



Staying relevant

Actor Tamannaah Bhatia says exploring new dimensions in acting is not just a choice but a way of life

LEISURE | P2



Losing ground

Shortage of infantry troops and supply routes coming under Russian drone attacks conspire against Ukrainian forces

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Global markets tumble

Global financial markets fall Monday over tariffs imposed on Canada, Mexico and China by US President Donald Trump

BUSINESS | P11



Pragg beats Gukesh

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa defeats world champion D Gukesh in a clash of compatriots to clinch the Tata Steel Masters title

SPORTS | P12



SUMMER AHEAD: Vendors sell watermelons at a roadside stall in Thiruvananthapuram, Monday, as temperatures soar in the southern state

PTI PHOTO

₹10,599cr rail infra push for Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Monday said the Centre has allocated ₹10,599 crore for development of railway infrastructure in Odisha in the Union Budget for 2025-26 financial year. The amount is ₹13 crore more than the allocation made in the previous Budget.

Addressing a presser in New Delhi, Vaishnaw said the present allocation is a 12.5-fold rise compared to ₹838 crore earmarked during 2009-2014. The Centre had allocated ₹10,586 crore for the rail sector in Odisha in the 2024-25 Budget.

The minister said that over 2,046 km of new tracks have been constructed in Odisha since 2014, surpassing Malaysia's entire rail network in scale. Also, the coastal state has achieved 100 per cent electrification with 1,516 km of track electrified.

Vaishnaw said currently, 48 new track projects are underway, with a total of 4,784 km of tracks being developed at an investment of ₹73,723 crore.

The Budget includes ₹2,379 crore for the development of 59 stations across Odisha, including key hubs like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur, and Rourkela.

The minister said Odisha has received over ₹10,000

crore for railway development in each of the past three years, contributing to a total investment of ₹78,000 crore in the state's railway sector. Furthermore, an additional ₹20,000 crore worth of projects have been sanctioned during the current government's tenure.

Currently, six Vande Bharat trains are running across Odisha, connecting 17 districts and 25 unique stoppages, offering modern, high-speed travel for passengers, he said.

"Since 2014, 522 rail flyovers and under-bridges have been constructed. Additionally, 43 lifts, 18 escalators, and Wi-Fi have been installed at 234 stations. The multi-tracking project from Kolkata to Chennai is progressing rapidly, with significant work completed between Kolkata and Bhadrak. Third line work is already underway, and the fourth line will be processed in the future," he said.

"The Rail Budget 2025 signals a new era for Odisha's railway infrastructure, bringing unmatched growth, modernisation, and connectivity to the state. The ongoing projects and future investments will strengthen Odisha's position as a key player in India's railway network and contribute significantly to regional economic growth," the minister added.

P3

Ex-Malkangiri DM faces arrest warrant

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Feb 3: A court here has issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against IAS officer Manish Agarwal for not appearing before it in connection with the death of his personal assistant (PA) Deba Narayan Panda during his tenure as the Malkangiri Collector in 2019.

Malkangiri Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) court has issued the warrant against the officer while hearing a case relating to the death of Panda.

Panda, who had gone missing December 27, 2019, was found dead near Satiguda reservoir under Malkangiri Sadar sub-division the next day. His wife, Banaja Panda, later filed a case alleging that Agarwal and three others were responsible for his death.

In its order passed February 1, the judge said, "It is observed that by keeping in view the importance of the case record, I found the law is well settled that the accused can avail the benefit of dispensation of personal attendance but the same cannot be claimed as a right."

Prez remark: Sonia faces privilege motion

New Delhi: A group of BJP MPs filed a breach of privilege notice against Congress parliamentary party leader Sonia Gandhi Monday for using "derogatory and slanderous" words against President Droupadi Murmu. Led by Sumer Singh Solanki, the MPs met Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and sought disciplinary action against Gandhi, contending her remarks lowered the dignity of the office of the President.

P8

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Forget news coverage, dear. It's all about news cover-ups now

Raj to make conversion non-bailable offence

Unlawful religious conversion will soon be treated as a cognisable and non-bailable offence in Rajasthan, as the Assembly Monday introduced a Bill to this effect. The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 makes religious conversion by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage an offence triable by court. The Bill has provisions of imprisonment for a term up to 10 years and a fine of up to ₹50,000. The development comes a few days after the Uttarakhnad government implemented Uniform Civil Code (UCC) aiming at establishing a unified set of personal laws governing matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and maintenance for the people of the BJP-ruled state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 3: The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 was introduced in the ongoing Budget Session of the Assembly Monday.

The offence under the anti-conversion Bill will be cognisable and non-bailable and triable by a court. The Bill is aimed at prohibiting unlawful conversion from one religion to another and has provisions for imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine of up to ₹50,000.

It was introduced by Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khinvsar and will be passed by the House following a debate during the session.

Religious conversion by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage has been made an offence in the Bill.

The Bill provisions imprisonment for a term not less than one year but it may extend to five years with a fine of ₹15,000. Those who violate the rules in respect of a minor, a woman



or a person belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of two years which may extend to 10 years along with a fine of ₹25,000. The Bill provisions three years' jail extending up to 10 years and a fine of ₹50,000 in case of mass conversion.

However, those who desire to convert his/her religion shall give a declaration in the prescribed form at least sixty days in advance, to the District Magistrate.

According to the aims and objectives of the Bill, the Constitution of India guarantees religious freedom to all people

which reflects the social harmony and spirit of India. The objective of this right is to sustain the spirit of secularism in India.

"In the recent past, many such examples have come to light where gullible persons have been converted from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or fraudulent means.

"The law related to the right to religious freedom already exists in various states of the country but there was no statute on the said subject in Rajasthan. In view of the above, it was decided to enact a law to provide for prohibition of unlawful conversion," the Bill states. As per the Bill, the court shall also grant appropriate compensation payable by the accused to the victim of said conversion which may extend to a maximum of ₹5 lakh. The Bill proposes double punishment for repeat offenders.

RUPEE SINKS TO ANOTHER LOW

Two days after US President Donald Trump announced to impose a punishing 25% tariff on imports from its long-time allies Canada and Mexico, apart from 10% duty on Chinese goods, and a subsequent retaliation by the allies, the impact was largely felt back here in India as the rupee plunged to 87.28 per US dollar before closing at 87.1850, the biggest single-day percentage loss since January 13

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 3: The Indian rupee fell to a record low Monday after US President Donald Trump slapped tariffs on imports from the country's three biggest trade partners, stoking fears of a trade war that rattled global financial markets.

The primary reason behind the depreciation of rupee is stated to be the strengthening of US dollar index (approaching 110), which has been bolstered by

robust US jobs data and higher interest rate expectations. Dollar forward positions have also lined up as rising treasury yields continue to remain attractive.

Asian currencies also slumped after the dollar rallied on Trump's sweeping tariffs that impose a 25 per cent levy on Mexican and Canadian imports into the US, while those from China will attract a 10 per cent charge. The tariffs kick in Tuesday.

Asian and European stocks fell Monday, while US equity futures pointed sharply lower. The Mexican peso tumbled more than 2% to touch its lowest in nearly three years, while the offshore Chinese yuan fell 0.3 per cent.

