more than 110 million square feet under its on-going and planned portfolio. Its market capitalisation is currently around ₹1.16L-cr*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Macrotech Developers MD Abhishek Lodha has described the ongoing dispute with his younger brother's firm House of Abhinandan Lodha on use of trademark 'Lodha' as "very painful matter" for him and asserted that this will not have any impact on the company's opera-

performances. Macrotech Developers has recently filed a suit in the Bombay High Court against House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL), formed by Abhishek's younger brother Abhinandan Lodha, for infringement of its trademarks and sought appropriate injunctions, reliefs and damages.

Macrotech Developers, which sells properties under



Lodha brand, is one of the leading real estate firms in the country, while HoABL is into plotted developments across various cities, including Ayodhya. According to a transcript of discussion with investors

is a very painful matter for me personally because Abhinandan Lodha is my younger brother. I have always wished him very well. And I hope that even going forward, he continues to be successful in all fields that he operates in, including real estate

He said the company is currently focusing to ensure that its consumers are not confused in any manner with respect to the fact that they are dealing with which company.

"And Lodha, the company, which has over 40 years, built a strong brand on the back of track record of delivery and

performance and integrity, should not be confused with any other brand, whether belonging to Abhinandan Lodha or any other third party. This is the basic fundamental of the dispute," Abhishek said. He said the matter is before the Bombay High Court and it can take a few months or even longer to get resolved.

"In any event, it has no ongoing impact on our operational performance because we, as a company, continue to focus on delivering value for our consumers and having the highest standards of governance, which will ensure that value creation is fully delivered," Abhishek assured analysts.

RANJI TROPHY

# King Kohli effect

FORMER INDIAN SKIPPER'S AURA BRINGS A PARTY LIKE ATMOSPHERE

## Samson's weakness, finishing woes in focus



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, Jan 30:** Sanju Samson's technical weaknesses against express pace along with Rinku Singh's dip in form and fitness issues will be a concern for India when they take on a resurgent England in the fourth T20 International here Friday.

Having fluffed their chances in the third T20I in Rajkot, the penultimate game of the five-match series gives the hosts another opportunity to seal the series going into the final game in Mumbai, February 2. Suryakumar Yadav's men won the first two games in Kolkata and Chennai.

Samson, the maverick keeper-batter from Kerala, whose sympathetic and loyal fan base never fails to remind everyone of the limited chances he has got, started the T20I season with three hundreds against Bangladesh and South Africa prior to the ongoing series.

In the current rubber, he has had scores of 26, 5 and 3 and it is not these numbers that are concerning. In T20 cricket, if one factors in risk, there would always be lot of less profitable days at the office considering the kind of strokes batters play these days. But in case of Samson, what is of concern is his palpable discomfort against anything bowled above 145 clicks.

Against Bangladesh at home, he faced Taskin Ahmed, Tanzim Hasan Shakib while in South Africa Andile Simelane and Lutho Sipamla were among the bowlers.

These are not exactly intimidating fast bowlers and he rightfully took them to the

cleaners. These are bowlers who fire in between 130 to 140 clicks and can be hit through the line on flat decks.

However, Jofra Archer and Mark Wood are different beasts, bowling between 145 kmph to 155 kmph and that pace is creating problems for Samson.

During all three games, the Kerala batter couldn't even get his bat down as deliveries would thud into Phil Salt's gloves. The hard lengths and steep bounce are creating a problem and even on batting shirt-fronts, it is not easy to hit through the line if one doesn't have proper technique or doesn't regularly face this quality of fast bowling.

Samson is one of head coach Gautam Gambhir's favourites and it is expected that he would be persisted with going into next year's T20 World Cup. But his technical issues need to be sorted out at the earliest by Gambhir, new batting coach Sitanshu Kotak and the himself.

Will Arshdeep be back in order to seal the series

Mohammed Shami needs a lot of bowling in match situations and the Rajkot game was a decent restart to his international career without being spectacular. While a bilateral series win counts for little, Gambhir wouldn't like the ignominy of being the first coach under whom India lost a home T20I series against England.

Hence, it would be interesting if Arshdeep Singh, India's best T20I bowler in absence of Jasprit Bumrah is in line to come back and give some breakthroughs in the Power-play overs.

and a housewife among several others.

With the chants of his name reverberating every few minutes, it wouldn't be wrong to say that one man turned an otherwise mundane Ranji clash into a spectacle.

### Thakur's hat-trick



Shardul Thakur remained at the forefront of the Mumbai attack as his hat-trick and unbeaten half-centuries from skipper Ajinkya Rahane (83) and Siddhesh Lad (89) helped the hosts build a 127-run lead against Meghalaya on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A clash here Thursday. Thakur found adequate help from another opening-day bowling-friendly surface as well as from fellow bowlers Mohit Avasthi (3/27), Sylvester D'Souza (2/14) and Shams Mulani (1/1) as Mumbai shot out Meghalaya for a mere 86.

