

Haunting past

Mamta Kulkarni has been stripped off her designation of Mahamandaleswar of Kinnar Akhada due to her link to cinema

LEISURE | P2

Trump warns BRICS nations

President Donald Trump once again warns that he will impose 100% tariffs against BRICS nations if they attempt to replace the US dollar in international trade

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Gold remains at peak

Gold prices hit a fresh record high of ₹84,900 per 10 grams, driven by robust domestic demand and strong global cues

BUSINESS | P11

Top honour

Legendary former batter Sachin Tendulkar will be conferred with the BCCI's Lifetime Achievement Award

SPORTS | P12



SLUGGISH GROWTH

₹6,152cr decongestion, expansion plans for City

The country's economy is likely to continue its sluggish pace of growth in the range of 6.3% to 6.8% in 2025-26 fiscal weighed down by global risks, according to the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday. With the growth set to fall to a four-year low this year from 8.2% last year, the survey has called on states to pursue business reforms to boost economic activity. While acknowledging the increasing reliance on financial markets for funding, the survey emphasised that financial markets must complement the banking sector to bridge the capital requirement gap. For the realisation of the dream of becoming a developed nation by 2047, India needs to grow by 8 per cent on average for about a decade or two, the report, authored by Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran and his team, has suggested



- HIGHLIGHTS**
- Economy to grow at 6.3-6.8% in FY26, against 6.4% in FY25
 - Risks to inflation remain on account of significant global political, economic uncertainties
 - Service oriented Indian economy vulnerable to automation, impact of AI is magnified for India given its size and its relatively low per capita income
 - Investment activity expected to pick up, supported by higher public capex and improving business expectations

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The state government is planning to invest ₹6,152 crore to ease the burgeoning traffic congestion here, expand the City, and improve connectivity.



The decision regarding the Capital City's decongestion plan was taken at a high-level review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday. Sources in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said a 64-km inner ring road will be constructed in Bhubaneswar. Additionally, six-lane roads will be developed from Tamando to Paikrapur, and from Dhauli to Tamando.

A plan for an outer ring road has also been prepared to facilitate the City's expansion. This 148-km ring road will include six lanes and two service roads. An elevated corridor will be built from Jayadev Vihar to Nandankanan.

tion of the Damana Chowk-Press Chowk road has been completed, while work on the Sundarpada-Jatni Road and the left parallel road is ongoing. The Chief Minister has directed officials to prepare a detailed project report for the remaining works immediately. During the meeting, it was revealed that the first phase of the Grand Ring Road project aims to connect the four corners of the state, with a 287-km road from Berhampur to Jajpur, including four tunnels. The CM has instructed officials to expedite the implementation of various new projects planned by the state government.

According to sources, the other planned projects include the Daya West Canal Road from Patia Station Chowk to Suanaga Mouza, widening of Jatni Road from Sundarpada, and the construction of three flyovers - at Sisupal Chowk, Museum Chowk, and Sishu Bhawan Chowk - along with an underpass at AG Chowk.

Similarly, work is in progress on a left parallel road from the Institute of Mathematics to Patharagadia, Utkal Hospital, Rail Vihar, and Ekamra Kanan. Additionally, plans have been made for three right-access roads from Damana to Press Chowk, Kalarahang to Barimunda, and Guru Kelucharan Park to Barimunda.

It was also disclosed that ₹214 crore will be allocated for the development of the Keonjhar Maa Tarini temple and the beautification of its surrounding areas. Majhi has directed that this work be initiated immediately and completed within the stipulated time frame. Additionally, the meeting covered the development of the Barbil Ring Road, Unit-2 area in Bhubaneswar, and other infrastructure projects. The review meeting was attended by Works Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, Development Commissioner Anu Garg, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Nikunj Bihari Dhal, and senior engineers from the Works department.

New Delhi, Jan 31: India's economy is likely to continue its sluggish pace of growth next fiscal year weighed down by global risks, according to the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday. The report has called on states to pursue business reforms to boost economic activity. The survey has projected GDP growth at 6.3 per cent to

6.8 per cent in the next fiscal year that starts April 1, with growth set to sag to a four-year low this year from 8.2 per cent last year. The report on the state of economy said the risks to India's economic prospects next year are balanced. "Rural demand backed by a rebound in agricultural production, an anticipated easing of food inflation and a stable macro-economic environment provide an upside to near-term

growth," the report, authored by Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran and his team, said adding that geopolitical and trade uncertainties, along with possible commodity price shocks, pose headwinds to the economy. "The range of growth forecast in the economic survey is appropriate given the global uncertainties," said Aditi Nayar, economist at ICRA, the India arm of Fitch ratings. ICRA has forecast growth of

6.5 per cent for 2025/26. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his third term's first full Budget, is likely to provide support for the world's fifth-largest economy where high prices and tepid wage growth have crimped consumption. Food inflation is likely to soften in the January to March quarter as some vegetable prices will ease seasonally along with good crop arrivals, Nageswaran said in the report. Estimates suggest India's

retail inflation will "progressively" align with the RBI's target, he added. However, any bad weather events and rise in international agricultural commodity prices pose a risk to food inflation, Nageswaran said.

India's retail inflation in December eased to a four-month low of 5.2 per cent. But inflation in food, which account for nearly half of the consumption basket, continued to remain high at 8.39 per cent in December, with vegetable prices rising at an eye-watering pace of 26.56 per cent.

The nation has set a 4 per cent headline inflation target for the RBI's rate-setting panel, with a tolerance band of 2 percentage points on either side. The panel is expected to cut rates for the first time in over four years at its meeting Feb 5-7.

While near-term growth is in line with the 10-year average, India needs a growth rate of 8 per cent to meet its longer term economic goals, the survey said. For this, Indian states, along with the Centre, must pursue systematic de-regulation as a priority. P3

2 men found dead in rented City home

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The Kharvela Nagar police recovered the bodies of two men, believed to be 23-25 years old, from a rented accommodation in Punjabi Colony near Satyanagar area here, Friday. Inspector-in-charge (IIC) Rajanikanta Mishra said the deceased - Debasish Sahoo and Gyanaranjan Behera - hailed from Jagatsinghpur district and Patrapada area in the City, respectively. The duo took the place on rent almost a year ago after they started working at a bakery unit near Saheed Nagar. No suicide note was found on them, or during a search of the house, Mishra said. The IIC said the incident came to the light after the duo failed to show up at their workplace Friday morning. P3

'The poor lady, the President' lands Sonia in soup

New Delhi, Jan 31: Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's "The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end... she could hardly speak, poor thing" remarks about President Droupadi Murmu after the latter's hour-long address to Parliament Friday snowballed into a huge controversy, with the Rashtrapati Bhavan saying they were in "poor taste, unfortunate and unacceptable." Prime Minister Narendra Modi also tore into the Congress, accusing its 'shahi parivaar'(royal family) of insulting the President, who hails from a tribal background, and claiming that the party has always undermined the progress of those who come from marginalized communities. The Rashtrapati Bhavan

came out with a statement to say the remarks clearly hurt the dignity of the high office. As several BJP leaders condemned Sonia Gandhi's remarks, party chief JP Nadda said they were "deeply disrespectful", and underscored the Opposition's "continued disregard" for the dignity of the highest constitutional office. Parliamentary Affairs minister Kiren Rijiju demanded an apology from the former Congress president. The Congress hit back and said every person in India has respect and empathy for President Murmu but claimed that the BJP leaders cannot digest Sonia Gandhi's "empathy" for her health. Soon after the President concluded her customary address to a joint sitting of Parliament to mark the start of the Budget session, Sonia Gandhi,

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, also a party general secretary, were seen discussing the speech in the Parliament complex. "The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end... she could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia Gandhi was heard saying in a video doing the rounds on social media. During the discussion, Rahul Gandhi was also heard asking his mother if the President's speech was "boring". When asked to comment on Sonia's comments, Priyanka Gandhi said her mother has the utmost respect for the President and that it is very unfortunate her remarks have been allegedly "twisted by the media".



AIMING HIGH
CM Mohan Charan Majhi tries his hand in cricket after reviewing preparations ahead of India-England ODI, February 9 at Barabati Stadium, Cuttack, Friday

Sunita Williams sets spacewalking record

Washington: Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams has broken the record for total spacewalking time by a woman by logging 62 hours and 6 minutes of spacewalk. Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore, who have been stranded on the International Space Station (ISS) since June 2024, conducted a spacewalk Thursday. P10

7 AAP MLAs quit party

New Delhi: In a setback to the AAP, seven of its outgoing MLAs resigned from the party Friday, with only five days to go for the Delhi Assembly polls. Sources said these MLAs were disgruntled after being denied tickets for the February 5 polls and were in touch with other parties. Most of the MLAs shared their resignation letters on social media and slammed the AAP over corruption and other issues. Madan Lal, the outgoing MLA from Kasturba Nagar, said seven AAP legislators, including him, have quit the party's primary membership. P8

Earliest lead pollution proof found in ancient Greece

Washington, Jan 31: Ancient Greece produced the earliest records of democracy, western philosophy — and, it turns out, lead pollution. Researchers studying sediment cores recovered from mainland Greece and the Aegean Sea have found the oldest known evidence of lead pollution in the environment dating to around 5,200 years ago. That's 1,200 years older than the previous earliest recorded lead pollution, which was found in a peatbog in Serbia. In antiquity, lead was released into the atmosphere as a byproduct of smelting ore for copper and silver. The toxic



metal later condensed as dust and settled onto the soil. "Silver was used for jewelry, for special objects — but it wasn't found in a pure state,"

day in Communications Earth and Environment. The site with the earliest signs of lead contamination is located in northeastern Greece, near the island of Thasos. Prior archaeological evidence suggests Thasos was one of the region's most significant sites for silver mining and metalwork, said Maran. "Lead released from smelting is the world's first form of toxic or industrial pollution," said Yale historian Joseph Manning, who was not involved in the study. The researchers found that levels of lead contamination remained fairly low and localized in ancient Greece, considered the cradle of European civilization, throughout the Bronze

Age, the Classical period and the Hellenistic period. The Classical period is famous for Athenian democracy, Socrates and Plato, and the Hellenistic period saw Greek cultural influence peak across the Mediterranean region. But around 2,150 years ago, the researchers detected "a very strong and abrupt increase" in lead emissions caused by human activities across Greece, said co-author Andreas Koutsodendraris at Heidelberg University. Around that time, in 146 BC, the Roman army conquered the Greek peninsula, transforming the region's society and economy. As Roman trade, colonies and shipping expanded across the

Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea, demand for silver coins grew rapidly, requiring smelting that released lead, said Koutsodendraris. Later the Roman Empire used lead for tableware and for construction, including pipes. Previous research — including an analysis of ice cores from Greenland — had detected high levels of lead across much of the Northern Hemisphere during Roman times. But the new study adds a more "specific and local picture to how lead levels changed," said Nathan Chellman, an environmental scientist at the University of Nevada, Reno, who was not involved in the research.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The best way to handle the economy is to be economical... with the truth

leisure



SWIFT'S GRAMMY AWARDS ATTENDANCE CONFIRMED

Pop icon Taylor Swift will be among the presenters at the upcoming Grammy Awards. The *Cruel Summer* hitmaker - who has received six nominations for this year's prizes - has been confirmed to attend music's biggest night at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles Sunday.

LIAM PAYNE'S NETFLIX SHOW TO GO AHEAD

English singer-songwriter Liam Payne's TV show *Building the Band* has been given the go ahead to air on Netflix later this year. The *One Direction* star died in October after plunging from a balcony at a hotel in Argentina.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Right now you need to summon all your mental abilities as you will have to take quick, on-the-spot decisions. However, Ganesha cautions you to take proper advice as your decisions may have a long-term impact, more so if they involve monetary matters.

TAURUS
You have an easy carefree day ahead. There will be no woes or worries, says Ganesha. But to will be inclined to take up too many things at one time, more than you can handle. This may, in turn, get you stressed and uptight. You are advised to be practical and not to overdo things. If you do get into a fix, a moment's reflection will show you that you alone are to be blamed.

GEMINI
Emotions, not acidity, will be the cause of your uneasiness. Something important is going on in your life and you are nervous. It can be related to a matter concerning law, ethics, prejudice, education, or social customs. You are, however, likely to win admiration from all quarters for your fine taste in arts, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Today, you will be at the centre of all your plans. Your responsibilities at home are likely to be unnecessary digressions for you, with your help-yourself-only attitude. However, you may feel that you are not getting enough returns of your hard work.

LEO
Love, respect and quality time together - this might just be the perfect recipe for a happy family life, says Ganesha. So on this day, make it a point to spend time with your loved ones, and show them just how much you care for them and what they mean to you. It may be a small gesture, but the returns you get in the evening will be priceless, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
A renewed zest for life will bring in a transformation in you. It is a good time to let people know how important and intelligent - yes, you can be both - are. Your eminence will be obvious as you show how things are meant to be done.

LIBRA
All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy! You don't want to be Jack, now, do you? It's high time you took a break from your busy work schedule. Go on a vacation to recharge your batteries.

SCORPIO
Two words will define your day - eloquence and elegance. Sweet talk and compliments may take you a long way, but do not become complacent and get carried away with your success. Sometimes, saying the right thing may be more beneficial than saying what the other person wants to hear.

SAGITTARIUS
Friendship with a few like-minded people is likely to develop today. You shall spend a large share of your time discussing issues like attitude, beliefs and values. Those with you will enjoy sharing their ideas and opinions, and casting them in a new mould.

CAPRICORN
The wait for some good news may have been too long, but it will surely find its way to you today, says Ganesha. Your focus will remain fixed on work, and you may feel like you are finally starting to like your job. This, in turn, will lead you to take some well-informed decisions about your future. And if the good news comes at the right time, you will probably be saved the effort of finding a new job.

AQUARIUS
Today is an important day in the larger scheme of things. You may finally decide to buy a home, change your job, or marry! Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards too. Reputation and rewards are all yours today. This acknowledgement helps you remain committed, says Ganesha.

PISCES
Your inherent talents, competitive colleagues and supportive superiors will spur you on to great heights at the workplace, beginning today. Make sure that you do not get carried away by little victories, says Ganesha. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip!

When Adah was left speechless

Mumbai: Adah Sharma recently attended an event where she was welcomed by 20 foreigner girls. All of them were dressed in sarees, inspired by the actress' look from her highly-acclaimed drama *The Kerala Story*.

Sharing a few glimpses from the event on her official IG, Adah Sharma also penned a heartfelt note saying that if she had known that the girls were going to dress up in sarees for the event, she would have worn a saree herself.

The *Hasee Toh Phasee* actress wrote in the caption, "What a lovely surprise !!! I wasn't told earlier nahi toh main bhi iss event pe Saadi pehen ke jaati! This is the first time these girls wore a saree because Kerala Story ki heroine was coming for the event...Don't they look stunnngggg sundar !!!! They showed me the Adah Sharma saree reference pictures they got. Swipe to see."

Moving on, Adah Sharma will next be seen in the second season of her popular series, *Reeta Sanyal*. Loved by cinephiles, the original drama turned out to be one of the most-watched OTT shows of 2024. IANS



PC's ugly encounter

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra Jonas, also known as PC among her fans, is undoubtedly one of the most adored, successful and bankable stars of the country. After making a name for herself in the Hindi film industry, she shifted base to the West and soon emerged as

a global icon with her hard work and acting skills. But the actor has seen her fair share of struggles along the journey. For instance, one of her early 'dehumanising' encounters with a filmmaker left her heartbroken when she was barely 19.

During the Forbes Power Women's Summit, Priyanka remembered the incident. At the beginning of her career,

while shooting for a film at the age of 19, she went up to the director and asked him if he would speak to her stylist in order to explain what the film demands in terms of her costume and looks. Priyanka recalled, "He picks up the phone and goes, 'Listen, people are going to come into the movies to watch her when she shows her panties. So it needs to be really short so that I can see her panties. You know those people sitting up front? They should be able to see her panties.' And he said it like four times. And it's not even pretty in Hindi. It's worse."

PeeCee then decided to walk out of the film and has till date never collaborated with the director.

Mamta's past leads to expulsion from Kinnar Akhada

Mumbai: Actress Mamta Kulkarni, who ruled the 90s, has been expelled from the Kinnar Akhada. The designation of Mahamandaleshwar, which was given to the actress, has been revoked. The reason behind the same has been revealed to the actress' past link to cinema, and her alleged criminal past.

in writing, because he has always strayed from the post for which he was appointed."

He alleged that Tripathi, who appointed the actress as the Mahamandaleshwar, not only committed an unconstitutional act but also "left the Sanatan Dharma and the country's interest".

Rishi Das called Mamta's alleged criminal past as an act of treason, as he wrote, she committed treason and is "associated with glamour, without following any religious or akhada tradition".

He went on to add, "All the symbols of Kinnar Akhara have been damaged by making illegal contracts in the name of Kinnar Akhara with Juna Akhara. These people are neither following the principles of Juna Akhara nor the principles of Kinnar Akhada."



Ghajini 2 in works!

Mumbai: Aamir Khan recently graced the trailer launch event of Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi's *Thandel*. During the event, 'Mr Perfectionist' and ace South producer Allu Aravind dropped a massive hint about the much-discussed sequel, *Ghajini 2*.

Addressing the media, Aravind shared, "I should make 1000 crore film with you. Maybe *Ghajini 2*." Reacting to this, Aamir said, "A lot on the net has been going around *Ghajini 2*."

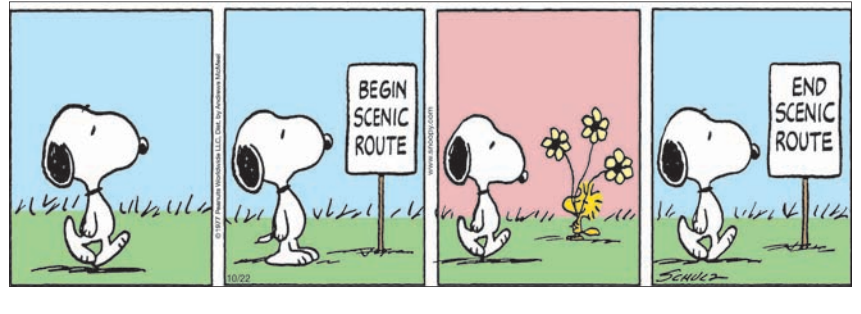
Reports have been doing rounds for some time now that Allu Aravind is planning to make the sequel in both Tamil and Hindi. If the reports are to be believed, Suriya will play the lead role in the Tamil version of *Ghajini 2*, whereas Aamir will be roped in for the Hindi rendition.

