



Dating rumours

Samantha Ruth Prabhu's latest Instagram post sparks dating rumours with *Citadel: Honey Bunny* director Raj Nidimoru

LEISURE | P2



Bodies pile up

Congo says 773 dead in Goma and its vicinity in the week-long fighting as military tries to repel Rwanda-backed rebels

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Crypto review

India is reviewing its stance on cryptocurrencies due to shifting attitudes towards the virtual asset in other countries

BUSINESS | P11



Odisha stunned

Services achieve the second highest successful run-chase in Ranji Trophy history as they overhaul a 376-run target against Odisha

SPORTS | P12

EAGLE: Cong sets up panel to monitor EC's conduct of fair polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: The Congress Sunday set up an eight-member committee -- Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) -- to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India.

The committee will first take up the Maharashtra voters' list manipulation issue, and submit a detailed report to the leadership at the earliest, the party said in a statement.

The panel includes Congress treasurer Ajay Maken and senior leaders Digvijaya Singh, Abhishek Singhvi, Praveen Chakravarty and Pawan Khera.

Besides, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Nitin Raut and Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy are also part of the panel.

"Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has constituted an Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) with immediate effect to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India," the statement said.

Besides Maharashtra, 'EAGLE' will also analyse past elections in other states, and proactively monitor upcoming elections and all other issues related to the conduct of free and fair elections in the country.

Significantly, the setting up of the panel comes just days before the Delhi Assembly polls.

Maintaining that something wrong has taken place in Maharashtra assembly elections, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had said the Congress and the opposition have been asking for voter lists of Maharashtra and Haryana elections, which the EC is refusing to provide.

He had demanded that the EC come clean on the issue.



YEAR OF THE SNAKE: A dragon dance is performed during the parade to celebrate the lunar new year at China Town, in London, Sunday

AP PHOTO

Tusker tramples elderly Kalahandi couple to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Lanjigarh, Feb 2: An elderly couple was trampled to death by a tusker at Kadamali village in Lakhahabali panchayat under this block and South forest division in Kalahandi district, late Saturday night. The deceased were identified as Muguna Majhi, 70, and his wife Gada Majhi, 65, in the village.

The couple, native of Dorasarli village, was staying in Kadamali village for the last few years. They were staying in a hut near their farmland in the village. While they were asleep in their hut, the tusker pulled down the house and trampled them to death. Their mutilated bodies were found in the house.

Muguna's son, younger brother and another relative, who were sleeping in an adjoining room, escaped death by a whisker as they managed to run away from the spot. On being informed, Forest officials led by ACF Narottam Majhi and Bijepur police IIC Nilambar Jani reached the spot and launched an investigation. ACF Majhi gave away an ex-gratia of ₹15,000 and assured to pay the rest of the compensation amount after completion of necessary formalities.

Trump's tariff sets off trade war

Ruffling feathers across the world for the past couple of months, US President Donald Trump's tariff threats got real Saturday as he declared a national emergency to impose a punishing 25 per cent tariff on imports from its long-time allies Canada and Mexico, apart from 10 per cent duty on Chinese goods. The widely expected move gave way to a trade war with America's immediate neighbours Canada and Mexico retaliating with tit-for-tat tariffs. China too has vowed strong counter-measures. With Trump saying that even the EU is in his crosshairs, a tariff war among the western world's major economies is set to add fresh headwinds to global growth. Buckling under pressure of frequent tariff threats, India in its annual Budget Saturday cut import duty on American bikes and cars, in an apparent move to pacify Trump. However, it remains to be seen how long the Indian government manages to dodge the tariffs.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 2: President Donald Trump Saturday signed an order to impose stiff tariffs

on imports from Mexico, Canada and China, drawing swift retaliation and an undeniable sense of betrayal from the country's North American neighbours as a trade war erupted among the longtime allies.

The Republican president posted on social media that the tariffs were necessary "to protect Americans", pressing the three nations to do more to curb the manufacture and export of illicit fentanyl and for Canada and Mexico to reduce illegal immigration into the US.

The tariffs, if sustained, could cause inflation to significantly worsen, threatening the trust that many voters placed in Trump to lower the prices of groceries, gasoline, housing, autos and other goods as he promised. They also risked throwing the global economy and Trump's political mandate into turmoil just two weeks into his second term.

Trump declared an economic emergency in order to place duties of 10 per cent on all imports from China and 25 per cent on imports from Mexico and Canada. Energy imported from Canada, including oil, natural gas



and electricity, would be taxed at a 10 per cent rate. Trump's order includes a mechanism to escalate the rates charged by the US against retaliation by the other countries, raising the specter of an even more severe economic disruption.

"The actions taken today by the White House split us apart instead of bringing us together," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a somber tone as he announced that his country would put matching 25 per cent tariffs on up to \$155 billion in US imports, including alcohol and fruit.

He channelled the betrayal that many Canadians are feeling, reminding Americans that

Canadian troops fought alongside them in Afghanistan and helped respond to myriad crises from wildfires in California to Hurricane Katrina. "We were always there standing with you, grieving with you, the American people," he said.

Mexico's president also ordered retaliatory tariffs. China also vowed strong counter-measures. "We categorically reject the White House's slander that the Mexican government has alliances with criminal organisations, as well as any intention of meddling in our territory," Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum wrote in a post on X while saying she had instructed her economy secretary to implement a response that includes retaliatory tariffs and other measures in defense of Mexico's interests.

The tariffs will go into effect Tuesday, setting up a showdown in North America that could potentially sabotage economic growth. Economic growth would slow and inflation would worsen - and the situation could be even worse with retaliation from other countries.

Odisha skips spring as summer arrives early

6 places record 35 degree Celsius from the beginning of February

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: Odisha is experiencing an early arrival of summer this year, with several districts recording temperatures well above the 35 degree Celsius mark just as February begins. According to the regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), as many as six locations across the state recorded temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius Sunday signaling the departure of winter and the onset of the dry season.

The state recorded the highest temperature of 36.67°C at Bolangir Sunday, followed by Titilagarh at 36°C. Other places which crossed the 35°C temperature threshold are Parakhemundi (35.8°C), Jharsuguda (35.6°C), Sambalpur (35.1°C), and Bhanwanipatna (35°C). Capital city Bhubaneswar recorded

a maximum of 34.9°C, a clear indicator of the rising mercury levels in the region.

The IMD has predicted that such temperatures are likely to persist for the coming days, with no significant change expected in the weather conditions. As Odisha faces an early start to summer, residents are urged to take necessary precautions to cope with the heat.

Alongside the heat, the IMD has also issued a yellow warning for dense fog in at least 10 districts, including Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Nayagarh, Angul, and Dhenkanal. The fog is expected to impact visibility during the early mornings for the next two days posing potential disruptions.

Experts are also predicting that heatwaves could become a significant concern as the season progresses, with the risk of temperatures crossing 40°C soon in several parts of the state. With the departure of winter, residents will have to prepare for what could be a particularly harsh summer ahead.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The UP CM wants everyone involved in the Budget stats exercise to count the Mahakumbh tragedy toll

U-19 WOMEN'S T20 WC India retain title with emphatic winning run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Feb 2: An utterly dominant India flaunted their embarrassment of riches to win a second successive U-19 Women's T20 World Cup title with a nine-wicket shellacking of South Africa here Sunday, the triumph giving a peek into the game's most perfectly calibrated youth structure.

Having outclassed every team during their march to the final, India asserted themselves yet again, getting the job done with as many as 52 balls to spare while also becoming the first team to win the tournament without dropping a single game.

The biggest star of the day

was all-rounder Gongadi Trisha, who complemented her excellent 3-15 with an unbeaten 33-ball 44 while batting.

South Africa, led by Kayla Reyneke, opted to bowl first, but their decision backfired quickly as India's three-pronged spin attack bowled them out for 82.

Left-arm spinner Aayushi Shukla was the star of the show with figures of 4-2-9-2, while leg-spinner Trisha, who has also been a revelation with the bat, further underlined her all-round capabilities with her triple strikes with the ball.

Trisha once again anchored India's chase with an unbeaten knock that was studded with eight fours. P12

Woman forces hubby to sell kidney, elopes with money and paramour

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Feb 2: A woman allegedly coaxed her husband to sell his kidney for ₹10 lakh to raise money for their daughter's education, only to flee with another man taking away the entire cash in West Bengal's Howrah district. Police Sunday launched a probe based on a complaint lodged by the husband's family living in Sankrail.

The woman had been pestering her husband for the past one year to sell his kidney and earn some money to run their household in a better way and admit their 12-year-old daughter to a good school, according to the complaint.

Believing in his wife, the man agreed to go under the

scalpel after she sealed a contract with a buyer for ₹10 lakh to sell the organ. After the surgery was held last month, the man brought home the money. His wife asked him to take rest and not step outside for a speedy recovery.

"Then one day she left the house and did not return. I later found the entire amount of ₹10 lakh in cash along with some more missing from the almirah," the man said.

The family could finally track her to a house in Kolkata's northern suburbs Barrackpore, far away from Howrah, with the help of their friends and acquaintances.

In that house, she was residing with the man she had allegedly eloped with. She had allegedly been in an affair with him for the past one year after meeting him on Facebook, according to the complaint.

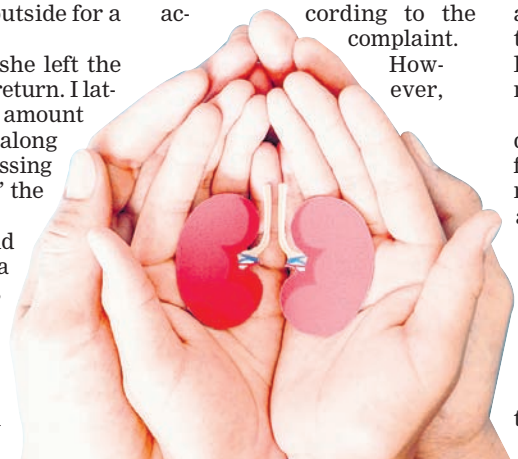
However,

when her husband, mother-in-law and daughter went to the Barrackpore house of the man, she refused to come out. Her lover allegedly told them that she would file a divorce suit alleging physical and mental torture by the woman's in-laws in the 16 years of their marital life.

Talking to reporters, the man denied she had taken any cash from the in-laws' home at Sankrail and claimed she only took away the money she had saved.

The officer said that based on the complaint and scanning the video footage of the lover's interaction with the husband's family, police launched a probe into the complaint.

Police said they would question the woman and her lover before initiating any action.



Setback for ISRO's navigation satellite

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: ISRO's attempts to place the NVS-02 satellite in the desired orbit suffered a setback after the thrusters on board the spacecraft failed to fire, the space agency said Sunday.

The NVS-02 satellite, which was crucial for India's own space-based navigation system, was launched January 29 on board the GSLV-Mk 2 rocket which was ISRO's 100th launch from the spaceport at Sriharikota.

But the orbit raising operations towards positioning the satellite to the designated orbital slot could not be carried out as the valves for admitting the oxidiser to fire the thrusters for orbit raising did not open, the space agency said in an update to the GSLV-F15 mission on its website.

leisure



BALDONI LAUNCHES WEBSITE TO ADDRESS BLAKE'S CLAIMS

Director Justin Baldoni has launched a website to counter Blake Lively's claims, featuring two key documents: an 'Amended Complaint' and a 'Timeline of Relevant Events.' Baldoni's legal team had earlier announced that the site would include all correspondence and videos to disprove Lively's accusations.

CHRIS, DAKOTA TAKE HOLY DIP AT MAHA KUMBH

Singer Chris Martin from the British band Coldplay visited Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj during his visit to India last month. Now, a video of him is doing the rounds in which he, along with his partner, actor Dakota Johnson, are seen taking a holy dip at the Sangam.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
 Curl, massage, clip, tweeze, polish, gloss, condition... today, will you attempt to shed your old skin. A dream date may have you in jitters but Ganesh suggests that you take it easy. True relationships are not sealed by glossy kisses alone!

TAURUS
 This all matters are likely to revolve around the opposite sex. Women are going to feature prominently and significantly in everything that you do. So says Ganesh. That is good. But you will be inclined to be lazy and laid back and may thus reduce the effect and impact of efforts. Keep your sluggishness away and you will find that everything that you have been striving for is falling in your lap.

GEMINI
 You need to pay more attention to yourself today. Your kind and generous nature means you often think about others rather than about yourself. Now is the time to pay attention to your own needs. You need to spend more time with your family and friends as well, says Ganesh.

CANCER
 You will secure your place with hard work in your job or business. Ties with partners will improve. Closeness with spouse is indicated. Melody and joy will mark domestic bliss. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Ganesh's blessings are with you.

LEO
 The pressure at work will be high. Some person may try to tempt you with lucrative offers to go against your principles. However, you will be able to resist the lure of easy money. Your health may suffer today, so be on guard, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
 You will stay calm and steady today, and there is hardly anything that can disturb your peace of mind. Your family and friends will back you fully and motivate you to overcome hurdles. You will work with devotion, says Ganesh. You may ask for work that others may find very difficult to do.

LIBRA
 Ganesh says people will try to take advantage of your amiable nature and disposition. Small issues will crop up today making your nature a little tensed and enhance your anger too. You will be inspired to take chances in monetary matters. Ganesh says you need to keep your mind steady and regain your lost charm soon.

SCORPIO
 Your imagination runs wild today. Though you do not travel geographically, your mind travels beyond boundaries. Think and act according to your will, advises Ganesh. However, practice caution before taking any major step.

SAGITTARIUS
 Your will be loaded with responsibilities at work today, fore sees Ganesh. But, you are pro challenges and will take it up sportingly. On personal front, the list of your friends is likely to get longer. All in all, Ganesh sees you in an active avatar today.

CAPRICORN
 Don't let your emotions play a spoilsport while deciding about the future. Think practically, otherwise, your expectations and reality will not be on the same boat, guides Ganesh. Friendly and supportive, today you will spread happiness and win the love of one and all. Whenever you get confused about which path to take, take advice from the experienced people around you.

AQUARIUS
 Set any target, take up any activity or accept any challenge: you will succeed in any of them with flying colours, foresees Ganesh. Your well-wishers will shower praises upon you for those hard earned achievements. Friends are like family to you, take them out and have a gala time before another busy day begins.

PISCES
 You will be busy with romance throughout the day. While singles are likely to find the person of their dreams, those who are married will establish a new closeness in their relationship. Your attitude towards work will begin to change. You will become more serious about your career, and the fruits of this transformation will be reaped by you shortly in the near future, says Ganesh.



Samantha sparks dating rumours

Mumbai: Samantha Ruth Prabhu's love life is once again in the spotlight, the *Yashoda* actress is rumoured to be dating *Citadel: Honey Bunny* director Raj Nidimoru, and her latest Instagram post has only intensified the speculation. Sharing glimpses from a recent pickleball tournament, where Raj was also present, Samantha sparked online chatter, especially with one particular photo where she was seen holding his hand.

Saturday, the *Kushi* star took to Instagram to share a series of pictures from the World Pickleball League, where she supported her team, Chennai Super Champs. Among the snaps, a few featuring Raj caught fans' attention. In one, he was seen watching her as she hyped up her team, while another showed them walking side by side. However, the most talked-about image was a group shot where Samantha casually held Raj's hand, leaving fans wondering if this was her way of subtly confirming the dating rumours.

Reddit's BollyBlindsNGossip quickly picked up on the moment, with a post reading, "I guess Sam is kinda making it official. Good for her, as long as everyone is happy!"

Though speculation about their relationship has been circulating for some time, neither Samantha nor Raj has addressed the rumours yet.



Mrunal's nostalgic dive

Mumbai: Actress Mrunal Thakur, who is known for *Sita Ramam*, *The Ghost Stories* and others, is getting nostalgic.

Recently the actress took to the Stories section of her Instagram, and shared a video showing her school in Delhi.

She wrote on the video, "Nostalgic. That's our school @manddathakur. I miss playing football on this ground! Miss those days".

Earlier, it was reported that Mrunal will be seen sharing the screen with Adivi Sesh in the upcoming movie *Dacoit*. The film is an action drama, and marks the directorial debut of Shaneil Deo.

It follows the story of an angry convict plotting revenge against his former girlfriend who betrayed him.

The project, produced by Supriya Yarlagadda and co-produced by Suniel Narang, is being shot simultaneously in the Hindi and Telugu languages. The director collaborated with Adivi Sesh on the story and screenplay. Production is currently underway in Hyderabad, with plans for an extensive shooting schedule in Maharashtra.



Mumbai: Hina Khan

has always been extremely vocal about her relationship with boyfriend Rocky Jaiswal. Recently, the actress used social media to shower praises on the 'wonderful person'. She recently shared a post on her Instagram stories that read, "Name a wonderful person you know who was born in February month."

Replying to his, Hina mentioned below, "The best Human @rockyj1 Your Birthday month has officially begun Saint Valentine."

Rocky will turn 38 on the 14th of February 2025. Prior to this, Hina penned a special post, calling Rocky, 'the best human in her life.'

The *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* actress took to her official Instagram and shared a couple of unseen pictures of the couple's journey together over the years.

The diva further penned a long appreciation note for her beau on the photo-sharing app. She wrote, "For the Best Human I know! He shaved his head when I shaved and he only let them grow when mine started growing back. To the man who looks after my soul, To the man who always says I GOT YOU."