### Rahul's dismal comeback

KL Rahul's much-anticipated return to Ranji Trophy lasted a mere 37 balls as the India opener was dismissed for 26, leaving Karnataka at 267/5 against Haryana on day one of their must-win Group C match here Thursday. Making his first Ranji Trophy appearance since February 2020, local hero Rahul walked in at No 3 to a warm reception from the semi-packed M Chinnaswamy Stadium, with chants of 'Rahul, Rahul' echoing through the stands.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Thousands of delirious fans screamed and cheered at the mere mention of his name as Virat Kohli's unmatched aura dominated the Ranji Trophy fixture between Delhi and Railways here Thursday, triggering an unprecedented rush for seats in the stands that forced administrators to make additional last-minute arrangements.

The DDCA (Delhi and Districts Cricket Association) had projected a crowd of around 10,000 for Kohli's homecoming, which is unheard of for a Ranji Trophy game. But such was his magnetic pull that even those lofty calculations went for a toss.

Long before the start of play at 9.30am local time, the 36-year-old Kohli's loyal band of supporters were jostling to enter the stadium where entry is free for domestic matches.

At first, the DDCA opened the roughly 6,000-capacity 'Gautam Gambhir Stand' for spectators but sensing that the crowd situation could go out of hand, the officials were forced to open the 'Bishan Singh Bedi Stand' which can accommodate around 11,000 people.

"I have never seen something like this in Ranji Trophy. Even in my playing days, there was hardly anyone who made the effort to watch domestic



**I have been involved in Delhi cricket for more than 30 years but I have not witnessed such scenes for a Ranji Trophy game. It just shows that Kohli's popularity is unmatched**

ASHOK SHARMA | DDCA SECRETARY

cricket. It is just because of one man," a former India player present at the ground told PTI.

What added to the commotion was the movement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cavalcade past the ground at the same time.

"What made it more challenging was that fans entering the stadium coincided with the VIP movement of PM Modi on the outside roads and as part of his strict security protocol and to maintain order, we were instructed by the police to open another stand for the public," Ashok Sharma revealed.

The Delhi Police also issued a statement after some chaos outside the stadium, assuring that nothing untoward hap-

pened in the melee. "Additional gates were soon opened, easing the situation. No injuries were reported, and the situation is now under control," it said in a statement.

The last time a domestic match evoked such a response from the fans was when the great Sachin Tendulkar played

and a housewife among several others.

With the chants of his name reverberating every few minutes, it wouldn't be wrong to say that one man turned an otherwise mundane Ranji clash into a spectacle.

Shardul Thakur remained at the forefront of the Mumbai attack as his hat-trick and unbeaten half-centuries from skipper Ajinkya Rahane (83) and Siddhesh Lad (89) helped the hosts build a 127-run lead against Meghalaya on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A clash here Thursday. Thakur found adequate help from another opening-day bowling-friendly surface as well as from fellow bowlers Mohit Avasthi (3/27), Sylvester D'Souza (2/14) and Shams Mulani (1/1) as Mumbai shot out Meghalaya for a mere 86.

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## No captains' photoshoot in Pakistan before CT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Karachi, Jan 30:** There will be no captains' photoshoot or conference in Pakistan before the ICC Champions Trophy, a source in the host cricket board told PTI Thursday, ending the possibility of India skipper travelling to the country for any pre-tournament engagements.

The Pakistan Cricket Board source said the PCB was forced to cancel the pre-tournament captains' gathering because of "unavailability of teams due to tight travelling schedules."

"The thing is all teams have tight schedules before the tournament. England and India are playing a white-ball series while Australia is playing a Test and ODI series in Sri Lanka," the source said.

He also said the PCB will organise an inauguration event for the tournament February 16 in Lahore instead of an official opening ceremony.

As per tradition, captains of all participating teams gather for a pre-tournament photo-op before the start of an ICC event.

The 2025 edition of the Champions Trophy, which is set to be played from February 19 to March 9, will be held across three venues in Pakistan and one in Dubai. India will, however, not travel to Pakistan for security reasons and will instead play all their matches in Dubai.

If they qualify for the final, the title clash will also be played in Dubai.

The inauguration ceremony would be held at the Huzoor Bagh in Lahore. The source though confirmed that PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi had approved a scheduled list of events prior to the first match of the mega event at the National Stadium in Karachi.

The PCB will officially open the renovated Gaddafi stadium February 7 in which Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has been invited as the chief guest.

## Hantal, Panna join Odisha FC



AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Kalinga Warriors announced the permanent signings of two local Odia players, striker Kartik Hantal and forward Roshan Panna on a professional contract Thursday.

Both players have been part of Odisha FC's reserve team, with Kartik being with the team from the very beginning and Roshan joining last season during the Reliance Foundation Development League (RFDL) from the youth team. Their standout performances in both the RFDL and Durand Cup have caught the attention of Indian football, showcasing their skill and passion.

In the recently concluded RFDL, Kartik made a huge im-

pact, scoring five goals in five matches; making him the highest scorer of the East Region Qualifiers. Roshan also showcased his ability to help the team perform at a high level.

Kartik Hantal has already made a name for himself at the national level. In 2024, he played a crucial role in helping Odisha team qualify for the final rounds of the 78th Senior Men's National Football Championship in the Santosh Trophy, scoring important wins in Group F against Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. He also played a key role in Odisha's strong performance in previous years, including scoring a vital goal in a 1-0 win against Manipur in 2022 during the 75th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy.