The 2008 action thriller *Ghajini* was made under the direction

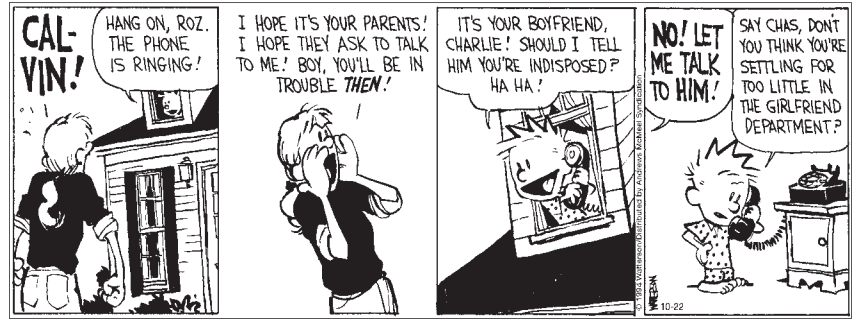


of AR Murugadoss. The project also marked the Bollywood debut of the filmmaker. Theatrically released on 25th December 2008, it became the highest-grossing Indian film of the year. *Ghajini* talks about a rich business tycoon, Sanjay Singhania, played by Aamir Khan, who suffers from short-term memory loss due to being hit by a metal pole during an attempt to save his girlfriend Kalpana Shetty (Asin).

PEANUTS



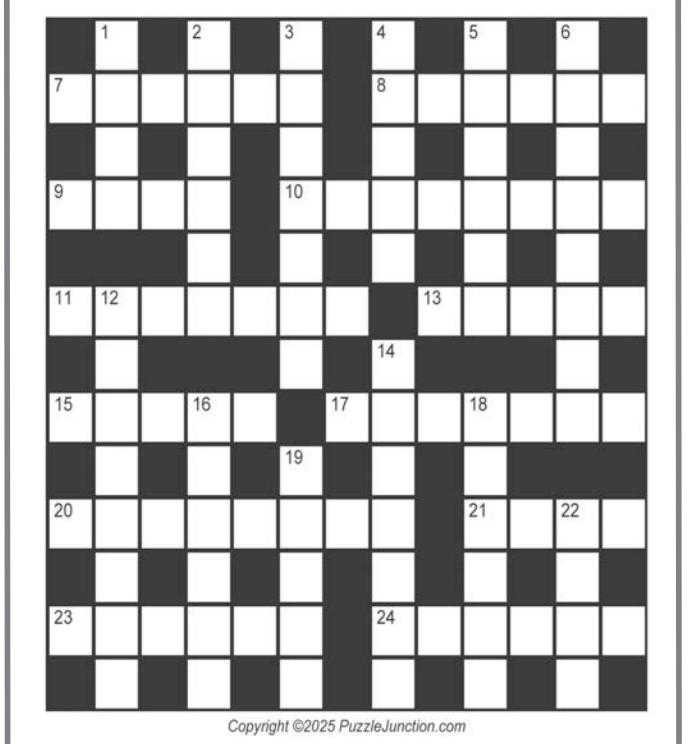
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Periphery
 - 8 Compadres
 - 9 Persian spirit
 - 10 Ottoman, e.g.
 - 11 Troglodyte (4,3)
 - 13 Colourful parrot
 - 15 Goose egg
 - 17 Crucial
 - 20 Broke, cash-wise
 - 21 Spumante
 - 23 Ornamental tree
 - 24 Out for the count
- Down**
- 1 Test choice
 - 2 Inveigle
 - 3 Danger sign (3,4)
 - 4 Nobleman
 - 5 Before Madre or Club
 - 6 Gaborone locale
 - 12 Travel industry
 - 14 Garrolous bore
 - 16 Harsh
 - 18 Soothsayer
 - 19 Vision-related
 - 22 Long haul

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.

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|---|----|---|----|----|----|
| 8 | 6 | | | 7 | 5 | | | |
| | | | | 6 | | | | |
| | | 2 | | 4 | 8 | | | |
| | | 2 | 8 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| 9 | 7 | | 6 | | | 4 | | |
| | | 5 | 1 | | | | | |
| 11 | 12 | | | | | 13 | | |
| | | | | | | 14 | | |
| 15 | | 16 | | 17 | | | 18 | |
| | | | | | | 19 | | |
| 20 | | | | | | | 21 | 22 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | | | | | | | 24 | |

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | A | C | A | R | A | T | R | U | M |
| E | H | N | A | E | | | | | |
| V | I | S | T | A | S | T | A | R | T |
| O | T | T | N | I | T | | | | |
| L | I | O | N | G | O | R | G | E | O |
| V | R | O | L | | | | | | |
| E | K | N | O | C | K | D | O | W | N |
| | | | | D | E | W | O | A | |
| M | E | D | I | O | C | R | E | H | I |
| A | E | E | T | S | S | | | | |
| G | A | R | L | A | N | D | A | R | E |
| I | B | A | R | | | | | | |
| C | A | Y | S | P | I | N | O | F | F |

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CM reviews preps for Barabati ODI



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Ahead of a high-octane ODI clash between India and England February 9, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday visited Barabati Stadium in Cuttack to take stock of the preparations and security measures put in place there.

“I discussed the arrangements being made to ensure the comfort of both spectators and players. This will be the first international match at the stadium under the new government,” said Majhi, while expressing his satisfaction over the ongoing preparations at the stadium.

“The preparatory work is being carried out under the direct supervision of all Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) staffers, district and state administration and Sports Minister Suryavanshi Suraj,” the CM said. “This is both a challenge and a matter of honour for us.

Jaishankar hails Odisha for hosting 18th PBD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said his ministry is looking forward to partnering with the state government for organising events like Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) in future. In a letter to CM Mohan Charan Majhi, he congratulated the state government for making the recently held 18th PBD in Bhubaneswar a ‘resounding success’. “My ministry looks forward to partnering with Odisha for organising similar events in the future,” he said. “The meticulous planning as well as impeccable execution of all details pertaining to the organisation of the PBD by the Odisha government was indeed commendable and praiseworthy,” Jaishankar said in the letter. “The Indian diaspora members who participated in the 18th PBD 2025 gave a very positive feedback of the hospitality extended by the state government of Odisha...” he added.

2 men found dead in rented City home

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The Kharvela Nagar police recovered the bodies of two men, believed to be 23-25 years old, from a rented accommodation in Punjabi Colony near Satyanagar area here, Friday. Inspector-in-charge (IIC) Rajanikanta Mishra said the deceased - Debasish Sahoo and Gyanaranjan Behera - hailed from Jagatsinghpur district and Patrapada area in the City, respectively. The duo took the place on rent almost a year ago after they started working at a bakery unit near Saheed Nagar. No suicide note was found on them, or during a search of the house, Mishra said. The IIC said the incident came to the light after the duo failed to show up at their workplace Friday morning. The bakery owner went to check on them at their home which he found bolted from the inside. “He then broke open the back door to find Debasish and Gyanaranjan lying lifeless on the bed, with froth oozing out of their mouth,” Mishra said. The bakery owner then alerted neighbours who took them to Capital Hospital where doctors declared them dead before arrival. An official at Capital Hospital’s autopsy centre said no relatives of the deceased duo have so far approached them to claim the bodies. Mishra said the police are waiting for autopsy reports to ascertain the causes of death of the duo. He said the Kharvela Nagar police has registered a case of unnatural death under the relevant BNS Sections.

CM: Sonia, Rahul remarks on Prez insult to Santal community, Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday demanded an immediate apology from the Opposition Congress over the remarks of party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi on President Droupadi Murmu and said those were insults to the people of Odisha and the Santal community also.

Taking to X, Majhi expressed his opinion on the ongoing debate over the alleged disrespect to the country’s first tribal woman President.

“Sonia Gandhi’s comment, ‘Poor lady President Murmu got tired at the end,’ and Rahul Gandhi’s ‘boring’ remarks are not just insults to India’s first tribal woman President but also a slight against the Santal community, the people of Odisha, and the democratic ethos of the nation,” the CM said. Majhi said that President Murmu who hails from Odisha embodies the aspirations of millions, particularly the tribal and marginalised communities, and has risen to the highest constitutional office through sheer perseverance, dedication, and service.

“The disrespectful and condescending remarks made by Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi against the President of India are deeply reprehensible and expose the Congress party’s elitist and dismissive attitude,” Majhi said.

He said that the Congress party’s repeated attempts to belittle her only reveal their ingrained arrogance and disregard for India’s democratic institutions.

“On behalf of the people of Odisha, I strongly denounce these offensive and disrespectful remarks. The people of India will not stand for such affronts to our constitutional head, and the Congress leadership must issue an immediate apology,” Majhi said.

Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal also condemned Sonia Gandhi’s remarks and alleged that Congress cannot tolerate the rise of tribals, Dalits and OBCs as it is happening during the BJP.

Meanwhile, the activists of the BJP Mahila Morcha staged a demonstration and burnt an effigy of Sonia Gandhi and demanded her resignation for allegedly insulting the President of India.

Soon after the President delivered her address to a joint sitting of Parliament Friday, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were seen discussing the speech in the Parliament complex.

“The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end... she could hardly speak, poor thing,” Sonia Gandhi was purportedly heard saying in a video doing the rounds on social media.

During the discussion, Rahul Gandhi was also heard asking his mother if the President’s speech was ‘boring’.

Union Budget 2025-26: What taxpayers expect

With just a few hours left for Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to present a record eighth consecutive Budget, and the first full Budget of Modi government’s third term, people expect that the annual financial statement of the country would balance aspiration of middle class, grappling with high food prices and stagnant wage growth, for tax cuts and needs of the economy. In sidelines of this, Orissa POST spoke to a cross-section of people about their expectations from the Union Budget 2025-26

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Education needs fund boost
Silpi Sahoo, educationist and chairperson of SAI International Education Group, advocated for a significant increase in funding for education in the Union Budget. She said this is essential to address shortfalls and meet the National Education Policy’s target of spending 6 per cent of GDP on education. Essential tax breaks for educational services, coupled with direct public investment in infrastructure are needed

for equitable access. Bridging the urban-rural education gap requires upgrading digital infrastructure and providing digital devices to underserved students. EdTech funding should emphasise accessibility and quality of content, Sahoo added. She further said skill training that integrates workplace skills into education is crucial for enhancing employability. Furthermore, reducing GST on educational services and encouraging tax relief for corporate educational grants can enhance collaboration and in-

I hope the match will be organised successfully,” he asserted. Sharing a lighter moment, Majhi engaged with former cricketer and ex-BJP MLA Lalitendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra by facing a delivery bowled by him. The Chief Minister also unveiled an energizing theme song composed by Prem Anand, featuring lyrics from Samir Rishu Mohanty, also known as Rapper Big Deal, adding to the excitement surrounding the upcoming match. This event marks the return of international cricket to Barabati Stadium after over five years, with the last match held between India and West Indies on December 22, 2019.

The Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) has announced ticket sales for the match, with approximately 4,000 tickets available online February 2. Ticket redemption will take place from 10 am to 4 pm February 7 and 8, and from 7 am to 12 noon February 9 at Cambridge School in Cuttack and KIIT University in Bhubaneswar.

Additionally, offline tickets will be sold at Barabati Stadium from 9 am to 6 pm February 5 and 6 during which one person can purchase two tickets by presenting a valid ID.

Avaada, Casale tie up for green ammonia plant at Gopalpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Avaada Group Friday announced its strategic collaboration with Casale to develop India’s largest green ammonia plant at Gopalpur, with an annual production capacity of 1,500 tonne per day.

According to the statement, Avaada Group, a leader in India’s renewable energy sector, inked a strategic collaboration with Casale, a global pioneer in ammonia technology, to develop a 1,500 tonne per day (TPD) green ammonia plant in Odisha’s Gopalpur.

Toll gates to detect uninsured vehicles from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The State Transport Authority (STA) will start detecting uninsured vehicles through electronic detection system at all the 22 toll booths across Odisha and issue electronic challans to erring vehicles starting Saturday, official sources said Friday.

“The e-detection system will collect data of vehicles passing through toll gates from Vahan server to verify the status of insurance and issue electronic challans for those found plying sans insurance,” an official of STA said, adding that the process will begin February 1.

Madhusudan Padhi takes charge as State Election Commissioner



Bhubaneswar: Madhusudan Padhi took charge as the State Election Commissioner, Friday. Padhi, a retired IAS officer, succeeded AP Padhi as the eighth State Election Commissioner. Soon after taking charge, Padhi expressed confidence that the State Election Commission would smoothly conduct the upcoming panchayat and urban polls in Odisha. “I have been entrusted with a major responsibility by the state government. I will try to do my best...,” he said.

Economic Survey warns of AI impact

If companies don’t optimise the introduction of AI over a longer horizon and don’t handle it with sensitivity, the demand for policy intervention and the demand on fiscal resources to compensate will be irresistible, says the survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Economic Survey presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Parliament Friday highlighted the growing unease and anxiety around Artificial Intelligence (AI) disrupting labour markets, and warned that if companies do not optimise the introduction of AI over a longer horizon or handle it with sensitivity, demand for policy intervention and the demand on fiscal resources to compensate, may become inevitable.

The pre-Budget document cited an IMF paper to say that governments may be forced to tax incremental profit of corporates that use AI to replace labour.

“It will leave everyone worse off and the country’s growth potential will suffer, as a result,” it warned.

A labour-surplus country like India cannot afford protracted labour displacement, the Economic Survey asserted.

With an entire chapter dedicated to ‘Labour in the AI era’ – a reflection itself of the seriousness being accorded to the issue – the Economic Survey noted that while impact of AI on labour will be felt across the world, “the problem is magnified for India, given its size and its relatively low per capita income”.

“If companies do not optimise the introduction of AI over a longer horizon and do not handle it with sensitivity, the demand for policy intervention and the demand on fiscal resources to compensate will be irresistible,” it said.

The state, in turn, has to resort to taxation of profits generated from the replacement of labour with technology to mobilise those resources, as the IMF suggested in its paper, it noted.



The survey called for regulatory framework tweaks to align AI use with societal values, and noted that structural changes to how children are educated will be needed too, in addition to safety nets that can shield existing workers from economic and social fallout.

Notably, it advocated a mechanism of enabling, insuring, and ‘stewarding institutions’ to help workers adapt to changing demands while providing essential safety nets.

The document, which details the state of the economy over the current fiscal year, went in-depth into the impact of AI on jobs, and not for the first time.

The Economic Survey, even in 2024, had said the advent of AI casts a “huge pall of uncertainty” with regard to impact on workers across skill levels. On Friday, it highlighted that the rapid advancement of AI presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges for labour markets worldwide. These challenges, along with AI’s experimental nature, create a window for policymakers to act.

“Concerns and fears about Artificial Intelligence (AI) disrupting labour markets have intensified as developments

in the field have continually demonstrated rapid progress over the last four years,” it said.

The increasing complexity of the models being developed today marks a paradigm shift in the field of AI, and in a few years, ‘intelligent machines’ will be capable of performing tasks that are predominantly handled by humans, it contended.

The survey cited founder of the AI frontrunner OpenAI’s recent blog post on how the company is expecting to have office-ready ‘AI workers’ by the end of 2025.

Expectations, the survey said, point toward a trend where AI begins outperforming humans in critical decision-making processes in areas like healthcare, criminal justice, education, business, and financial services among others.

“Further, with executives optimistic about the capabilities of AI and the cost-saving potential they expect it to possess, the impact of AI on the labour market, particularly entry-level jobs is turning into a point of concern for policymakers. This economic displacement adds to a broader sense of unease about whether AI will exacerbate existing social and economic divides,” it said.

2 get 3-year RI for gunrunning

Bhubaneswar: The Chief Judicial Magistrate of Khurda Friday awarded three years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) to three persons after holding them guilty of dealing in illegal arms. The court also slapped a penalty on the convicts – Basanta Moharana and Krushna Chandra Srichandan. According to the case details, the STF of Odisha Police nabbed Basanta and Krushna while they were waiting to sell illegal arms near Siko village in Khurda July 17, 2021. The STF also recovered country-made guns from their possession. “Following investigation, a chargesheet was submitted against them under Sections 25 and 27 of the Arms Act, 1959,” an official of the STF said.



technologies, electric vehicles (EVs) and clean mobility, climate resilience and adaptation, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, circular economy, carbon markets and green innovation projects that can create jobs and sustainable solutions in the long run. Expectations also hinge on government’s commitment in integrating sustainability, focusing on green growth, to ensure that India meets both domestic and international targets in the environment sector, he said.

Make funding access easier
Sakyasingha Mahapatra, an entrepreneur, said the Union Budget 2025 should focus on tax relief, easier funding access, and reduced compliance burdens to boost innovations, startups and MSMEs. Expanding tax exemptions under Section 80-IAC, lowering corporate tax for MSMEs, and simplifying GST norms will boost business. Increased funding through Start-up India, collateral-free loans, and VC incentives can acceler-

ate innovation, especially in AI, robotics, and green technology. A business-friendly budget will drive entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic growth.

Colleges, varsities need world-class infra

Anandita Mishra, a student of BJB College, Bhubaneswar, said the focus of the Budget should be on funds for high-quality labs, educational tools, computers, AI-related training and skill based occupational rendering. The government should allocate funds to equip colleges and universities with world-class infrastructure.

Public edu system needs focus

Bibhuti Bhushan Mahapatra, a student leader, said India needs to revolutionise its public education system so that it can compete with private educational institutions, and equip the youth with the requisite skill set to get gainful employment. The Union Budget 2025-26 should allocate a substantial amount on public education system.

Paddy procurement target enhanced to 77 lakh tonne



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Keeping in view the willingness of the farmers to participate in the paddy procurement process, the Group of Ministers (GoM), during a meeting held at Lok Seva Bhawan Friday, approved the enhancement of the Kharif procurement target to 77 lakh tonne from 65 lakh tonne.

The meeting revealed that more farmers are interested to sell their paddy as the government is providing minimum support price (MSP) of ₹2,300 and additional input assistance of ₹800 per quintal.

Presenting the procurement status of the state, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department principal secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh revealed that 46,36,541 tonne paddy has been procured from 9,77,293 farmers so far.

Nearly ₹10,000 crore as MSP

The GoM meeting revealed that 46,36,541 tonne paddy has been procured from 9,77,293 farmers so far

Nearly ₹10,000 crore as MSP and ₹3,500 crore as input assistance have already been transferred to farmers' accounts

and ₹3,500 crore as input assistance have already been transferred to farmers' accounts. This year, the interest of the farmers have been given utmost importance during procurement and necessary arrangements have been made at the mandis (procurement centres). Keeping in view the interest of the farmers, 3,883 nodal officers have been deployed with CCTV surveillance at the mandis. In addition, 217 enforcement squads have been constituted to keep a close watch on paddy vehicles com-

ing from outside the state. Various complaints related to the sale of paddy including tokens, input support, MSP to farmers are being resolved expeditiously through the Command Control Centre at Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation. As many as 4,15,267 calls have been received and resolved through toll free No-1967.

The meeting chaired by Agriculture Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo was attended by Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, Co-operation Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and other senior officials.