While intermittent dollar sales from state-run banks helped limit the rupee's decline, the absence of stern intervention by the central bank was seen by many traders as an affirmation that it is allowing the rupee to move in line with its peers.

Beyonce first Black woman to win Best Country Album

REUTERS

Los Angeles, Feb 3: Beyoncé Knowles-Carter made history at the 2025 Grammy Awards with 11 nominations and 2 wins, bringing her total to 34 Grammys. She became the first Black woman to win Best Country Album for Cowboy Carter.

The superstar singer triumphed over Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish and others to claim the trophy that had eluded her even as she collected more lifetime Grammys than any other artist.

"I just feel very full and very honored. It's been many, many years," Beyoncé said on stage, standing next to her daughter Blue Ivy Carter.

Beyoncé's win came on her fifth nomination in the album category. She earned three trophies in total Sunday, bringing her career haul to 35.

Rapper Kendrick Lamar claimed record and song of the

CHANDRIKA shines at Grammys

NEW DELHI: Indian-American vocalist and entrepreneur Chandrika Tandon has won the Grammy award for album 'Triveni' in the Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album category. The 67th edition of the biggest musical awards night, organised by the Recording Academy, was held Sunday at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. "Day 5 of @recordingacademy GRAMMYS week - honored to receive a GRAMMY for our collaborative album Triveni. A moment that reminds me that music is love, music ignites the light within all of us, and, even in our darkest days, music spreads joy and laughter." P2

year for "Not Like Us," a diss track in his feud with Canadian rapper and singer Drake. Lamar, who swept the five categories he was nominated for, dedicated his wins to Los Angeles, where the ceremony was held.

"This is my neck of the woods that's held me down since I was a

CM's ₹5L aid for ailing girl



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday sanctioned ₹5 lakh for the treatment of a girl suffering from a rare disease, as well as a house for her family under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Majhi made the "on-the-spot" sanction at a 'grievance hearing' here.

He asked the District Collector of Boudh to hand over ₹5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), and directed the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department to provide a house to the family of

Pratyusha Giri.

Majhi said the girl is suffering from "zeroderma", a genetic disorder that causes extreme sensitivity to ultraviolet light.

"We have sanctioned ₹5 lakh on the spot, and asked the District Collector of Boudh to provide a PMAY house to her family," he told reporters here.

He said the girl was admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack last month, where she received treatment free of cost. However, the disease requires regular treatment and her family is not able to bear the expenses, said the CM.

Majhi also asked officials to arrange for the treatment of a 12-year-old boy from Saintala in Bolangir district.

He said the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell has so far received 8,031 petitions out of which "around 81 per cent cases have been disposed".



to recover from the fires.

The Grammys also remembered influential music producer Quincy Jones, who died in November. Stevie Wonder led the crowd in singing the famine relief anthem "We Are the World" with a choir of students from schools destroyed in the wildfires, and Janelle Monae performed Michael Jackson's "Don't Stop 'til You Get Enough."

leisure



'WHENEVER I TALK ABOUT MY MUSIC, I WANT TO CRY'

Pop superstar Lady Gaga gets so 'vulnerable' on her upcoming album *Mayhem* that just speaking about it makes her want to cry. The 38-year-old explained that she goes to a 'very unsettling place' at the start of the deeply personal record.

PETER ANDRE SCARED TO HAVE VASECTOMY

Pop star Peter Andre has admitted he's a bit scared to have a vasectomy even though he has previously discussed the idea with his wife Emily. The 51-year-old, a father of five, welcomed his youngest child - a daughter named Arabella with his wife Emily - last year.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Some decisions are hard to take, but a firm resolve will help you stay committed. Sentimentality may shake your purpose, but once decided, you must stick to it. Also, learn to take heartbreak in your stride, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
This day you will be compelled to be resigned to your fate. Ganesha does not see your own will power in operation today. Though you would be surrendering yourself to the whims of destiny, do not expect anything good to come out of it. You are likely to take wrong decisions and go of course.

GEMINI
You will try very hard to strike a balance between logic and emotions. Though you may succeed in doing so in front of the world, you may not be so discreet with your friends. You will have an excellent time with your sweetheart, but your physical appearance will be a cause of concern to you, says Ganesha.

CANCER
A string of domestic responsibilities awaits you; today, you are about to realise that it is a long, long string. Chances are that this sudden rise in work pressure may also lead to blood pressure problems. Ganesha advises you to stop presuming how people may react to everything; also, avoid being too proud to avoid excess heartache.

LEO
Nothing will overshadow your love for your kids today, and they will be the number one priority for you. It seems like a good day to take time out and monitor their progress in school; so, do not skip that PTA meeting. Remember, there are various ways to teach children, so consider taking them out on a small picnic or a field trip to help educate them better.

VIRGO
You will begin your journey on the long, hard road to success, predicts Ganesha. Hard work will be the key to any progress that you make. Avoid short cuts, and all the toil and trouble will pay off with rich returns as recognition and rewards will come your way.

LIBRA
Today promises a definite sense of pride and joy from children who bring home glory, says Ganesha. Fiscal gains are also on the cards, and you may consider it worthwhile to put your money into lucrative businesses.

SCORPIO
It is more than likely that you will be in high spirits today, says Ganesha. All your energy and exuberance may not yield expected results. That is no reason to lose heart though. Keep up the effort from your end and you will eventually taste success in the days to come.

SAGITTARIUS
You will find yourself rubbing shoulders with Lady Luck today. Sharpen your multi-tasking skills as you will keep busy and have only occasional moments of respite. Good will and green print, you might find them both with ease and in abundance, predicts Ganesha.

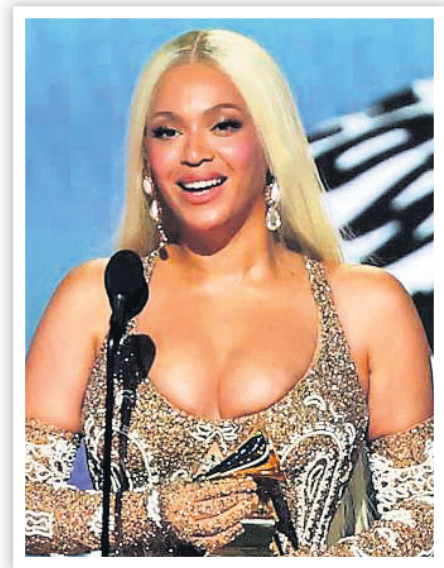
CAPRICORN
You have sacrificed a lot on enjoyment with friends and family, done some backbreaking work and kept your focus to reach where you are right now. Ganesha gives you a pat on your back for all the hard work you've put in. Now, it is time to watch the tree bear fruits.

AQUARIUS
You blessed with a very high level of patience and practicality, and you can easily untangle any problem. But, it gives an excuse to the people around you to wash their hands of any responsibility. It may put you in a tight spot at times leaving you frustrated.

PISCES
You could swing both ways today! Fortunately, this alludes to nothing more sinister than the mix of the introvert and the extrovert that you are. So, between a quiet evening out by yourself at a classical music concert, or performing on the dance floor at the local disc - take your pick, says Ganesha.