SALMAN'S LIFE ADVICE

Mumbai: Last year, Arhaan Khan launched a podcast which created some buzz, especially after teasing an interview with his uncle, Salman Khan. Following a brief hiatus, Arhaan has now released a new teaser featuring Salman offering life advice to the younger generation of the Khan family.

The teaser blends old interview clips of Salman with fresh family footage. It opens with a throwback moment where an interviewer tells Salman that his on-screen persona is public business. Salman agrees, explaining that while his image is carefully crafted, he is just a regular person at heart.

The video then shifts to present-day clips of Salman speaking with Arhaan, stressing the importance of being there for friends and family, as relationships require consistent effort. He also shares insight into his own self-discipline, admitting that he speaks to himself harshly and joking that if he treated others the same way, they wouldn't appreciate it.

Salman also dis-cusses forgiveness, saying you can forgive a couple of times, but after that, it's over. In a playful moment, he jokes with Arhaan and them 'dumb and dumber,' saying that they're 'rest' for doing together. The classic motif-your body mind should when both

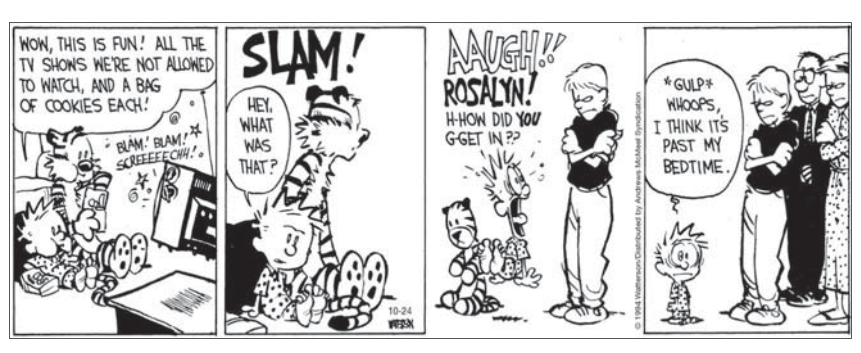


AGENCIES

PEANUTS



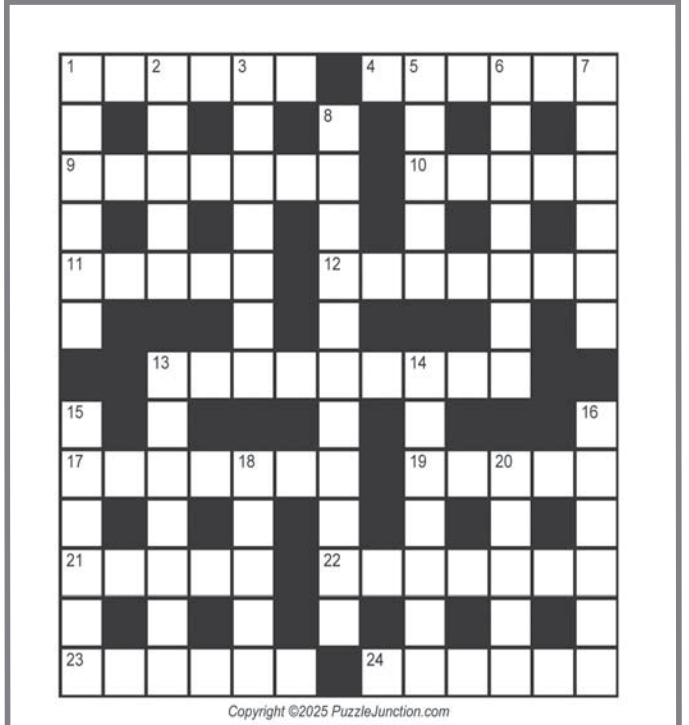
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



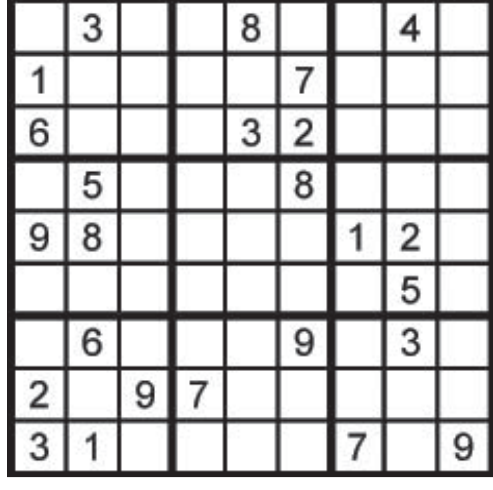
FUN post CROSSWORD



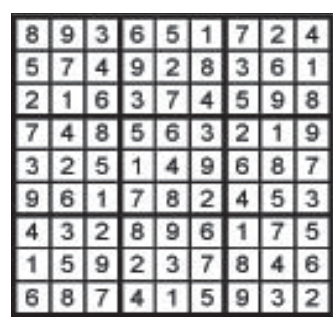
- Across**
- 1 Building material
 - 4 Rigid bracelet
 - 9 Import barrier
 - 10 Goddess of the hunt
 - 11 Its capital is Innsbruck
 - 12 Couplet
 - 13 Mansion employee
 - 17 Wildly excited
 - 19 Inundated
 - 21 Hard wood
 - 22 Hero's welcome
 - 23 Animation pioneer
 - 24 Risky
 - 7 Crown covering
 - 8 Speak in a dogmatic and pompous manner
 - 13 Soft leather
 - 14 Jubilation
 - 15 Insult
 - 16 Greek moon goddess
 - 18 Culinary herb
 - 20 Oranjestad's island
- Down**
- 1 Slender
 - 2 Crayola color
 - 3 Whorl of petals
 - 5 Part of a TV feed
 - 6 Alluring beauty

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

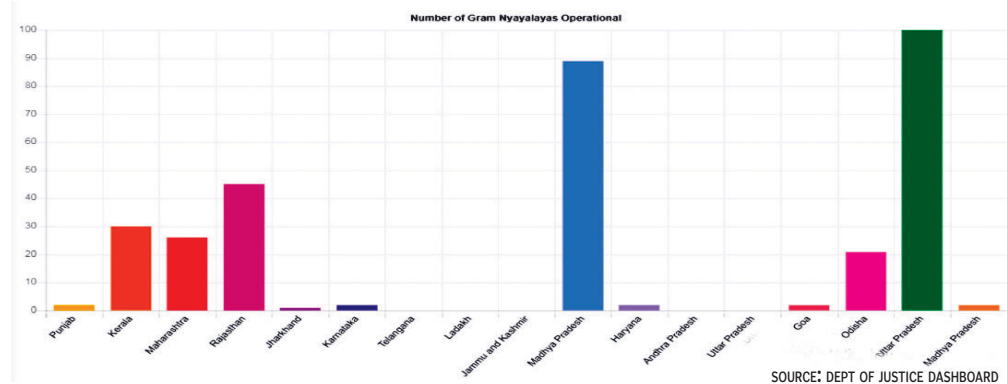


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

UNION BUDGET 2025-26

Fund cut for village courts



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Gram nyayalayas or village courts, conceived as a tool to deliver affordable justice at doorsteps, have seen a sharp decrease in fund allocation this year. According to the Budget document, Gram Nyayalaya Scheme of the Union Law Ministry has been allocated ₹2 crore in the coming 2025-26 fiscal. As per the revised estimates for 2024-25, the scheme was allocated ₹10 crore. The village courts are finding it difficult to live up to their purpose due to manpower shortage and financial crunch. So far, 481 gram nyayalayas have been notified by 15 states, of which 309 have been made operational in 10 states, the Law Ministry had told Parliament in the Monsoon session last year. In 1986, the law commission had suggested setting up village courts to provide affordable and quick access to justice to citizens at their doorsteps. After years, the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008 came into effect from Gandhi Jayanti in 2009.

The law provides for the establishment of gram nyayalayas at the grassroots level to provide access to justice to the citizens at their doorsteps and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to anyone due to social, economic or other disabilities. Citing "certain studies", the Law Ministry had said in Parliament that the main reasons for slow progress in setting up of these village courts include non-filling of the post of 'nyayadhikaris' in many states, non-availability of public prosecutors, notaries and general shortage of first-class judicial magistrates. Limited pecuniary jurisdiction of gram nyayalayas, insufficient staff, inadequate financial backing from states, reluctance from legal and state authorities and lack of community awareness were the other reasons cited for the present state of affairs of village courts, the government said. Besides, the issue of overlapping jurisdiction with regular courts is another reason for the "slow take off" of such courts in

some states, it had noted. As per guidelines, the Centre provides ₹18 lakh per gram nyayalaya to meet non-recurring expenditure as a one-time measure and bears 50 per cent of the recurring expenses of these courts, subject to a ceiling of ₹3.2 lakh per courts per annum during the first three years. In December last year, the Supreme Court had said that there cannot be a "straitjacket formula" for the entire country over establishment of gram nyayalayas as the situation would depend from state to state. A bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan made these observations while hearing a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and all states for taking steps to set up gram nyayalayas under the supervision of the apex court. **Gram nyayalayas in Odisha** According to the dashboard of the Department of Justice, Odisha has 21 operational and 31 notified gram nyayalayas. The state has received ₹5.24 crore from the Centre since the inception of the scheme in 2009.

AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING

Servitors perform 'Ratha Katha Anukula' ritual by sprinkling sacred water on the logs that will be used in construction of the three chariots of the Holy Trinity at Puri Sunday



CM unveils reprinted 'Barnabodha'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday released the reprinted original edition of Odia primer 'Barnabodha' written by 'Bhaktakabi' Madhusudan Rao.

Odia Bhasa Pratisthana, an autonomous institution functioning under the Odia Language Literature and Culture (OLLC) department of the state government, has republished the 'Barnabodha', adding colours only, an official said.

Speaking at a function organised on the occasion of Rao's birth anniversary, the Chief Minister said republishing the book is the greatest tribute to Rao.

He said that the state government has decided to print 10,000 copies of the book this year for distribution.

Rao had published the book in 1895 when the Odia community and the language were struggling for survival and identity.

In the primer, Rao has wonderfully demonstrated how to teach letters, characters, consonants, words, word formation and sentence formation to tod-



dlers in a simple manner, Majhi said. He said the book has become a part of every Odia family. 'Barnabodha' became so popular that eight editions of the book were published between 1895 and 1901.

The book is necessary to learn pure Odia. Even after 130 years, there is no alternative to the book, he said.

"Today, the concept of joyful teaching and learning is being implemented in our modern primary education system. It aims to make teaching easy and understandable for children through pictures, toys and examples," the Chief Minister said.

In fact, Madhusudan Rao was the father of such education as

he made teaching understandable through simple language and small verses, he added.

The CM, along with Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, Ekamra MLA Babu Singh and two senior officials, also released the digital edition of 'Barnabodha' and three other books. Majhi also felicitated the family members of Rao.

OLLC department joint secretary Deba Prasad Dash said that Odia Bhasa Pratisthana had published a new edition of the book a few years ago.

However, Rao's family members and some other individuals had objected to the changes made in the book, and they had moved the Orissa High Court,

he said. While hearing the petition, the HC had put a stay on the distribution and publication of the new edition of 'Odia Barnabodha', Dash said.

"Even today, a book titled 'Chabila Madhu Barnabodha' is being sold in the market. A lot of changes have been made in the book. So, we have republished the 1901 edition of 'Barnabodha' without changing anything. We have just added colour," the joint secretary added.

"The 1901 edition can be considered as the original edition as this was the last edition published by Rao, who died in 1912. The previous seven editions from 1895 are not available," he added.

Subhadra money for new applicants Feb 8

Bhubaneswar: Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida Sunday said the first instalment of 'Subhadra Yojana', the women welfare scheme of the BJP government, will be distributed to eligible new applicants February 8 in Jajpur. The state government had earlier postponed the release of the instalment scheduled December 25. Speaking to mediapersons, Parida said that applications of about 2.50 lakh eligible women are pending for biometric and NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) failure. She advised those women to visit their bank branch February 3 or 4, to resolve the issue and make their bank account direct benefit transfer (DBT) enabled. Parida said that another 1.15 lakh applications are pending for e-KYC verification. If the applications pending at banks are cleared, the total number of beneficiaries will cross 1 crore, she said. Subhadra Yojana, an ambitious women welfare scheme of the BJP government, was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday, September 17, 2023.

**Shaadi, Utsav ya Tyohar...
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UNION BUDGET 2025-2026

INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT

EMPOWERING THE MIDDLE CLASS EMPOWERING INDIA

MAJOR INCOME TAX RELIEF FOR MIDDLE CLASS

- No income tax for persons having income upto ₹ 12 lakh
- No Income Tax upto ₹ 12.75 lakh per annum for Salaried Class (including Standard Deduction of ₹ 75,000)
- The taxpayers can now claim NIL annual value for two self-occupied properties without any conditions
- The annual limit of ₹ 2.4 lakh for TDS on rent to be increased to ₹ 6 lakh

NEW SLABS AND TAX RATES

Total income	Rate of tax
Upto ₹ 4 Lakh	Nil
From ₹ 4 Lakh to ₹ 8 Lakh	5%
From ₹ 8 Lakh to ₹ 12 Lakh	10%
From ₹ 12 Lakh to ₹ 16 Lakh	15%
From ₹ 16 Lakh to ₹ 20 Lakh	20%
From ₹ 20 Lakh to ₹ 24 Lakh	25%
Above ₹ 24 Lakh	30%

Income Tax Department
Central Board of Direct Taxes

For Website

For FAQs

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CBC 15401/13/0014/2425

SC conference addresses state judiciary challenges



The conference aimed to engage with stakeholders in the state judiciary, particularly district courts, to understand their challenges. The goal was to develop a plan to address these issues effectively

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Identification of bottlenecks in case disposal and strategies to reduce backlog of cases at different levels came up for discussion at a national conference organised by the Supreme Court here on issues faced by the state judiciary.

The conference held Saturday witnessed participation of judges of the top court, the high courts as well as the district judiciary.

“The idea behind this conference was to engage in a meaningful dialogue with different stakeholders and functionaries in the state judiciary, especially the district courts, to first understand the challenges being faced by them and thereafter, chalk out a plan to address the same,” the apex court ad-

ministration said in a release.

The conference had four technical sessions which covered diverse topics affecting the performance of state judiciary. The technical sessions were chaired by the judges of the apex court, including Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna.

It said the first session witnessed discussions on ways to narrow the gulf between institution and disposal of cases, identification of case types flooding judicial dockets, identification of bottlenecks in case disposal and strategies to reduce backlog of cases at different levels.

It said in one of the sessions, the feasibility of having a uniform case categorisation in different courts was explored.

“In this session, ways to leverage technology and better to optimise the judicial pro-

cesses were also deliberated upon,” the release said.

It said discussions were also held on timely recruitment of judicial officers and court staffs, continual recruitment or empanelment of public prosecutors or legal aid counsels, creation of a permanent IT and data cadre in all high courts and district courts and measures to enhance objectivity in the process of recommending suitable candidates from district judiciary for elevation to the high courts.

Discussions on career progression and continuous performance evaluation of judicial officers, need for establishing a common curriculum for training and capacity building of judicial officers and ways of ensuring accountability of judicial officers and court staff were also held during the sessions.



IN SYNC: Artistes perform 'Chhau' on the concluding day of Mayurbhanj Utsav at Utkal Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

NGT notice on alien fish for mosquito control

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought a response from the Centre on two highly-invasive and alien fish species being used as biological agents for controlling mosquitoes in 11 states including Odisha. It cited National Biodiversity Authority's (NBA) finding that these species adversely impact local aquatic ecosystems by causing food scarcity for the indigenous fish species.

The tribunal was hearing a plea about two fish species – Gambusia Affinis (Mosquitofish) and Poecilia Reticulata (Guppy) – being released in water bodies to control mosquitoes in various states.

The states which stored and released Mosquitofish were Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, while Guppy species had been released in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab

and Odisha, the plea said.

It said the NBA has declared these two fish species as “invasive and alien” as they adversely impacted the local aquatic ecosystems by causing food scarcity for the indigenous fish species.

It also referred to the ban imposed on Mosquitofish by countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

The plea referred to a report by the Invasive Species Specialist Group, as per which Mosquitofish was among the 100 world's “worst invasive alien species”.

“Issue notice to the respondents for filing their response/reply,” a bench comprising NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel said in an order dated January 24.

The respondents in the matter include the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the National Biodiversity Authority, and the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control.

The matter has been posted for further proceedings May 6.

Inter-state youth exchange programme held at IHM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) Khurda in association with Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports organised the Inter-State Youth Exchange Programme (ISYEP) at Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), under Ministry of Tourism here Sunday.

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) eastern region regional director Shivaji Muralidhar Kharat graced the event as the chief guest. Head of the department at IHM Sabit Suman and national youth awardee Avinash Das graced the event as guests in the inaugural ceremony.

The main objective of the programme is to sensitise youth with the rich cultural heritage of the country, to enable them to appreciate the ‘Unity in Diversity’, expose them to development activities and industrial advancement, help emotional linkages with their peer groups and enhance their self-esteem. This will be great opportunity for them to learn new things and explore new ideas and lifestyle, Kharat said.

During the programme, NYKS Odisha and NYK Khurda will host 27 youth from Prakasham, Chittor, Kakina-da, Guntur and Vijayawada districts of Andhra Pradesh for five days. During their visit, they will explore the culture, tradition and other aspect of the state and will get to know about various development schemes launched by the state government. The delegation will also explore historic sites and explore the local areas.