This year's paddy procurement process has been facilitated under the direct supervision of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. Singh Deo said the process of paddy procurement has become more transparent and successful as Deputy CMs, ministers and senior officials are visiting various districts and monitoring the procurement status. He also suggested that steps should be taken at the earliest for the purchase of paddy in the upcoming Rabi season.



AT LORD'S SERVICE: Artisans prepare decoratives ahead of Lord Jagannath's Padma Besha ritual in Puri, Friday

OP PHOTO

NSUI workers arrested for showing black flag to RSS chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: The Odisha Police Friday arrested eight NSUI activists for holding a demonstration and showing black flags to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat during his travel in Bhubaneswar the previous day.

The arrested youths, who were detained by the police Thursday evening from the spot, were in the age group of 19 years to 24 years. They were booked under several sections of the BNS.

The workers of the Congress' student wing were protesting against Bhagwat's recent remark on India's Independence and demanded an apology. On the first anniversary of Ram temple's consecration, Bhagwat had said the day should be celebrated as 'Pratishtha Dwadashi', marking the establishment of India's 'true independence' after centuries of foreign invasions.

The RSS chief was on a five-day tour from Thursday and the incident happened when he was going to attend a memorial



Members of NSUI and Youth Congress stage a protest outside Congress Bhawan demanding release of NSUI workers who were arrested for showing black flag to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat Thursday

meeting at Jaydev Bhawan in the City.

Though tight security arrangements were in place, around 20 NSUI activists led by Udit Pradhan (president, NSUI, Bhubaneswar), "unlawfully assembled" carrying placards and black flags, and started shouting slogans such as "Mohan Bhagwat, Go Back", the police said in a statement.

A police officer asked them to disperse to maintain security, but they ignored his request and attempted to breach the

police cordon "to detain and harm the dignitary", the statement said.

It accused the NSUI workers of using obscene language against the police, issuing threats and attacking the police personnel.

The police then detained NSUI's Bhubaneswar unit president Udit Pradhan and seven others besides seizing an SUV used by them. The other members of the organisation fled.

"The detainees also applied criminal force to them (police

personnel) in order to escape from custody," the statement said.

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Niranjan Patnaik criticised the state's BJP government for the arrest of eight young men below 25 years.

"They have not created any violence and taken law into hand. Staging black flag demonstrations is a part of the agitation and protest. That does not amount to arrest of young men," said Patnaik, a former state Congress president.

This reflects the BJP's "intolerant" attitude towards political opponents, he alleged.

Odisha BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal defended the police action claiming some of the arrested persons have crime records.

They are not simply innocent young men as claimed by Patnaik, he said.

Biswal also defended Bhagwat's comment on Independence and claimed that it was not different from those of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr BR Ambedkar.

Dy CM reviews solar projects by Waaree

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, who also holds the portfolios of Agriculture & Farmer Empowerment, and Energy, Friday reviewed the projects being operated by Waaree Energies Limited in Dhenkanal district.

The Deputy Chief Minister held a threadbare discussion on issues related to power availability for construction and operational requirements, surface water supply, pipeline connections, land acquisition, and other issues related to the progress of these projects.

Furthermore, he directed the officials to coordinate among various departments to expedite the work.

Present at the meeting were Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, Energy department principal secretary Vishal Dev, OPTCL chairman-cum-managing director (CMD) Bhaskar Jyoti Sharma, IDCO managing director (MD) Bhupendra Singh Poonia and engineer in-charge of Water Resources department Chandrasekhar Padhi.

Review meet held to formulate policy for improvement of roads

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: Under the chairmanship of Law, Works and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, a review meeting was held at Lok Seva Bhawan here Friday, to formulate a special policy for the construction, repair and improvement of roads in the state.

Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mohapatra and Development Commissioner Anu Garg were also present in the meeting.

Ministers discussed ways to improve and streamline transportation facilities in the state, keeping in view the current situation. The department aims to build 75,000 km of road in next 5 years at the rate of 15,000 km annually, which includes National Highways, Ports, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Urban Development department roads and bridges.

"Recently, due to lack of coordination between various departments, roads are frequently dug up to lay water pipes, electricity lines, telephone internet cables etc. To get rid of this problem, separate utility cor-



ridors will be constructed on various roads. Arrangements will be made for planting saplings in such a way that trees do not have to be cut during road widening. However, where necessary, instead of cutting down old and large trees, use modern equipment to move them elsewhere," Harichandan emphasised at the meeting.

A special financial system to solve the problem of land acquisition during construction of roads in rural areas will also be created.

The review meeting also discussed how to use special construction methods to avoid road accidents, prioritising environment during construction work and how to use waste materials in construction using modern technologies.

GMAPV scheme will be enforced through OSEPA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 31: School and Mass Education department, in a notification Friday informed, "State government, after careful consideration have been pleased to decide that 'Godabarish Mishra Adarsha Prathamika Vidyalaya' (GMAPV) scheme shall be implemented through Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) and 'Aitihya Vidyalaya' scheme shall be implemented

through Panchasakha Sikhya Setu (PSS)."

Earlier, the state cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, recently ratified a slew of key decisions, including a proposal to upgrade and strengthen government-run primary schools as model schools under the GMAPV scheme.

The model schools will be established in all 6,794 panchayats across the state. Announcing the decision at a media conference, the chief minister said,

"The financial implication for establishment of the model primary schools will be ₹11,939.41 crore over a five-year period from 2024-25 to 2028-29."

In first phase, model schools will be set up in 114 gram panchayats. The remaining will be completed over the next four years. The approximate cost per school will range from ₹1 crore to ₹4 crore depending on the enrolment, he said. The actual expenditure will be based on the detailed project report (DPR) for each school.

Every high school will be made smart school under the Adarsha Vidyalaya Yojana, he informed.

PSS scheme is a flagship programme by the state government which aims to revamp school education by promoting volunteerism and collaboration through innovative citizen-government partnership.

The state government had launched the PSS scheme by rechristening 'Mo School Abhiyan' scheme of the previous BJD government.

Ganjam bags second prize in OS-CIT edu

Chhatrapur: The Ganjam wing of the Odisha Knowledge Corporation Limited (OKCL) has been adjudged as the second best Odisha State Certificate in Information Technology (OS-CIT) education imparter in the state. The awards were presented at the OKCL Annual Meet 2025 held at East Coast Railway Auditorium in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday.

Head of the Ganjam OKCL S Rekha Mohanty received the award on behalf of the district. The event was organised under the leadership of Managing Director of OKCL Manoranjan Puthal, Chief Executive Officer of OCAC Pradeep Kumar Rout, Managing Director of Haryana Knowledge Corporation Abhijit Kulkarni among others were the guests in the event.

Artificial Intelligence plays a key role in today's generation of technology and OKCL is doing a remarkable job in educating the youth of the state, the experts said during the conference.

Rain, climate change triggered 2023 Sikkim floods: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The 2023 Sikkim floods were triggered by landslides that were made more likely due to heavy rainfall and were a result of an interplay of climate change, glacier loss and human infrastructure in mountain regions, according to a paper published in the journal Science.

In the paper, an international team of researchers, including those from the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, Odisha, have described the sequence of events, including driving factors and causes that culminated in the massive Sikkim floods.

At least 55 died, 74 left missing and the 1200-megawatt Teesta-III hydropower dam was destroyed.

In October 2023, a multi-hazard cascade in the Sikkim Hi-



malayas was triggered when earth and stones, which had accumulated over time due to land eroded by a moving glacier, collapsed into the South Lhonak Lake, located in the Upper Teesta basin, they said.

Lead author Ashim Sattar, an assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Technolo-

gy, Bhubaneswar, said glacial lakes are growing in number and size, and thus, need to be critically and urgently evaluated for downstream hazards and damage potential.

"Climate change is leading to changes in permafrost temperatures, increasing the risk of slope failures that can lead

to avalanches or trigger glacial lake outburst floods in the high mountains," Sattar said.

The team described that October 3 and 4, 2023, the Teesta Valley in West Bengal experienced heavy rainfall, driven by climate change, which saturated the soil and increased the vulnerability of slopes to failure. "This preconditioning effect primed the landscape, leading to numerous landslides triggered by the GLOF (glacial lake outburst flood) event," the authors wrote.

A GLOF is a sudden release of water from a glacial lake, which has formed over time due to melting of a glacier.

Further, the landslides so triggered, coupled with rainfall, "intensified the volume and velocity of the floodwaters, leading to more severe impacts on infrastructure, communities and agricultural lands in Sik-

kim, West Bengal and Bangladesh".

"A landslide went into a lake and that triggered a wave that eroded a dam at the end of the lake, which resulted in a slurry-like flood for hundreds of kilometres," said co-author Dan Shugar, a geomorphologist and an associate professor at Canada's University of Calgary.

The team wrote, "This multihazard cascade exhibits the complex interactions between climate change, glacier mass loss and human infrastructure in mountainous regions."

The findings highlighted the urgency of a "paradigm shift in numerical modelling and observational techniques for GLOFs".

The urgency extends to improving GLOF risk management and infrastructure development in high mountain regions, the authors said.

| WEATHER | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|
| | BBSR | CTC |
| Max Temp | 30.4° | 29.5° |
| Min Temp | 19.8° | 22.0° |
| Humidity | 91% | 88% |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil |
| FORECAST | | |
| Shallow fog | | |

| MARKET WATCH | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------|
| INDEX | VARIATION | |
| SENSEX | 77500.57 | ▲ 740.76 |
| NIFTY | 23508.40 | ▲ 258.90 |
| DOLLAR | 86.77 | ▼ 0.02 |
| EURO | 90.20 | ▼ 0.08 |
| GOLD | ₹82,000 | ▲ ₹277 |
| SILVER | ₹93,970 | ▲ ₹524 |

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₹52L credit card fraud unearthed; 4 held

Credit accumulation in the bank accounts of the mastermind and another accomplice runs into crores

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 31: The Cyber Crime & Economic Offences Police Station under Rourkela Police has uncovered a large-scale credit card fraud involving financial record manipulation, forged documents, and unauthorised cash withdrawals, amounting to ₹52.9 lakh, plus accrued interest.

The investigation was initiated after a complaint was received from ICICI Bank. The probe revealed that the primary accused, Md. Tabrez Alam, had lured several individuals into applying for credit cards, prom-



ising easy approval despite their lack of stable income. Alam allegedly connived with a Tax and Account Services firm in Udit Nagar to fabricate income tax returns (ITRs) to secure high-limit credit cards. An

actions at merchant establishments in Rourkela, which were later converted into EMIs. Further investigation of Tabrez Alam's bank account showed a credit accumulation of ₹2.7 crore from September 2023 to August 2024, with multiple deposits traced back to the fraudulent transactions.

Similarly, the bank account of a chartered accountant, the owner of the Tax and Accounting Services firm involved in the fraud, showed a credit accumulation of ₹8 crore from September 2023 to August 2024, with multiple deposits traced back to the fraudulent transactions into various benami accounts.

The EMIs were paid irregularly and sometimes handed over to Tabrez Alam, who deducted a commission before making payments. The merchants involved facilitated these fraudulent transactions,

allowing credit card funds to be misused. The fraudulent credit applications and transactions led to wrongful gain for the accused and a corresponding loss to ICICI Bank.

Following a thorough investigation, a cyber police team headed by Inspector Khitish Patra arrested four persons – Md. Tabrez Alam (37), proprietor of Libas Tailors; an employee of ICICI Bank's credit card department; the proprietor of Tax and Account Services, Udit Nagar; and the proprietor of RN Traders, Udit Nagar. The police also seized three POS terminals used for swiping the credit cards.

Further investigations are underway to identify other possible accomplices involved in the fraudulent scheme, and other agencies will be notified to check for links to additional fraudulent activities, a press release issued by Rourkela Police said.

5 arrested for stealing ₹10L while loading cash in ATM



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhawanipatna, Jan 31: Police here Friday arrested five people working in a cash logistics company on the charge of stealing ₹10 lakh during transition of money to ATMs in Kalahandi district.

The company that engaged those five people was assigned by the SBI to load cash in ATM counters.

In a press note, Kalahandi SP Abhilash G said that the staff working in the company January 18 collected ₹4.80 crore from the SBI main branch in

Bhawanipatna to load the cash in various ATMs.

However, the five accused persons stole ₹10 lakh from the amount and loaded the rest in ATMs, the officer said.

Later, the bank staff found a shortage of ₹10 lakh in some ATMs and informed their higher authority. Accordingly, an FIR was filed in Bhawanipatna Town PS.

Police, after investigation, arrested the five and recovered ₹7.80 lakh from them. Police also seized six mobile phones and a vehicle, the police officer informed.

Man awarded life term for murder of ex-SU VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, Jan 31: The Additional District & Sessions Court here Friday sentenced Prabin Dhurua, a resident of Sirisguda Kuanrmal under Laikera police limits to life imprisonment, along with a fine of ₹10,000, in the murder case of former Sambalpur University vice chancellor, Dhrubaraj Naik.

Garnayak further explained that Dhurua had attacked Naik with an axe outside the latter's residence June 27, 2021, leading to his death. The prosecution presented the axe used in the crime, along with statements from witnesses and other documents, as evidence in the case.

Public Prosecutor Gangadhar Garnayak confirmed the

verdict, stating, "The Additional District & Sessions Court today convicted and sentenced Prabin Kumar Dhurua, 24, of Sirisguda Kuanrmal under Laikera police limits to life imprisonment, along with a fine of ₹10,000, in the murder case of former Sambalpur University vice chancellor, Dhrubaraj Naik."

Vigilance arrests PA of Bonai ITDA for possessing DA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Rourkela, Jan 31: Project Administrator (PA) of Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) Bonai, Biswadarsi Sahoo, was arrested and forwarded to the court Friday for possessing Disproportionate Assets (DA).

Vigilance department sources said Sahoo was found in possession of DA including one multi-storeyed building and two flats (Rs 1.50 crore advanced to purchase one flat) at Bhubaneswar, nine high-value plots, 150 grams gold, ₹4.51 lakh cash, over ₹61 lakh deposits, during the searches conducted by the Vigilance sleuths.

Following this, Sahoo was arrested by Odisha Vigilance sleuths as he failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for the assets accumulated beyond his known sources of income.

In this connection, Rourkela Vigilance has registered a case against Biswadarsi Sahoo and the investigation of the case is in progress. The Vigilance sleuths Thursday carried out simultaneous house searches in seven places in Bhubaneswar, Balasore, Jajpur and Bonai on the strength of search warrants issued by the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Sundargarh.

Notably, the Odisha Vigilance department has arrested 181 government officials over allegations of corruption in the state during 2024. The department has also registered 200 cases against 308 persons after finding them involved in various corrupt activities last year.

10 students among 12 held for paper leak

BARPALI: Police have arrested 12 people, including 10 students, in connection with a question paper leak at Barpali College in Bargharh district, officials said Friday. The Political Science question paper for the Plus III third-semester examination was allegedly leaked, leading to the arrests. The incident came to light during an inspection by a special squad at the time of the examination. Following a complaint filed by the college principal, the Barpali police registered a case and arrested the individuals involved. The investigation revealed that the question paper had been photocopied at a Xerox shop before being circulated. The paper was reportedly sourced from Naktideul in Sambalpur district. Police arrested the students who had purchased the leaked papers, along with the shopkeeper and a clerk of the college. Police are continuing their investigation. Meanwhile, authorities announced plans to introduce a digital lock system to secure question papers and prevent leaks.

Youth gets 20-yr RI for kidnapping, raping minor girl

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, Jan 31: The court of Additional District Judge of Kendrapara, Prangya Paramita Raul, Friday sentenced a youth to 20 years of Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) and slapped penalty of ₹61,000 for kidnapping and raping a minor girl. The judge further ordered that the convict would further undergo another year of RI, if he failed to deposit the fine amount.

Special Public Prosecutor Manoj Kumar Sahoo said the convict identified as Kiran Das, 24, of Thakurapatana village under Kendrapara Sadar police station had kidnapped the victim girl and raped her several times. The father of the victim later lodged an FIR at Pattamundai police station April 12, 2021.

The Pattamundai police submitted a charge sheet before the court against the accused, under Sections 363, 366, 506, 376 (2) (n) of IPC and Section 6 of POCSO Act. The court also recommended to the government to provide a compensation of ₹7 lakh to the victim for her proper rehabilitation and directed the Secretary of District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Kendrapara to take steps for sanctioning of the compensation amount to the victim, Sahoo said.