GRAMMYS 2025

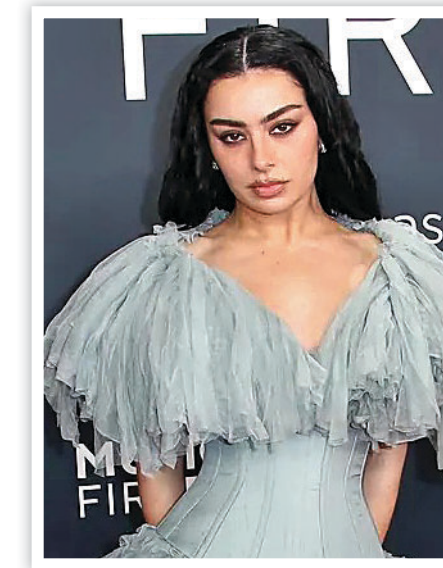
Kendrick, Charli, Beyonce win big



Beyoncé



Kendrick Lamar



Charli XCX

Los Angeles: Rapper Kendrick Lamar won five honours for *Not Like Us*, while Beyoncé and Charli XCX followed with three awards each at the 67th Grammy Award. The awards took place in the early hours of Monday according to India time. The event was held at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. Lamar bags the awards for record of the year, song of the year, rap performance, best rap song and best music video categories, making the Compton-bred rapper a 22-time Grammy winner. Beyoncé took the lead in the night with 11 Grammy nominations, a career-high, for her country album *Cowboy Carter*. Lamar, Billie Eilish, Post Malone and Charli XCX each had seven nods apiece, followed by Taylor Swift, Chappell Roan and Sabrina Carpenter with six each. Charli XCX took home dance pop recording for *Von Dutch*, dance electronic album

Nooyi's sister Chandrika bags maiden Grammy at 71



Los Angeles: Indian-American vocalist and entrepreneur Chandrika Tandon has won a Grammy award in the 'Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album' category for her album *Triveni*. This is the first Grammy for Chandrika, 71, who beat competitors like Ricky Kej and Anoushka Shankar to take home the gramophone. For Chandrika, the honour is just another addition to her long list of accomplishments. She is also a businesswoman, philanthropist, and the first Indian-American woman to be elected partner at McKinsey and Company. In certain circles, however, she is best known as the elder sister of former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi. Born in 1954 in Madras (now Chennai), India, into a conservative Tamil Brahmin family, she pursued higher education at Madras Christian College and later at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad.

for *Brat* and best recording package. Carpenter won for best pop solo performance for *Espresso* and pop vocal album, while

Roan was named best new artist. Carpenter also took home the Best Pop Vocal Album for *Short n Sweet*.

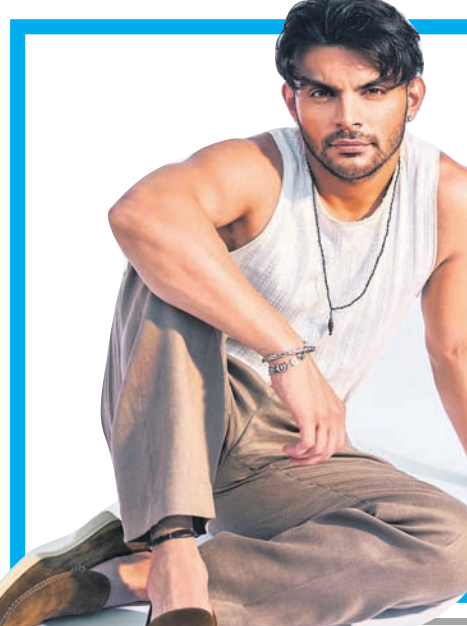


'Pushing boundaries in acting is a way of life'

Mumbai: Tamannaah Bhatia, one of the iconic Pan-India actors, recently opened up about her vibrant personality, love for glamour and passion for experimentation in acting on *The Masoom Minawala Show*. She described herself saying, "I am a little bundle of happiness," embracing both her playful nature and the glitz of the entertainment industry. "I am like a goofball, but I love the glamour," she shared, reflecting on her unique blend of fun and sophistication. However, beyond the sparkle, Tamannaah also believes she carries the wisdom of a 60-year-old within her. "I am someone who is a little bit glamour, a little bit joy, a little bit mas-ti, and I have one 60-year-old aunty in me who has a lot of depth and wants to know what life is all about," she remarked, hinting at her deeper introspective side. "I would

like to call myself an actor who can don any cap. I love experimenting and becoming anything," she said, emphasizing her passion for versatility. For her, pushing boundaries and exploring new dimensions in acting is not just a choice but a way of life. "Experimenting is my biggest strength, that is what I love doing, and that's the reason I became an actor," she added. AGENCIES

Should I kill myself and be reborn: Veer

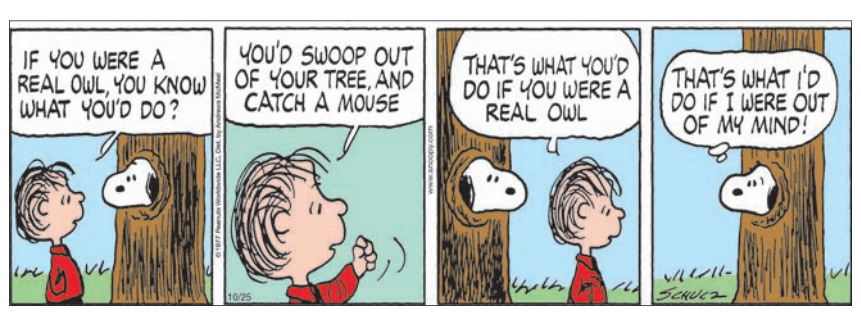


Mumbai: Veer Pahariya, who has been in news for his debut *Sky Force*, fell prey to social media memes after his dance from his debut film *Sky Force* went viral. While the newbie was called out by netizens for coming from a 'privileged' family of politicians and entrepreneurs, Pahariya has addressed these statements. Speaking to an entertainment portal,

Veer expressed his happiness over being born into his family as he said, "What can I do? It's my fortune that I was born into such a family. My dream has always been to become an artist. Should I kill myself and be reborn just to please them?", Veer went on to ask. The debutant insisted that he feels pride in being able to work as an actor, assuring that he would put every effort and would continue his

work with utmost sincerity. "All I can do is work with sincerity and prove that I deserve my place in this industry. Negativity doesn't bother me. Maybe some people are spreading hate because they haven't seen the film yet. If I haven't won hearts this time, I will work harder for my next film and turn this hate into love," he shared. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



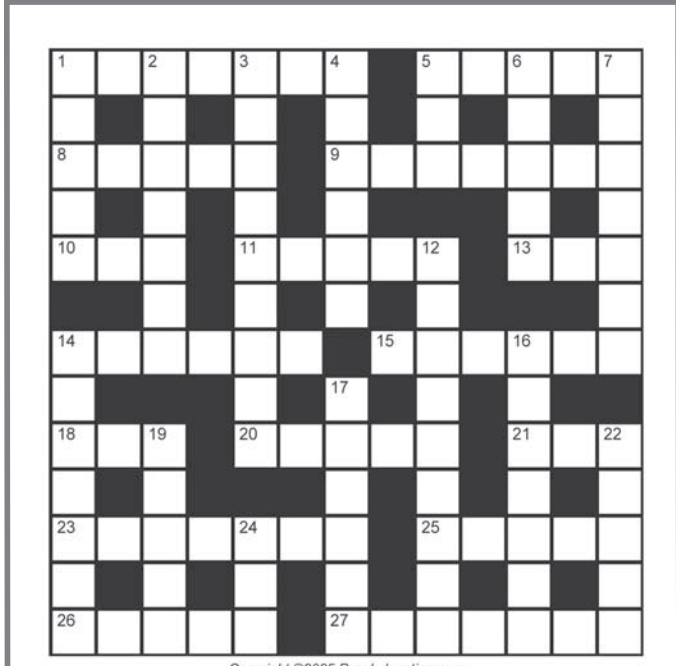
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