Saraswati Puja celebrated with gusto and devotion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: Saraswati Puja was celebrated at various educational institutions, offices and homes across the state Sunday.

Governor Hari Babu Kam-bhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi greeted the people of the state on the occasion of Basant Panchami and Saraswati Puja.

“May Goddess Saraswati fill everyone's lives with knowledge, happiness, peace and prosperity,” the Governor prayed.

Taking to X, the Chief Minister wrote, “May the lives of students be illuminated with the light of knowledge with the blessings of Maa Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge. May everyone's life be filled with happiness, peace and prosperity.”

The day also marks the beginning of the chariot-making process for the Rath Yatra in Puri.

The ‘Ratha Katha Anukula’ ceremony for the commencement of the construction of the three chariots- ‘Nandighosha’, ‘Taladhawaja’, and ‘Darpadana’ for the annual Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath and his siblings will be performed this afternoon on the occasion of Shree Panchami.



Saraswati Puja at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Students wearing colourful attires offered prayers to the goddess at schools, colleges, universities and offices and community pujas.

“Now I am studying in Class X. This is my last Saraswati Puja in school. So, I became a little emotional. I pray before Goddess Saraswati for better results in the board examination and better future,” said Lipsa Mohanty, a student of SSVU School.

The day was also celebrated in different communities and housing societies holding puja of the Goddess and preparing pure vegetarian dishes.

“We have worshipped Maa Saraswati and prepared pure vegetarian food. All members of our society have come together to celebrate the day,” said Rosalin Chand, a native of Jagannath Warriors Residency in Bhubaneswar.

₹4L worth ornaments stolen in City burglary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: Gold ornaments worth over ₹4 lakh were stolen from a house near Asutosh Nagar in Bhubaneswar in the early hours of Sunday.

The burglary took place on the fourth floor of a building within the limits of Badagad police station. The complainant, Sarbeswar Sahoo, filed an FIR stating that he and his parents had been away following a house-warming ceremony when the incident occurred.

He received a call from neighbours notifying him of the burglary. Upon returning home, he found the house ransacked, with valuables missing.

Sahoo further mentioned that the stolen iron trunk was found abandoned a few meters away from the house, but it was emptied of valuables, leaving only a few clothes inside. Police suspect the miscreants to be construction workers, citing a toolkit box they used to break open the doors. The Badagad police have initiated an investigation, collecting forensic evidence Sunday morning, to identify the culprits.

The incident follows a recent burglary at the residence of senior Congress leader Niranjan Patnaik in Nayapalli, which also remains unsolved.

Odisha Tourism bags Best Decoration Award at OTM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: Odisha Tourism bagged the ‘Best Decoration Award’ at Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) Mumbai, held from January 30 to February 1.

Sharing about the news at X, Odisha Tourism department Sunday said, “Here's another Excellence Award that comes as a cheer for #Odisha. Odisha bagged the Best Decoration Award at OTM Mumbai, held from January 30 to February 1.”

Odisha showcased various tourism places at OTM 2025, targeting tourists with diverse offerings and cultural experiences for increased arrivals. “The state has a lot to offer when it comes to the tourism sector. It has a long coastline, beautiful temples, wildlife, natural beauty, ecotourism destinations, waterfalls, mountains, lakes, and dams. Domestic tourists visit these sites around the year,” an officer said.

Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) 2025, organised by Fairfest, was held at Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai.

The prestigious event brought



together exhibitors from over 80 countries and 28 Indian states, showcasing their destinations, innovations, and offerings to a global audience. Regarded as South Asia's largest travel trade fair, OTM featured over 1,600 exhibitors from more than 60 countries, attracting over 40,000 visitors. This included leisure and corporate travel professionals and enthusiasts. Stakeholders displayed wildlife expeditions, sustainable travel initiatives and eco-tourism destinations.

OTM 2025 showcased exclusive participation from several countries, including Cambodia, France, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, the Maldives, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines, Tanzania, the Cayman Islands, Uganda, the USA, Visit Brussels, and Visit

Sarajevo. The event was inaugurated by Union Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat who also joined the occasion as chief guest, alongside an esteemed panel of dignitaries.

Recently, at the Utkarsh Odisha Conclave, tourism director Samarth Verma said, “As Odisha seeks to evolve beyond its traditional offerings, it is positioning itself to become a premier hub for high-profile weddings and business events, rivaling the likes of Rajasthan's royal cities, Goa and Kerala. The department has decided to promote popular beach towns such as Puri and Konark in Puri district and Gopalpur in Ganjam district as sites for destination weddings, big meetings and conferences.”

World Wetland Day celebration by Hirakud WL Division

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur, Feb 2: Hirakud Wildlife (WL) Division celebrated World Wetland Day 2025 Sunday with the participation of villagers, Eco-Development Committee (EDC) members from 48 villages, as well as children and teachers from 37 schools near the Hirakud Wetland and Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary. The event highlighted efforts for the conservation and protection of wetland ecosystems.

Hirakud Wildlife Division Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Anshu Pragayan Das addressed the gathering, discussing the steps taken to preserve the wet-

land habitat. The Hirakud Wetland and the Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary share a unique 100 km shoreline, where the wetland and wildlife ecosystems merge, creating a vital ecological region.

In her speech, DFO Das also announced that Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary has been plastic-free since April 1, 2024, with a ban on the use of single-use plastic in ecotourism activities. In place of plastic, substitutes like jute bags, toughened glass bottles, and cane and bamboo products have been introduced. The ban extends to day visitors, including those coming for safaris and cruises. To ensure a



smooth experience for tourists, a series of measures have been implemented by the forest staff and the local community.

As part of ongoing conservation work, toxic Ipomoea weeds

were cleared from the Hirakud Wetland during 2022 and 2023, reclaiming about 200 hectares of the shoreline. Efforts to restore the area with nutritious grasslands for wildlife are still

underway.

The Hirakud Wildlife Division has partnered with local schools to educate students about the region's diverse wildlife and the importance of maintaining a plastic-free natural habitat. The division also highlighted the efforts of local villages in adopting eco-friendly living practices.

In 2023, Govindpur became the state's first bird village, and in 2024, Dhodrokusum was declared the first green village, both setting examples of sustainable living. Many of the homes in these villages are equipped with toilets and dustbins provided by the division, and the villagers have pledged

to support eco-friendly living, zero poaching, and wildlife conservation.

Hirakud is crucial for a variety of wildlife, including bisons, sambar deer, wild boars, leopards, bears, elephants, jackals, hyenas, and wild dogs. It is also home to more than 3.7 lakh migratory birds of over 120 species and a wide range of aquatic plants and animals. In recognition of its ecological importance, Hirakud was declared a Ramsar Site—Wetland in 2022. The Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, which saw the relocation of four villages and 400 families in 2023, is now being considered for designation as a National Park and a Tiger Reserve.

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CAPTIVATING PERFORMANCE: Artists from Ganjam performing traditional Ranapa dance on the concluding night of Tihidi Mahotsav, at Tihidi in Bhadrak district Saturday

NAAC scam: SU professor among 10 in CBI net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 2: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a professor of Sambalpur University (SU), who was a member of the NAAC Peer Review Committee, in connection with alleged bribery case in the accreditation rating process.

The accused was identified as Dr Bulu Moharana, head of Library and Information Science Department at Sambalpur University's Jyoti Vihar campus.

Sources said Moharana was taken into custody as part of an investigation into the alleged manipulation of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) rating for the Andhra Pradesh-based KLEF (Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation) at Vaddeswaram, near Vijayawada in Guntur district. So far, the Central investigation agency has arrested a total of 10 persons, including six members of the NAAC Peer



Review Committee, and four officials and employees of KLEF. All of them were held in Guntur.

Following Moharana's arrest, CBI officials sealed his official quarters at Jyoti Vihar, Sambalpur, Saturday night. The agency has registered the case (number RC 21825 A0002) and invoked Sections 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, along with relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against the accused persons. A notice was also posted outside Moharana's residence

before sealing the premises.

The arrest of several individuals has raised questions about the transparency and credibility of NAAC in evaluating the recognition and ratings of various educational institutions. The CBI has launched a thorough probe into the matter and, stated in a press release that appropriate action will be taken based on its findings.

The other accused in the case include KLEF University Chancellor GP Saradhi Verma, Vice Chairman Koneru Raja Harin, KL University Hyderabad Campus Director A Ramakrishna, NAAC Peer Review Committee Chairman and Ramchandra Chandravanshi University Vice-Chancellor Samarendra Nath Saha, Committee Coordinator and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Professor Rajiv Shizaria, Committee Member and National Law Institute Dean Dr D Gopal, Committee Member and Bhopal Jagran Lakecity Uni-

versity's Rajesh Singh Pawar, Committee Member and GL Bajaj Institute of Technology and Management Director Manas Kumar Mishra, and committee member and Dvgiri University Professor Gayatri Debraja.

Reports indicate that a six-member NAAC peer review delegation visited the Guntur-based educational institution in Andhra Pradesh. During the visit, a deal was allegedly struck to improve the institution's rating to A+++. As part of the arrangement, representatives of the institution reportedly provided high-end iPhones and large sums of money to the visiting delegation.

Meanwhile, efforts to contact Sambalpur University Chancellor Professor Bidhu Bhushan Mishra, and Registrar Dr Rajat Kujur, yielded no results as they were unavailable for personal meetings on account of Sunday. Also, phone calls to them went unanswered.

Fertiliser black marketing alleged at Barunei PACS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 2: Allegations have surfaced that employees and managers at Barunei Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) in the Binjharpur block are involved in the illegal sale of subsidised fertilisers in the black market, causing significant losses to farmers.

It is worth mentioning here that the government has made arrangements for the supply of fertilisers to farmers at subsidised prices through PACS.

According to reports, fertilisers worth around ₹2 crore meant for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 Kharif seasons were diverted and sold illegally, rather than being distributed to farmers.

In the previous Kharif season, under the MARKFED scheme, 4,210 quintals of fertiliser valued at ₹84.61 lakh were reportedly not delivered to PACS warehouses. Instead, those were allegedly sold in the black market. Farmers, including Ashok Kumar Sahu, Raja Malik, and others, had lodged complaints regarding the issue.

In response, the Odisha Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS) had instructed a thorough investigation into the allegations and directed the Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies (DRCS) in Jajpur to take appropriate action and submit a detailed report.

Notably, the farmers of Korei, Dharmasala, Binjharpur, Dasarathpur, Bari and Barchana blocks in the district have a significant role in paddy cultivation. However, farmers in



the district are facing a fertilizer shortage despite the government's efforts to regulate sales. Though more than 20 dealers have been appointed for sale of fertilisers, and the government's efforts to regulate its sales, the district continues to face a shortage due to the alleged inefficiency of state authorities.

Allegations of illegal transfers of fertilisers, including urea, to districts such as Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, and Kendrapada have also emerged, where urea and other fertilisers are being sold without proper authorisation.

Companies such as IFFCO, Nagajurna, and PPL have entered into agreements with district administrations for distribution of fertilizers, especially urea which is necessary partic-

ularly for paddy and sugarcane crops in the Kharif season.

Farmers from Barunei PACS have been forced to purchase fertilisers at inflated prices, leading to increasing debts. In October 2024, farmers staged a protest by locking the PACS office. Though some farmers received small funds, many were left without assistance. There are also reports of intimidation against those who protested.

The other allegations include the withholding of crop insurance payouts, forced signing of blank cheques by farmers, and demands for bribes in the distribution of agricultural loans. Despite multiple complaints to the district collector and RCS, no significant action has been taken, according to the farmers.

Headmaster arrested for molesting student

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 2: The headmaster of an upgraded primary school in Shivnarayanpurugoda village, under Telkoi block in this district, was arrested Sunday for allegedly molesting an eighth-grade girl student.

Telkoi Police Station Inspector in Charge (IIC) Susanta Parida said that the headmaster, Dilip Kumar Sahu, was arrested based on the complaint lodged by the district administration. "Further investigations are on," he said. According to reports, following the receipt of the complaint about Sahu's inappropriate behaviour towards the survivor, a team, led by District Welfare Officer Praveer Kumar Deo, conducted an inquiry on behalf of the district administration. During the inquiry, statement of teaching staff, students, and the accused headmaster was recorded. It was transpired that Sahu had allegedly molested several eighth-grade students on different occasions.

On Saturday, Deo submitted his findings to the district administration, which lodged a complaint with the police.

3 turtles, 15 parrot chicks rescued; 4 held in Boudh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, Feb 2: Forest department sleuths in Boudh have rescued three turtles and 15 parrot chicks, and arrested four individuals involved in the illegal wildlife trade.

The operation, which was conducted Saturday, followed intelligence provided by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau in Bhopal which was alerted by the Khurda Wildlife department. Sources said Boudh Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Debapriya Komp, directed a team, led by Forest Range Officer Archana Gomang and Forester Gobardhan Meher, to conduct a series of raids following the receipt of the intelligence, Saturday. The team initially zeroed in on one Kishore Kumar Sahu from Kantuani village in Boudh who was found attempting to sell three baby turtles. He was promptly arrested.

Further investigations revealed a larger trafficking network. Based on the information ferreted out from Sahu, the Forest sleuths conducted raids at various locations across Sambalpur district, including the homes of Jogeshwar Dehury of Saleisingh, Balamam Jena of Sadasahi village, and Ayush Kumar Sahu of Khandadhipar under



Redhakhol police limits. During these raids, they rescued 12 more parrot chicks and three turtles. In total, the operation resulted in the rescue of 15 parrot chicks and three turtles. The rescued animals were safely taken into the custody of Forest department. The four arrested individuals were booked under the provisions of Wildlife Protection Act and were forwarded to court Sunday for further legal action. Authorities are also increasing surveillance and further raids are planned as involvement of more people is suspected in the smuggling ring.

Meanwhile, the Boudh Forest department has cautioned the public about the dangers of trading or keeping protected wildlife species, and has warned to take strict action against offenders.

Six detained over 'conversion attempts'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, Feb 2: The police Saturday detained six persons who were allegedly trying to convert residents of Parapokhari village, under the jurisdiction of Kasia Marine police station in Bhadrak district, into Christian faith.

Sabitri Panda, officer-in-charge (IIC) of Kasia Marine police station said that a case had been regis-

tered against the six persons following complaint by a villager. She said investigations are underway to find out the veracity of allegations pertaining to religious conversation attempts. "Further inquiries are continuing to determine the details of the incident," she said. Meanwhile, reports said that the alleged attempt to spread Christian faith and conversion by a group of people evoked strong opposition

from the villagers. According to reports, one Shiba Jena from Parapokhari village - along with six others from Bhubaneswar who belong to Christian community - had organised a religious gathering on his son's 21st day ceremony. It included prayers and other Christian rituals.

During the conduct of the event, they allegedly appealed to the villagers to embrace Christianity. This invited strong disapprov-

al from the villagers, with some of them questioning the purpose of 'outsiders preaching another faith within their community.'

The situation led to a stand-off during which the group was detained and handed over to the Kasia Marine police at around 8 pm. The police took the six persons for questioning. Later, a written complaint was lodged by Susanta Kumar Raut, a resident of Parapokhari.

Bamboo artisans struggle for survival



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kandhamal, Feb 2: Chitrasen Behera, a 70-year-old artisan from Balsakumpa village in Khajuripada block of this district, has dedicated his life to bamboo craftsmanship.

Despite facing challenges, such as high cost of raw material and cheaper plastic alternatives, Chitrasen continues to pursue his ancestral profession - selling handmade products in local markets to sustain his family. His wife, Sabhabati, acknowledges that their income is no longer sufficient to meet the family's needs.

Sabhabati's statement finds echo in scores of people in the village

engaged in the ancestral craftsmanship that keeps fire in their kitchen burning. In fact, in the era of plastic, traditional bamboo craftsmanship is struggling for survival. Artisans, like Chitrasen, who once sustained their families through this craft, are now facing declining demands. Additionally, the scarcity of raw materials has posed a significant challenge.

Bamboo is used for making various household items such as mats, cradles, trays, flower baskets, winnowing baskets, sieves, and hand fans. However, the number of bamboo trees in villages has dwindled over the years. Where available, they come at a high cost, making

it difficult for artisans to continue their work profitably. Despite their efforts, fair wages remain elusive, and government support is lacking.

Previously, bamboo products were in high demand, and customers even paid in advance to secure their purchases. These days, plastic alternatives have replaced these traditional items, significantly reducing demand. Those in the trade said the absence of government assistance and increasing use of plastics are putting the future of bamboo craftsmanship at jeopardy.

Artisans like Krushna Behera believe that training programs - similar to those conducted for self-help groups - could help revive the craft by increasing demand and attracting buyers. However, the lack of financial security is forcing many artisans to abandon their trade, with the younger generations migrating to other states in search of work.

A few artisans continue their craft in different parts of the district, striving to keep the tradition alive. Experts suggest that financial incentives and skill development programs by the government could help sustain this ancient art form.

INDIAN OIL CORPORATION LIMITED

(Marketing Division)

Advertisement No. IOCL/MKTG/HO/REC/2025

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Summary of Post-wise positions notified is as under:

A) For All India Open Recruitment of Experienced Personnel in Non-Executive category:

Post Code	Grade	Name of Post*	Total no. of Positions
101 to 123	Gd.-I	Junior Operator	215

* Refer to detailed advertisement for positions reserved for SC/ST/OBC(NCL)/EWS/ExSM which is as per Govt. Directives, and other instructions.