The Odisha women 4X100 Midley Relay team bagged the gold medal with a timing of 4:30.09. While Pratyasa Ray and Mannata Mishra in (breast stroke), Shrishti Upadhyay (butterfly) and Divyanka Dibyajyoti Pradhan in (freestyle) to clinch the gold.

Divyanka Dibyajyoti Pradhan grabbed an individual bronze medal in the women's 200m breaststroke event by clocking 2:45.56.

The Maharashtra and Karnataka teams won the silver and bronze medals clocking 4:31.29

## 38TH NATIONAL GAMES

### Odisha women swimmers bag relay gold

So far, the state has won three medals including a gold and two bronze medals in ongoing National Games

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Odisha women swimmers bagged the first gold medal for the State in the 38th National Games 2025 at Haldwani, Uttarakhand Thursday.

The Odisha women 4X100 Midley Relay team bagged the gold medal with a timing of 4:30.09. While Pratyasa Ray and Mannata Mishra in (breast stroke), Shrishti Upadhyay (butterfly) and Divyanka Dibyajyoti Pradhan in (freestyle) to clinch the gold.

Divyanka Dibyajyoti Pradhan grabbed an individual bronze medal in the women's 200m breaststroke event by clocking 2:45.56.

The Maharashtra and Karnataka teams won the silver and bronze medals clocking 4:31.29



and 4:31.62 respectively. Earlier Wednesday, Shrishti Upadhyay won a bronze medal in her individual event.

So far Odisha won three medals including a gold and two bronze medals in the ongoing National Games.

Odisha's both women and



men rugby teams barged into the semifinals by defeating Tamil Nadu and host Uttarakhand by 56-0 and 36-0 respectively in the quarterfinal match at Dehradun Thursday. Both the Odisha teams will face Maharashtra teams in the semifinals.

## Gukesh beats Warmerdam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Wijk Aan Zee, Jan 30:** World champion D Gukesh defeated Dutch Grandmaster Max Warmerdam to stay in sole lead on 7.5 points at the end of the 10th round of Tata Steel Chess tournament here.

It was another eventful day for Gukesh who is now closing in on the 2800-rating barrier. The victory with black came easily when Warmerdam missed the line after being level for quite some time.

It was a closed Sicilian where Gukesh knocked down a couple of pawns to force resignation in 34 moves.

The youngest world champion is a half point ahead of nearest rival Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan. Holding the sole third spot is R Praggnanandhaa on 6.5 points after a finely crafted victory over Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia.



Arjun Erigaisi's hunt for an elusive victory continued for the 10th day running as he drew with Vincent Keymer of Germany. P Harikrishna defended a slightly worse rook endgame to hold his fort against top seed Fabiano Caruana of the United States, while Leon Luke Mendonca played out a draw with Anish Giri.

Praggnanandhaa came up with a dominating performance against Fedoseev who chose the Tarrasch defense as black. The opening saw Praggnanandhaa getting a structural advantage and he nurtured it quite well in the middle game.

## FIH PRO LEAGUE

### Youngsters in Hockey India's probables' list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** India, Thursday included more than half-a-dozen young players in the long list of probables for the upcoming FIH Pro League, based on their performance in the Hockey India League and junior level competitions.

Among those included in the list of 32 senior probables for the first time are goalkeeper Princedeep Singh, defender Yashdeep Singh, midfielders Rabichandra Singh and Rajinder Singh, and forwards Angad Bir Singh, Uttam Singh and Arshdeep Singh.

Veteran drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh will lead the side, while Hardik Singh will be his deputy for the Bhubaneswar leg of the Pro League,



to be played at the Kalinga Stadium from February 15 to 25.

India's campaign will feature matches against Spain, Germany, Ireland and England, playing each team twice. Impressive performances in

the junior team and the ongoing HIL has won 22-year-old Angad Bir Singh and 20-year-old Arshdeep Singh their first senior team call-ups for the upcoming FIH Pro League matches, said Hockey India in a statement.

Princedeep, a member of the gold-winning side at last year's Junior Asia Cup in Muscat, is a notable addition to the senior side and will join first-choice goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera.

Yashdeep will be positioned in defence alongside veterans Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas and captain Harmanpreet, while in the midfield, Rabichandra Singh will stand out. Manpreet Singh, Hardik, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma for company.

Head coach Craig Fulton expressed confidence that the current set of players would play entertaining, top-notch hockey in the Pro League.

"Extremely happy with the squad we have selected for the

Bhubaneswar leg matches of the FIH Pro League. I believe this team can win us games, perform in harmony and most importantly play an impressive brand of hockey. Looking forward to training with the players in the camp and starting our Pro League campaign on the right note. I have been scouting these players over the last few weeks and am excited to see what they do against some of the best international teams in the world."

India had finished seventh among nine teams in the 2023-24 edition of the Pro League but the European leg did not go as per expectations.

The team, however, came back from the setback to win a second successive gold at the Paris Olympics.