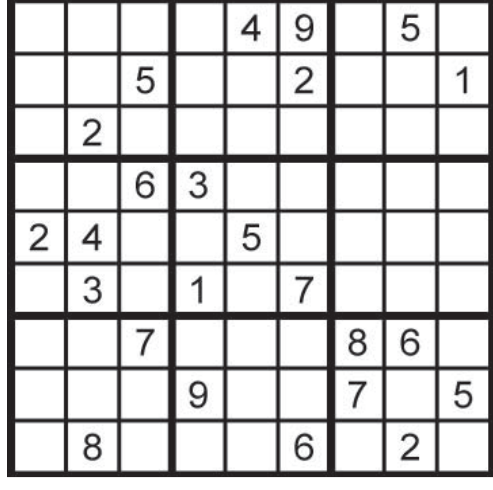
FUN POST CROSSWORD



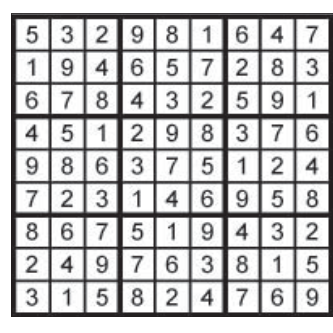
- Across**
- 1 Type of underwear or mug
 - 5 It's spotted in westerns
 - 8 Like some jokes
 - 9 Motley assortment
 - 10 Wee one
 - 11 Golf course
 - 13 Handbills
 - 14 Easily tamed birds
 - 15 Popular fundraiser
 - 18 Forty winks
 - 20 Moore of *The Saint* fame
 - 21 Guanabara Bay city
 - 23 Stomp on
 - 25 Raise up
 - 26 Rival of Paris
 - 27 Some poems
 - 4 Grand Prix site (2,4)
 - 5 Sidekick
 - 6 Martial arts expert
 - 7 Supervise
 - 12 Sand dollar (3,6)
 - 14 Large tropical carnivorous lizard
 - 16 Sneaky
 - 17 Means of escape
 - 19 Sacred hymn
 - 22 Solemn promises
 - 24 Maven
- Down**
- 1 Implied
 - 2 Unpredictable
 - 3 Pilgrim's transport

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

EMPOWERING THE MIDDLE CLASS EMPOWERING INDIA

Income Tax Department | Central Board of Direct Taxes

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)
- Limit for tax deduction on interest for senior citizens to be doubled from the present ₹ 50,000 to ₹ 1 lakh

For FAQs

CM: Rail allocation to help build 'Developed Odisha'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: A few minutes after Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced allocation of ₹10,599 crore for Odisha's railway sector development in the Union Budget 2025-26, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister, Union Finance Minister and Railway Minister for the budgetary provision and said it will help build a 'Developed Odisha'.

Taking to X, the Chief Minister said, "On behalf of the people of Odisha, I express my gratitude to Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi, Union Finance Minister Smt @nsitharaman and Union Railway Minister Shri @AshwiniVaishnaw for providing ₹10,599 crore to Odisha in the Railway Budget for the financial year 2025-26 to further strengthen the railway infrastructure of the state."

Majhi added, "Through this, the development of railways, improvement of infrastruc-

OPPN ALLEGES STATE OVERLOOKED IN UNION BUDGET 2025-26



₹2,379 crore allocated for the development of 59 stations across Odisha, including key hubs like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur and Rourkela

Kavach safety system has been sanctioned for 1,898 km of rail line, with ongoing work and tendering for 645 km

While six Vande Bharat trains are running across Odisha, connecting 17 districts and 25 unique stoppages, offering modern, high-speed travel for passengers, an Amrit Bharat Express, running between Malda Town in West Bengal and Bengaluru, connects five states, enhancing regional connectivity

ture, etc. will be accelerated which will strengthen the economic condition of the state and help in building a 'Developed Odisha'. #ViksitBharatBudget2025."

The Opposition BJD, however, criticised the 'double engine' government (one party both in state and Centre) for Odisha being allegedly neglected in the Union Budget 2025-26 including in the railway sector.

Addressing a press conference here, senior BJD leader Amar Patnaik said, "The Indian Railways earns maximum revenue from Odisha. However, the state is given less allocations."

"How does the state benefit from the double engine government? The allocation for railways sector was only ₹13 crore more than the previous year and there was no mention of Odisha's name in the

Union Budget this time while huge funds were given to poll-bound Bihar. The Union Budget 2025-26 is not an economic document, but a political document," Patnaik said.

The BJD leader said that the people have sent 20 BJP MPs and three of them are ministers in the Union government. "Still, the state is neglected and BJP MPs are silent," he alleged.

Earlier in the day, address-

ing a press conference through virtual mode from New Delhi, Vaishnaw said the Centre has allocated ₹10,599 crore for the railway sector development in Odisha — ₹13 crore more than the previous Budget allocation.

The Kavach safety system has been sanctioned for 1,898 km of rail line, with ongoing work and tendering for 645 km. A total of 1,000 locomotives will be integrated with the system to enhance safety, Vaishnaw said.

Apart from six Vande Bharat trains running across Odisha, offering modern, high-speed travel for passengers, an Amrit Bharat Express — running between Malda Town in West Bengal and Bengaluru — connects five states, enhancing regional connectivity, he added.

Vaishnaw said the budgetary allocation includes ₹2,379 crore for the development of 59 stations across Odisha, including key hubs like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur and Rourkela.

BJD organisational polls to be over by April first week



INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The organisational elections in the main Opposition party in the state, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), will be completed by the first week of April, a party leader said Monday.

BJD leader Pradip Kumar Amat Monday revealed this following the meeting of the party's coordination committee at Sankha Bhawan here.

The meeting was attended by senior leaders of the party to discuss various issues related to the organisational

during the meeting.

He said the process for organisational polls has begun following consultations with constituency-wise and district-wise leaders of the party.

"In the first week of February, District Returning Officers will be appointed. Later, Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) and other functionaries will be given appointment. The entire process of election of members to all the executive committees and state councils will be completed within the first week of April or before the traditional Odia New Year," Amat said.

He added that the newly elected members of the executive committees and state councils will later elect the party president.

The senior BJD leader also rubbished the rumours regarding the differences between the senior and junior leaders of the party.

He asserted that the party has no issues of rebellion.

The party had earlier dissolved all the state-level frontal organisations such as Biju Mahila Janata Dal, Biju Yuva Janata Dal, Biju Chhatra Janata Dal, Biju Shramika Samukhya, Legal Cell, Apravasi Cell in view of the forthcoming organisational election of BJD.

The elections to various party organisational bodies will be conducted in four phases.