B) Special Recruitment Drive [SRD] only for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities [PwBD] in Non-Executive category:

SRD - Posts Reserved only for PwBD			
Post Code	Grade	Name of Post	Total no. of Positions
201 to 204	Gd.-I	Junior Attendant	23
205 to 208	Gd.-III	Junior Business Assistant	08

Important Dates to remember

Activity	Dates
Date of Opening of Online Application (website link: https://iocl.com/latest-job-opening)	03.02.2025 (10.00 Hrs)
Last date of submission of Online Application, Document Upload and Payment of Application Fees	23.02.2025 (23.55 Hrs)
Tentative Month of Computer Based Test (CBT)*	April, 2025
Likely schedule for Publication of Computer Based Test Results (Shortlist for SPPT/CPT) on https://iocl.com/latest-job-opening	April/ May 2025

FOCUS ECONOMY

A WORKMAN-LIKE BUDGET



Let us hope that regulatory reform gives importance to stability, consistency and predictability of investment policies

and reduce litigation. The budget has several sectoral focused initiatives on agriculture, tourism, aviation, clean energy including nuclear energy. It recognised the need to revive labour intensive manufacturing activity such as footwear, toys and agro-processing. How much investment will come into these sectors remains to be seen.

On balance this is a workman-like budget which achieves some fiscal discipline and some tax-cut stimulus. It accepts the need to revive private sector investment by the long-term policy reform of reducing regulatory burdens and unshackling the entrepreneur. It avoids any big bang reforms since the global situation has too many imponderables. From her earlier speech in July there were some expectations on an employment linked incentive scheme along similar lines of production incentives. The fact is that wages are stagnant because employment is not picking up. Job creation will happen only when half a million new small and medium enterprises take birth. That calls for improving ease of not just running a business, but also of starting and closing. All of this hopefully will be the domain of the regulatory reforms committee's recommendation. We will also need substantial net inward foreign direct investment, which has dried up. The FDI not only brings in dollars, but also knowhow and management best practices.

Let us hope that regulatory reform gives importance to stability, consistency and predictability of investment policies. That itself will go a long way in reviving economic growth domestically, aided by India's demography, urbanisation and the fast-growing digital economy

The writer is a noted economist. ©THE BILLION PRESS

jump from the earlier ceiling of 7 lakh announced in 2019. This cut is mainly addressed to the middle class, whose mention was made even by the President in her speech as well as by the Prime Minister. By giving such a large tax exemption, millions will fall out of the tax net. This goes against the principle of widening the base of taxpayers. India has 80 million people filing their income tax, but only around 25 million pay more than zero tax. The tax cut was necessitated due to sluggish growth in consumption spending, especially in urban areas. The middle class also has been complaining of high inflation eating into their purchasing power. Even though the tax has been cut, the FM expects total tax collection to go up faster than nominal GDP which itself has been assumed to rise by about 10.5% next year. This is a heroic assumption given the global slowdown and turmoil, and the sombre projection given by the Economic Survey.

India cannot ignore the precarious nature of its fiscal situation. Interest on the debt itself consumes 49% of all tax revenues of the Union government. The debt to GDP ratio has to decline. The high borrowing requirement which will be nearly 15 trillion rupees this year tends to put upward

pressure on interest rates and crowds out private investment. Hopefully, with a lower fiscal deficit next year, softening inflation and injecting liquidity in the banking system, the Reserve Bank of India can do its bit by reducing interest rates in its next meeting. One of the major highlights of the budget is its continued push for regulatory simplifications, including a commitment to reducing business regulations and legal complexities. This was flagged in the Economic Survey, which effectively said that the government must keep a hands-off approach. Let the entrepreneur run his business and not be bogged down by the inspector raj and compliance burden. The Survey advocated a trust-based regulation, whose contours will be visible as soon as a new committee has been announced. A review of permits, clearances, and licenses aims to create a more business-friendly environment, which will certainly go a long way in reviving private sector investment. The FM also announced the removal of seven tariff rates, following last year's reduction of a similar number. She has also promised a new Income Tax Bill, aimed at procedural simplifications. This too signals an intent to modernise tax administration

The challenge for any Finance Minister in presenting a Union Budget is to balance multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives of growth stimulus, subsidies for the deprived sections and yet balancing the books. This tightrope walk is difficult at most times, but against the backdrop of global turmoil it becomes even more difficult. President Trump has slapped import duties against the Canadians and the Chinese. The Chinese will try and dump their goods into countries like India. Trump's policies are creating global nervousness and hence there is a flight of capital toward the safety of New York's bond markets. That creates a strong demand for the dollar making it stronger. India too is facing a situation with the falling rupee, and net foreign direct investment falling to zero.

Against this backdrop the FM presented her eighth budget in a row, proposing to spend about 51 trillion rupees and expecting revenues of 35 trillion. The gap is the deficit to be made up by borrowings. Even as the major highlight is the big cut in personal income tax, the budget does not lose sight of the need for fiscal prudence. As promised a few years ago the fiscal deficit next year is aimed to go below 4.5% of the GDP. This is a major milestone in India's fiscal consolidation journey, achieved despite maintaining an average of 7% GDP growth and having increased capital expenditure for the past few years. The next year's target of 4.4% fiscal deficit ratio is sought to be achieved despite foregoing an income tax collection loss of nearly 1 trillion rupees, thanks to the tax cut. It is also aided by freezing capital expenditure to remain same as last year.

The maximum ceiling below which no income tax is to be paid has been raised to 12.75 lakh rupees. This is a huge



Ajit Ranade

THE TAX CUT WAS NECESSITATED DUE TO SLUGGISH GROWTH IN CONSUMPTION SPENDING, ESPECIALLY IN URBAN AREAS

The Trump Tariffs

Our life should be governed by the love for the Truth and the thirst for Light. THE MOTHER

A global trade war seems to have been switched on. US President Donald Trump has just done what he had been threatening to do all through his presidential campaign: imposing tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, his country's three biggest trading partners. Trump on 1 February announced an economic emergency to impose a 25 per cent tariff on imports from Mexico and Canada and 10 per cent tariff on imports from China. However, energy imports from Canada, such as oil, natural gas, and electricity, would be subject to a 10 per cent tariff. Justifying the tariffs as essential "to protect Americans," Trump identifies three main reasons behind his action: rampant immigration, the trafficking of fentanyl—a potent synthetic opioid drug for use as an analgesic (pain relief) and anesthetic -- allegedly produced and smuggled into the US through these countries, and a significant trade deficit. The POTUS urged the three countries to take stronger action against the production and export of illegal fentanyl, while calling on Canada and Mexico to address illegal immigration into the US. It is pertinent to mention here that China, Mexico, and Canada are the leading contributors to the US trade deficit. China accounts for the largest share at 30.2 per cent, followed by Mexico at 19 per cent and Canada at 14 per cent.

While Canada and Mexico swiftly retaliated with 25 per cent tariff on US imports, China, the world's second largest economy and America's main economic adversary, has said that it will challenge the US tariffs by filing lawsuits with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Delivering a televised address on 1 February, outgoing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau outlined specific retaliatory actions, including a reciprocal 25 per cent tariff that will be gradually implemented on \$107 billion worth of American goods. Likewise, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum also announced retaliatory tariffs against the US and other measures to protect Mexico's interests.

The actions of the US president could jeopardize North America's economy and reverse decades of integration. The introduction of new trade barriers is expected to hinder growth and increase inflation across all three nations in the coming years, with Mexico and Canada facing the most significant impacts. The "Trump tariffs" also have the potential to destabilise the global economy.

Though India, with which the US has 3.2 per cent trade deficit, was excluded from Trump's tariff target this time, it has to brace for any eventuality in the near future. In this context, India in its annual Budget 2025 presented on 1 February cut import duty on American motorcycles and cars, a move seen by many as a desperate bid to appease Trump.

However, this doesn't mean India remains insulated from the tariffs. In the past, Trump has announced that the US will implement tariffs on countries that "harm" America, specifically citing China, India, and Brazil as examples of nations with high tariffs.

Besides, in order to maintain the dollar's dominance in global trade, Trump has emphasized the possibility of taking punitive measures, including imposing an unprecedented 100 per cent tariff, on the BRICS countries, which include Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The US refraining from inviting India's Prime Minister Modi to Trump's Inauguration could also be a huge indication of his displeasure.

With Trump at the helm in the White House, it could be a roller-coaster ride for the global economy during these four years. All countries, including India, are going to be affected by an eccentric and motivated POTUS in some way or the other. Amid an uncertain economic environment characterised by rising inequalities, high cost of living and unending wars, a full scale global trade war is the last thing the world would want.

WISDOM CORNER

We should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

You are loved just for being who you are, just for existing. You don't have to do anything to earn it. Your shortcomings, your lack of self-esteem, physical perfection, or social and economic success - none of that matters. No one can take this love away from you, and it will always be here.

RAM DASS

I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled poets to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean.

SOCRATES

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1870: Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ratified. On this day in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified, guaranteeing the right to vote regardless of race and intending to ensure, with the Fourteenth Amendment, the civil rights of former slaves.

1917: Not yet involved in World War I, the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany after the Germans announced their intention to practice unrestricted submarine warfare.

1960: The Italian dramedy La dolce vita, which was directed by Federico Fellini, had its world premiere, and it became widely hailed as one of the most important films in cinema.

1969: Yasser Arafat becomes leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Even after his death in 2011, Arafat remained a highly controversial figure, many Arabs praising him as a freedom fighter while many Israelis denouncing him as a terrorist.

1972: The deadliest snowstorm in history kills 4000. The Iran Blizzard lasted a week and left whole villages without survivors.

1989: Paraguay's dictator, Alfredo Stroessner, is overthrown. Stroessner had come to power in 1954 with a military coup.

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Turning the tide for small island states

Small island developing states (SIDS) are on the front lines of climate change, threatened by rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and ocean warming and acidification, despite contributing the least to global greenhouse-gas emissions. This now poses an existential risk to our ways of life, our livelihoods, and the very ground beneath our feet.

Given our disproportionate reliance on the ocean, SIDS are uniquely positioned to preserve this fragile but essential resource. These countries are home to 40% of the world's coral reefs, which shelter one-quarter of all marine life and directly support the livelihoods of 500 million people. But even though our ecosystems play a crucial role in global climate mitigation and adaptation, SIDS face negative feedback loops from a host of interconnected economic and environmental challenges.

In the Maldives, which comprises nearly 1,200 islands and contains 3% of the planet's coral reefs, fishing and tourism account for up to 36% of GDP, while around 98% of exports are derived from the ocean. Because the economy depends on healthy coral reefs and marine

life, increased coral bleaching and declining fish stocks spell economic trouble. Moreover, climate change has led to freshwater scarcity, forcing the Maldives to rely on bottled water and thus increasing the flow of plastic waste into the ocean.

It is a similar story in the Bahamas, which consists of 700 islands and boasts the world's third-largest barrier reef. Tourism is even more central to the Bahamian economy, accounting for around 50% of GDP and employing nearly 70% of the workforce. But despite tourism's essential economic role, it has its own challenges, for example cruise ships dump plastics, fuel, and other waste into the ocean, degrading the very assets that attract visitors.

In many SIDS, the ocean also serves as an important thoroughfare. For a population spread out over atolls or an archipelago, the movement of people and essential goods — including food, medical supplies, potable water, and fuel — depends on inter-island mailboats and barges, which are particularly vulnerable to adverse weather. Increasingly frequent and severe weather events — a consequence of climate change — could thus leave communities with insufficient

supplies and uncertain about when the next shipment will arrive. In addition to disrupting supply chains, climate disasters can destroy infrastructure. The financial pressure from climate shocks makes exploratory deep-sea mining and other risky ventures more tempting as a short-term fix to increase revenue, despite long-term damage to the marine environment.

The key to breaking these feedback loops is more financing. The problem is that many SIDS are in or at risk of debt distress, making new borrowing prohibitively expensive. Countries that have graduated from "least developed country" status also struggle to secure enough investment, since they can no longer access various grant facilities and concessional finance. SIDS are thus at risk of entering a debt spiral.

One promising solution is to increase the use of green and blue bonds, which provide more affordable financing for climate adaptation and biodiversity conservation, enabling SIDS to protect critical ecosystems and build economic resilience.

Equally compelling are biodiversity and carbon credits, which recognize the essential role that SIDS play in mitigating

climate change. These islands' coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrasses are important stores of biodiversity and carbon, absorbing vast amounts of CO2 and providing valuable economic benefits. Incorporating these contributions into compliance and voluntary credit markets would develop new funding streams for SIDS, ensuring that they are financially rewarded for their conservation efforts.

With these tools, SIDS can harness our unique ecosystems and natural resources to achieve a more resilient and sustainable future. Yes, these countries are on the front lines in the fight against climate change. But SIDS are also home to some of the world's most valuable natural assets. Preserving these precious resources requires sustainable economic strategies, innovative financial solutions, and, perhaps most importantly, coordinated international support.

Maya Delaney is the Octopus Desk Project Lead at the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance. Aminath Shauna is a board member at the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Maya Delaney & Aminath Shauna

GIVEN OUR DISPROPORTIONATE RELIANCE ON THE OCEAN, SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO PRESERVE THIS FRAGILE BUT ESSENTIAL RESOURCE

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarih Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Unpalatable remarks

Sir, It's very shocking to observe the unpalatable remarks against the first citizen of the country by some members of India's oldest political party. For no reason, the head of the state has been subject to disrespect in the context of her addressing both Houses of the Parliament on the eve of presentation of the Union Budget. Addressing the President of India as "poor lady" and "seemingly tired" exposes the very poor mindset and taste of the lawmakers. This prompted Rastrapati Bhawan authorities to issue rejoinder to the objectionable syllables mouthed by the Opposition leaders. As citizens, no doubt, they enjoy freedom of speech and as lawmakers the privileges under the Rule Book of the world's largest democracy. But they cannot escape under that grab the responsibility and blame for showing disrespect to the head of a Republic. Now the time has come for the party to introspect and refrain from minting such deplorable words in respect of the dignified post as India occupies a significant place among the comity of nations.

Sanjib Kumar Das, CUTTACK

Consumption boost

Sir, The Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is expected to provide a major boost to consumption with massive reliefs on the income tax front. This tax rebate would ease the burden on the lower and middle classes struggling with high prices and stagnant wage growth while being fiscally prudent. At a time when the economic momentum was slowing down and incremental capex was beginning to generate a declining multiplier factor on the margin, the budget has delivered this mega booster for renewed consumption boost. Along with sustained capex, the economy is expected to regain the lost momentum in quick time. Continuing to adhere to the guided fiscal consolidation path even while providing tax relief is another positive feature which should help improve India's rating upgrade prospects. With the fiscal deficit of 4.8% better than targeted 4.9%, no other major economy has been able to reduce fiscal deficit at this pace post COVID-19, bolstering India's place as an upcoming economic power.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

ADDRESSING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SPACES

'Educate men, respect women's choices'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 2: The topic of sexual harassment of women in public spaces took the centre stage at the ongoing Jaipur Literature Festival, as social activist Aruna Roy, lawyer Vrinda Grover and economists Seema Jayachandran and Abhijit Banerjee discussed the factors contributing to the offence, ways for its redressal, and its long-term solutions.

The panellists were speaking at a session titled 'The City Through Her Eyes: Voices on Sexual Harassment in India' Saturday.

The session was set around the findings of a survey conducted on women's safety in public spaces by the research centre J-Pal South Asia and NGO Aparajita by Pramod Bhasin.

The survey conducted across Jaipur and Delhi with 1,899 and 2,093 women respondents, respectively, revealed that nearly 50 per cent women in Jaipur and about 65 per cent women in the national capital faced some form of sexual harassment in public spaces in the past year, including staring, cat call, gestures, groping, stalking, flashing and sexual assault.

They reported that women were subjected to sexual harassment in virtually all public spaces, including on the streets, public transports, bus stops and railway stations, market places, schools, and even places of worship.

Grover, who's also a child

and women's rights activist, said it's important to make this distinction since there is "a social obsession with only looking at rape" as a crime against women.

"...and feeling angry about rape and that anger need not necessarily be productive. So I am really glad that today we are focusing on sexual harassment, which, as your survey shows us, is part and parcel of women's daily life in the public space," Grover said.

Roy, meanwhile, argued that to draw any conclusion from such a survey, it would have to be conducted across intersectionalities of religion, caste, and class at various places with all the differences taken into consideration.

"...with cultural differences taken into consideration because the kind of harassment they face in different places of India are different, and I think that's why one feels that all these issues are right and things like surveys produce technical support to the issues that we feel are relevant but the solutions are all democratic, political, and socio-economic," the Ramon Magsaysay awardee said.

In response to Banerjee's argument that women in rural areas may be relatively safer compared to their urban counterparts because of the social structure, Roy said women are more or less targeted in a similar manner.

"But in a rural area, culturally men cannot do cer-

tain things. Public spaces are restricted, segregated, for instance, so some kind of protection may come from that but there are as many cases of terrible sexual harassment among rural women as in urban areas, only the stations are different," Roy said.

The former bureaucrat noted that women in rural areas may face sexual harassment based on their caste as well.

"There is a general feeling that women who belong to lower castes can be treated anyhow, which is something you don't get in an urban area," Roy said. Talking about legal remedies available to women in such cases, Grover said despite there being a structure in place, she does not encourage women to go directly to police stations as the system is not "accessible or enabling".