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बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda


REGIONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH
Plot No.: CM-2B, 1st Floor, Sector-7, Near Markat Nagar
Police Station, CDA, Cuttack-753014, Odisha

POSSESSION NOTICE
(Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **BANK OF BARODA** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 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 calling upon the Borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice together with further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment 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 and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **SYMBOLIC POSSESSION** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on the date mentioned below. The Borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **BANK OF BARODA** for an amount stated herein below together with further interest thereon at contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.**

| Name & Address of the Borrowers | Description of the Immovable Property | Demand/ Possession Notice Date | Outstanding Amount |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Borrowers: Mr. Suvendu Kumar Biswal and Mr. Subrat Kumar Biswal, Both are S/o: Bhagabata Biswal, At: Kuansha, Kara Sahi, P.O.: Bhadrak Town, Bhadrak, Odisha-756100 | Equitable Mortgage of Land & Building situated at Khata No.: 348 & 349, Plot No.: 1429, Area: Ac. 0.050 Dec. & 1431/2434, Area: Ac. 0.010 Dec., Total Area Measuring: Ac. 0.060 Dec., Mouza: Kuansha, P.S.: Bhadrak Town, Tahasil: Bhadrak, Dist.: Bhadrak in the name of Mr. Suvendu Kumar Biswal & Mr. Subrat Kumar Biswal, Both are S/o: Bhagabata Biswal. | 07.11.2024 28.01.2025 | ₹ 9,22,587/- + uncharged Interest (₹ 9,85,183/-) due from 01.05.2017 to 04.11.2024 at contractual rate + charges and expenses there after. |

Place: Cuttack, Date: 31.01.2025 Sd/- Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda



बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
Bank of India

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

E-AUCTION
SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

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

| Sl. No. | BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrowers / Co-Applicant/Guarantor / Total Dues | Description of the Properties | Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount |
|---------|--|--|---|
| 1. | SAHID NAGAR BRANCH (PH.: 7008216628) & ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, CUTTACK (PH.: 8249067773) / 1) (For Housing Loan, Personal Loan) Borrower: Mr. Kumar Bijan Jena, S/o: Mr. Abhimanyu Jena, Plot No.: 347/2652, Duplex No.: 4, Subh Aarambh Villa (Backside of Angel Avenue Block-D), Mouza: Andilo, Baliaanta, Khurda, Odisha - 752101, 2) (For Cash Credit, Term Loan-I (GEC/L), Term Loan-II (GEC/L) Borrower: M/s. ABP Consultants and Services, Plot No.: 656, Sahid Nagar, Near Happy Home School, Bhubaneswar - 751007, Partners: 1) Mr. Kumar Bijan Jena, S/o: Mr. Abhimanyu Jena, 2) Mrs. Padmalaya Pradhan, W/o: Mr. Kumar Bijan Jena, Both are at Plot No.: 347/2652, Duplex No.: 4, Subh Aarambh Villa (Backside of Angel Avenue Block-D), Mouza: Andilo, Baliaanta, Khurda, Odisha - 752101, 3) (For Cash Credit) Borrower: M/s. ABP Infosolutions Private Limited, Plot No.: 656, Sahid Nagar, Near Happy Home School, Bhubaneswar - 751007, Directors/Guarantors: 1) Mr. Kumar Bijan Jena, S/o: Mr. Abhimanyu Jena, 2) Mrs. Padmalaya Pradhan, W/o: Mr. Kumar Bijan Jena, Both are at Plot No.: 347/2652, Duplex No.: 4, Subh Aarambh Villa (Backside of Angel Avenue Block-D), Mouza: Andilo, Baliaanta, Khurda, Odisha - 752101 / Total Dues: ₹1,68,19,294.48 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. | G+1 Storied Residential Building pertaining to Sub Plot No.: 4, Rev. Khata No.: 616/1536, Rev. Plot No.: 347/2652, Land Area: Ac.0.029 Dec. i.e. 1263.24 Sqft, G.F BUA - 784 Sqft, F.F BUA - 809 Sqft, having KISSAM: Gharabari, inside the project of "Subh Aarambh Villa" at Mouza: Andilo, P.S./Tahasil: Baliaanta, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mr. Kumar Bijan Jena, S/o.: Mr. Abhimanyu Jena, Bounded by East: 20ft wide Road, West: Rev. Plot No.: 331, North: Sub Plot No.: 5, South: Sub Plot No.: 3 | ₹84,71,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) ₹8,47,100/- ₹ 50,000/- |
| 2. | BHUBANESWAR BRANCH (NOW THE BELOW ACCOUNTS ARE TRANSFERRED TO ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, CUTTACK), PH.: 8249067773 / Borrower: M/s. Maa Tarini Fly Ash Bricks, Prop.: Mrs. Sujata Swain, At: Plot No.: 1187, Khata No.: 210/27, Mouza: Bajabati, PO.: Thanual, Haridaspur, Dist.: Jajpur, PIN-755024 / Guarantor: Mr. Sunil Kumar Swain, S/o.: Golakha Bihari Swain, At: Nuagaon, PO.: Jaraka, Haridaspur, P.S.: Dharmasala, Dist.: Jajpur, PIN-755024 / Total Dues: ₹2,56,53,192.75 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. | Homestead Land and Fly Ash Bricks Plant having Factory Shed: 11,900 Sqft, Office Room: 690 Sqft including P&M over Khata No.: 210/27 & 129/25 & various plots with Plot No.: 1176, 1177, 1181, 1182, 1187 & 5/324, Land Area: Ac.1.300 Dec. i.e. 56,628 Sqft, KISSAM: Gharabari, situated at Mouza: Bajabati & Jhadasoahala, P.S./Tahasil: Dharmasala, Dist.: Jajpur, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mrs. Sujata Swain, W/o.: Mr. Sunil Kumar Swain, Bounded by East: Road, West: Pvt. Land, North: Pvt. Land, South: Pvt. Land | ₹2,25,41,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) ₹22,54,100/- ₹ 50,000/- |
| 3. | SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH, PH.: 9438456140 / Borrower: Mr. Bibhuti Bhuvan Naik, S/o: Ramesh Ch. Naik / Co-Applicant: Mrs. Nimita Naik, D/o: Binod Ch. Naik, Both are At/P.O.: Kinjirpa, P.S.: Bhasma, Dist.: Sundargarh, PIN-770019 / Total Dues: ₹28,69,371/- + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. | Land and Building over Khata No.: 162, Plot No.: 583(P), Plot Area: Ac.0.041 Dec. i.e. 1786 Sqft, Mouza: Nijagarh Kurki, P.S.: Pipili, P.S. No.: 4, SRO/Tahasil: Pipili, Tahasil No.: 162, Dist.: Puri, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mr. Sachidananda Paikara, Mr. Saroj Kumar Paikara, Mr. Suryakanta Paikara, Mr. Mrutyunjaya Paikara, Bounded by East: Road left by the Vendors, West: | ₹28,30,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) ₹2,83,000/- ₹ 50,000/- |
| 4. | SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH, PH.: 9438456140 / Borrower : Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Swain, S/o.: Fakir Charan Swain, At: Sorbha, P.S.: Gop, Dist.: Puri, PIN-752107 / Total Dues: ₹25,59,487.57 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. | Land and Building over Khata No.: 240/1678, Plot No.: 583/1921, Plot Area: Ac.0.041 Dec. i.e. 1786 sqft., Mouza: Nijagarh Kurki, P.S.: Pipili, P.S. No.: 04, SRO/Tahasil: Pipili, Dist.: Puri, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Swain, S/o.: Fakir Charan Swain, Bounded by East: Internal Road left by Land Owner, West: Plot No.: 581, North: Sub Plot No.: H-6, South: Sub Plot No.: H-8 | ₹36,20,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹3,62,000/- / ₹ 50,000/- |
| 5. | POKHARIPUT BRANCH, PH.: 9066629742 / Borrowers: 1) Mr. Satyanarayan Sahu, S/o.: Gopal Krishna Sahu, 2) Mr. Laxminarayan Sahu, S/o.: Gopal Krishna Sahu, Both are At: LIG-282, K-4, Kalinga Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khordha-751019 / Total Dues: ₹37,85,357.92 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. | Flat No.: 410, 4 th Floor, Type- 2 BHK, Block-B having Super Built up Area: 920 sqft., Carpet Area: 589 Sqft with undivided proportionate share for the Flat Ac.0.0112 Dec. i.e. 487.87 Sqft out of Khordha-751019 / Total project Area: Ac.0.648 Dec., along with parking space in the Apartment name & Style as "ABLAZE HOMZ" bearing Khata No.: 512/256, Plot No.: 1127/2676, KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Ghangapatna, P.S.: Chandaka, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha-752054, Standing in the name of Mr. Satyanarayan Sahu, S/o.: Gopal Krishna Sahu, Bounded by East: Open Space, West: Flat No.: 408, North: Open Space, South: Corridor | ₹30,59,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) ₹3,05,900/- ₹ 50,000/- |
| 6. | JAGATISINGHPUR BRANCH, PH.: 9938772882 / Borrower: M/s. Rajnandini Fashions, Prop.: Mr. Keshab Kumar Das, S/o.: Mr. Bishnu Charan Das / Guarantor: Mrs. Manorama Das, W/o.: Mr. Keshab Kumar Das, Both are At/PO.: Jankoti, P.S.: Jagatsinghpur, Dist.: Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, PIN-754103 / Total Dues: ₹10,75,300.43 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. | Vacant Land situated over Mouza: Jankoti, SRO/Tahasil: Jagatsinghpur, Tahasil No.: 217, P.S.: Jagatsinghpur, P.S. No.: 217, Dist.: Jagatsinghpur, Odisha-754103, Khata No.: 805/146, Plot No.: 937, Area: Ac.0.120 Dec. i.e. 5227.2 Sqft, KISSAM: Gharabari, Standing in the name of Mr. Keshab Kumar Das, S/o.: Mr. Bishnu Charan Das, Bounded by East: Plot No.: 930, West: Plot No.: 935, North: Plot No.: 936, South: Plot No.: 938 (Rev. Road & earthen Road connect to main Road) | ₹23,11,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) ₹2,31,100/- ₹ 50,000/- |

Date & Time of E-Auction: 27.02.2025 From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

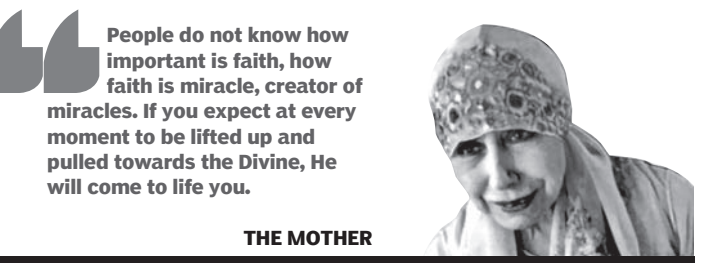
Last Date & Time for submission of EMD & Documents: 27.02.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 25.02.2025 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

***Successful Bidder to deposit 25% of the bid amount by next working day which includes EMD money. The balance amount to be paid on or before 15th Day of confirmation of sale.**

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. This is also a 15 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com>

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 01.02.2025 Authorised Officer, Bank of India



People do not know how important is faith, how faith is miracle, creator of miracles. If you expect at every moment to be lifted up and pulled towards the Divine, He will come to life you.

THE MOTHER

New Wrapping

The Union Cabinet's new Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) has set tongues wagging. Touted as a clever blend of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and the National Pension System (NPS), it's worth asking—does it really bring anything new to the table, or is it just a repackaged version of old, problematic ideas?

Under UPS, government employees get a guaranteed pension—half their average basic pay from their last 12 months of service. Employees and the government both chip into a pension corpus, with the government's share rising from 14% to 18.5%. Sounds generous, right? But that contribution bump is projected to cost an extra Rs 6,250 crore in the first year alone! And if the government's assumptions about investment returns don't pan out, guess who's on the hook? Taxpayers.

While UPS does bring some structure by requiring monthly contributions, for many observers, it feels like a step back in terms of fiscal prudence. It reintroduces the same risk that the 2004 reforms were designed to avoid: a budget that could buckle under the pressure of covering pension shortfalls.

Employees are divided on this. Several staff associations contend that both NPS and UPS are inadequate compared to the traditional OPS, which they prefer to have reinstated. It's a no-brainer for them: a guaranteed pension without strings attached is the gold standard.

The big question remains: is UPS truly a step forward, or are we dressing up outdated ideas in shiny new packaging? Either way, it's taxpayers who'll be picking up the tab if things go south. Is that a risk we're ready to take?

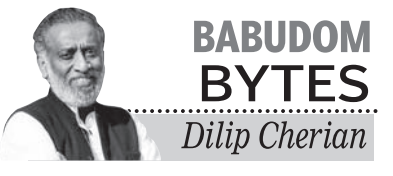
Perplexing scenario

The recent game of musical chairs in the Finance Ministry's top echelons has left many of us scratching our heads, especially with the Union Budget just around the corner. In the past three months, three different Revenue Secretaries have taken the hot seat—a scenario that's as perplexing as it is unprecedented.

It all began in December with the unexpected appointment of Sanjay Malhotra as RBI Governor. This surprise move left a vacuum in one of the Finance Ministry's core departments, prompting Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth to take additional charge of the Revenue Department to ensure continuity, especially with the GST Council meeting scheduled on December 21. Arunish Chawla was appointed Revenue Secretary, but his tenure lasted less than two weeks before he was moved to DIPAM. Finally, Tuhin Kanta Pandey has taken over the role, bringing a semblance of stability—for now.

While bureaucratic changes are par for the course, such rapid reshuffles in a crucial ministry at such a critical time are anything but normal. The Revenue Secretary is a key player in drafting tax policies and revenue projections, both of which are integral to the Union Budget. Frequent leadership changes not only risk policy inconsistencies but could also impact the strategic direction of fiscal planning.

This timing raises important questions: Is this disruption a sign of deeper challenges within the Finance Ministry? Will the frequent handovers affect the cohesion needed for effective budgetary planning? As citizens, we can only hope these reshuffles don't derail the government's ability to deliver a thoughtful, stable, and growth-oriented budget. After all, with so much at stake, continuity and clarity in leadership are not just desirable—they're essential.



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

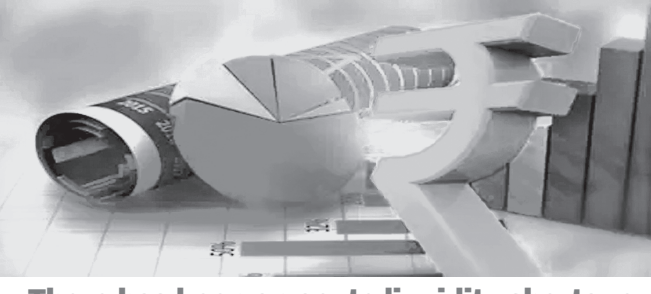


Ajit Ranade

THE GROWTH SLOWDOWN IS PALPABLE, SINCE THIS YEAR IT WILL FALL TO 6.4 PER CENT FROM 8.2 PER CENT LAST YEAR

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present her record eighth budget to Parliament on February 1. This is her second one during the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Her last seven budgets have seen ups and downs, the biggest being the disruption and shutdown of major parts of the economy during covid pandemic. That year GDP went down by nearly seven percent. In the last four decades that year has been the only time that India's economy contracted, i.e. reported a negative growth rate. While growth has been positive during her reign as FM, presently the economy is facing several challenges which are formidable. The Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament on the eve of the budget is also quite somber in its tone. It is acutely aware of the fact that unless domestic investment and consumption picks up and foreign investors come in droves, economic growth is going to be a challenge. After three years of relatively good growth, we are facing two consecutive years of slowing down. The reasons are both global and domestic.

The global turmoil is led by actions of US President Donald Trump. In the very first few weeks of his presidency, he has passed many executive orders with potentially unsettling effect. For instance, he has threatened countries with trade sanctions if they do not accept repatriation of illegal aliens back into their country. He has withdrawn membership in the World Health Organization. Stiff trade tariffs against China, Canada and Mexico are on. Funding for major programs has been cut, and thousands of government officials face the axe. Foreign



There has been an acute liquidity shortage in the banking system. Some of this is being addressed on a war footing by the new Governor at the Reserve Bank of India.

aid is cut. Trade war with China means that Chinese goods will get diverted and dumped at low cost into third countries like India. China too is facing its slowdown. Even high import trade barriers cannot prevent Chinese goods from flooding into India. The bilateral trade deficit is close to 100 billion dollars. How do we bridge that or at least narrow it?

The other big disruption has come from a Chinese app called DeepSeek which has demolished the monopoly of the American company Open AI which sells ChatGPT. The DeepSeek AI program does everything that programs like ChatGPT do, but it is open source, and anyone in the world can adopt, adapt, modify and improve upon it. It is achieved at a fraction of the cost of OpenAI. As a result of the huge success of DeepSeek, the stock market value of Nvidia, the main chipmaker used in AI crashed by half a trillion dollars. This stock crash is affecting the whole world. In India too, the stock market is down nearly ten percent. The dollar exchange rate has fallen to 89 rapidly. The dollar outflow from India is worrying. Net

foreign direct investment (FDI) is sharply down.

As if that was not enough for the FM to worry about, there has been an acute liquidity shortage in the banking system. Some of this is being addressed on a war footing by the new Governor at the Reserve Bank of India. The RBI is injecting liquidity by buying bonds and releasing term loans through 56-day loans to banks. In the next meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee perhaps the repo rate might be cut, to signal an easing of loan rates.

The growth slowdown is palpable, since this year it will fall to 6.4 percent from 8.2 percent last year. The FM must signal policies and spending priorities which will at least propel it back to 7 if not 8 percent next year. But this cannot be done merely by fiscal expansion, as has been the trend in the last few years. The fiscal deficit needs to come below 4.5 percent as promised. This will mean fiscal consolidation and prudence. Else the fiscal expansion leads to higher interest rates, inflationary pressure and ultimately unsustainable debt. The debt situation of households is also a matter

of great concern. Household debt to GDP ratio is the highest it has been, at 43 percent of GDP. Net financial savings i.e. net of financial liabilities of households were at a fifty year low till recently, just barely 5 percent of GDP. Savings are the driver of economic growth, and we badly need to revive household savings. Recently the RBI tightened unsecured loans and microfinance, perhaps out of apprehension of a buildup of bad loans and delinquency. Consumer spending is sluggish and barely growing at 3 percent, when it should be at least double of that.

Thankfully the spending on the Kumbh Mela is a booster for consumption. It is expected that with nearly 400 million footfalls, and assuming 5000-rupee spending per-capita, the Kumbh Mela might see about 2 lakh crore of spending, all good news for GDP. The big driver of growth that needs revving up is private investment spending. It should be at least 28 percent of GDP but is much lower now. Can the Union Budget infuse some enthusiasm and animal spirits to get private investors to start investing in new businesses, factories and new capacity? It must be remembered that the FM does not have too much room to manoeuvre since 77 percent of her spending is on revenue items, like interest on debt, salaries, pensions and committed subsidies. Hence much depends not only on the spending numbers, but the signals that she gives in terms of the policy stance of her government. It is a tough year, and here is wishing the FM presents a budget which combines growth boosting measures along with fiscal prudence.

The writer is a noted economist
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SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Green free trade in a protectionist age



Ma Jun

A SUCCESSFUL GREEN TRADE ARRANGEMENT MUST START WITH CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF ALL NON-TARIFF BARRIERS

US President Donald Trump's threats to raise tariffs on imports from Canada, China, and Mexico—which he now says may happen on February 1—have the world bracing for major trade disruptions. While protectionism has come back into vogue, and countries like the US are cultivating critical sectors at home to bolster their economic security, the reversal of free trade will accelerate under Trump, with far-reaching consequences.

There is a straightforward path to ending our dependence on fossil fuels: nurture green industries. Open trade would strengthen these industries, reduce the costs of green goods and services in most countries.

At a time of rising protectionism, pursuing this path requires the establishment of a special green free-trade arrangement, involving sharp reductions in tariffs and non-tariff barriers on goods and services that deliver environmental and climate benefits. Since one or two economies could scupper a truly global framework, multiple smaller arrangements could be created by "coalitions of the willing."

Using existing regional trade agreements as a basis for green trade could hasten this

process considerably. Consider the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—the world's largest trade bloc by both population and GDP—comprising Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and the ten ASEAN countries. Operating within the RCEP's framework may enable quicker agreement and implementation of a green free-trade arrangement involving countries that collectively account for 30% of global economic activity.

The first step toward realizing this vision would be to demonstrate clearly the economic benefits of a green trade agreement. A preliminary study conducted by the Institute of Finance and Sustainability (which I chair) and research partners, does just that. Our study, which we will present at a conference in Hong Kong in March, found that a green free-trade arrangement could boost members' economies (in terms of GDP, exports, jobs, and fiscal revenue), bolster their green industries, and bring about faster decarbonization.

Next, in order to help mitigate climate change and address environmental degradation, countries must identify the goods and services that should be covered

by the green free-trade arrangement. Our study suggests that this list could include a few dozen categories and a few hundred products and services, including renewable energy, electric vehicles (EVs) and their components, waste management, sustainable agriculture, nature-based solutions, and environmental professional services.