The elections to various party organisational bodies will be conducted in four phases

'Centre, states can't reduce forest areas'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Supreme Court Monday restrained until further orders the Centre and the states from taking any step that would reduce forest areas.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and K Vinod Chandran was hearing a batch of petitions against the amendments to the 2023 forest conservation law.

"We will not permit anything which leads to reduction of forest area. We further order that until further orders, no steps will be taken by the Union of India and any state which will lead to reduction of forest land unless compensatory land is provided by the Centre and the states..." the bench said.

Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, said she would file response on the applications filed in the matter within three weeks.

A status report would also be placed before the court prior to the next date of hearing, added Bhati. One of the advocates ap-



GAME PREP: Sale of tickets for the upcoming ODI between India and England begins at OCA conference hall in Cuttack, Monday

500-bed trauma centre to come up at SCBMCH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: In a bid to provide emergency advance care to accident victims, a 500-bed trauma centre will be set up at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, Chief Minister's Office (CMO) sources said, Monday.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has approved the establishment of the facility, which will come up under Central government's Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana, they said.

"The Union government will bear 60 per cent of the construction cost, while the state government will provide the remaining 40 per cent," they added.

The Chief Minister had written to Union Health Minister

CM Mohan Charan Majhi has approved the establishment of the facility, which will be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana

JP Nadda July 2 last year, requesting him for setting up of a trauma centre at SCB.

The Chief Minister's approval came after a formal go-ahead from the Centre, sources added.

"A detailed project report will be prepared now for the execution of the 500-bed proposed facility," they pointed out.



HC asks theft accused to plant saplings while granting bail

AGENCIES

Cuttack, Feb 3: The Orissa High Court Monday granted bail to a person, accused of theft, on the condition that he will have to plant at least 200 saplings in and around his village and maintain those for two years.

This was one of several conditions for allowing bail to the accused. Justice SK Panigrahi allowed the bail application of Manas Ati of Jharsuguda district who was arrested by Kolabira Police December 25 last year for allegedly stealing at least six electric poles, worth over ₹2 lakh, of a power supply company.

Without going into the merits of the case and considering the fact that the bail of a co-accused in the case has already been enlarged, the high court directed the lower court to grant bail to Ati on some conditions.

The court also asked the accused to appear before the police every fortnight. "The petitioner (Manas Ati) shall plant 200 saplings of local varieties like mango, neem, tamarind etc. around his village over government land or community land or any private land," the high court said directing the local police, forest and revenue officials to assist Ati for plantation.

BLACK FLAG SHOWN TO RSS CHIEF

Congress demands release of arrested NSUI activists

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Opposition Congress Monday demanded release of eight National Students' Union of India (NSUI) activists, including Odisha unit president Udit Pradhan, arrested for showing a black flag to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat January 31 here.

The party made the demand after a delegation of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) met the arrested members of the NSUI, the student wing of Congress, at the Jharpada jail here.

Holding a press conference here after meeting the activists in the jail, senior Congress leader Jayadev Jena said, "When the NSUI members were staging demonstrations democratically, the BJP government, through its police force, arrested them and put them behind bars, which is completely against the spirit of our democratic system.

"The activists have not hurled stones or eggs or tomatoes. They have shown a black flag to RSS chief Mohan



Bhagwat, who has insulted the freedom fighters by making remarks on India's independence," he said.

On the first anniversary of Ram Temple's consecration, Bhagwat had said the day should be celebrated as 'Pratishtha Dwadashi', marking the establishment of India's 'true independence' after centuries of foreign invasions, Jena said.

"The student leaders were staging a protest to raise the voice of the youth who believe in secularism. But the BJP government tried to murder the democracy by putting them in jail," the Congress leader said.

The Congress leader urged the BJP government to drop the charges framed against the Congress workers and release them from jail. "Otherwise, the Congress party would hit the streets and take the fight to every corner of the state," he warned.

MoU signed for access to world-class edu in state



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed Monday between the School & Mass Education department and CK-12 Foundation to provide world-class educational resources to students, teachers, and schools in the state.

The MoU was formalised by School & Mass Education Commissioner-cum-Secretary Shalini Pandit and CK-12 founder and executive director Neeeru Khosla at Lok Seva Bhawan, with Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja present at the ceremony.

The MoU aims to offer free access to high-quality educational content and technology tools, empowering students

and teachers to explore diverse learning methods and enhance their teaching strategies. CK-12 Foundation is a not-for-profit educational technology organisation dedicated to providing universal access to great educational experiences, primarily for K-12 students.

Ahuja, addressing the gathering, emphasised the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in governance and education. He highlighted how AI is revolutionising educational systems by enhancing learning experiences and improving student outcomes. AI-powered tools enable personalised learning, adapting content to each student's pace, while also supporting teachers by automating tasks such as grading and les-

son planning.

Additionally, AI-driven analytics help educators identify learning gaps and provide tailored interventions for students in need of support.

The integration of AI also supports teachers by streamlining administrative duties, allowing them to focus more on student engagement and mentoring. AI-based platforms will offer personalised learning, virtual simulations, and real-time feedback, ensuring continuous skill development for both students and officials.

CK-12's educational resources will allow students in Odisha to learn at their own pace, with offline accessibility and content tailored to various subjects. The initiative will help bridge educational gaps and provide teachers with additional resources to improve their instruction, promoting equity and enhancing overall educational standards across the state.

The MoU reflects a significant step toward leveraging technology and AI to enhance the quality of education in Odisha and prepare students for the future.

OUTR earns top honours



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) received top honours at the Digital Bharat Education Conclave 2025 held in Mumbai recently.

OUTR was awarded the prestigious certificate of excellence as an "Outstanding Institute in Learning Initiatives and Skill Development," recognising its efforts in fostering academic excellence and promoting hands-on, industry-relevant learning.

University vice-chancellor Bibhuti Bhusan Biswal was also honoured with the "Iconic Leadership in Higher Education 2025" award for his visionary contributions to advancing educational standards and fostering innovation at the university.

KIMS 1st to introduce LOT CRT tech for heart failure treatment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) has become the first hospital in Odisha to introduce the groundbreaking LOT CRT (Left-sided Optimised Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy) technology for advanced heart failure treatment. This cutting-edge procedure aims to deliver better clinical outcomes and significantly improve the quality of life for patients suffering from heart failure.

The first LOT CRT procedure in the state was performed by Panchanan Sahoo, senior professor in the department of Cardiology, December 13 last year, under the guidance of renowned cardiologist Anindya Ghosh from Madras Medical Mission. Sahoo performed a second procedure at KIMS January 9, 2025.

LOT CRT improves the synchronisation between the



heart chambers, enhancing contraction and reducing

the risk of complications. Unlike traditional RV (Right Ventricular) pacing, which has a 20 per cent heart failure recurrence rate, LOT CRT uses precise placement of the pacing lead on the left side of the ventricular septum, improving heart contractions and normalising the QRS complex—an indicator of the heart's electrical activity.

Sahoo, a pioneer in electrophysiology (EP) and radiofrequency ablation (RFA) in Odisha, has been at the forefront of advancing cardiac care in the region. With the support of KIMS founder Achyuta Samanta, Sahoo established a state-of-the-art EP lab at KIMS, significantly raising the standards of cardiac treatment.

Along with EP specialists Anupam Jena and Milan Ghadei, Sahoo has successfully treated numerous patients using advanced EP and RFA procedures.