"Am I therefore suggesting that these women, these girls who are going to actually march to the police station or ask for any accountability through the law... That's not happening. I don't encourage them to go running to the police station because we have not made a legal system that is either accessible or enabling. And that process should not be further debilitating," she suggested.

"But what is important is that it has spelt it out. Unfortunately, in our society, what is a wrong towards women unless and until it is spelt out in black and white... I think there is an ambiguity around it," Grover said.

Roy addressed Grover's concern by saying that during her work in Rajasthan, they managed to attach Mahila Suraksha Kendra to about 24 police stations across the state, where women can go and talk to the police "without feeling any fear".

"...that has considerably increased the possibility of getting some kind of attention in justice," she said.

Going forward, Grover felt hope that more and more women are "not accepting that kind of behavior".

"There is mobility and they are finding answers and we move from eve-teasing to sexual harassment through feminist interventions. Women are not going to stop, either economically or socially. Politically, you see women voting in larger numbers than ever before," she said.

And even as there are hurdles such as instrumentalisation of violence against women during elections, women will continue to forge ahead, she added.

While Jayachandran suggested working with adolescent boys at home and in school to help them understand gender equality, masculinity norms and their emotions, Roy echoed that there is no one solution but a bundle of solutions, including educating men.

"The men in our society need to be educated. I think this is a fundamental reason why things happen. The society as a whole has to understand why these young men are so frustrated... Because they are jobless, on the streets and that this produces all kinds of quirks in their social behaviour," Roy said.

Grover argued that while men and boys need policing and discipline at home, women's choices should be respected for a long-term solution.

"The people who indulge in sexual harassment, they are not dropping from somewhere else, they are in our midst. Stop policing the girls and women in your family. Rather, police and discipline the men and the boys a little bit. Respect the women's choice," the lawyer said.

B'DESH REBUILDING EMBANKMENT ALONG INT'L BORDER

TRIPURA TO RAISE ISSUE AT RIVER PANEL MEET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, Feb 2: The Tripura government will take up the issue of rebuilding an embankment by the Bangladesh authorities, some portions of which are falling on the 'zero line' along the international border, in the upcoming meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission between the two countries, an official said.

The neighbouring country has been rebuilding the embankment on a massive scale at Alinagar in Moulvibazar district, close to Tripura's Rangauti area, and some portions of the structure are on the 'zero line', triggering widespread resentment among the people in Kailashahar, a border subdivision in Unakoti district of the northeastern state, he said.

The Bangladesh government has also "not taken the consent of the Indian authorities to rebuild the portions of the embankment which are on the zero line", Water Resources department Chief Engineer Sudhan Debbarma alleged.

"The Bangladesh government has undertaken repair work of the embankment at Alinagar as the structure was badly damaged in the last monsoon. In the course of repairs, they have constructed approximately 200 metres of the 6km embankment on the zero line as per inputs we have gathered so far. The Bangladesh government did not seek any permission from us which violates the spirit of Joint Rivers Commission guidelines," the chief engineer told PTI.

He said the repair work was stopped following objection from the Indian side and the BSF was asked not to allow any work along the 'zero line' until the matter is resolved amicably.

The 'zero line' falls from the border pillar to 150 yards in the territories of both countries. Normally construction of any structure is not allowed on the 'zero line' but it can be done



following mutual agreement.

Debbarma said, "The state will raise the issue in the meeting of the Joint River Commission scheduled to be held in Kolkata in March."

The state government has also submitted a report with satellite images to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking remedial measures after the Water Resources Department's chief engineer along with senior officials visited Kailashahar January 21 to assess the ground reality.

Congress MLA Birajit Sinha raised the issue of the embankment construction by the Bangladesh government in the recently held state Assembly session, claiming that some portions of the embankment are on the 'zero line'.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha had assured the assembly that the government would take up matters with the Centre following Sinha's concern.

Debbarma said the Tripura government has already initiated a process to strengthen four embankments in Kailashahar to save the subdivision from the impending flood.

Kailashahar is prone to flood as the Manu river flows in the sub-divisional town before entering Bangladesh.

"At Rangauti (Indian side), repair work on the existing

4.30km embankment will start soon on a priority basis. The cost of the repair work stands at Rs 4.50 crore," he said.

He also said, "Of the total 4.30km-long embankment, we need to take concurrence from Bangladesh for approximately 2km as per JRC guideline as it falls along zero line."

However, the repair work of the embankment will start shortly, leaving the 2km stretch (on zero line), as the estimate for the work is ready, he said.

The Congress January 25 organised a long march to the international border area in Unakoti district to press demand for the Centre's intervention to stop the rebuilding of the embankment by the Bangladesh authorities on 'zero line' along the boundary.

Sinha urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shah to take immediate steps to stop the reconstruction of the embankment by the Bangladesh authorities.

"This is an international issue. Bangladesh has been constructing an embankment on the zero line flouting the Indira-Mujib pact. In fact, the Bangladesh government has declared a war against India, Tripura and the people of Kailashahar by undertaking reconstruction of the embankment," he alleged.

River, lakes in Manipur being rejuvenated: CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 2: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh Sunday said many rivers, lakes and water bodies in the state are being rejuvenated to protect their ecosystem and the surrounding environment.

The water bodies are also being redeveloped for beautification and promotion of

eco-tourism, the CM said at a function of World Wetlands Day at Leishang Hiden, Canchipur in Imphal West district.

"We are preserving and rejuvenating the wetlands. We depend on nature to survive. We are taking care of it. Many wetlands rejuvenation (related projects) have been sent to the Union ministry for financial assistance. Some has been taken up by the state government," he said.

The CM said, "Leishang Hiden holds a significant place in the history of Manipur and we have begun the work to restore it. The important rivers, lakes and water bodies of our state are being redeveloped for beautification and promotion of eco-tourism. They are being rejuvenated to protect their ecosystem and the surrounding environment which are vital for our sustenance and growth."

Nat'l institute of Ayurveda launches plant-based alternatives for skincare

JAIPUR: The National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA), a Deemed to be University under the Ministry of Ayush, has launched a line of plant-based cosmetic products aimed at providing safe, chemical-free alternatives for skincare. The range includes foot care cream, Aloe Vera gel, lip balm and a variety of herbal soaps, among others, using plant-based extracts to offer effective skincare solutions.

"Ayurveda has always advocated harmony between nature and human health. Our mission is to bring this wisdom into everyday skincare, ensuring that people have access to safe, effective, and sustainable products," Sanjeev Sharma, vice-chancellor of NIA, said. The NIA is actively working on technology transfer mechanisms to introduce these products to the wider market, fostering a collaboration between the academia and the industry, he added.



Cultural groups take part in Assam Sahitya Sabha cultural rally during the 77th Biennial Assam Sahitya Sabha Pathshala Conference, in Bajali district, Assam, Sunday

'MILKMAN OF AALO': TURNING COWS INTO CASH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar, Feb 2: Disillusioned by the demands of his low-paying job, Dope Padu, a civil engineering diploma holder, took a bold step to pursue his entrepreneurial dream by establishing a dairy farm.

Today, his venture, Goyum Dairy Farm, has made him a household name in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district.

Hailing from Darka village, 32-year-old Padu left his contingency job as a site engineer at the Arunachal Pradesh Police Housing and Welfare Corporation.

The job, which paid him a modest Rs 12,000 per month, required extensive travel across the state.

"Life was not secure, and my job involved a lot of travelling. I had to visit places like Tirap, Changlang, Longding, Tezu,

and Anini, among others. The department didn't cover travel expenses, and there was no travel or dearness allowance. I couldn't even save Rs 1,000 at the end of the month," Padu said.

Frustrated by financial constraints and lack of stability, he decided to take a leap of faith.

"As my life was at a standstill, I decided to venture into dairying," he said.

With financial help from his elder brother, Padu began his journey in December 2021. His initial investment went toward procuring cows and building sheds. Today, his farm houses 30 cows of various breeds, including Jersey, HCF, and Sahiwal, sourced from Haryana, Rajasthan, and other states.

"I feed them with dairy ration, cattle feed bobino, and chapor, which I procure from Silapathar, Dibrugarh, and Tin-



sukia in Assam," he said.

To manage his farm, Padu employs seven labourers, including a delivery boy. Fondly referred to as the 'Milkman of Aalo', he supplies milk to the entire Aalo township in the mornings and to Ramakrishna Mission school, Kabu, Sipu Puyi, and Darka villages in the

afternoons.

At peak production, his farm yields over 100 litres of milk daily. However, with many of his cows nursing calves, current production has dropped to 60-70 litres per day.

Padu's success is evident in his monthly earnings of over Rs 3 lakh, with milk priced at

Rs 120 per litre. After spending Rs 1 lakh on cattle fodder and paying his employees, he saves nearly Rs 1 lakh per month.

In addition to milk, he sells paneer at Rs 1,000 per kg and curd at Rs 200 per kg.

"There is huge scope for dairying in Aalo since there is virtually no competition," Padu said, adding that most of the milk supply in the region comes from non-locals catering to small sectors or colonies.

To diversify his income, he has also set up three fish ponds near his farm.

"I rear all types of fish, and they are fed with cow dung," he added. Despite his achievements, Padu expressed disappointment over the lack of support from the animal husbandry and veterinary department.

While schemes like the chief minister's 'White Revolution'

and 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat', and 'Pasu Palan (Animal Husbandry) Yojana' exist, Padu claimed that these benefits often go to particular individuals due to favouritism.

"I did receive a unit of milch cows under the Chief Minister's White Revolution and some assistance for cultivating Napier fodder on my farm," Padu acknowledged.

Napier grass is a high-energy feed that helps boost milk production. District veterinary officer Dake Riba praised Padu's initiative, saying, "There is a huge demand for cow milk in Aalo and nearby villages, and it should be tapped properly. The department provides support in the form of cattle, fodder schemes, and subsidies for sheds."

Padu's dedication and quality products have earned him a loyal customer base.

Rain likely in parts of Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 2: Rain is expected in many parts of Rajasthan in the next two days due to the effect of a new western disturbance, the weather department said Sunday.

A new western disturbance is likely to become active in some parts of the state February 3 and 4, according to the Meteorological department.

During this time, there is a possibility of rain in some places in eastern and northern Rajasthan.

The lowest minimum temperature in the state in the last 24 hours was recorded at 4.4 degrees Celsius in Lunkaransar. The weather is likely to remain dry in the rest of the state in the coming days.



It is my pleasure that I have become a part of the Maha Kumbabishekam of the Murugan Temple in Jakarta. I am far from Jakarta but my mind is close to it just like India and Indonesia are close to each other...I extend my wishes to all the people there on the occasion of Maha Kumbabishekam

INDIA COMMITTED TO PROTECTING, ENRICHING NATURE: BHUPENDER

Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Patel Yadav Sunday said India is committed to conserving and enriching nature, as reflected in the steady increase in Ramsar sites -- wetlands of international importance -- across the country



of the day quote

I think it's very important to spend money on India's defences. We don't spend on the defence budget to wage a war, we do it to discourage other countries from feeling that we are weak and they can engage in an adventure against us



Parvati and Arga natural lakes are a symbol of India's heritage, formed hundreds of years ago by the Saryu river. Even today, migratory and local birds arrive here from thousands of kilometers away



Our Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and the BJP-backed Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde have almost no real communication anymore, which has turned into a source of entertainment for the public



MAHA KUMBH: MEDICAL FORCE ON HIGH ALERT



Ahead of the Monday's final Amrit Snan at the Maha Kumbh on Basant Panchami, top officials stress the compliance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive of "zero error"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mahakumbh Nagar, Feb 2: Ahead of the Basant Panchami Amrit Snan at the ongoing Maha Kumbh, the entire Prayagraj division's medical infrastructure has been put on high alert, the Uttar Pradesh government said Sunday.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

emergency response system, particularly ambulance services, is playing a crucial role. "In case of need, patients will be transferred to Swarup Rani Nehru Hospital or Tej Bahadur Sapru Hospital (Bailey Hospital). Medical teams across Prayagraj, the division, and Mahakumbh Nagar are fully prepared," he said.

APPOINTMENT OF AD-HOC JUDGES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, along with two senior judges of the Supreme Court, Sunday held a meeting with high court judges to discuss issues related to filling up of vacancies, appointment of ad-hoc judges in high courts and establishment of evening courts.

The meeting was held a day after a national conference was organised by the apex court here to address issues faced by the state judiciary. "The conference was followed by a meeting of the chief justices of the high court and senior-most judges of the high court with the Chief Justice of India, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice B R Gavai and Justice Surya Kant, judges of the Supreme Court of India," the top court administration said in a press release.

CJI, top SC judges hold meeting



The bench had relaxed and kept in abeyance certain conditions the top court had imposed in its April 20, 2021 judgment on the appointment of ad-hoc judges in the high courts. The release said the conference held Saturday witnessed the participation of judges of the top court, the high courts as well as the district judiciary. It said issues like identification of bottlenecks in case disposal and strategies to reduce backlog of cases at different levels came up for

discussion at the conference. "The idea behind this conference was to engage in a meaningful dialogue with different stakeholders and functionaries in the state judiciary, especially the district courts, to first understand the challenges being faced by them and thereafter chalk out a plan to address the same," the release said. The conference had four technical sessions that covered diverse topics affecting the performance of the state judiciary. The technical sessions were chaired by the judges of the apex court, including the CJI. The release said the first session witnessed discussions on ways to narrow the gulf between institution and disposal of cases, identification of case types flooding judicial dockets, identification of bottlenecks in case disposal and strategies to reduce backlog of cases at different levels. It said in one of the sessions, the feasibility of having a uniform case categorisation in different courts was explored.

The conference had four technical sessions that covered diverse topics affecting the performance of the state judiciary. The technical sessions were chaired by the judges of the apex court, including the CJI

SHORT TAKES

5 killed as bus falls into gorge

Dang (Gujarat): Five persons were killed and 17 others were injured after a private luxury bus carrying pilgrims fell into a deep gorge near Saputara hill station in Gujarat's Dang district in the wee hours Sunday, police said. The accident took place at around 4-4:30 a.m. when the driver of the bus lost control over the vehicle near the Saputara hill station, in-charge Superintendent of Police SG Patil said. The bus, carrying over 40 pilgrims, broke the crash barrier and fell at a depth of about 35 feet into the gorge, he said.

UP: Man gets 20 years RI

Mainpuri (UP): A court in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri has sentenced a man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) for raping a 6-year-old girl in 2019, besides imposing a fine of ₹50,000 on the offender, officials said Sunday. Government advocate Vipin Chaturvedi told PTI that the incident was reported May 27, 2019, from a village under the Beparw police station area where the convict intercepted the 6-year-old girl who took her goats for grazing, and raped her.

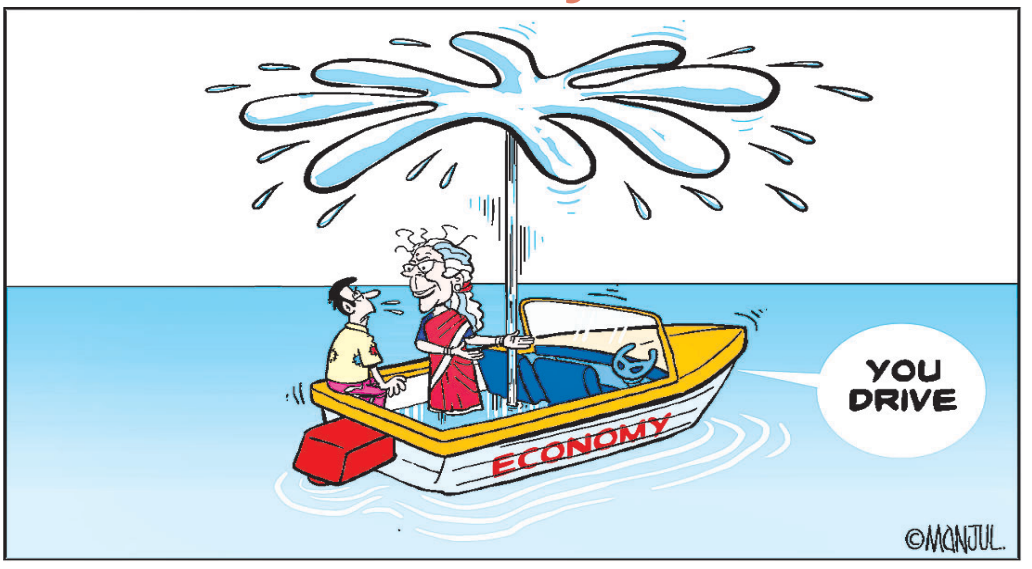
BSF nabs 14 Bangladeshis

Agartala: The Border Security Force (BSF) has nabbed 14 Bangladeshis in Tripura since January 26 for illegally entering India, a senior official of the force said Sunday. Two Indian tourists enabling infiltration were also nabbed during the corresponding period. Besides, a significant quantity of narcotics, sugar, cattle, and other smuggled items valued at a total of ₹2.5 crore was seized. "The BSF Tripura Frontier has enhanced vigilance and intensified its domination along the international border. Since January 26, 2025 BSF troops have successfully thwarted several attempts of infiltration, exfiltration, and trans-border smuggling," the official said.

13 flights delayed

Kolkata: The arrival and departure of a total of 13 flights were delayed at Kolkata's Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport Sunday due to poor visibility caused by fog in the eastern metropolis, a senior official said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



BJP unveils new campaign song ahead of Delhi polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: BJP MP Manoj Tiwari Sunday launched the party's fourth campaign song for the Delhi Assembly elections, three days before the February 5 polling day.