A third priority is to attract green foreign investment and technology transfers, which requires a more stable policy environment, protections for investors, and secure intellectual property rights in the regional trade blocs. A green trade arrangement that ensures these conditions would help lower-income countries, in particular, to develop their green industries and create green jobs. Such arrangements must also address non-tariff barriers, which can impede trade and investment even within low-tariff or tariff-free zones. A successful green trade arrangement must start with careful analysis of all non-tariff barriers, including those arising from import and export quotas, quality-control and customs-clearance processes, product-traceability requirements, trade-finance and export-credit insurance, and the settlement of cross-border payments.

The case for green trade ar-

rangements is even stronger when one compares them to the approach being embraced by advanced economies. While the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) favored by the European Union, the United Kingdom, and potentially the US can reduce carbon "leakage" from imports produced in countries with more lenient emissions rules, it harms incomes and employment in the developing economies exporting carbon-intensive goods. And it does nothing to foster cooperation; on the contrary, such unilateral measures could lead to retaliation and yet more protectionism.

As incentives go, CBAM amounts to a "stick," which punishes developing countries for not sacrificing domestic growth and development in order to reduce emissions. A green free-trade arrangement, by contrast, amounts to a "carrot": by aligning climate goals with development objectives, it rewards participating economies for making progress in the green transition. It is a win-win solution—just the type a just green transition demands.

The writer is Co-Chair of the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Pollution control boards struggling to fill vacancies

Pollution control boards across India are facing a major staffing crisis—less than 10% of positions have been filled, despite the looming deadline to get their act together. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) recently told the National Green Tribunal that, out of 2,228 posts in 12 states and two union territories, only 267 are occupied. Not exactly a stellar performance.

To make matters worse, 16 state boards and six union territories have not even bothered to submit progress reports. It's almost like they're waiting for someone to come knock on their door and remind them that pollution control is a thing. The National Green Tribunal had to step in and set a hard deadline of April 30, 2025, for filling these vacancies, except in states like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. They're already under the Supreme Court's watch, so it's not like anyone's giving them a free pass.

Now, let's take a look at how the states are doing—spoiler alert: it's not great. Assam, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan combined have managed to fill only 167 posts. Rajasthan, for example, has filled a whopping 93 out of 395 vacancies. They've also held an exam for junior assistant posts, so there's maybe some hope on the horizon. Punjab, with 26 out of 234 filled positions, is promising to make appointments soon, but the results for 148 posts are still "pending." Again, not reassuring.

The silver lining? Only Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Lakshadweep seem to have their pollution control boards fully staffed. Maybe they've cracked the code on how to fill vacancies and manage pollution. Go figure.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

I feel it is unnatural and immoral to try to teach science to children in a foreign language. They will know facts, but they will miss the spirit.

CV RAMAN

All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.

GALILEO GALILEI

My childhood did not prepare me for the fact that the world is full of cruel and bitter things.

J ROBERT OPPENHEIMER

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1923:** The private army of Blackshirts that had helped Benito Mussolini come to power in Italy was officially transformed into a national militia, the Voluntary Fascist Militia for National Security.
- 1946:** Norwegian politician and diplomat Trygve Lie was elected the first secretary-general of the United Nations.
- 1979:** The spacecraft Voyager 1 photographed Jupiter from a distance of 20.3 million miles (32.7 million km).
- 2003:** While returning to Earth from an orbital mission, the US space shuttle Columbia broke up catastrophically at an altitude of about 40 miles (60 km) over Texas, killing all seven crew members.

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



Srimandir in sorry state

Sir, Last week, my family visited Srimandir, the revered shrine of Lord Jagannath in Puri. This temple stands tall, rich in faith and history. However, the same cannot be said about its management. Pick pocketing, chain snatching, theft, and looting occur alongside the darshan, tarnishing the spiritual experience. I must admit that we felt ashamed to be Indian in such a chaotic environment. Since wallets, mobile phones, shoes, and bags are not allowed inside the temple, there should be a utility deposit center managed by the temple authorities near the entry point. Such systems are in place at most of the famous temples in India, but they are conspicuously absent at the abode of Lord Jagannath. The temple police and authorities are not performing their duties properly. The servitors manipulate the system to help some pilgrims enter through the exit gate, further exacerbating the chaos. I saw a few people who had lost their wallets and mobile phones, weeping and struggling unsuccessfully to contact their relatives. This distressing sight underscores the urgent need for better management and security measures. I urge the Odisha government to intervene and take immediate measures to redefine guidelines for the temple authorities. The sanctity and safety of this holy place must be preserved for the millions of pilgrims who visit it every year.

Akhil Royzada, RAIPUR

Commendable effort

Sir, The "bagless learning model," an initiative launched by Chhattisgarh government to create a stress-free learning environment, is certainly commendable. The model, implemented in eight government schools for classes 1-8 is definitely a new beginning in easing academic pressure. The sight of children with bent backs, carrying heavy bags, is pathetic. The vast syllabus, numerous study materials, and the sheer amount of content to learn make learning cumbersome. Within a stipulated time, children have to learn all the content given in the syllabus. Consequently, children do not have time for entertainment or relaxation. The Chhattisgarh government's attempts to make school education stress-free must be appreciated. It must be remembered that the aim of education is not to fill children's minds with information but to make them better human beings.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

MAHA KUMBH

RUSH OF ILLEGAL BANGLADESHI MIGRANTS

Pilgrims face transportation woes

Ajit flags overcrowding in Maharashtra's cities

Several ordinary devotees were seen walking long distances on foot because not everyone was lucky enough to find the much-in-demand shuttle or e-rickshaw



The Maha Kumbh, considered among the holiest Hindu pilgrimages held once every 12 years on the banks of Triveni Sangam, started January 13 and will continue till February 26

Thousands of pilgrims returning from Maha Kumbh remain stranded at Varanasi Cantt and Banaras railway stations. Some devotees said they missed their trains due to the rush while others were stuck because of train cancellations.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, Jan 31: It is quarter to 10 pm Thursday. A group of more than a dozen pilgrims, tired after a nearly 30-km walk to and from Triveni Sangam, take a rest for a while on the side of a road near a mustard field on the outskirts of Prayagraj.

It is still eight km for them to find the next transport bus and reunite with fellow devotees from Rajasthan at Beli Kachar for their onward journey.

Ghanshyam, one of the pilgrims, told PTI, "We have been walking from Triveni Sangam as no transport was available. Police officers helped us at a crossing but after that, we found no water, tea stalls or transport options along the roadside."

Devotees continue to face transportation challenges, with many forced to walk long distances in search of transport.

The Maha Kumbh, considered among the holiest Hindu pilgrimages held once every 12 years on the banks of Triveni Sangam, started January 13 and will continue till February 26. So far, nearly 30 crore devotees have taken a dip at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati in the ongoing mega-spiritual gathering.

Some had initially gone to the bus stand but said they could not find any transport.

"The police are assisting the devotees in boarding private vehicles but the drivers are refus-

ing to move ahead unless they get long-distance passengers," Baboolal, another devotee who claimed he walked for several kilometres, said.

"We took a dip at Sangam at midnight and have been walking since morning. A long, tiring travel still awaits us," he said.

Suresh, a pilgrim from Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan said his group completed their Maha Kumbh bath. They had heard about the stampede during Mauni Amavasya but they did not appear to be deterred by the tragedy which killed 30 people and injured 60.

After the Maha Kumbh, they planned to visit Kashi Vishwa-

nath in Varanasi and the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

A new route, opened before Maha Kumbh, connects Stanley Road to Malaka Chauraha and is known as the "Steel Bridge Route".

Many pilgrims said large parking areas have been set up in Beli Kachar, about 10 km from the main city, to enable pilgrims to easily park their vehicles before they are cleared to proceed to Triveni Sangam through any available transport or else on foot.

There are small shops and toilets near the parking areas but the entire 10-km stretch, with sections of both paved and unpaved roads, from there to the city generally remains deserted.

Several ordinary devotees

were seen walking long distances on foot because not everyone was lucky enough to find the much-in-demand shuttle or e-rickshaw.

Thousands of pilgrims returning from Maha Kumbh remain stranded at Varanasi Cantt and Banaras railway stations. Some devotees said they missed their trains due to the rush while others were stuck because of train cancellations.

Prayagraj District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mandar said Thursday evening, "All devotees (who had come for Mauni Amavasya) are returning. The police have been instructed to remove diversions and barricades. There will be no restrictions on vehicle entry January 31, February 1 and February 4."

He added that diversions would only be in place February 2 and 3 for the Basant Panchami bathing festival. "There is a separate process for vehicle entry in the Mela area, which will be communicated by the fair authorities and the DIG," he said.

"There are no vehicle restrictions in Prayagraj Commissionerate," he added.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Prayagraj Ajay Pal Sharma told PTI on Friday that the traffic situation in the district had returned to normal.

Pune, Jan 31: Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar Friday expressed concerns about challenges in town planning in the state, saying that not only people from northern states but even illegal Bangladeshi immigrants were rushing to cities in Maharashtra.

Speaking at an award ceremony organised by the Urban Development and Urban Planning Department here, Pawar said the population of Pune, including the Pimpri Chinchwad area, is set to reach two crore by 2054.

He said, "Traffic and transportation issues are becoming increasingly difficult in the city. We need to improve mobility. The population of Pune, including Pimpri-Chinchwad, is projected to reach around two crore by 2054, and our efforts are inadequate. If the population reaches two crore, where will we get enough water to meet the needs of such a large populace?"

The deputy chief minister said dam water currently used by the Tata power project in Mulshi will have to be diverted to urban areas to meet Pune's water needs.

"We will have to approach the courts, arguing that dam water used for power generation should be allocated for public use," he said.

He emphasised that town planning was about constructing roads and buildings and striking a balance between social, economic, and environmental factors.

The latest technology needs

6 Traffic and transportation issues are becoming increasingly difficult in the city. We need to improve mobility. If the population reaches two crore, where will we get enough water to meet the needs of such a large populace?
AJIT PAWAR
DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, MAHARASHTRA

to be harnessed to meet the demands of the ever-increasing population, he added.

Pawar said, "People migrate to cities because they lack opportunities in rural areas. As migration increases, cities become overcrowded, leading to a rise in slums. The government implements slum rehabilitation schemes with good intentions. However, once slum-dwellers get proper housing under these schemes, they inform their relatives in Uttar Pradesh, who then migrate here. Not only people from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar move to cities in Maharashtra, even illegal Bangladeshi nationals are rushing in."

He also highlighted the growing threat of climate change and stressed the need for stringent regulations to maintain ecological balance.

Pawar said the state now has a stable government that will be there for five years.

"There will not be any episodes like deflections. We are 237 in Mahayuti. It doesn't matter if some go here and there. We require 145, but we are taking everyone along," he said.

SGNP to introduce 'leopard safari' for visitors: Minister

The leopard safari, which will soon be launched, will offer visitors a unique wildlife experience while ensuring a safe environment for the rescued leopards and their cubs that have been rehabilitated in this park

pose and it is available. The leopard safari, which will soon be launched, will offer visitors a unique wildlife experience while ensuring a safe environment for the rescued leopards and their cubs that have been rehabilitated in this park, he said.

"This will not only enhance tourism but also boost revenue," Shelar said.

SGNP director G Mallikarjuna said the cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 5 crore.

"Every year, 20 lakh tourists visit the SGNP. If leopard safari is introduced, the number of tourists will increase thereby boosting revenues of the park," Mallikarjuna, who made a detailed presentation to the minister, said. After the presentation, Shelar gave instructions to immediately initiate the process of starting the leopard safari and the funds needed will be jointly sourced from the forest department and the district planning committee.

The minister also instructed the district collector to expedite the proposal to implement the initiative at the earliest. Shelar said there were 400 workers at the SGNP, who carry out their duty in extreme weather conditions and come in direct contact with wild animals.

"Most of them are tribals. Also, there is a team of 11 workers who work for the protection of both wildlife and human settlements," Shelar said, adding that he had directed the officials to provide them with immediate insurance cover for their safety.



Students of Shri Aadi Vishweshwar Veda Pathshala while taking holy dip in the Ganga river during ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Friday

COMETH THE MAHA KUMBH, COMETH THE PRAYAGRAJIS

Locals provide meals, shelter to pilgrims

While the administration grapples with the crowd after the deadly stampede on Mauni Amavasya, the city's residents, businesses, and students have risen to the occasion, providing food, shelter, and transport help to the countless devotees arriving for a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, Jan 31: Residents of Prayagraj have thrown their doors open to the hundreds of stranded and hungry after a massive surge in number of pilgrims arriving for the Maha Kumbh sent the city infra groaning under its weight.

While the administration grapples with the crowd after the deadly stampede on Mauni Amavasya, the city's residents, businesses, and students have risen to the occasion, providing food, shelter, and transport help to the countless devotees arriving for a holy dip at the

Triveni Sangam. Dr Anjali Kesari, a local, summed up the sentiment, "In Allahabad, we don't see the Maha Kumbh pilgrims as outsiders, we are hosts and they are our guests."

Speaking to PTI, she shared how her neighbourhood in Chowk, close to the railway station, banded together to serve food to weary pilgrims.

"Yesterday alone, we distributed tea that took 80 litres of milk into its preparation along with snacks, while others prepared meals like tehrri and dal-chawal for the pilgrims," she said. Many locals have cleared

up spaces outside their homes for visitors to rest at night.

"For us, Kumbh is not just a religious fair; it is a confluence of humanity," Dr Kesari said.

City hotels are not far behind in lending a pro bono hand to the weary.

Alok Singh, who runs Hotel Vitthal in Civil Lines, has converted his 100-bed dormitory into a free rest stop for pilgrims.

"After taking a holy dip, many devotees are exhausted

when they return to Civil Lines and head towards the railway station. It's a part of Prayagraj's culture to help others, and this is our way of contributing," he said. Singh said he otherwise charges Rs 12,000 to Rs 25,000 per night for a room.

Dr Mrityunjay Parmar, an English Department Assistant Professor, told PTI that in the aftermath of the stampede, Allahabad University opened its campus and hostels to return-

ing pilgrims before they undertook their journey.

"We have several hostels like Shatabdi Boys' Hostel, KPUC PC Banerjee, and Sir Sundarlal Hostel, where students are actively assisting pilgrims," he said. Women students from Mahadevi Verma Hostel and Kalpana Chawla Hostel are also contributing, either individually or in groups, Parmar added.

Apart from accommodation, the university campus has been designated as a holding area for Kumbh, where officials and students are working together to arrange meals for pilgrims.

Students from Allahabad University's Law Faculty have also been actively assisting the pilgrims. Abhinav Mishra, a final-year BA LLB student, said he and his classmates have been distributing tea, biscuits, and snacks to devotees. Some have even been offering free motorbike rides to reduce the burden of long walks.

Fadnavis bats for AI-based Marathi language model

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Jan 31: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Friday underscored the need to capitalise on artificial intelligence (AI) to showcase Marathi literature and ensure that future generations can access the work created by great Marathi writers.

Speaking at the third 'Vishwa Marathi Sammelan' at Fergusson College in Pune, Fadnavis directed the state's Marathi Language Department to develop a small lan-

guage model using AI to promote Marathi language and literature.

The central government last year accorded the "classical language" tag to Marathi.

Referring to industry minister Uday Samant's remark that some people had raised questions about the Marathi Language Department organising this event, Fadnavis said debate is an integral part of whether it is a literary meet or a theatre festival.

"Such events cannot be complete without discussions and



differences of opinion. In fact, creating a debate is part of our core temperament because we are emotional and sensitive people. Debate and counter-debate must take place. Only then will real in-

tellectual churning happen," the CM said.

With the recognition as a classical language, Marathi has received its rightful place, he said.

"Our language has always been classical, but official recognition is significant. When the Mughals made Persian the 'Rajbhasha' of this country, it was Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who made Marathi the official language of swarajya. He was the one who granted Marathi its royal recognition," Fadnavis said.

Maha mandates fishermen to carry QR-coded Aadhaar cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 31: The Maharashtra government has ordered that fishermen venturing into the sea for fishing will have to carry a QR-coded Aadhaar card before leaving the ports in the state, an official said Friday.

Fisheries Department Commissioner Kishore Tawde said the decision has been taken as a step to strengthen coastal security.



Fisheries and Ports Minister Nitesh Rane recently visited Sassoon Dock in south Mumbai and found that majority of the sailors did not carry their Aadhaar cards. After that, the minister instructed the authorities

to issue formal orders mandating the fishermen leaving the ports for fishing to carry QR-coded Aadhaar cards, he said.

The fisheries department has also made it mandatory for the operators of the fishing trawlers to paint their registration number on it.

Renewals of licences will only be done after compliance of the order and licenses of those who do not comply with the order will be cancelled, Tawde said.

national



Delhi is not just the country's capital but also the heart of the people. This heart has developed an infection
NITIN GADHKARI | UNION MINISTER

27 BANGLADESHI NATIONALS HELD FOR ILLEGAL STAY IN KOCHI

Twenty-seven Bangladeshi nationals who were illegally staying and working near Kochi have been arrested, police said Friday. They were arrested in a joint operation carried out by Ernakulam rural police and the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) in the North Paravur area in the Ernakulam district, police said



of the day quote

Delhi today is grappling with both a polluted Yamuna, which supplies water to the city, and rising environmental pollution. It is a concerning situation. Both the AAP government and the Centre are culprits of the city's residents. They have failed in their responsibilities



HARISH RAWAT | CONGRESS LEADER

Arrangements should be made to transport medical and paramedical staff from across the state to the people trapped in remote areas through two-wheelers of volunteers



AKHLESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

We are passing through a difficult phase. Many in both hills and valley have lost their lives while many have been displaced from their homes. Even then, the government is working for restoration of peace



N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

7 AAP MLAs resign ahead of Delhi polls



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: In a setback to the AAP, seven of its outgoing MLAs resigned from the party Friday, with only five days to go for the Delhi Assembly polls.

Sources said these MLAs were disgruntled after being denied tickets for the February 5 polls and were in touch with other parties.

Most of the MLAs shared their resignation letters on social media and slammed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over corruption and other issues.

Madan Lal, the outgoing MLA from Kasturba Nagar, claimed that he and six other AAP legislators have quit the party's primary membership. He said they have also sent their resignation letters to Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel.

Besides Lal, the AAP MLAs who have resigned are Bhavna Gaur (Palam), Naresh Yadav (Mehrauli), Rohit Mehraulia (Trilokpuri), Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar), B S Joon (Bijwasan) and Rajesh Rishi (Janakpuri). "Seven AAP MLAs were anguished over being given a cold shoulder by the party and its leaders, despite honestly working for years. We will soon share our future strategy," Lal told PTI.

In her resignation letter addressed to party supremo Arvind Kejriwal, Gaur said, "I hereby resign from the primary membership of the Aam Aadmi Party as I have lost faith in you and the party." She is a two-time MLA from Palam.