BMC reviews & strengthens mosquito control measures

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: A review meeting focused on mosquito control efforts within the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) area was held under the chairmanship of BMC Mayor Sulochana Das Monday. The meeting assessed the ongoing measures and discussed further actions to manage the mosquito menace effectively.

During the meeting, Mayor Das emphasised the importance of intensifying the anti-larvae program across all wards, directing officials to enhance human resources for the task. She announced that fogging operations



will now be carried out twice a day, with an increase in manpower to facilitate simultaneous fogging across the City. Both machines and human resources will be fully utilised for maximum efficiency in mosquito control.

The meeting also followed a high-level review session chaired earlier by Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, where officials were instructed to identify high-risk zones for

mosquito breeding within seven days. Minister Mahapatra directed that immediate action be taken within the following two days in these identified areas.

BMC Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil reported a positive trend, noting that the city has seen a substantial reduction in dengue cases this year. While nearly 4,000 dengue cases were recorded last year, only about 1,200 cases have been reported so far this year, thanks

to timely interventions.

Currently, BMC uses 20 auto-mounted fogging machines, 30 hand-held fogging machines, and two tractor-mounted fogging machines for regular fumigation across various wards. Minister Mahapatra called for the procurement of four additional tractor-mounted machines to strengthen the City's mosquito control efforts.

Furthermore, Daya West Canal, a known breeding ground, will be treated with mosquito oil weekly. Officials were also urged to monitor the quality of chemicals used for fogging and ensure proper treatment in residential areas, markets, and other high-traffic zones.

Kedar Ranjan Pandu appointed OPGC MD



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Kedar Ranjan Pandu has been appointed as the managing director (MD) of Odisha Power Generation Corporation Limited (OPGC), starting Monday. A Mechanical Engineering graduate from CET, Bhubaneswar, and an M Tech from IIT Delhi, Pandu brings over 39 years of experience in the power sector.

He began his career at NTPC Ltd. in 1986 as an engineering executive trainee and retired as the regional executive director of the south region. Over the years, he has served in various key roles at NTPC, including CEO at NTPC Tamil Nadu Energy Ltd., CEO at Meja Urja Nigam Ltd., and regional head at Bhubaneswar and Hyderabad.

Pandu was instrumental in the commissioning of two 800 MW supercritical units in Telangana, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Recognised for his contributions to energy efficiency, Pandu has received several prestigious awards, including the "Economic Times Energy Leadership Awards 2024," "CII Energy Efficiency Award-2024," and "APEX India Leader CEO of the Year Award 2024."

City CARE Hospitals hosts spine surgery workshop

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: CARE Hospitals, Bhubaneswar recently organised a pioneering live neuro and spine surgery training workshop, bringing together leading neurosurgeons and medical professionals from across India.

The event, held under the guidance of Atmaranjan Dash, a senior consultant in neurosurgery at CARE Hospitals and an alumnus of AIIMS New Delhi, focused on the latest advancements in Biportal Endoscopic Spine Surgery.

In his address, Dash highlighted the transformative impact of Biportal Endoscopic Spine Surgery, emphasising the need to equip surgeons with the expertise to leverage these innovations. "The advancements in Biportal Endoscopic Spine Surgery are revolutionising patient care," Dash said.

"It is essential that we train surgeons to utilise these cutting-edge techniques," he added.

The workshop, a testament to CARE Hospitals' commitment to medical education, featured live surgical demonstrations showcasing the precision of the minimally invasive procedure, which promises reduced recovery times, lower complication risks, and improved outcomes for patients.

Following the surgeries, participants engaged in interactive training sessions, gaining hands-on experience and discussing the nuances of the technique.

The event was further elevated by the presence of Padma Shri Ashok Mahapatra, a renowned neurosurgeon, who honoured those completing their Advanced Training Programme in Biportal Endoscopic Spine Surgery.

The workshop underscored healthcare institute's dedication to advancing neurosurgical practices and enhancing healthcare standards through continuous innovation and education.

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Bhub Manipal Hospitals expands care to Jajpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 3: Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar, is now offering its specialised healthcare services to the residents of Jajpur through its senior consultants at Tata Steel Medica Hospital, Kalinganagar.

This new initiative aims to provide expert medical care in cardiology, neurosurgery, and oncology, ensuring that patients in the region have access to top-tier treatment options without needing to travel far.

Senior consultant in Interventional Cardiology and director of the Cath Lab at Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar Lingaraj Nath will be available at Tata Steel Medica Hospital on the second Friday of every month from 10:30 am to 2 pm.

With over 16 years of experience, Nath specialises in coronary angioplasty, complex coronary interventions, and

The new initiative aims to provide expert medical care in cardiology, neurosurgery, and oncology, ensuring that patients in the region have access to top-tier treatment options

advanced cardiovascular care, including renal and peripheral angioplasty, and implantation of cardiac resynchronisation devices.

Consultant in Neurosurgery Deepak Kumar Parida will hold consultations on the first and third Tuesday of every month from 10:30am to 2pm.

Parida, with more than 15 years of expertise, specialises in neurotrauma, neuro-oncol-

ogy, spine surgery, and complex neurosurgical procedures. His areas of focus include surgeries for brain and spinal cord tumors, epilepsy, movement disorders, and pediatric neurosurgery.

Consultant in Medical Oncology Sachin Sekhar Biswal will be available on the third Thursday of every month from 10:30am to 2pm.

Biswal, a seasoned oncologist, is known for his work in treating solid organ and hematologic cancers, offering personalised treatment plans for patients.

Hospital director Saktimaya Mohapatra expressed enthusiasm about the initiative, stating, "We are excited to bring our expert doctors closer to the residents of Jajpur, ensuring that patients receive world-class care in cardiology, neurosurgery, and oncology."

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	32.4°	30.6°
Min Temp	21.2°	20.2°
Humidity	90%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later.		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	77,186.74	↓ 319.22
NIFTY	23,361.05	↓ 121.10
DOLLAR	87.33	↑ 0.56
EURO	89.57	↓ 0.62
GOLD	₹83,087	↑ ₹1,150
SILVER	₹93,244	↑ ₹244

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Jyosna Das, D/o Akulananda Nath, W/o. Anup Kumar Das, resident of at Plot No.574/1566, Tankapani Road, Near Celebration Sphere, Bankuala, PS. Badagada, Bhubaneswar, Dist. Khordha, Odisha - 751018, declare by this Affidavit CF No.68/Dt.28.01.2025. That now onwards I shall be known as JYOSHNA DAS instead of JOTCHHNA SHERMA for all purposes.

An initiative to rediscover ancient traditions, architecture, and cultural narratives of the region

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagatsinghpur, Feb 3: The inaugural edition of the Jagatsinghpur Heritage Walks (JHW) was successfully conducted on the auspicious occasion of Saraswati Puja, Sunday. The heritage walk commenced from the premises of Maa Sarala Temple, drawing participation from over 35 heritage enthusiasts from across the state.

JHW convener Srikanta Singh welcomed the participants and elaborated on the

mission and vision behind the initiative. He highlighted Jagatsinghpur's rich historical legacy, which dates back to the 6th century AD, and its association with the Prachi Valley Civilisation.