The song -- "Dil Walo Ki Dilli Ko Ab BJP Sarkar Chahiye" -- has been sung by former MP Dinesh Lal Yadav, while senior BJP leader Neel Kant Bakshi is its creative director. Speaking at the launch, Tiwari told mediapersons that when the BJP announced its manifesto, someone asked him how the party plans to fulfil all the promises made in it. The discussions led to the idea of launching another campaign song to raise awareness among the residents of Delhi, he said. "We felt the people of Delhi should be informed about these developments, and that's when the idea for this song was conceived," the BJP MP from Northeast Delhi said. "Someone from the crowd reminded me I missed mentioning that those earning up to ₹12 lakh annually will now be completely exempt from income tax. This shows that people are aware, and they want a BJP government," he said.

6-day training programme 'Charakayatan' concludes

POST NEWS NETWORK



Haridwar, Feb 2: A 6-day residential training programme 'Charakayatan' was organised for Ayurveda teachers and post-graduate and graduate scholars of Ayurveda by Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of AYUSH, under the aegis of Patanjali Ayurveda College. On the closing occasion of the programme, Patanjali University Vice Chancellor Acharya Balkrishna, as the chief guest, said that the main objective of 'Charakayatan' is to provide authentic clinical knowledge of Charaka Samhita and its relevance to practice among the students and to develop the skill of learning and teaching Charaka Samhita. Addressing the students, he said, "We are fortunate that we got the opportunity to connect with Ayurveda... Ayurveda should be visible in your behaviour, conduct, nature and life." Allopathy is dependent on synthetic medicines and chemicals, while Ayurveda is not dependent on these substances, Balkrishna said, adding "You can give life by crushing herbs, using bark, stem, leaves and making decoction. But first of all you have to believe in yourself and your Ayurveda." Renowned Ayurveda physician Vaidya (Prof.) SK Khandel said that Patanjali is the world's leading institute in the field of Ayurveda. Patanjali has presented Ayurveda and Yoga on the national and international stage with facts and evidence, Khandel added.

Three workers killed after falling into drain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 2: Three labourers died after falling into a drain while clearing a manhole at Kolkata Leather Complex in Bantala area in the eastern suburbs of the city Sunday, police said.

One of the labourers tripped and fell into the 20-feet-deep drain while clearing the manhole clogged with effluents from the leather units in the area while two others tried to save him but also fell into the drain, a police officer said. Personnel of the disaster management force and fire brigade retrieved the three bodies after an hour-long search, he said. The three deceased were identified as Farzan Sheikh, Hasi Sheikh and Suman Sardar.



It was not immediately known whether the three were wearing masks while working in the manhole. Municipal Affairs Minister Firhad Hakim visited the spot and termed the deaths as unfortunate and tragic. He said the state government would launch a probe to find out those responsible for the tragedy. "We will inquire whether the agency involved in the clean-up and the contractor followed all necessary guidelines and taken action against those responsible," he said.

The minister said that the state will provide compensation to the next of kin of the deceased. In a dig at the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh over the deaths of pilgrims in Maha Kumbh Mela, Hakim said, "This is not UP. We always stand by the people and don't leave them in the lurch." BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari said Hakim should first explain why high-rises collapsed in Garden Reach area causing deaths in the past and what measures were adopted to prevent the recurrence of such disasters.

'Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama' to screen at Parl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Movie distribution company Geek Pictures Sunday said it is set to organise a special screening of the 1993 Japanese-Indian anime film "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama" at the Parliament February 15.

According to a press release, the screening will be attended by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla along with members of Parliament as well as special invitees from the cultural sectors. "We are deeply honoured by this gesture from the Parliament of India. It is a privilege to see our work being recognised at such a prestigious level." "This screening is not just a showcase of a film but a celebration of our rich heritage and the timeless story of the Ramayana, which continues to inspire and guide us," Arjun Aggarwal, co-founder of Geek



"RAMAYANA: THE LEGEND OF PRINCE RAMA" WAS SCREENED IN INDIA AT THE 24TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA (IFFI) IN 1993 BUT WASN'T RELEASED IN CINEMA HALLS IT BECAME POPULAR WITH INDIAN AUDIENCES UPON ITS RE-RUNS ON TV CHANNELS IN THE EARLY 2000S

its original English version January 24 in the 4K format. Also distributed in the country by AA Films and Excel Entertainment, the animated film was eyeing an October 18, 2024 release which was rescheduled to make the film accessible in a significantly greater number of cinemas. "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama" is directed by Yugo Sako, Ram Mohan and Koichi Sasaki. In its earlier Hindi version, "Ramayan" star Arun Govil voiced the character of Ram, Namrata Sawhney voice starred as Sita and the late Amrish Puri lent his voice

to Raavan. Veteran actor Shastrughan Sinha served as the narrator. Screenwriter V Vijayendra Prasad, known for the "Baahubali" franchise, "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" and "RRR", has overseen the creative adaptation of the new versions of the film. "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama" was screened in India at the 24th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in 1993 but wasn't released in cinema halls. It became popular with Indian audiences upon its re-runs on TV channels in the early 2000s.



As soon as they (AAP) came to power, the number of students passing Class XII started to decline

DELHI HC TO HEAR PLEA AGAINST ATISHI TODAY

The Delhi High Court will hear a BJP leader's plea challenging an order dismissing his defamation case against Chief Minister Atishi Monday. Justice Vikas Mahajan is scheduled to hear the matter



Priyanka slams PM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Hitting back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi who accused Sonia Gandhi of insulting President Droupadi Murmu, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday said the attempt to make it an election issue was an insult to people struggling with problems of inflation and unemployment.

she had insulted the President. What kind of issue did they raise? One elderly woman is expressing her sympathy for another elderly woman, saying that 'bechari Rashtrapati ji thak gayi honghi ek ghante ka bhashan unko padhna pada (President would have been tired as she was made to read out an address for an hour)'. 'They attempted to make this an election issue, saying it is an insult. You are insulting the people of the country who are struggling due to inflation and unemployment, they are not getting pensions and safai karamcharis are troubled, and you are talking about these useless things,' she said. Priyanka Gandhi urged the people to force leaders to talk about real issues. Soon after the President delivered her address, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were seen discussing the speech in the Parliament complex.

ADDRESSING A PUBLIC MEETING IN SEEMAPURI HERE, PRIYANKA GANDHI SAID PRIME MINISTER MODI AND AAP CONVENER ARVIND KEJRIWAL ARE ALIKE AND BOTH ARE "SLAVES OF THESE BIG INDUSTRIALISTS"

THE CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY SLAMMED MODI FOR RAISING THE ISSUE OF SONIA GANDHI'S REMARKS ABOUT MURMU AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO A JOINT SITTING OF BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT FRIDAY

The Congress general secretary slammed Modi for raising the issue of Sonia Gandhi's remarks about Murmu after the President's address to a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament Friday. "Modi ji that day said about my mother that

Suresh Gopi backtracks on 'upper castes' remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Thiruvananthapuram Feb 2: Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Suresh Gopi Sunday courted a controversy by stating that the members of the "upper castes" should handle the tribal affairs portfolio, which he backtracked later.

Speaking at a BJP election campaign meeting in New Delhi, the actor-turned-politician said that real progress in tribal welfare would only be possible if leaders from "upper castes" oversaw the ministry. Facing backlash over his remarks, Gopi later backtracked, claiming that his statement was made with good intentions. "If my comment is not well received or if this explanation is unsatisfactory, I withdraw my remarks," he said.

He clarified that his intention was to end discrimination. "I did not label anyone as good or bad; my only aim was to break free from this framework," Gopi said, adding that as a politician, his priority has always been the welfare of the tribal community. Earlier in the day, Gopi, who also holds the Tourism portfolio, said: "It's a curse of our country that only a person from the tribal community can be made the minister for tribal affairs."

"It is my dream and expectation that someone from outside the tribal community should be appointed for their welfare. Let a Brahmin or a Naidu take charge, there would be significant change. Likewise, tribal leaders should be given the portfolio for the welfare of forward communities." "Such a shift should happen within our democratic system," Gopi further stated.

DELHI POLLS

KEJRIWAL ACCUSES BJP OF HOOLIGANISM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Days ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal Sunday demanded that the Election Commission deploy special observers in his New Delhi constituency, alleging "hooliganism" by the BJP.

The BJP hit back at Kejriwal, saying that he has sensed defeat in the February 5 elections and it has impacted his "language and mental condition".

The former Chief Minister is pitted against BJP's Parvesh Verma and Sandeep Dikshit of the Congress in a triangular contest in the New Delhi constituency.

In a press conference, Kejriwal asserted that with just three days remaining for the polls, a storm of support for the AAP is sweeping across Delhi and the party is headed to a "historic victory". "In this desperate situation, the BJP is baffled. Specially, Amit Shah is very much rattled and maddened. The kind of hooliganism he has spread in Delhi has not been seen by the people earlier," Kejriwal charged.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra hit back at Kejriwal, saying the AAP chief "is losing the polls and now abusing and calling the home minister mad". "This is nothing but his frustration of an imminent defeat," he said in a press conference. "Those calling Shah "mad" are scared of defeat. Patra said asserting that the BJP



"In this desperate situation, the BJP is baffled. Specially, Amit Shah is very much rattled and maddened

The former Chief Minister is pitted against BJP's Parvesh Verma and Sandeep Dikshit of the Congress in a triangular contest in the New Delhi constituency

The kind of hooliganism he has spread in Delhi has not been seen by the people earlier," Kejriwal charged

survey reveals that the party is coming to power in Delhi with a "massive mandate". "Kejriwal himself and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, and Manish Sisodia are losing their elections. Kejriwal knows this and it has impacted his language and mental condition," claimed the BJP spokesperson.

Meanwhile, in a complaint to the chief election commissioner, Kejriwal cited various instances of attack, threat and intimidation of AAP volunteers and supporters allegedly by the BJP. He also alleged that the Delhi Police too was intimidating AAP workers at BJP's behest. No immediate reaction was available from the Delhi Police over his charges. "We fear our volunteers may be detained, threatened, or even assaulted on poll eve and election day? to cripple our election

operations by preventing our volunteers from working," he charged in his letter.

He demanded the CEC for deploying special election observers in New Delhi to monitor police activity on night before the polling day and prevent any unlawful detentions. He also demanded direction to police to allow AAP volunteers to work freely and protection to them by any agency other than Delhi Police. He also sought action against police officers and BJP workers involved in threatening, attacking party workers.

In response to the alleged threats, Kejriwal announced the launch of a new social media campaign with hashtag 'AmitShahKiGoondagardi' on X. He urged people to share their experiences of being "attacked, threatened, or intimidated" using the hashtag.

Saini blasts Kejriwal over 'Yamuna poisoning' claim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Sunday took a jibe at AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal over his "Yamuna poisoning" remark and accused him of lying for his own benefit.

Addressing a public meeting in support of the BJP's Mundka candidate Gajendra Daral, the Haryana Chief Minister urged people to recognise the importance of the upcoming days and emphasised that there was much work to be done in a short period.

"To expose his (Kejriwal's) lies, I went to the Yamuna ghat in Palla village and drank the water myself so that people's fears could be alleviated. I took water from the point where Haryana supplies water to Delhi, as well as from the area where Kejriwal claims to provide water to the city," he said.

"I went upstream from that point to fill the water, and there was a stark difference between the two sources," he added. The AAP supremo January 27 alleged that the BJP government in Haryana had mixed poison in the water supplied to Delhi through the Yamuna.

"Thanks to DJB (Delhi Jal Board) engineers, who caught it and stopped the water, it did not enter Delhi. If that water got mixed with drinking

water, a mass genocide would have happened," Kejriwal had said. He had claimed the BJP wanted to mix "poison" in the water supplied to Delhi to trigger chaos so that AAP could be blamed for people dying. Kejriwal was issued two notices by the Election Commission over the matter on a complaint from the BJP. "The AAP government has been a disaster for Delhi. Kejriwal has harassed every section of Delhi's population over the past decade."



An aerial view of the Sangam on the eve of the 'Basant Panchmi Amrit Snan' during ongoing 'Maha Kumbh Mela' festival in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

GAMBLING RACKET BUSTED IN NEPAL

10 Indians among 24 people arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Feb 2: Nepal police have busted an online gambling racket involving more than 3 billion rupees and arrested 24 people, including ten Indian nationals.

According to Kaji Kumar Acharya, Superintendent of Police of Kathmandu Valley Crime Investigation Office, a special team of police based on a tipoff conducted raids on two houses in Sanepa area of Lalitpur metropolitan city on Saturday and arrested 10 Indian nationals and 14 Nepalese, who were found to be cheating people in the name of online gaming. The 10 Indians arrested include, Ajit Kumar, 22, Mukesh Mandal, 24, Manoj Kumar Bajaj, 44, Sumit Khatri, 28, Prabat Kumar Sah, 34, Om Prakash Khatri, 32, Ravi Prakash Bishwokarma, 28, Ravi Abhishek Ojha, 23, Shivam Pandey, 22, and Manoj Kumar 25.

Most of those arrested are from Uttar Pradesh, said Acharya. The accused were running the illegal online betting from two rented houses located at Sanepa in Lalitpur.

They were conducting online gambling with the help of online betting application by contacting people through WhatsApp and using Indian bank accounts for depositing and withdrawing money of the customers.

The preliminary investigation revealed that they had conducted transactions worth Nepalese 3,047,356,612, police said. Police have also seized 57 mobile phones, 13 laptops, 34 ATM cards of different banks, 88 sim cards, 12 cheque books, eight Aadhaar cards and six passports from the accused.



'Frequent extreme weather events driving food inflation'

Over the past two years, India's food inflation rate has remained firm, diverging from global trends of stable or declining food inflation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: The food inflation rate in India has remained firm over the past two years defying the global trend, and frequent extreme weather events are one of the reasons, the government said in its latest Economic Survey.

Tabled in Parliament Friday, the report said that the decline in onion and tomato production over the past two years can be partly attributed to frequent extreme weather events in major producing states compared to other regions.

Extreme weather events in 2023-24 damaged crops in major horticulture-producing states, leading to inflationary pressure on horticultural commodities, it said.

Over the past two years, India's food inflation rate has remained firm, diverging from global trends of stable or declining



ing food inflation. This can be attributed to factors such as supply chain disruptions exacerbated by extreme weather events and reduced harvest of some food items, the report read.

Citing data from the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), the report said that the total crop area damaged in 2024 was higher than in the previous two years due to extreme

weather conditions.

The government also referred to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data, which shows a significant rise in the frequency of extreme weather

of the day note

I don't want to criticise anyone. The people of the constituency have replied to Deve Gowda, Kumaraswamy and Yediyurappa. Your message is reverberating across the country

D K SHIVAKUMAR | K'TAKA DEPUTY CM

People have only two options, one is a party that prioritises education and the other that thrives on conflict. You must decide which path to take

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

Jharkhand contributes significantly to the country's exchequer with its mineral resources. But, there is nothing for the state in the Budget. Nothing is there for our tribal people

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

POST OF THE DAY

Samajwadi Party MP From Ayodhya Avdhesh Prasad crying for justice for the Dalit girl who was rap'd last year.

irony is that the accused Moeed Khan is his close man, and he tried his best to protect him.. Nautanki

@MrSinha_

SHORT TAKES

Badrinath Temple portals to open May 4

New Tehri: The sacred portals of the Badrinath temple in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district will open for devotees at 6 am May 4. On the occasion of Basant Panchami, the auspicious time for opening the temple was decided after special prayers were offered at the former Tehri royal court in Narendra Nagar. After Ganesh Panchang and Chowki puja, royal priest Acharya Krishna Prasad Uniyal decided the date for opening the doors of the Badrinath temple. On this occasion, besides former Maharaja of Tehri Manvendra Shah, his wife, daughter Shreejaand, Tehri Lok Sabha member Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, Badrinath's chief priest Rawal Amarnath Nambodri, Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee's chief executive officer Vijay Thapliyal and several religious officials were present.

Bangladeshi national held

Kochi: One more Bangladeshi national was arrested near Kochi Sunday for illegally staying in India, police said. Suman Haladar (22), was taken into custody from the Edavanakadu area in Ernakulam district as part of an intensified crackdown on illegal immigrants in the region. The investigation was led by Ernakulam Rural District Police Chief Vaibhav Saxena, said a release issued by the police. According to officials, Haladar had crossed the river along the Bangladesh-India border before making his way to Njarakkal, after staying at multiple locations en route.

Quake hits Bikaner

Jaipur: Tremors of magnitude 3.6 were felt in Bikaner, Rajasthan Sunday afternoon. No loss of life was reported in the quake. According to the meteorological department, an earthquake was felt in Bikaner and some surrounding areas at 12.58 pm Sunday.