Slamming these MLAs, AAP's national spokesperson Reena Gupta said a survey conducted by the party had revealed that all of them were unavailable to the public in their respective constituencies and that is why they were denied poll tickets. "We did not give them tickets because of the unfavourable results of the survey. The fact that they are

now attending another party after being refused tickets is not a huge deal. It is a part of politics," Gupta said.

The AAP has replaced 16 of its incumbent MLAs with new faces for the February 5 polls. Yadav was initially given a ticket by the AAP from Mehrauli but was replaced by Mahender Chaudhary in December over his conviction in a 2016 case of desecration of the Quran by a Punjab court. Yadav has been the Mehrauli MLA since 2015. Mehraulia, the AAP MLA from the Trilokpuri reserved seat, also shared his resignation letter on X.

"My relationship with such fake and opportunist people who only need a photo of Baba Saheb (Ambedkar), not his ideology, ends today. I resign from the primary membership of the AAP and all other posts," he said in a post on the microblogging platform.

Janakpuri MLA Rajesh Rishi was also among those who quit the Kejriwal-led party.

"Born out of the Anna Hazare movement and formed by Arvind Kejriwal to ensure a corruption-free Delhi, the AAP has become corrupt now, as a result of which I am resigning with a heavy heart from the primary membership and all other posts of the party," Rishi said on X. The Delhi election is being seen as a referendum on the AAP's governance model and its leader, Kejriwal.

As the AAP battles to retain its stronghold for a third consecutive term, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is aiming for a comeback to power in the national capital after a gap of more than 25 years. Rituraj Jha, the Kirari MLA who has also been denied a poll ticket this time by the AAP, slammed those who have quit the party, saying history will never forgive them. Jha said Kejriwal gave him everything and allowed him to represent Kirari in the Assembly for 10 years.

Elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly are scheduled to be held February 5, with the results set to be declared February 8.

Mob led by father-in-law parades woman naked

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dahod, Jan 31: A 35-year-old tribal woman was assaulted, disrobed and paraded by a mob led by her father-in-law in Gujarat's Dahod district over a suspected extra-marital affair, following which 12 persons were arrested after a video of her ordeal went viral on social media, a police official said Friday.

The incident took place January 28 in a village in Sanjeli taluka, Superintendent of Police Rajdeepsinh Zala said.

"An FIR was registered January 29 against 15 persons. We have arrested 12 persons, comprising four men, four women

The incident took place January 28 in a village in Sanjeli taluka

and four juveniles. After we were alerted about the incident, we rescued the woman, who was locked inside the house by her father-in-law," he said. The accused have been booked on charges of abduction, wrongful confinement, outraging modesty and assault with intent to disrobe, while those in the mob who videoed the act and circulated it have been slapped with provisions of Information Technology Act, the SP informed.

GUJARAT HORROR



As per the FIR, the victim had an affair with a man from the village and had gone to meet him on the day of the incident. A mob led by her father-in-law Bahadur Damor and her husband's brother Sanjay Damor along with some women

stormed into the man's house, assaulted the victim, partially disrobed her and forced her to walk around the village after tying her hands with a chain police said.

She was then tied to a motor cycle and dragged on the main road before being taken home and locked inside, as per the FIR. The opposition Congress and Aam Aadmi Party slammed the BJP government over the incident and sought strict action against the culprits.

Gujarat Health Minister and government spokesperson Rushikesh Patel told reporters in Gandhinagar that police acted immediately and have arrested 12 persons so far.

GBS: Toll from outbreak rises to four in Maha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Jan 31: The number of suspected deaths in Maharashtra due to Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), a rare nerve disorder, rose to four Friday, while the tally of cases recorded in the state so far stood at 140, health officials said.

A 36-year-old man died due to "trauma to the respiratory system due to pneumonia" at Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Hospital in the neighbouring Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation limits Thursday.

The fourth suspected victim was a 60-year-old man from Dhayari area off Singhad Road here who died Friday.

The man was admitted to the hospital January 27 following loose motions and weakness in the lower limbs



A farmer works in a potato field on the outskirts of Amritsar, Punjab

PTI PHOTO

SHORT TAKES

Missing Sena leader found dead in car

Palghar: The body of a Shiv Sena leader missing since January 20 from Dahanu in Maharashtra's Palghar district was Friday found in the trunk of his car in neighbouring Gujarat, a police official said. Shiv Sena leader Ashok Dhodi went missing from Gholwad here January 20, after which a case was registered on the complaint of his kin, he said. His body was found in the trunk of his car which was abandoned in a shut stone quarry in Bhilad in Gujarat's Valsad district this afternoon, the official said. "The car was pulled out from a 40-45 feet deep water-filled pit at the quarry," the official added.

Samajwadi Party MP, workers booked

Ayodhya (PTI): A case has been registered against a Samajwadi Party MP for violating government orders during a road show, police said Friday. The FIR was lodged at Inayat Nagar police station based on a complaint by Sub-Inspector Alok Kumar Singh, against unidentified party workers and MP Dimple Yadav. The complaint alleged violation of government orders, including the use of more vehicles than permitted, police said.

Girl dies after brutal assault, sexual abuse

Kochi: A 19-year-old girl, who was sexually abused and brutally assaulted by her boyfriend at her residence a few days ago, died Friday as a result of the injuries suffered by her, police said. The girl, a POCSO case survivor, was found in a severely injured state at her home in Chottanikkara Monday, was admitted to a private hospital here on that same day and was on ventilator support.

7 Naxalites surrender

Kanker: Seven Naxalites, including three women, involved in several attacks on security forces and carrying collective cash rewards of ₹32 lakh surrendered in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh Friday, a police official said. The cadres turned themselves in before senior police and Border Security Force (BSF) officials here citing disappointment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology and tribals' exploitation by senior Naxalites, Kanker Senior Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela said.

Warmer, drier February expected in India: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Most parts of India are expected to experience above-normal temperatures and below-normal rainfall in February, following a warmer and drier January, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Friday.

The rainfall in February is likely to be below 81 per cent of the long-period average (1971-2020) of 22.7 mm. IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said most parts of the country are likely to receive below-normal rainfall, except for some areas in west-central, peninsular and northwest India.

Minimum temperatures in February are expected to be above normal in most regions, except in some parts of north-west and peninsular India. Similarly, maximum temperatures are likely to be normal to above normal in most areas, except in parts of west-central and peninsular India, Mohapatra said.

He said India received an average of 4.5 mm of rainfall in January, making it the fourth lowest since 1901 and the third lowest since 2001. The country's mean temperature in January was 18.98 degrees Celsius, the third highest for the month since 1901, behind 1958 and 1990.

GIR SOMNATH DEMOLITIONS

SC rejects plea for 'Urs' at razed shrine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Supreme Court Friday rejected a plea seeking to hold "Urs" festival between February 1 and February 3 at a dargah (Muslim shrine) razed in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district during a demolition drive.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih observed the submissions of solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Gujarat authorities that unauthorised constructions, including temples on the land belonging to the government, were demolished.

Mehta said no activities, including Hindu religious rituals, were allowed on the land in question which was encroached upon earlier. The bench observed Mehta's contention that the land belonged to the government and unauthorised constructions, including the temples, were demolished.

The applicant's counsel said "Urs" festival was held at the site of the razed dargah for many years but authorities on January 30 denied permission. "If at all they (authorities) are saying they are having an



apprehension that there will be some law and order problem, I will suggest one thing... 20 people will go for some time, they will perform the rituals and come out," the applicant's counsel said. It was a structure made before 1299 AD, added the counsel. "Is there a structure now?" asked the bench.

The counsel said it was demolished and argued it was a protected monument. Mehta said the demolition drive applied to all religions. "Whatever was unauthorised, is demolished. This is undisputedly a government land," he said. While the bench told the applicant's counsel that authorities had demolished temples too, it told

Mehta no religious functions at the site should be allowed by the authorities. While rejecting the application, the bench said the prayer couldn't be granted without hearing the main matter.

When the bench told Mehta that it had recorded his statement that no religious rituals would be permitted there, the law officer referred to an order passed by the top court in the main matter. The top court January 27 said it would hear after three weeks the pleas, including a contempt petition against the Gujarat authorities for allegedly demolishing residential and religious structures in Gir Somnath district without its prior nod.

Tiger area increased by 30% over past two decades: Study

Researchers at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, and National Tiger Conservation Authority, New Delhi, found that while tigers persisted most in highly protected "human-free, prey-rich" areas, the carnivore species were also found in areas shared with humans where war, poverty and land-use changes were low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The area occupied by tigers in India has increased by 30 per cent over the past two decades, a new study has found.

Researchers at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, and National Tiger Conservation Authority, New Delhi, found that while tigers persisted most in highly protected "human-free, prey-rich" areas, the carnivore species were

also found in areas shared with humans where war, poverty and land-use changes were low.

Tigers now occupy nearly 1,38,200 square kilometres of area in India, the largest occupancy in the world, the authors said. The findings, published in the journal Science, on recovery of India's 'Panthera tigris' population offers "cautious optimism for megafauna recovery, particularly in the Global South".

The researchers analysed



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

over 3.8 lakh square kilometres of tiger habitats, using models. National-level tiger monitoring data was also involved in the analysis.

"Tiger occupancy increased by 30 per cent (at 2,929 square kilometres per year) over the past two decades," the authors

wrote. A large fraction of the tigers' current territory (45 per cent) is shared with nearly 60 million people in India.

However, "tigers persistently occupied human-free, prey-rich protected areas (35,255 square kilometres)," the authors wrote. In September 2024, thousands

of tribals residing in core areas of tiger reserves protested in response to a government order that directed forest officials to fast-track their relocation. The order was issued by the National Tiger Conservation Authority in June. Core areas of tiger reserves are to remain unoccupied by humans for tiger conservation, according to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. However, tribes and indigenous communities have the right to live in these forests and access resources, under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

In the study authors also explained that 'land sparing' and 'land sharing' are looked on as opposing views for recovering carnivore population.

Separating people from predators, or 'land sparing', is often resorted to for recovering large

carnivores amid crowded and poverty-ridden regions of the Global South. On the other hand, 'land sharing' between people and predators is criticised as unattainable, owing to heightened possibilities of conflict, the authors said.

"In this work, we demonstrated that both views of land sparing and land sharing were required for recovering tiger populations across India, suggesting that both paradigms play a part in the future of large carnivores," the team wrote.

However, regions experiencing high poverty, armed conflict, and habitat loss saw a continued decline in tiger numbers and local extinctions, highlighting socioeconomic and political factors as important for ensuring a successful recovery, the authors said.

national



We will have to approach the courts, arguing that dam water used for power generation should be allocated for public use
AJIT PAWAR | MAHA DY CM

THREE INDIANS MISSING IN IRAN

Three Indian nationals went missing in Iran and New Delhi has taken up the matter strongly with Tehran, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Friday. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the Indians had travelled to Iran for business purposes and lost contact with their families shortly after their arrival in that country



of the day quote

Politics is business for some people. They go with whoever is in power. But the people are with the Congress
NANA PATOLE | MAHA CONG PRESIDENT

From the Sheesh Mahal to the liquor scam, all its (AAP's) corrupt activities have been highlighted in the CAG report
ANURAG THAKUR | SENIOR BJP LEADER

The proposed Waqf amendment bill not only violates the religious and constitutional rights of Muslims but also seeks to seize these properties by diluting the autonomy of the Waqf Act. I have written to @NitishKumar ji and @ncbn ji urging them to halt this onslaught and assault on the very idea of India
MEHBOOBA MUFTI | POP PRESIDENT

MEA: India working with US for early extradition of Rana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: India Friday said it is working with American authorities for the early extradition of Tahawwur Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.



The extradition of Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, was cleared by the US Supreme Court a few days ago as it rejected his review petition in the case.

"The US Supreme Court January 21 declined to hear a petition from the accused. We are now working with the US side on procedural issues for early extradition to India of the accused in the Mumbai terror attack," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. He was replying to a question at his weekly media

briefing.

Rana, currently lodged at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles, is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks. On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went into a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian sea.

As many as 166 people were killed in the nearly 60-hour assault that sent shockwaves across the country and even brought India and Pakistan to the brink of a war. In November 2012, Ajmal Amir Kasab, the lone surviving gunman among the Pakistani group, was hanged to death in Yerawada Jail in Pune.



A decorated tram on a road during 'Tram Book Fair', Kolkata, West Bengal

PTI PHOTO

POST OF THE DAY

SHOCKING! History will thank Arvind Kejriwal for exposing this spineless man who runs an organisation like ECI like he is a BJP leader. Kejriwal is likely to be banned from campaigning for 48 crucial hours just for exposing Ammonia levels in water, while BJP leaders continue to distribute cash, sarees, shoes and what not openly. This man might get a lucrative post after retirement but History will spit on him for taking the Election Commission to the extreme low and compromised levels.
@RoshanKrRaii

Yamuna row: Kejriwal visits EC office, furnishes reply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal went to the Election Commission's office here Friday and furnished his reply to the poll body over its notice to him on his "poison mixed" in Yamuna water remark.

Kejriwal was accompanied by Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and her Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann. The former Delhi chief minister went to the Election Commission's office without an appointment.

Sources from the Election Commission (EC) said that they accepted the meetings as a "special case" as campaigning in Delhi is at its peak. "The Commission accepted the manner of meeting with Arvind Kejriwal today as a special case, altering its earlier schedule in view of the thick of the campaign period in Delhi and for leaving no scope for complaint for any stakeholders," an EC source said.

"The Commission gave a patient hearing to Arvind Kejriwal to substantiate his statements on Yamuna poisoning and mass genocide," the source added. Talking to reporters after Kejriwal's meeting with the Election Commission, AAP MP Sanjay Singh said that his party chief gave the poll panel a detailed reply.

"Kejriwal told them in details how a conspiracy was hatched by the BJP to send poisonous water to Delhi. The Election Commission has said they will conduct a probe," Singh told reporters. Before visiting the Election Commission's office, Kejriwal told re-



KEJRIWAL THURSDAY ACCUSED THE EC AND ITS CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER OF INDULGING IN POLITICS OVER HIS STATEMENT AND CLAIMED THAT YAMUNA WATER SUPPLIED FROM HARYANA TO DELHI HAS HIGH LEVELS OF AMMONIA CONTENT

porters that the language of second notice hints that the poll body has already decided their action.

He alleged that the poll body is "shooting the messenger" by targeting the AAP for raising its voice. Kejriwal said that it was a political conspiracy to force half of Delhi to thirst because of "poisonous" water having high ammonia in it. "I want to congratulate the people of Delhi that our struggle has been successful and the ammonia level in Yamuna which was 7 ppm since January 26-27 has now come down to 2.1 ppm now," the AAP chief said. Kejriwal Thursday accused the EC and its chief election commissioner of indulging in politics over

his statement and claimed that Yamuna water supplied from Haryana to Delhi has high levels of ammonia content.

The EC served him two notices seeking reply over his allegation that the BJP government mixed "poison" in Yamuna water for Delhi in attempting a "genocide" in the city. Kejriwal said Friday that he saved Delhi from an artificial water crisis to influence the polls, but the EC served him notices. Kejriwal, who is contesting the Delhi polls from the New Delhi seat, was asked to share details of engineers, location and methodology of detecting the "poison" by the Delhi Jal Board staff by Friday 11 am failing which the Commission will be free to take appropriate decisions in the matter.

Road accident leaves 11 dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ferozepur (PB), Jan 31: Eleven people were killed and fifteen were injured in a collision between a pick-up van and a canter truck in this district Friday, police said.

The pick-up van was carrying mainly those working as waiters, who were going to attend a function at Jalalabad. The accident took place near a village in Guruharsahi sub-division, police said. The injured were undergoing treatment at various hospitals, said police. Ferozepur's Senior Superintendent of Police, Saumya Mishra said that soon after the accident, teams from "Sadak Suraksha Force" (SSF) reached on the spot and started the rescue operation.

Police said they are investigating the reason behind the accident which occurred at around 8 am. Deepshikha Sharma, Deputy Commissioner said that some of the critically injured were referred to the Guru Gobind Singh Medical College in Faridkot, while few others were admitted at Civil Hospital in Jalalabad.

"Five ambulances had reached the spot immediately after the incident", said the DC, while adding that the administration will bear the cost of treatment of those who are injured.

"In Ferozepur this morning, there was news of a major accident due to a collision between a canter and a pick-up vehicle, in which the news of the tragic death of waiters going to the wedding ceremony has been received and some people are said to be injured. "The Punjab government stands with the affected families in this difficult time," Mann posted on X.

MAHA KUMBH TRAGEDY

Judicial probe panel visits stampede spot, hospital in Prayagraj



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, Jan 31: A three-member judicial commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh government to probe the Maha Kumbh stampede reached Prayagraj and visited the incident spot at Sangam Nose Friday, an official said.

The panel is headed by Harsh Kumar, a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court, and comprises former director general of police (DGP) V K Gupta and retired IAS officer D K Singh. "The commission is holding meetings with officials concerned here. We may also visit the incident spot later in the day," an official told PTI earlier in the day. Sangam Nose is a triangular landmass that is sandwiched between the river Ganga in the north and the river Yamuna in the south, before they merge.

In the afternoon, the panel visited Sangam Nose, where the stampede took place, accompanied by Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand, DIG Vaibhav Krishna, and SSP Rajesh Dwivedi, who kept briefing

the panel members. The panel moved around the area amid heavy security comprising scores of personnel from the state police and Rapid Action Force, holding a rope cordon around the commission members and officers.

From there, the commission went to the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in the city, where those injured in the stampede are admitted. They interacted with some patients, their kin and hospital staff for an update on the situation, it was learnt.

By 5 PM, the panel returned to Circuit House before departing for Lucknow. "I don't want to comment right now. Today we just visited the spots and reviewed the situation," panel head Harsh Kumar said in a brief statement to reporters.

The panel was formed in the wake of an early Wednesday stampede that killed 30 devotees at Sangam Nose where they had gone for a dip on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya. The commission has a month to wrap up its investigation but will try to expedite it, Kumar had said Thursday.

'Funding shortfall may prompt reworking of climate targets'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The lack of funding from developed countries to mitigate climate change in the Global South may prompt developing countries to "rework" their climate targets, India said Friday.

In the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament, the government said the new financial package agreed at the 2024 UN climate conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan to support climate action in the developing world "presents little optimism". With countries required to submit their next round of Nationally Determined Contributions or climate plans for the 2031-2035 period this year, the economic survey said the "funding shortfall may lead to a reworking of the climate targets". According to the Paris Agreement signed in 2015,

countries are encouraged to strengthen their climate targets every five years. India's Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said that domestic resources will be the key to climate action amid the lack of support from developed countries.

Therefore, resources for meeting development challenges may be affected, undermining progress toward sustainable development objectives and "compromising the integrity of international climate partnerships", he said. Nageswaran said the small mobilisation target of \$300 billion annually by 2035 is just a "fraction" of the estimated requirement of \$5.1-6.8 trillion by 2030.