The region is known for its archaeological remains, ancient navigation networks, inland and overseas trade, fabric manufacturing, religious tolerance, and significant contributions to India's freedom struggle.

During the walk, the participants were addressed by Pandit Ranjan Panda, the chief priest of Maa Sarala Temple and author of Shri Chandri Sarala Madala, and Ajay Kumar Mishra, an eminent researcher and author of Chitramaheshwari. The speakers provided insights into



the historical and cultural significance of the site.

According to Sarala Das' Mahabharata, written in the 15th century, the Maa Sarala Chandi Temple was originally situated in the village of Sarola near

the Prachi and Chandrabhaga rivers. The deity was initially worshipped at Landa Deula Temple, where Lord Ganesh is now revered. The practice of Bali Ratha was discontinued in 1946.

Both speakers also discussed historical events related to the temple, including the attack by Kalapahada and a second assault during the reign of Aurangzeb. The current temple structure was reportedly built in two phases, with the main temple constructed around 1890-1895 and the installation of Parshwadevatas in 1914.

The visitors were also guided through the Mahabharata written by Sarala Das, which has been translated into Bengali and Telugu. Discussions covered the ongoing debate surrounding the various names attributed to Sarala Das and the interpretations of his Mahabharata. The chief priest further explained the daily rituals of the temple and the integration of Buddhism, Tantrism,

Shaivism, and Vaishnavism in the temple's religious practices.

Prominent participants in the first JHW included Dipak Samantrai, convener of Cuttack Heritage Walks (CHW), Sanjay Baral, convener of Puri Heritage Walks (PHW), Biswa Ranjan Dehury, a founding member of Dhenkanal Heritage Walks and Prabhanshu Santarai, Publisher of Divya Duta Publication. Local college students also actively took part in the event.

The success of this heritage walk marks a significant step toward promoting and preserving Jagatsinghpur's rich cultural heritage. Organisers expressed hope for future walks to engage more participants and further explore the historical landscape of the region.

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Mishap magnets: 20 killed on Keonjhar roads in Jan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 3: The rising number of deadly road accidents in Keonjhar continues to be a major concern with as many as 20 lives lost in January alone this year in the mineral-rich district. Despite the district administration's efforts, such as organising road safety awareness programmes, rallies, and enforcing measures against speeding, drunken and reckless driving, the roads have become increasingly unsafe with major mishaps becoming the order of the day.



Thousands have been injured, with many rendered physically disabled with amputated limbs. These tragic incidents have also left many widowed or orphaned.

A statistics of the mishaps and resultant loss of lives paints a macabre picture. According to official records, Keonjhar district witnessed 698 accidents in 2024, 754 in 2023, 659 in 2022, 680 in 2021 and 649 in 2020. In the last five years, 1,865 fatalities have been reported, further increasing public concern. In 2024, 393 people were killed on the district's roads and highways, in comparison to 395 in 2023, 378 in 2022, 345 in 2021, and 354 in 2020. More than half of these fatal accidents occurred on national and state highways.

Additional Superintendent of Police, Keonjhar, Manoj Rout, identified poor road conditions and drunken driving as the primary causes of road accidents. He noted that low-quality road construction and the movement of heavily loaded iron ore trucks have severely damaged highways, making them death traps.

Illegal truck parking on NH-20, NH-720, and NH-49 has also been a major factor contributing to accidents. The enforcement efforts to clear obstructions have been weak, especially in mining areas from Koira to Rimuli, leading to severe traffic congestion and accidents.

Social activist Sandip Pattanayak expressed concern over the frequent accidents, saying

that road blockades and protests following accidents disrupt daily life and emergency services in Keonjhar.

Four people lost their lives in just two days recently, and three others were injured in three separate accidents on NH-20, spreading panic among residents.

On Friday evening, two people were killed in a road accident near Sanabarabada village under Ghatagaon police limits.

Similarly, two more people lost their lives, and one sustained severe injuries Thursday evening after a speeding jeep hit their motorcycle near Sailang village under Ghasipura police limits. A Hyva truck then ran over them.

Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Gopal Krushna Das stated that authorities are conducting traffic awareness programmes, penalising reckless drivers, and taking action against overloaded vehicles. Efforts are also being made to clear illegally parked trucks obstructing the highways.

Despite these measures, the increasing number of accidents in Keonjhar remains a pressing issue, demanding immediate road infrastructure improvements and stronger enforcement of traffic rules.

REHAB CENTRE IN EYE OF STORM

Secy sent to police remand after serious allegations surfaced of torture and sexual abuse of mentally challenged inmates

POST NEWS NETWORK



Sambalpur, Feb 3: Amid serious allegations of inhuman torture and rape of inmates at a mental health rehabilitation facility in this town, police Monday took Harishchandra Das, the secretary of the Samartha Rehabilitation Centre in Netaji Nagar, into two-day remand.

The matter came to the fore after a video exposing the abuse went viral on social media platforms. The incident sparked outrage across the district and the state, prompting swift police action.

The district administration swung into action and ordered

a thorough investigation. The police are actively probing allegations of abuse and other illegal activities at the facility. As part of the investigation, Das has been placed under remand for interrogation to uncover the truth behind the allegations.

Police believe this will help expose his alleged wrongdoings under the garb of public service. Moreover, this will uncover the mystery shrouding the alleged rape of an inmate and deaths of six other inmates in the facility.

Sambalpur Additional Su-

Mishra confirmed that all complaints received against Das will be investigated thoroughly.

The Samartha Rehabilitation Centre, affiliated to Adarsha Shishu Mandir since 2022, was allowed to accommodate 50 inmates. However, reports indicate that 30 people—both men and women—were housed in highly unhygienic conditions, often locked inside two rooms. Allegations also surfaced that apart from physical and mental torture, the inmates faced sexual abuse.

An inmate accused Das of rape and forced abortion, adding to the severity of the case. Another major concern is the reported deaths of six-seven residents, for which no proper records were maintained or post-mortem examinations conducted. This has raised further suspicions, with calls for a deeper investigation into the deaths.

Authorities are expected to intensify their inquiry, ensuring justice for the victims and accountability for those responsible

250 govt employees renounce ration cards after state's whip



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, Feb 3: Around 250 government employees in Subarnapur district have returned their ration cards, according to district administration data received by Monday evening.

The individuals returning their cards include lecturers, teachers, nursing officers, constables, and panchayat executive officers (PEOs). Officials expect the number to increase in coming days. The move came after the state Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra cracked the whip on ineligible beneficiaries receiving free rice with ration cards and warned of stringent action if they do not return their cards.

The Central and state governments provide free rice to impoverished individuals to combat hunger. However, reports suggest that well-off people have exploited the system, taking advantage of benefits meant for the poor. Some government employees and taxpayers allegedly obtained ration cards under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the state's food security programme through fraudulent means.

In Subarnapur district, government employees have been accused of illegally obtaining ration cards meant for the underprivileged and collecting free ration every month. A report titled "809 government employees grabbed ration cards" was recently published in a premier Odia daily,

which sparked strong reactions among the local intelligentsia in the district following publication.

There has been growing public demand for strict action against government employees misusing the free rice distribution scheme meant for the poor. The issue has drawn administrative attention, creating panic among ineligible beneficiaries, the Block Development Officers (BDOs) of six blocks in the district said. In response, several officials at the district level have begun publicly disclosing the names of those returning their ration cards.