We will be in New Delhi by nightfall, important meetings and negotiations are planned tomorrow. India is a strategic partner. We have long-standing relations of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation with it

VYACHESLAV VOLODIN | CHAIRMAN OF RUSSIA'S STATE DUMA

BLAST-OFF

Japan's space agency said Sunday it successfully launched a navigation satellite on its new flagship H3 rocket as the country seeks to have a more precise location positioning system of its own. The H3 rocket carrying the Michibiki 6 satellite lifted off from the Tanegashima Space Centre on a south-western Japanese island



of the day quote

We want Ukraine to hold elections, potentially by the end of the year, especially if Kyiv can agree a truce with Russia in the coming months

KEITH KELLOGG | TRUMP'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR UKRAINE AND RUSSIA



As the world's largest democracy, the fifth-largest economy and home to one-fifth of humanity, India is an important member of the United Nations

PHILEMON YANG | PRESIDENT, UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Those who are acting as terrorist proxies of their foreign masters who have mastered the art of manifesting double standards of hunting with the hound and running with the hare are well known to us

ASIM MUNIR | ARMY CHIEF, PAKISTAN



Carnage in Congo

773 DEAD IN WEEK-LONG FIGHTING AS MILITARY TRIES TO REPEL RWANDA-BACKED REBELS

REUTERS

Goma, Feb 2: There were 773 bodies in hospital morgues in and around the eastern Congolese city of Goma as of January 30 following this week's offensive by Rwanda-backed M23 rebels, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's health ministry said Saturday. Morgues are over-filled and more bodies are lying on the street, the ministry said. It added that 2,880 wounded were recorded between January 26 and January 30.



The rebel advance has left in its wake extrajudicial killings and forced conscription of civilians

JEREMY LAURENCE | HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE SPOKESMAN, UN

The Tutsi-led M23 rebels Tuesday seized Goma, east Congo's largest city and the capital of North Kivu province, which is home to lucrative gold, coltan and tin mines.

They then moved on towards Bukavu in South Kivu, but appeared to be held up Friday by Congolese troops supported by Burundi's army.

Well trained and professionally armed, M23 is the latest in a long line of Rwandan-supported rebel movements to emerge in Congo's volatile eastern borderlands following two successive wars stemming from Rwanda's

rebels advanced. Humanitarian organisations struggled to operate during the days of heavy fighting surrounding Goma's capture, supporting overwhelmed hospitals and providing relief amid widespread looting of their warehouses and crossfire that also affected their own staff.

Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) said Friday it had only a small stock of medicine left and had stopped assisting people in displacement camps. The World Food Programme said it had evacuated

1994 genocide. The latest escalation has worsened a long-standing humanitarian crisis that has driven hundreds of thousands to seek shelter in Goma after fleeing fighting between M23 and Congolese troops.

Thousands more streamed into the city this month as the

- Over 770 bodies in Goma hospital morgues, more on the street
- 2,880 wounded were recorded between January 26-30
- Displaced people leave Goma camps as daily life slowly resumes
- Congo army retakes villages from M23 rebels in Kalehe
- Burundian troops support Congo against M23, Rwandan forces

staff and suspended activities. There was a shortage of medical supplies, ambulances and body bags, Congo's health ministry said, with security concerns still limiting access to parts of the city.

DISPLACED RETURN HOME

Daily life was tentatively resuming in Goma Saturday after intense fighting that led to human rights violations including summary executions, the bombing of displacement camps, reports of gang rape and other sexual violence, ac-

ording to the UN. M23 have been intent on showing they can restore order and govern. Power and water, which were cut for days, have been partially restored, while residents were told school would resume and that displaced people would be allowed to return home.

Markets reopened, although food remained scarce, with many stalls empty. One customer said mobile internet was still down. Three humanitarian sources said people were leaving displacement camps. Corneille Nangaa, head of the political coalition backing the M23, Alliance Fleuve Congo, said people were leaving because roads had reopened, and that their aim was to facilitate their return home "as soon as conditions allow".

"We are going to ask all these NGOs for their support (with this), but the challenge is to do everything, to move from humanitarian aid to development," Nangaa said Friday.

The latest escalation of the conflict has sparked international criticism of Rwanda and repeated calls for a ceasefire.

2 Indian students killed, 2 seriously injured in car crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 2: Two Indian students in their 20s have been killed and two others remain in hospital with serious injuries after the car they were travelling in struck a tree in County Carlow, southern Ireland, according to the Irish police.

Cherekuri Suresh Chowdary and Chithoori Bhargav were pronounced dead at the scene of the fatal road collision early Friday morning by the local Gardai, or police, and emergency services.

The Indian Embassy in the Irish capital of Dublin issued a condolence message on social media Sunday.

"Embassy of India in Dublin conveys its deepest condolences on the sad demise of two Indian nationals Mr Cherekuri Suresh Chowdary and Mr Chithoori Bhargav in a car accident in Co Carlow," the embassy stated.



"The Embassy team is in touch with the family and friends of the deceased and also extending all possible support and assistance to two Indian nationals injured in the accident," it added. "A black Audi A6 was travelling towards Carlow town when it traversed the road and hit a tree at Grai-guenaspiddoge," said Superintendent Anthony Farrell from Carlow garda station.

"The car is believed to have travelled from the direction of the Mount Leinster area, through Fenagh and on to Carlow... All of those in the car are part of our Indian community living together in Carlow town. Our sincere sympathies are extended to the community at this time," he said.

The two other passengers of the car, a man and a woman aged in their 20s, were taken to St Luke's General Hospital in Kilkenny with serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

With maximum range of 1,700 kms, Iran unveils its new ballistic missile

Western countries have grown concerned over advances in Iran's ballistic missile programme, accusing it of destabilising the Middle East



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tehran, Feb 2: Iran revealed a new ballistic missile Sunday that it said was capable of travelling 1,700 kilometres, unveiling it in a Tehran ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian.

State television broadcast images of the missile, dubbed Etemad, or "trust" in Persian, saying it had a maximum range of 1,700 kilometres (1,056 miles) and was "the most recent ballistic missile" built by the Iranian

defence ministry. Iran's missiles, including this newest design, are capable of reaching its arch-foe Israel, which it targeted twice last year as the Gaza war spilled over.

"The development of defence capabilities and space technologies... aims to ensure that no country dares to attack Iranian territory," Pezeshkian said in a televised address.

Greece issues Santorini seismic activity warning

The island is famous for its historical volcanic activity, particularly the massive Minoan eruption around 1600 BC which is regarded as one of the largest in human history



REUTERS

Athens, Feb 2: Greek authorities have advised people on the Aegean island of Santorini to shut schools Monday, avoid two small ports and refrain from gathering in indoor spaces after increased seismic activity in the area over recent days.

A series of tremors up to a

4.3 magnitude were registered Friday and Saturday in the area between the volcanic island of Santorini and Amorgos, the civil protection ministry said in a statement Saturday afternoon.

The ministry said the activity was not linked to volcanic activity and was receding, but experts had proposed precautionary measures including the school closures February 3. Earthquakes measuring between 2.8

What we must realise is that the Santorini volcano produces very large explosions every 20,000 years. It's been 3,000 years since the last explosion, so we have a very long time ahead of us before we face a big explosion

EFTHYMIOS LEKKAS | SEISMOLOGIST, HELLENIC VOLCANIC ARC

and 4.5 struck the area Sunday morning, according to the Athens Geodynamic institute, without causing damage. Greece sits on multiple fault lines and is often rattled by earthquakes.

Santorini is one of Greece's top tourist destinations. One of the largest eruptions in history, around 1600 BC, formed the island in its current shape.

WEEK'S BEST PICS



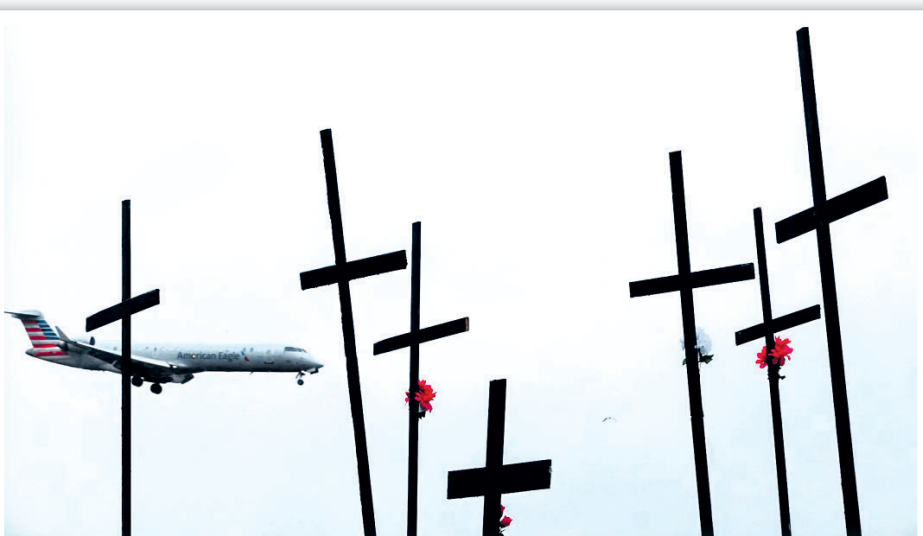
A person views large waves as Storm Eowyn arrives, in Porthcawl, Wales, Britain, January 26

REUTERS



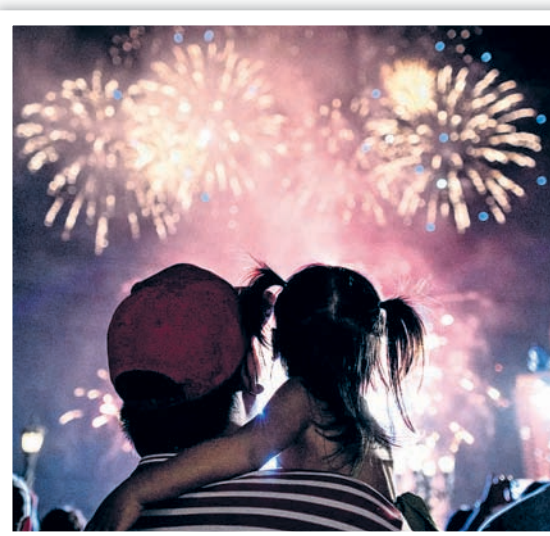
Members of the Texas National Guard walk in line to board a bus after arriving at the McAllen International Airport to assist in security along the border with Mexico, Texas, January 27

REUTERS



Crosses line a roadway near Ronald Reagan National Airport in memory of the victims of the American Eagle flight 5342 and Black Hawk helicopter collision, January 31

REUTERS



A man and his child watch fireworks during Lunar New Year celebrations in Manila, Philippines, January 29

REUTERS



Canada's Mikael Kingsbury, left, races against Asher Michel, of the US, during the round of 16 in the men's World Cup freestyle skiing dual moguls in Saint-Come, Quebec

AP/PTI



Vedanta's commitment to optimising its production reflects our recognition of the rising demands of such metals in India and the role they will play in supporting our nation's progress toward a low-carbon future
ANIL AGARWAL | CHAIRMAN, VEDANTA

SEBI MULLS SAFE UPI PAYMENT MECHANISM

Markets regulator Sebi is looking to come out with a new mechanism to ensure secure and efficient payments in the securities market through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in bid to distinguish legitimate financial intermediaries from fraudsters



of the day quote

A committee will be set up under the national manufacturing mission to get into the details on issues like cutting cost of doing business; preparing future-ready workforce; and availability of technology to further promote Make in India initiative



PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

Though the Budget announcements would help boost outbound shipments, we sincerely request the Finance Minister to kindly reinstate the scheme for all exporters to make them globally competitive



SANJAY BUDHIA | CHAIRMAN OF CII NATIONAL COMMITTEE, EXIM

While Trump has long criticised India's tariff structure, these latest reductions indicate a shift in policy that could boost US exports across multiple sectors



AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

SHORT TAKES

Mcap of 7 of top cos jumps ₹1.83 lakh cr

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of seven of the 10 most valued firms jumped ₹1,83,322.54 crore last week, with Hindustan Unilever becoming the biggest gainer. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,315.5 points or 1.72 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 389.95 points or 1.68 per cent. While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) were the gainers from the top-10 pack, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel and Infosys suffered erosion from their valuation. Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and LIC.

Power consumption growth subdues at 3%

New Delhi: India's power consumption increased by just 2.7 per cent to 137.49 billion units (BU) in January as use of heating appliances like heater and geysers reduced owing to above normal temperatures. According to India Metrological Department (IMD) the country's mean temperature in January was 18.98 degrees Celsius, the third highest for the month since 1901, behind 1958 and 1990. According to official data, power consumption was 133.94 BU in January 2024. Similarly, the highest supply in a day (peak power demand met) also rose to 237.30 GW from 222.32 GW in January 2024. The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250 GW in May 2024. The previous all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

WeWork files for IPO

New Delhi: The Indian franchisee of US shared office space manager WeWork has filed for an initial public offering in Mumbai, draft papers filed by the company showed. The offer will consist of the sale of 33 million equity shares by Indian real estate firm Embassy Group and 10.3 million equity shares by 1 Ariel Way Tenant. It will not issue new shares. "The company will not receive any proceeds from the offer for sale," WeWork India Management said.

₹ not depreciating against any currency other than USD: FM

The reasons for the rupee hitting record lows almost on a daily basis against the US dollar range from widening trade deficit to a surge in the dollar index after the US Federal Reserve hinted at fewer rate cuts in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Sunday rejected criticism over the slide of the Indian rupee, saying it has depreciated only against a strengthening US dollar but remained stable against all other currencies because of the strong macroeconomic fundamentals. In an interview with PTI, she said a 3 per cent depreciation in the rupee against the US dollar in past few months is a matter of concern as it makes imports costlier, but she rejected criticism that the local currency has seen all-round weakness. "I am concerned but I will not accept the criticism that 'Oh Rupee is weakening!' Our macroeconomic fundamentals are strong. Rupee wouldn't be stable against all the currencies if the fundamentals were weak," she said.

The Indian rupee has been under pressure in the last few months but it continues to be the least volatile currency against the US dollar among its Asian and global peers. The

reasons for the rupee hitting record lows almost on a daily basis against the US dollar range from widening trade deficit to a surge in the dollar index after the US Federal Reserve hinted at fewer rate cuts in 2025.

The Reserve Bank has reportedly spent \$77 billion from its foreign exchange reserves to defend the rupee from falling sharply in the spot market, taking India's foreign exchange reserves down to USD 629.557 billion as January 30, 2024, from \$701.176 billion October 4, 2024.

"Rupee's volatility is against the dollar. Rupee has behaved in a far more stable fashion

I am concerned but I will not accept the criticism that 'Oh Rupee is weakening!' Our macroeconomic fundamentals are strong. Rupee wouldn't be stable against all the currencies if the fundamentals were weak
NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

than any other currency," Sitharaman said.

Rupee volatility is noticeable as the dollar is strengthening. "RBI also has been looking at ways in which it will interfere in the market only to stabilise the need for avoiding huge volatility based reasons. So we are all closely watching the situation," she said.

She termed critics pointing to rupee volatility and depreciation as "a very quick argu-



Govt reviewing crypto position

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 2: India is reviewing its stance on cryptocurrencies due to shifting attitudes towards the virtual asset in other countries, a senior government official told Reuters Sunday.

The review, which follows crypto-friendly policy announcements by US President Donald Trump, could further delay publication of a discussion paper on cryptocurrencies that was due for release in September 2024.

"More than one or two jurisdictions have changed their stance towards cryptocurrency in terms of the usage, their acceptance, where do they see the importance of crypto assets.



In that stride, we are having a look at the discussion paper once again," India's Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said in an interview. Seth said that because such assets "don't believe in borders", India's stance cannot be unilateral.

He did not specifically mention the United States, where

Carmakers see mild uptick in sales

Domestic sales of India's top four carmakers - which form 80% of the country's car market - rose 1.8% from a year ago



REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 2: India's overall car sales to dealers saw a slight increase in January, data released by automakers Saturday showed, as inflation-wary customers continued to delay purchases. Domestic sales of India's top four carmakers - which form 80% of the country's car market - rose 1.8% from a year ago, helped by sales of market

leader Maruti Suzuki's small cars and Mahindra & Mahindra's sports utility vehicles.

Peers Hyundai India and Tata Motors saw sales declining 5.5% and 10%, respectively, hurt by increased competition.

Car sales in India, the world's third-largest car market, have slowed after two years of rapid growth as higher inflation has squeezed buyers' pockets.

VW sues India to quash \$1.4bn tax demand

New Delhi: Volkswagen has sued Indian authorities to quash an "impossibly enormous" tax demand of \$1.4 billion, arguing the ask is contradictory to New Delhi's import taxation rules for car parts and will hamper the company's business plans, court papers show. Volkswagen's unit, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, also told the High Court in Mumbai the tax dispute puts at risk its investments of \$1.5 billion in India, and is detrimental to the foreign investment climate, according to the 105-page filing which is not public but was reviewed by Reuters. In the biggest ever import tax demand, India in September slapped a \$1.4 billion tax notice on Volkswagen for using a strategy to break down imports of some VW, Skoda and Audi cars into many individual parts to pay a lower duty. Indian authorities alleged Volkswagen imported "almost the entire" car in unassembled condition - which attract a 30-35% tax applicable on CKDs, or completely knocked down units, but evaded the levies by mis-classifying them as "individual parts" coming in separate shipments, paying just a 5-15% levy. Volkswagen India had kept the Indian government informed of its "part-by-part import" model and received clarifications in its support in 2011, the company says in the court challenge.

Higher raw material costs have forced carmakers to raise prices even as they offer discounts to perk up demand.

The government's proposal to slash personal income tax rates in its annual budget

Saturday has raised hopes of a consumption boost in the world's fifth-largest economy, which could possibly entice more people to buy cars.

India's auto index rallied on the day, settling 1.9% higher.