The new climate finance package is "out of sync" with the needs of the critical decade when action is required to keep the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement within



reach, he said. It underscores the unwillingness of affluent developed nations to assume their equitable share of the responsibility to address emission reduction and mitigate climate change impacts on vulnerable populations in developing regions, he said.

According to the United Na-

tions Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, high-income industrialised nations, which have historically been responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, are required to provide finance, technology and capacity-building support to devel-

oping and low-income economies to help them cope with a warming world.

These countries include the United States, the UK, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and European Union member states such as Germany and France. Hisham Mundol, chief advisor at the Environmental

Defense Fund, said rich and industrialised countries are largely responsible for the climate crisis, as they have contributed 75 per cent of historical emissions.

In 2015, countries came together to limit global warming to "well below 2 degrees Celsius", aiming for 1.5 degrees Celsius. Fast forward, the world has already heated up by 1.3 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era, largely due to burning fossil fuels.

To limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the UN's climate science body, IPCC, says emissions must peak by 2025 and drop 43 per cent by 2030 and 57 per cent by 2035. But current policies point to a hotter future -- around 3 degrees Celsius warming by 2100. Even if every country fulfils its climate promises or NDCs, emissions would only shrink by a weak 5.9 per cent by 2030.

international



There will be no negotiation with the United States over ownership of the Panama Canal
JOSE RAUL MULINO | PRESIDENT, PANAMA

May 9, 2023 protest: Pak HC suspends sentences of 10

A Pakistani high court Friday suspended the sentences of 10 people who were convicted for links with the violent protest of May 9, 2023, that erupted after the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan. The founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was arrested May 9, 2023, which enraged his followers who resorted to violence and vandalism



of the day note

The history of the 21st century will largely be about what happened between the US and China. So for us to pretend that somehow we're not going to engage with them is absurd



MARCO RUBIO | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

You always have the threat from the East, and you must be aware and take all the necessary precautionary measures in order not to be attacked



GITANAS NAUSEDA | PRESIDENT, LITHUANIA

The goldfields in the state of Victoria have been added to Australia's World Heritage Tentative List



TANYA PLIBERSEK | MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER, AUSTRALIA

SUNITA WILLIAMS SETS NEW SPACEWALKING RECORD

The astronaut now has 62 hours and 6 minutes of total spacewalk time, fourth on NASA's all-time list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 31: Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams has broken the record for total spacewalking time by a woman by logging 62 hours and 6 minutes of spacewalk.

Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore, who have

been stranded on the International Space Station (ISS) since June 2024, conducted a spacewalk Thursday.

The duo ventured outside the ISS to remove degraded radio communications hardware and collect samples that may show whether microorganisms exist on the exterior of the orbiting laboratory.

The spacewalk began at 7:43 am and concluded at 1:09 pm, lasting 5 hours and 26 minutes.

It was the ninth spacewalk for Williams and the fifth for Wilmore.

"NASA astronaut Sunita Williams just surpassed former



astronaut Peggy Whitson's total spacewalking time of 60

hours and 21 minutes," NASA said in a post on X.

She surpassed Whitson's record for total spacewalking time by a female astronaut. Williams now has 62 hours and 6 minutes of total spacewalk time, fourth on NASA's all-time list, according to NASA.

In 2012, during a trip to the ISS, Williams became the first person to finish a triathlon in space, during which she simulated swimming using a weight-lifting machine and ran on a treadmill while strapped in by a harness so she wouldn't float away.

Williams, 59, and Wilmore

went on what was meant to be an eight-day mission to the ISS aboard Boeing's Starliner in June 2024.

However, technical issues including helium leaks and thruster malfunctions meant that the Starliner was unsafe for their return.

NASA plans to bring them back to Earth in late March aboard a spaceship built by SpaceX, a rival company of Boeing.

Despite these setbacks, the astronauts have continued their work aboard the ISS while awaiting a safe journey home.

3 Israeli hostages set for release in Gaza Today

REUTERS

Jerusalem, Jan 31: Palestinian militant group Hamas said Friday it would free the father of the youngest hostages seized in its Oct 7, 2023 attack on Israel and two others including a dual US citizen in the next exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners.

Yarden Bibas, Keith Siegel and Ofer Kalderon will be handed over Saturday, Hamas armed wing spokesperson Abu Obeida said in a post on his Telegram channel.

Yarden Bibas is the father of baby Kfir, only nine months old when he was kidnapped, and Ariel, who was four at the time of the cross-border attack.

There was no word on the fate of Kfir and Ariel, or on their mother Shiri, who was taken at the same time. Hamas said in late 2023 that they had been killed by Israeli bombardment, in the early months of the Gaza war.

Video of their capture began circulating soon after they were seized. It showed a terrified Shiri clutching her small children in a blanket as they were bundled into captivity surrounded by militant assailants.

The father, Yarden, 34 at the time of the attack, was also abducted and a clip circulated showing him bleeding from a head injury suffered from hammer blows.

Israeli-American Keith Siegel, who was taken hostage with his wife Aviva, was seen in a video released by Hamas last year. His wife was released in the first hostage-for-prisoner exchange in November 2023.

Boats return to Potomac River

More than 40 bodies have been pulled from the river as the massive recovery effort continued



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arlington, Jan 31: Police boats returned to the Potomac River Friday as part of the recovery and investigation after a midair collision killed 67 people in the United States' deadliest aviation disaster in almost a quarter century.

More than 40 bodies have been pulled from the river as the massive recovery effort continued, law enforcement officials told The Associated Press Friday.

The officials were not authorised to discuss details of the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity. Investigators have already recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder of the American Airlines plane that collided with an Army helicopter as the plane was landing Wednesday night at Ronald Reagan National Airport next to Washington, DC.

Officials are scrutinising a range of factors in what National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy has called an "all-hands-on-deck event".

All aboard the two aircraft were killed, with officials examining the actions of the military pilot as well as air traffic control after the helicopter ap-

parently flew into the path of the American Airlines jet.

Air crash investigations can take months, and federal investigators told reporters Thursday they would not speculate on the cause.

Authorities were still looking for the helicopter's black box recorder, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said Friday on Fox News Channel. Other factors in the crash, including the

helicopter's altitude and whether the crew was using its night vision goggles, are still under investigation, Hegseth said.

Military aircraft frequently conduct such flights in and around the nation's capital for familiarisation with routes they would fly in case of a major catastrophe or an attack on the US that would require relocation of key officials from the capital region.

"You need to train as you fight, you need to rehearse in ways that would reflect a real world scenario," Hegseth said. He stressed that it remained the Pentagon's duty to also mitigate risks, while conducting such training. But he underscored US forces need "to ensure, if unfortunately, there were a real world event where things needed to happen we could respond to it day or night".

SNIPPETS

Myanmar's military govt extends state of emergency by 6 months

Bangkok: Myanmar's military government Friday announced another six-month extension of its

mandate to rule in preparation for elections it has said will be held this year, as the country enters its fifth year of crisis. However, it did not announce an exact date for the polls. The military declared a state of emergency February 1, 2021, when it arrested the country's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and top officials from her government in an army takeover which reversed years of progress toward democracy after five decades of earlier military rule.

The takeover sparked an armed resistance movement, with powerful ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces that support Myanmar's main Opposition now controlling large parts of the country. The military government is currently facing its greatest challenge since taking power and is on the defensive in much of the country. However, it is still able to hold onto much of central Myanmar and big cities including the capital, Naypyidaw.



Serbian student protesters march ahead of bridge blockade

Indija (Serbia): Hundreds of striking students marched through the Serbian countryside Friday as they took their anti-graft protest toward the northern city of Novi Sad, where they plan to blockade three bridges over the River Danube this weekend. The bridge blockade planned for Saturday will mark three months since a huge concrete construction at the railway station collapsed in Novi Sad November 1, leaving 15 people dead.

What started two months ago as a protest against suspected corruption in construction contracts has developed into the most serious challenge in years to the country's powerful populist leader, President Aleksandar Vucic. Meanwhile in Belgrade, a driver rammmed a car into a silent protest Friday, injuring two women who work as doctors at a nearby psychiatric institution. Media reports say both hit the pavement with their heads and are being examined. The incident, the third of its kind in weeks, happened in downtown Belgrade during 15 minutes of silence observed daily throughout Serbia at around noon when the canopy collapsed at the railway station in Novi Sad.



Go find another sucker nation: Trump

THE PRESIDENT WARNS BRICS NATIONS AGAINST REPLACING US DOLLAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 31: President Donald Trump has once again warned that he will impose 100 per cent tariffs against BRICS nations if they attempt to replace the US dollar in international trade, telling them to go and find "another sucker nation."

BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries -Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

"The idea that the BRICS countries are trying to move away from the dollar, while we stand by and watch, is OVER," Trump said Thursday in a post on Truth Social, a social media platform owned by him.

Trump said he wanted a commitment from these "seemingly hostile" countries that they would neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the "mighty" US dollar.

"Or they will face 100 per



Over the past few years, a few of its member countries, in particular Russia and China, are seeking to have an alternative to the US dollar or create BRICS currency

cent tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy," Trump said.

"They can go find another sucker nation. There is no

chance that BRICS will replace the US dollar in international trade, or anywhere else, and any country that tries should say hello to tariffs, and goodbye to America!" Trump threat-

ened. Although Trump has repeatedly criticised BRICS nations against any move to float their own currency, this is his strongest opposition to it so far.

In December too, Trump warned BRICS nations against such a move.

BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries -Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

BRICS, formed in 2009, is the only major international group of which the US is not a part.

Over the past few years, a few of its member countries, in particular Russia and China, are seeking to have an alternative to the US dollar or create BRICS currency.

India, an important pillar of BRICS, has said it was against de-dollarisation.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in December said India had never been for de-dollarisation and there was no proposal to have a BRICS currency.

HOMEGROWN VEG, CHEAP SUBSTITUTES

With inflation taking hold in Japan after a generation of stagnant prices, many consumers are facing a similar plight, and looking for creative solutions to ease the pain

REUTERS

Tokyo, Jan 31: Japanese homemaker Kirina Mochizuki has always considered "okonomiyaki" savoury pancakes the ultimate comfort food: simple, satisfying and cheap.

These days, though, it's a struggle to get the dish, a favourite among Hiroshima natives like herself, on the table. With the price of cabbage - a key ingredient - tripling recently, Mochizuki makes daily trips to the supermarket in search of discounted produce, or resorts

to using dried seaweed. "I never imagined that okonomiyaki would become a delicacy," the mother-of-two said, adding she had also taken to re-growing leek in a glass of water using the usually discarded root base.

With inflation taking hold in Japan after a generation of stagnant prices, many consumers are facing a similar plight, and looking for creative solutions to ease the pain. Data Friday showed the average price of cabbage more than tripling this month in the capital, Tokyo, from a year ago.

The Bank of Japan hiked interest rates to the highest in 17 years last week citing confidence in the outlook for salaries. But inflation-adjusted wages have fallen in 29 of the last 32 months while the Engel's coefficient, or the share of households' spending on food, hit a four-decade high last year. The price of a head of cab-



bage reaching 1,000 yen (\$6.43) in Tokyo - roughly equivalent to an hourly wage - had already made headlines even before Friday's data, and the central bank noted last week that rice would probably stay expensive until the spring of 2026. Wholesale rice prices surged 60% in December from the same period

a year earlier. As the price of agricultural products has risen, Japanese have also been eating less of them. The average intake of vegetables among Japanese adults fell to an all-time low in November, the most recent government data shows. Meanwhile, cheap "furi-

kake", or dried condiments sprinkled on rice, are being used as a substitute for other dishes on the dinner table. Sales last year are expected to have reached a record high, according to research firm Fuji Keizai.

"A 10-yen rise in our daily goods might seem small but it adds up," Mochizuki said, noting that she had already shaved what she could from other spending.

Worried about the impact of rising prices on voter sentiment, the government last year compiled an economic stimulus package that includes cash payouts to low-income households. And in a first, the farm ministry is considering drawing up new rules to allow the government to sell stockpiled

rice to agricultural cooperatives with the aim of bringing down retail prices.

LIVING ROOM FARMING For YouTuber Kazuki Nakata, the recent price trends have proved to be a boon.

Having started indoor farming at home as a hobby during the pandemic, the 37-year-old now has nearly 90,000 subscribers, opens new tabs eager to learn how to stretch out store-bought vegetables and grow new ones in containers of water, without soil.

Nakata quit his job at an electronics retailer in 2023 to focus on the 47 types of vegetables he currently grows all over his house. Everything from shiso leaves, onions and daikon radish thrive in empty plastic bottles, beer cans and even the basket of his bicycle.

PRICES OF STAPLES LIKE RICE, CABBAGE SOAR

CONSUMERS LEARN TO GROW THEIR OWN VEGETABLES AT HOME

SHARE OF HOUSEHOLD SPENDING ON FOOD HIT 42-YEAR HIGH IN 2024



The most effective policies governments - Union and States - in the country can embrace is to give entrepreneurs and households back their time and mental bandwidth. That means rolling back regulation significantly

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN
 CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

YAMAHA CUTS PRICES OF TWO MODELS BY UP TO ₹1.1 LAKH

India Yamaha Motor Pvt Ltd Friday said it will cut prices of its flagship models -- R3 and MT-03 by up to ₹1.10 lakh from February 1, 2025. The Yamaha R3 will be priced at ₹3,59,900 and the MT-03 at ₹3,49,900 (all prices ex-showroom, Delhi)



of the day quote

So we have to add another 100 MT of capacity in next six years. If we don't do that, then we basically become dependent on the imports

SANDEEP POUNDRIK | STEEL SECRETARY

With a 7,500 km coastline in India, investing in corrosion-resistant metal is crucial to ensuring long-term sustainability, reducing economic losses, and safeguarding public infrastructure

ABHYUDAY JINDAL | MD, JINDAL STAINLESS

The Cabinet's approval of the National Critical Mineral Mission, accompanied by a significant financial outlay, is a major step forward for India's energy security

RAKESH SURANA | PARTNER, DELOITTE INDIA

WORLD'S FASTEST-GROWING MAJOR ECONOMY

Budget day: Key numbers to watch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present her 8th straight Budget Saturday and all eyes will be on the much-expected tax relief for the middle class.

Sitharaman had in her first Budget in 2019 replaced the leather briefcase -- which had been in use for decades for carrying Budget documents -- with a traditional 'bahi-khata' wrapped in red cloth. This year's Budget would be in paperless form, as done in the last three years.

Here are the key numbers to watch out for in the Union Budget for 2025-26:

FISCAL DEFICIT: The budgeted fiscal deficit, which is the difference between the government expenditure and income, for the current fiscal (April 2024 to March 2025 or FY'25) is estimated at 4.9 per cent of GDP. As per the fiscal consolidation roadmap, the deficit is to be brought down to 4.5 per cent of GDP in FY26. Markets will keenly watch for the deficit number in FY'26 Budget.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE: The government's planned capital expenditure for this fiscal



We believe that the starting point of the Budget will be the fiscal deficit, and efforts will be made to lower the ratio by 0.5 per cent to probably close to 4.3-4.4 per cent of GDP for FY26. Within this framework, the budget would work to maintain, if not increase capex, in the range of ₹11 lakh crore that will provide a flip to investment (the revised estimate for FY25 could be lower than what was projected)

MADAN SABNAVIS | CHIEF ECONOMIST, BANK OF BARODA

year is budgeted at ₹11.1 lakh crore. However, slower government spending in the first four months due to Lok Sabha elections delayed the capex cycle and the final numbers for current fiscal are expected to be lower than Budgeted. The capex

momentum is expected to continue in FY'26 Budget as well.

DEBT ROADMAP: The finance minister, in her 2024-25 budget speech, had stated that from 2026-27 onwards the endeavor of fiscal policy would be to maintain the fiscal deficit in a way

that the central government debt is on a declining path as a percentage of GDP. Markets would closely look for the debt consolidation roadmap from FY'27 onwards to see when the finance minister sees general government debt-to-GDP fall to the 60 per cent target. The general government debt-to-GDP ratio was 85 per cent in 2024, which included central government debt of 57 per cent.

BORROWING: The government's gross borrowing Budget was ₹14.01 lakh crore in FY'25. The government borrows from the market to fund its fiscal deficit. The borrowing number will be watched by the market, especially on the back of lower dividend from the RBI in FY'26 compared to ₹2.11 lakh crore in FY'25.

TAX REVENUE: The 2024-25 Budget had pegged gross tax revenue at ₹38.40 lakh crore, an 11.72 per cent growth over FY'24. This includes ₹22.07 lakh crore estimated to come from direct taxes (personal income tax + corporate tax), and ₹16.33 lakh crore from indirect taxes (customs + excise duty + GST).

GST: Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in 2024-25 is estimated to rise 11 per cent to

₹10.62 lakh crore. FY'26 GST revenue projections will be watched as the revenue growth has slowed over the last three months in the current fiscal.

NOMINAL GDP: India's nominal GDP growth (real GDP plus inflation) in FY'25 is estimated to be 10.5 per cent, while the Real GDP growth estimated by NSO is 6.4 per cent. FY'26 nominal GDP growth projections in the Budget will give an idea about the inflation trajectory in the next fiscal.

DIVIDEND: The Government estimated ₹2.33 lakh crore from RBI and financial institutions and ₹56,260 crore from CPSEs as dividend in FY'25. These two key non-tax revenue numbers will be looked for in FY'26 Budget projections.

DISINVESTMENT & ASSET MONETISATION: 'Miscellaneous Capital Receipts' -- which include proceeds from disinvestment and asset monetization -- was pegged at ₹50,000 crore in FY'25 Budget. The FY'26 Budget will give a number for next year and a broader asset monetisation roadmap.

Spotlight would also be on spending on key schemes like NREGA as well as key sectors like health and education.

Fiscal deficit at 56.7% of full year target at end-Dec

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Centre's fiscal deficit touched 56.7 per cent of the annual target at the end of December 2024, according to the data released by Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between expenditure and revenue -- was ₹9,14,089 crore during the April-December 2024-25 period.

The deficit was 55 per cent of Budget Estimates (BE) of 2023-24 in the year-ago period.

The CGA data showed that the central government's tax revenue (net) was ₹18.43 lakh crore, or 71.3 per cent of the BE of 2024-25. It was at 74.2 per cent during the corresponding year of the last financial year.

The total expenditure was at ₹32.32 lakh crore, or 67 per cent of the BE, according to the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government. In the year-ago period it was at 67.8 per cent of BE.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year. The deficit was 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24.

Q3 RESULTS

Vedanta profit shines

New Delhi: Vedanta Friday reported a 76.2 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at ₹3,547 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2024 due to higher income. The company had posted profit of ₹2,013 crore in the year-ago period, Vedanta Ltd said in a filing to BSE. The company's consolidated income grew by 9.5 per cent to ₹39,795 crore, over ₹36,320 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. Vedanta's consolidated revenue for the third quarter stood at ₹38,526 crore, up four per cent Q-o-Q and 10 per cent Y-o-Y driven by favourable market prices and higher premiums.