MARKET OUTLOOK

RBI policy, Budget reactions essential drivers for equities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: RBI's interest rate decision, quarterly earnings and global cues would be the major driving factors for equity markets this week, analysts said adding that the impact of the Union Budget could linger on this week.

Trading activity of foreign investors will also be a key driver for the markets, experts noted.

Will the RBI soften its stance and announce any rate cut in this week's credit policy that would be interesting to watch out for? However, investors need to watch out for global developments, as any uptick in US bond yields and FI selling could dampen sentiment

PRASHANTH TAPSE | SENIOR VP (RESEARCH), MEHTA EQUITIES



there are several important events on the horizon, including the MPC outcome, the Delhi state election, and developments regarding US tariffs. These events present an opportunity for market participants to remain engaged and informed, as they are likely to introduce some volatility," Osho Krishnan, Sr Analyst, Technical & Derivatives of - Angel One, said.

Equity markets were open Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,315.5 points or 1.72 per cent, and the NSE Nifty went up by 389.95 points or 1.68 per cent.

Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "The impact of the Union Budget could linger in the next session, particularly in the consumption sectors." Additionally, with the earnings season set to take center stage again, traders should focus on stock selection, Mishra added.

On Saturday, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex eked out a marginal gain of 5.39 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 77,505.96. The Nifty dipped 26.25 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at 23,482.15.

Reliance brings Shein back to India after 2020 app ban

Shein, founded in China, offers a vast selection of low-priced Western clothes. Its app was banned in India in 2020 alongside other Chinese apps such as ByteDance's TikTok due to data security concerns, after a border dispute soured Indo-Chinese relations

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 2: Reliance Retail has launched an app in India to sell fashionwear from China's Shein under a licensing deal, almost five years since Shein's app was banned in the country after getting caught up in a diplomatic tussle.

Reliance, owned by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, launched the app Saturday morning, said a person with direct knowledge of Reliance's launch plans. The firm did not announce the launch.

Neither parent Reliance Industries nor Shein responded to

requests for comment outside of business hours.

The Shein India Fast Fashion app represents a departure from Reliance's strategy of adding brands to its flagship fashion app Ajio - whose offering includes Superdry and Gap - as it competes with rivals such as Myntra from Walmart's Flipkart.

Shein, founded in China in 2012 and later headquartered in Singapore, offers a vast selection of low-priced Western clothes. Its app was banned in India in 2020 alongside other Chinese apps such as ByteDance's TikTok due to data se-



curity concerns, after a border dispute soured Indo-Chinese relations.

Last year, India's govern-

ment disclosed to parliament, opens new tab that Reliance had entered an agreement with Shein under which Indian man-

ufacturers would supply products under the Shein brand. It did not make any other details public.

"The fashion OG (original) is back," said a message displayed upon opening the app. Deliveries will initially be limited to a few cities including New Delhi and Mumbai and expanded nationwide soon, it said.

Offerings include dresses priced as low as ₹350.

Reliance will pay a licence fee for using Shein's brand name, said the person with direct knowledge of the matter. There is no equity investment in the partnership, the person

said, without elaborating on financial arrangements.

All Shein-branded products sold through the app are designed and made in India, said a second person with direct knowledge of the matter. The clothing will later be made available on Ajio, the person said, without providing a time frame.

Shein aims to list in London in the first half of the year. It ended its attempt to list in the US following objections from lawmakers who questioned China's requirement for businesses to seek approval to list abroad, Reuters has reported.

U19 WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Eves retain crown

Accolades pour in

Mighty Women in Blue thrash SA to win second successive U-19 women's T20 world title

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kuala Lumpur, Feb 2: Trisha Gongadi put out a sparkling all-round performance as a dominant India retained their U19 Women's T20 World Cup title with a nine-wicket win over South Africa in the final at the Bayuemas Oval Sunday.

A stellar bowling performance, with the spinners taking nine wickets – three of which went to Trisha – along with fielders stepping up nicely helped Niki Prasad-led India apply the squeeze on South Africa and bowl them out for 82 on a slow pitch.

In the chase, Trisha made 44 not out off 33 balls while Sanika Chalke slammed an unbeaten 26 off 22 deliveries to help India complete the chase in 11.2 overs to clinch the title yet again after winning it in 2023 in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

India's second successive triumph in the U19 Women's T20 World Cup yet again showed the gulf that exists between them and teams of other nations at the U19 women's level, as they also became the first side to win the title without losing any game.

Chasing 83, India got going with Trisha edging wide of the keeper for four Nthabiseng Nini. She then thumped Fay Cowling over covers twice for fours, before G Kamalini began by clearing mid-on with ease off Kayla Reyneke for her first boundary of the final.

Trisha took a special liking



The BCCI Sunday announced a cash award of Rs 5 crore for the Indian team and its support staff after the title triumph with the board's top office-bearers hailing the achievement

to Seshnie Naidu's leg-spin by rocking back to cut between cover and point, steering past short third region and swinging the full toss over fine leg to collect three fours, as India reached 36 for nil in just four overs.

Kamalini fell for eight in the fifth over when she stepped out to hit Kayla over the boundary ropes, but ended up hitting to long-on. After Sanika Chalke took a scalp, Vaishnavi's tally of wickets now stands at 17, which also made her the top wicket-taker of the tournament.

At the start of the tournament, I mentioned we're here to dominate, to ensure India is here to stay on top

NIKI PRASAD | SKIPPER U-19, INDIA

long-on for four more. With Sanika hammering one over Ashleigh van Wyk's head and beating a valiant dive from long-off to get another boundary, it brought India just 25 runs away from reaching the target. The duo took their time and rotated the strike well, before Sanika clipped Jemma Botha for four.

Trisha steered Jemma past the keeper for four, and was followed by Sanika heaving Monalisa for a boundary to the square leg to get the winning runs for India.

Previously, apart from Trisha's three-fer, left-arm spin trio of Parunika Sisodia, Aayushi Shukla and Vaishnavi Sharma picked two wickets each while fast-bowler Shabnam Shakil took a scalp. Vaishnavi's tally of wickets now stands at 17, which also made her the top wicket-taker of the tournament.

the final. Aayushi got her second scalp by rattling Karabo Meso's middle stump with a fuller delivery to leave South Africa at 44/5 in 12.4 overs.

Fay Cowling and Mieke van Voorst shared a 30-run partnership to bring South Africa's innings back on track, but Trisha had the latter and Seshnie Naidu in quick succession to all but ensure South Africa won't reach the three-figure mark. Vaishnavi castled Fay and Monalisa Legodi, before Parunika had Ashleigh van Wyk caught out on last ball of the innings as South Africa posted a total that was too low to defend against a top-class Indian batting.

Brief Scores:
South Africa 82 all out (Mieke van Voorst 23, Fay Cowling 15; Trisha Gongadi 3-15, Parunika Sisodia 2-6) lost to India 84/1 in 11.2 overs (Trisha Gongadi 44 not out, Sanika Chalke 26 not out; Kayla Reyneke 1-14) by nine wickets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: From Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar, the country hailed the Indian team's title triumph in the U-19 Women's T20 World Cup in Kuala Lumpur Sunday.

India thrashed South Africa by nine wickets in a lopsided final to win the tournament for the second successive time.

"Immensely proud of our Nari Shakti! Congratulations to the Indian team for emerging victorious in the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025. This victory is the result of our excellent teamwork as well as determination and grit. It will inspire several upcoming athletes. My best wishes to the team for their future endeavours," PM Modi said in his tweet.

Mandaviya, who heads the sports ministry, tweeted, "WORLD CHAMPIONS! Heartiest congratulations to our U19 Women's Cricket team for winning the U19WorldCup. Your hard work and dedication have made the nation immensely proud. Wishing each and every member of the team the very best."

Tendulkar, one of the game's greatest players, said, "From the first game to the final, our team played like true champions. Winning is special, but defending a title takes something extraordinary."

"Huge congratulations to #TeamIndia for lifting the U19 T20 World Cup once again! This team has inspired many and set new benchmarks for the future. Very happy for the girls & for women's cricket!"

India bowled out South Africa for 82 after the latter opted to bat first.

"Congratulations to @BCCI on back-to-back @ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup titles. And kudos to all the participating teams who took part in this very successfully hosted tournament by @MalaysiaCricket - crucial to the global development of the women's game #U19WorldCup," the ICC posted on its social media handle.

The BCCI, on its part, also lauded the team for its incredible performance.

"A second straight World Cup triumph speaks volumes about India's depth of talent. Be it pay-parity under Mr. Jay Shah's tenure, the TATA WPL, or a strong age-group structure, the Board remains fully committed to ensuring that Indian cricket continues to thrive at all levels. India are proud of our World Champions," the BCCI tweeted.

Indian men's team coach Gautam Gambhir also praised the girls for their superb show. "Enthralling performance by our young guns! You've made the nation proud girls! #Champions #TeamIndia," Gambhir wrote on X.

"Unstoppable. Unmatched. Unbeaten. India didn't just win the U19 Women's T20 World Cup, they dominated it! A flawless campaign capped with a one-sided final win over South Africa.

"Congratulations to each and every one in the squad and support staff for this phenomenal achievement. We are extremely proud of you! A golden generation has arrived!" Mithali tweeted.

SHORT TAKES

Chouksey slams NR

Dehradun: Asian Games bronze-winning shooter Ashi Chouksey of Madhya Pradesh broke the women's 50m rifle 3 positions national record on her way to the gold medal at the 38th National Games here Sunday.

The 22-year-old Chouksey, who won a silver in 50m rifle 3 positions and a silver in 10m air rifle team event at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023, scored an exceptional 598, breaking the previous record of 594 set by Sift Kaur Samra in 2023. Chouksey's precision and consistency across kneeling, prone and standing positions was impressive and her record-breaking feat reinforces her status as one of the country's top rifle shooters.

Madrid's streak ends

Madrid: Real Madrid's winning run ended in stunning fashion after losing at relegation-threatened Espanyol 1-0 in La Liga. Defender Carlos Romero's late goal beat the La Liga leader and moved Espanyol out of the bottom three. Espanyol inched two points clear of the drop zone, while Madrid's lead was cut to one point after Atletico Madrid beat Mallorca 2-0 earlier. Madrid, which found out Friday that it will face Manchester City in the Champions League knockout playoff round, travelled to Espanyol with 10 victories in its last 11 matches in all competitions. It dominated and Vinicius Junior thought he gave the visitors the lead in the 21st minute but it was ruled out due to a foul by Kylian Mbappé.

Jagdish wins gold

Dehradun: Maharashtra weightlifter Vaishnav Thakur broke the snatch national record in the men's 102kg category but settled for silver as he was beaten in total lift by Services' Jagdish Vishwakarma who completed his clean-and-jerk effort standing on just one leg at the National Games here Sunday. Vaishnav lifted 160kg in the snatch section, surpassing the previous national record of 157kg which was in the name of Jagdish. But a poor clean-and-jerk effort of 175kg meant that Vaishnav finished second in total lift (335kg). Jagdish, who could only come up with 152kg in snatch, lifted 193kg in clean and jerk for a total of 345kg to win the gold, while Haryana's Harshit Sehrawat (329kg) took the bronze.

MCL unveils logo for Coal India Bhubaneswar Half-Marathon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 2: In an effort to contribute Odisha's sports drive, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) unveiled the official logo and race shirt for the inaugural Coal India Bhubaneswar Half-Marathon. The event, scheduled for March 2, 2025, at the iconic Kalinga Stadium, was attended by Keshav Rao, Director (Personnel), MCL among senior officers from the coal company and other prominent figures, who lauded MCL's efforts.

Rao said, "The Half Marathon marks a milestone in promoting long-distance running and healthy living in Odisha.

The move, a part of MCL's broader initiative to promote fitness and community engagement, underscores the company's commitment to fostering a culture of sports in the region.

The unveiling event, held in Bhubaneswar ahead of the marathon scheduled for March 2, 2025, at the iconic Kalinga Stadium, was attended by Keshav Rao, Director (Personnel), MCL among senior officers from the coal company and other prominent figures, who lauded MCL's efforts.

Rao said, "The Half Marathon marks a milestone in promoting long-distance running and healthy living in Odisha.



The official race shirt and logo not only symbolise the spirit of our event but also our dedication to community development and sports excellence."

MCL's Coal India Bhubaneswar Half-Marathon slated to be one of the largest events of its kind in the region, featuring a total prize purse of ₹45.34 lakhs. As an AIMS-certified event, it will allow runners to use their official timings to qualify for prestigious international races. Participants can

choose from a range of events, including a 1.5 km Fun Run (welcoming kids, families, and senior citizens), 5 km and 10 km timed runs, as well as the 21 km Half-Marathon

The Coal India Bhubaneswar Half-Marathon is expected to attract a diverse group of competitive runners and fitness enthusiasts. Hosting the event at Kalinga Stadium will further highlight Bhubaneswar as a hub for athletic excellence.

Services stun Odisha with record-breaking chase

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Feb 2: Riding on openers Shubham Rohilla's 209 not out and Suraj Vashisht's unbeaten 154, Services achieved the second highest successful run-chase in Ranji Trophy history as they overhauled a 376-run target against Odisha without losing a wicket in their Group A match here Sunday.

Services' effort is second only to Railways' 378-run chase against Tripura in Agartala last year.

Vashisht and Rohilla's unbroken 376-run partnership is also the second highest stand in a successful fourth-innings run-chase in First-Class cricket history.

Services were set the imposing target after Odisha notched 394 in the second innings, with Anil Parida remaining unbeaten on 99.

Odisha were bundled out for 180 in the first innings. In reply, Services managed just 199 in their first essay, taking a slender 19-run lead owing to Ravi Chauhan's 120.

However, Vashisht and Rohilla produced a stunning ef-



fort on the fourth and final day of the game to see their team home in unbelievable fashion.

Resuming the day on overnight 46 for no loss, the duo of Vashisht and Rohilla went about their task in a professional manner and completed the job in 85.4 overs after maintaining a scoring rate of over four runs per over.

Rohilla struck 30 boundaries during his double century and faced 270 balls in all, while Vashisht hit 15 fours and a six in his 246-ball knock, as the Odisha bowlers toiled through the day without any success.

Services earned seven points from the match including a bonus as they won the game by 10 wickets.

TATA STEEL MASTERS

Gukesh, Praggn lose; set for tiebreaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wijk Aan Zee (Netherlands), Feb 2: World champion D Gukesh and Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa lost on a dramatic final day but still set up a tie-breaker at the end of the 13th and final round of the Tata Steel Chess tournament here Sunday.

Gukesh lost his first game as the world champion, bowing to some energetic play by compatriot Arjun Erigaisi while Praggnanandhaa went down against Vincent Keymer, whose technique was impeccable on the final day.

Interestingly enough, the chess buffs were reminded of the 2013 Candidates tournament where Magnus Carlsen of Norway and Vladimir Kramnik of Russia were leading together but both lost.



Carlsen won on tie-break and went on to beat Viswanathan Anand to be crowned the world champion for the first time.

Despite the loss, Praggnanandhaa will play tie-break games of shorter duration against Gukesh after the two ended with identical 8.5 points each. The other contender Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan was denied the full point by P Harikrishna, who played a hard fought draw.

In the tiebreaker, the players will play two games of three minutes each with a two seconds increment after every move. If the result is still tied then sudden-death games will be played until a winner is found.

Gukesh's ambition to play out of the rule book did not pay dividends as Erigaisi, playing black, was up to the task in a Petroff defense game.

Abhishek's record ton shakes England

India register 150-run win, bag T20I series 4-1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 2: Irresistible Abhishek Sharma topped records en route a 54-ball 135, the second-fastest century and the highest score by an Indian batter in T20Is, as the hosts crushed a feeble England by 150 runs in the fifth T20I to take the series 4-1 here Sunday.

Abhishek went hammer and tongs to power India to 247/9, their highest-ever T20I total against England, after the visitors opted to bowl. Jos Buttler's men surrendered meekly, getting bowled out for just 97 in 10.3 overs.

India's win by 150 runs is now their second biggest by margin of runs in T20Is after their 168-run hammering of New Zealand in 2023. The night belonged to only one man as Abhishek tore into the English bowling with disdain, producing a knock of the highest quality, replete with compelling strokes against pace and spin alike as he etched his name in record books.

The 24-year-old Abhishek looked set to break Rohit Sharma's record for the fastest T20I hundred (35 balls) for an Indian batter but eventually achieved it in 37 balls for the second fastest three-figure knock, having already recorded the second quickest fifty off 17 balls for the country.

But Abhishek did break the record for the most sixes by an



Indian in a T20I knock when he smacked Brydon Carse (3/38) for his 11th six in the 17th over, eventually finishing with 13 hits over the ropes.

Abhishek's monumental innings, which contained seven fours, is now also the highest individual score by an Indian in the format, going past Shubman

Gill's 126 not out against New Zealand at Ahmedabad in 2023.

While scoring more than half of the team total, Abhishek also helped India set their highest T20I score against England, bettering their total of 224/2 at Ahmedabad in 2021.

This was also India's fourth-highest innings total in T20Is.

Brief Scores:
India 247 for 9 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 135, Tilak Varma 24, Shivam Dube 30; Brydon Carse 3/38, Mark Wood 2/32) beat England 97 all out in 10.3 overs (Phil Salt 55; Mohammed Shami 3/25, Varun Chakravarthy 2/25, Shivam Dube 2/11, Abhishek Sharma 2/3).