Nestle profit up 4.9%

New Delhi: FMCG major Nestle India Ltd Friday reported a 4.94 per cent increase in net profit at ₹688.01 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2024. The company had posted a net profit of ₹655.61 crore in the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Nestle India. Nestle India's revenue from the sale of products was up 3.89 per cent to ₹4,762.13 crore in the December quarter. It was at ₹4,583.63 crore in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

PNB profit jumps 2X

New Delhi: State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) Friday posted more than two-fold jump in net profit at ₹4,508 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024. The bank had earned a net profit of ₹2,223 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to ₹34,752 crore from ₹29,962 crore in the same period a year ago, PNB said in a regulatory filing. Interest income also rose to ₹31,340 crore from ₹27,288 crore.

Marico profit surges

New Delhi: Homegrown FMCG major Marico Ltd Friday reported an increase of 5.18 per cent in consolidated net profit to ₹406 crore for the December quarter ended 2024, in which the Mariwala-led firm reported a volume growth from the domestic market and good performance from its International business. It had posted a net profit of ₹386 crore in the October-December quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing by Marico. Marico's consolidated revenue from operations was up 15.35 per cent to ₹2,794 crore during the quarter under review. It was at ₹2,422 crore a year ago.

Benchmarks rise for fourth straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 31: Benchmark Sensex jumped 741 points while Nifty rallied to close above 23,500 on Friday heavy buying in Larsen & Toubro post its Q3 results and the Economic Survey predicting a pro-growth budget.

Rallying for the fourth day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 740.76 points or 0.97 per cent higher at 77,500.57. During the day, it jumped 846.15 points or 1.10 per cent to 77,605.96.

The NSE Nifty rallied 28.90 points or 1.11 per cent to 23,508.40. During the day, it climbed 297.3 points or 1.27 per cent to 23,546.80.

India is expected to record GDP growth of 6.3-6.8 per cent in 2025-26 on the back of strong fundamentals, calibrated fiscal consolidation and stable private consumption, said the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament Friday.

From the 30-share blue-chip



Sensex rallies 741 pts, Nifty settles above 23,500 as Eco Survey ignites hopes of pro-growth budget

In the month of January, the BSE benchmark declined 638.44 points or 0.81%, while the Nifty lost 136.4 points or 0.57%

pack, Larsen & Toubro climbed 4.31 per cent after the infrastructure and engineering major reported 14 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax to ₹3,359 crore for the December quarter on the back of higher revenue from operations.

Stock markets will remain open for trading Saturday due to the Union Budget presentation.

Gold continues record breaking rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Gold prices hit a fresh record high of ₹84,900 per 10 grams in the national capital Friday, driven by robust domestic demand and strong global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity continued its ascent for the third straight session, jumping by ₹1,100 to hit a new peak of ₹84,900 per 10 grams.

The yellow metal has rallied by ₹5,510 or 7 per cent since January 1 when the metal traded at ₹79,390 per 10 grams in the local market.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity surged by ₹1,100 to hit a lifetime high of ₹84,500 per 10 grams from the previous market close of ₹83,400 per 10 grams.

Silver advanced by ₹850 to ₹95,000 per kg Friday. The white metal had ended at ₹94,150 per kg Thursday.

In futures trade, gold contracts for February delivery appreciated by ₹487 or 0.6 per cent to hit another record high

GOLD & SILVER



The bullish momentum in precious metals continues, with spot gold reaching a new all-time high and surpassing the \$2,800 threshold in the intraday trade on Friday, while the spot gold price in the Delhi market crossed the ₹84,000-mark

SAUMIL GANDHI | SENIOR ANALYST OF COMMODITIES, HDFC SECURITIES

of ₹82,210 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

The April contracts for the

precious metal increased by ₹371 or 0.45 per cent to hit another fresh peak of ₹82,415 per 10 grams.

FOREX KITTY ZOOMS TO \$629.55 BILLION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 31: India's forex reserves increased \$5.574 billion to \$629.557 billion in the week ended January 24, the Reserve Bank said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall kitty had dropped \$1.888 billion to \$623.983 billion.

The reserves have been on a declining trend for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation, along with forex market interventions by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to help reduce volatilities in the rupee.

The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in end-September.

For the week ended January 24, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased \$4.758 billion to \$537.891 billion, as per the RBI data.

Gold reserves increased \$704 million to \$69.651 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up \$79 million to \$17.861 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was up \$33 million to \$4.154 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

Key infra sectors' growth slides to 4% in Dec 2024

The eight core sectors contribute 40.27% to the Index of Industrial Production, which measures overall industrial growth



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: The output of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 4 per cent in December 2024, as against 5.1 per cent growth registered a year ago, according to official data released Friday.

On a monthly basis, the growth rate in the production of these sectors was lower than the 4.4 per cent expansion recorded in November 2024.

In December, production of natural gas output recorded a negative growth.

The production growth of

coal, refinery products, fertiliser, and steel moderated to 5.3 per cent, 2.8 per cent, 1.7 per cent, and 5.1 per cent, respectively, against 10.8 per cent, 4.1 per cent, 5.9 per cent and 8.3 per cent in December last year.

However, cement and electricity output rose to 4 per cent and 5.1 per cent in the month under review.

The growth of core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 4.2 per cent during April-December this fiscal. It was 8.3 per cent in the same period last fiscal.

ANOTHER GEM IN SACHIN'S THRONE

Master Blaster to be conferred with BCCI Lifetime Achievement Award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 31: Legendary former batter Sachin Tendulkar, whose records and impact on international cricket have stood the test of time, will be conferred with the BCCI's Lifetime Achievement Award at the Board's annual gala here Saturday.

Overall, Tendulkar will be the 31st recipient of the award, which was instituted in 1994 in the honour of India's first captain Colonel C K Nayudu.

The 51-year-old Tendulkar, who played 664 international games for India, holds the record for the highest number of Test and ODI runs in the history of the game.

"Yes, he will be the recipient of the C K Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award for the year 2024," a Board source told PTI. Tendulkar's 200 Test and 463 ODI appearances are also the highest by any player in the history of the game. He amassed 15,921 Test runs besides a whopping 18,426 in ODIs.

However, he played only one T20 International in his stellar career. In 2023, the lifetime honour was bestowed on former India head coach Ravi Shastri and wicket-keeping great Farokh Engineer.

Considered the greatest batter of his era, Tendulkar was not just a prolific run-scorer but also an icon of the game, who played for more than two decades after debuting as a 16-year-old in a 1989 Test against Pakistan.

numerous batting records apart, Tendulkar was also a key member of India's 2011 World Cup-winning team, which was his record sixth and last appearance in the showpiece.

At his peak, the diminutive right-hander could bring the nation to a standstill by simply walking out to bat.

His dismissal was the most sought after among opposition teams, who did not hesitate to say that Tendulkar was the only Indian batter who could intimidate them.

Tendulkar's emergence in the Indian cricketing scene happened at the same time when India witnessed economic liberalisation and the curly-haired genius became a favourite of corporate India, thanks to a never-seen-before emotional connect with people from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.

When a 17-year-old Tendulkar scored a hundred at Perth on a treacherously bouncy WACA track, lot of teenagers found a hero.



The 51-year-old, who played 664 international games for India, holds the record for the highest number of Test and ODI runs in the history of the game

Tendulkar's 200 Test and 463 ODI appearances are also the highest by any player in the history of the game. He amassed 15,921 Test runs besides a whopping 18,426 in ODIs

When he scored the 'Desert Storm hundred' at Sharjah against Australia in 1998, a middle-aged man somewhere wished that he was his son.

When he withstood pain and nearly took India to a victory against Pakistan in Chennai in 1999 and broke down, a billion hearts broke into pieces. When he shed tears of joy

while hugging Mahendra Singh Dhoni April 2, 2011, a nation shared his happiness.

And in November 2013, when he left the field in front of his adoring fans in Mumbai, thousands lost cried hoping for him to continue.

If Sunil Gavaskar brought respect for Indian cricket with his astute mind and artistic defence, Tendulkar, with his dazzling array of strokes, stood for style and aura.

They were the social symbols of their time. BCCI didn't become a rich cricket board just overnight. It's first blue chip share certainly was Tendulkar, which paid them handsome dividends throughout.

Tendulkar was that middle-class success story, which led to a "successful marriage" of India Inc. and Indian cricket. It wouldn't be an overstate-

ment to say that for cricket historians, there will be distinct eras which need to be chronicled namely - 'BT' which is Before Tendulkar, 'DT' which will be 'During Tendulkar' and 'PT' that is Post Tendulkar.

Tendulkar always united India with his craftsmanship creating organic love in the pre-social media days free of toxicity.

His humility made him ever more endearing.

Tendulkar will be bestowed with the honour but it is the establishment that should feel privileged that they perhaps had the greatest servant of Indian cricket for 24 years.

There could easily be more followed cricketers in India but when it comes to unadulterated love, no one will ever surpass the 'Master'. He owns that love.

India seal series against England

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Pune, Jan 31: Ravi Bishnoi (3-28) and debutant Harshit Rana (3-33) claimed three wickets each as India beat England by 15 runs in the fourth T20I at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium here on Friday. India thus took an unbeatable 3-1 lead and sealed the series with the last T20I scheduled to be played at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai Sunday.

India came back after losing the third T20I in Rajkot. The hosts had started by winning the first two T20Is in Kolkata and Chennai.

Earlier, Hardik Pandya (53) and Shivam Dube (53) produced a counter-attacking partnership to rescue India from a precarious position and push them to a competitive 181/9 after Saqib Mahmood's (3 for 35).

However, it was Mahmood who stole the show, registering a historic triple-wicket maiden, the first-ever in men's T20 internationals. Sanju Samson (1), Tilak Varma (0), and Suryakumar Yadav (0) all fell in quick succession, leaving India reeling at 12/3 in two overs. Samson guided a rising delivery straight to deep square leg, Varma sliced his first ball to Archer at short third, and Suryakumar chipped a catch to short mid-wicket, playing right into England's well-set trap.

With India at 98/5 in 13 overs, the onus was on Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube to steady the innings and provide a strong finish. The duo stitched to-

gether an 88-run partnership to force India to a competitive total. With England needing 96 runs off the final 10 overs to chase down India's 182-run target, the visitors were still in contention despite losing three early wickets.

Rana wasted no time making an impact. Bowling at speeds touching 150 kmph, he rattled England's middle order. His very first over saw Liam Livingstone edge one behind Sanju Samson, departing for 9 off 13 balls. England slipped to 99/4 in 12 overs and were suddenly losing all momentum in their chase. Brook, however, remained England's best hope.

Just when England looked like regaining momentum, Chakravarthy struck twice in quick succession. Brook, who had just reached his fifty off 26 balls, attempted a cheeky scoop shot but only managed to lob a simple catch to Arshdeep Singh at short fine-leg. Brook departed for 51, leaving England at 133/5 in 15 overs.

Arshdeep claimed the last wicket of Saqib Mahmood as India defeated England by 15 runs to seal the five-match series 3-1, making the last T20I scheduled at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai inconsequential.

BRIEF SCORES

India 181/9 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 53, Shivam Dube 53; Saqib Mahmood 3-35, Jamie Overton 2-32) beat **England 166** all out in 19.4 overs (Harry Brook 51, Ben Duckett 39; Ravi Bishnoi 3-28, Harshit Rana 3-33) by 15 runs



Kohli's 1st Ranji innings in 13 years lasts 15 balls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 31: Virat Kohli's first Ranji Trophy innings in 13 years lasted all of 15 balls, extending his lean run and fuelling the raging debate over his form.

For the 5000-odd crowd that assembled here to watch Kohli (6 off 15 balls), it was fun while it lasted but when he had his off-stump uprooted by Railways pacer Himanshu Sangwan in the 28th over of Delhi's first innings, a majority of them took no time to exit the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

The frequent chants of 'RCB, RCB' and 'Kohli, Kohli' dried up as the superstar took the long walk back to the dressing room, giving Railway employee



Sangwan the most prized scalp of his career. Ahead of his first domestic red-ball appearance since November 2012, Kohli had trained with former India coach Sanjay Bangar to iron out flaws in his batting that crept up on the tour of Australia.

More specifically, it was the

ball outside the off-stump that haunted the former India captain on the two-month long tour Down Under. Kohli came out to bat to a loud reception following the leg before dismissal of Yash Dhull at about 10.30am local time, which was an hour into day's play.

Odisha eves bag hat-trick of Rugby 7s gold medals



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Jan 31: Haryana men crushed Maharashtra, while Odisha women defeated Bihar in Rugby Sevens to complete a hat-trick of gold medals at the National Games here Friday.

Haryana defeated Maharashtra 22-7 in men's summit clash, while Odisha thrashed Bihar 29-5 in the women's final to cover themselves in glory.

Maharashtra men tried gamely to challenge Haryana, the most dominant team on the national circuit, levelling the scores at 7-7. But Haryana stepped up the pressure to beat

Maharashtra for the third successive time in the National Games final.

Odisha women posted their most authoritative win in the final, surpassing the 22-0 victory over Maharashtra in 2022 in Ahmedabad.

Bihar, who had kept Odisha down to 12-7 in the final in Goa, were unable to make an impression on the most formidable women's team in the country until rather late in the match.

Odisha, reeling from the defeat by Maharashtra in the semifinals, were slow off the blocks in the men's bronze-medal playoff against West Bengal.

It was not until they had conceded two tries that Odisha found their rhythm. From 0-10, they stepped on the pedal to open up a 26-10 lead, giving West Bengal no chance of breaching their defence.

In the women's bronze-medal playoff, Delhi trailed Maharashtra for the longest time after conceding a try in the opening minute. They managed to swing the pendulum the other way with great effort late in the first half and early in the second. Maharashtra broke Delhi's resolve in the final three minutes to walk away with the medal following a 17-10 victory.

Thapa gets Lifetime Achievement Award

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 31: Legendary footballer and coach Shyam Thapa was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Federation of Football Coaches in India (FFCI) here Friday at the Press Club. Thapa who has been a coach for over three decades was presented with the award by IFA Chairperson Subrata Dutta. Speaking on the occasion, Thapa harped on the need for infrastructure for the coaches. "Coaches need proper facilities to succeed which is not available in India," Thapa said.

FFCI organized the programme to honour the 'Unsung Gurus' coaches who have been working tirelessly for the development of the game without any gains. A total of 23 awards were presented to coaches from all over India.

Speaking on the occasion Dutta said that the need of the hour is 'educator' for coaches. "We need proper training programmes to educate the coaches," he said.



SHORT TAKES SHUTTLERS BOW OUT

Patumwan: Ace Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth and Sankar Subramanian's campaign at the Thailand Masters, a BWF Super 300 badminton tournament, came to an end with their respective quarterfinal losses Friday. While Srikanth was defeated 17-21, 16-21 by sixth seed Wang Zheng King of China, former world junior No 1 Subramanian lost 21-19, 18-21, 13-21 against another Chinese Zhu Xuan Chen in a match that lasted one hour and 10 minutes. Later, the eighth-seed Indian men's doubles pair of Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy and K Sai Pratheek suffered a straight game 19-21, 18-21 loss to the second-seed Indonesian duo of Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Daniel Marthin.

INDIA ENTER FINALS

Kuala Lumpur: G Kamalini's well-paced fifty complemented the excellent work of spinners as defending champions India subdued England by nine wickets to enter the final of the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup here Friday. India will face South Africa in the title match Sunday. The Proteas qualified for their first-ever ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup final following an impressive five-wicket win over Australia in the first semifinal earlier in the day. Left-arm spinners Parunika Sisodia (3/21) and Vaishnavi Sharma (3/23) shackled England with fine spell to limit them to 113 for eight.

88-member contingent for Asian Winter Games

NEW DELHI: The sports ministry has approved the participation of a strong 88-member Indian contingent for the 9th Asian Winter Games to be held in the Chinese city of Harbin from February 7-14, ending weeks of uncertainty over the size of the group. The contingent will have 59 athletes and 29 team officials in disciplines such as alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, figure skating, short track speed skating, and speed skating (long track) and will receive full funding from the government under the Assistance to National Sports Federations (ANSF) Scheme to athletes. However, the participation of the 23-member men's ice-hockey contingent and seven support staff associated with the discipline has been cleared on a no-cost-to-government basis.

Neymar aims to recharge career

THE STRIKER RETURNS TO HIS DEBUT CLUB AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE

AGENCIES

Sao Paulo, Jan 31: Neymar has confirmed he will sign what is expected to be a short-term contract with his boyhood club, Santos, as the Brazil striker aims to recharge his career ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

The 32-year-old Neymar said Thursday that he's returning to the Sao Paulo club, and local media reported that the deal will extend only to June 30.

"Only Santos can give me the love that I need to prepare for the challenges I have in the next few years. All of you, no

matter who you support, know well what I am talking about," Neymar said on his social media channels.

Santos used its social media channels to respond Neymar's video: "Your home awaits. Your people awaits."

Neymar left Santos nearly 12 years ago to join Barcelona.

The striker's return follows the termination of his contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal. Neymar had returned in October from an ACL injury sustained while playing for Brazil only months after he joined Al-Hilal. He played only seven

matches and scored once for the Saudi team.

Neymar also left Paris Saint-Germain under criticism from fans, who accused him of not caring enough about his fitness. In 2017, his exit at Barcelona was also frustrating for club supporters, who hoped he could help Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez win more trophies.

A Santos official told The Associated Press that Neymar is expected to arrive at Sao Paulo's international airport at 9 am Friday. He will then board a helicopter to go to the club's Vila Belmiro Stadium. After he signs his contract, he will be reintroduced to fans during the evening. The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to

lack of authorisation to discuss the matter publicly.

Neymar has already played 225 matches with Santos. He scored 138 goals for the club, many of which key for the six titles he won at the Brazilian giant, which was relegated in 2023 and returned to the country's top division last year. Neymar became the most expensive player in soccer history when he transferred from Barcelona to PSG for 222 million euros (then USD 262 million) in 2017. Neymar's most recent match was played in November. Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus had repeatedly cast doubts about the striker's form to play.

Neymar left the Saudi Arabian league after playing just

seven games in 17 months following his big-money move to the oil-rich kingdom. The Brazilian's contract was due to expire after this year's FIFA Club World Cup, which will be played between June 15 and July 13 in the United States.

The striker joined the Saudi club from PSG in August 2023 for 90 million euros (USD 94 million). His salary was reportedly one of the biggest in world soccer as well.

Neymar, Brazil's all-time top goalscorer with 79 goals in 125 matches, also said he is focused on getting more playing time so he can prepare for the World Cup in North America next year in what could be his last shot at winning the tournament.



I hope you all follow me in this new phase of my life
NEYMAR JR | BRAZILIAN STRIKER