Despite earning monthly salaries ranging from ₹40,000 to ₹1 lakh, several government employees have fraudulently obtained ration cards meant for low-income individuals and those living below the poverty line. Many of them have been collecting free rice for years, while genuinely needy people in the district struggle to access government food security programs.

Some officials employed outside the district in established organisations have falsely claimed to be poor to avail of subsidised rice. In Durguripali block alone, 176 government employees were found holding ration cards, of whom 46 have returned their cards. Similarly 37 in Binika block, two in Binika town, 35 in Birmaharajpur block, 21 in Sonepur block, 21 in Subarnapur town, 37 in Tarbha block, eight in Tarbha town, and 32 government officials in Ulunda block have returned their ration cards.

Following media reports, government authorities have launched an investigation. A probe team, including PEOs and supply assistants, has been formed. They are preparing lists of ineligible beneficiaries and collecting applications for the voluntary surrender of ration cards.

Rourkela airport expansion gains traction after CM visit



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 3: The prospect of a full-fledged airport in Rourkela gained momentum following Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's recent visit to the Steel City. Majhi held discussions with Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) officials February 1 regarding the transfer of land for the airport expansion.

The Chief Minister met with RSP Director-in-Charge Alok Verma, and the meeting was deemed "very satisfactory," according to party spokesperson Dhiren Senapati. Majhi instructed RSP to return the required land to the state government, which will then be handed over to the Airport Authority of India (AAI) for the expansion project.

meeting will soon take place involving the Chief Secretary, Transport Secretary, Transport Minister, district administration, AAI, and SAIL officials to streamline the land transfer process. Once the land is transferred, AAI will determine the exact area needed for the project, including runway expansion, a terminal building, and a night landing system.

Local demands for a better airport have been persistent, with the Rourkela Airport Action Committee (RAAC) leading protests. Activist Mukhtikanta Biswal went on an indefinite hunger strike January 26 to press for these improvements. Biswal and his accomplices were removed by police before Majhi's arrival and later admitted to Rourkela General Hospital, where Biswal ended his fast.

In guise of farmer, Collector uncovers 'irregularities' in paddy procurement

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhadrak, Feb 3: The District Collector of Bhadrak, Dilip Routrai, has claimed that he found irregularities at a paddy procurement centre in Dhamnagar block, after he went there in the guise of a farmer.

A show-cause notice has been issued to the officer concerned, Routrai told reporters.

Dressed in casual attire and sporting a face mask, Routrai parked his vehicle at a distance and walked to the Katasahi mandi in Bhadrak district Saturday, he said.

The Collector said he was prompted to take the step following allegations of 'katni-chhatni' - undue reduction of paddy prices upon grain quality assessment. To verify the charges, Routrai made an attempt to sell paddy at the mandi, but the cooperative official in charge informed him that almost 8 kg of paddy would be deducted as wastage. "Repeated allegations of 'katni-chhatni' by farmers compelled me to go in disguise to know the truth" he said.

Routrai also appealed to all paddy purchasing officers to refrain from "such irregularities". "Strong action would be taken against them if found guilty of such practices," he added.

Bank of India E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

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

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

Sl. No.	CHAKEISIANI BRANCH, PH.:7978881718 / Name & Address of Borrower/Co-Applcant / Total Dues	Description of the Properties	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	Borrower: Mr. Durga Sankar Parida, S/o: Mr. Dhirendranath Parida / Co-Applcant: Mrs. Baisakhi Parida, W/o.: Mr. Durga Sankar Parida, Both are At: Meria Bazar, Near UP School, Cuttack, Odisha-753001 / Total Dues: ₹19,30,732/- + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid.	Residential Land & Building pertaining to Khata No.: 686/1527, Plot No.: 434/7546, Area: 0.0221 Dec. i.e. 960 Sqft., having KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Adalia, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar Police Station, SRO/Tahasil: Cuttack, Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha, in the name of Mrs. Baisakhi Parida, W/O.: Mr. Durga Sankar Parida, Bounded by East: Sub Plot No.: 25, West: Sub Plot No.: 5, North: Plot No.: 433, South: Approach Road	₹17,06,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹1,70,600/- / ₹ 50,000/-
2.	Borrower: Mrs. Mandakini Parida, W/o.: Mr. Purna Chandra Parida / Co-Applcant: Mr. Romio Ranjan Parida, Both are At/P.O.: Gopalpur, P.S.: Chandabali, Dist.: Bhadrak, Odisha-756133 / Total Dues: ₹26,00,374/- + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid.	Residential Land & Building pertaining to Khata No.: 686/1500, Plot No.: 434/7528, Area: Ac.0.0551 Dec. i.e. 2400 sqft., having KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Adalia, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar Police Station, SRO/Tahasil: Cuttack, Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha, in the name of Mrs. Mandakini Parida, W/O.: Mr. Purna Chandra Parida, Bounded by East: Sub Plot No.: 6, West: Sub Plot No.: 3, North: Plot No.: 433, South: Approach Road	₹33,55,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹3,35,500/- / ₹ 50,000/-

Date & Time of E-Auction: 10.03.2025 From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

Last Date & Time for submission of EMD & Documents: 10.03.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 07.03.2025 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

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

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. This is also a 30 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com>

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 04.02.2025

Authorised Officer, Bank of India

UCO BANK ZONAL OFFICE: POSSESSION NOTICE

C-2, Ashok Nagar, Unit-II, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751009, Ph.: 0674-2620423

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

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the UCO Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the borrowers, co-borrowers & guarantors to repay the amount as mentioned below within 60 days from the date of the said Notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers, co-borrowers & guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the property/ies described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned below. The borrowers, co-borrowers & guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank for the amount plus interest plus expenses thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.

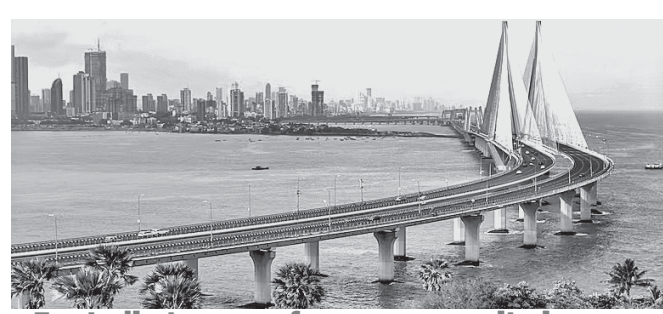
BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Demand / Possession Notice Date	Description of the Immovable Property/ies
BAJRAKBATI BRANCH / Borrowers: 1) Mr. Pramod Kumar Lenka, S/o- Dibakar Lenka, 2) Mrs. Saishila Priyadarshini, W/o- Mr. Swadhin Barik, Both are at Address: Postal Colony, Kalyani Nagar, Cuttack-753010.	₹ 7,93,491.91 as on 23.10.2024 (inclusive of interest up to 23.10.2024) + further interest & other charges thereon	23.10.2024 / 31.01.2025	Immovable property standing in the name of Mr. Pramod Kumar Lenka, S/o- Dibakar Lenka, At: Plot No.: 130, Khata No.: 658/10, Mouza: Nuapada, PS: Cuttack Sadar, PS No. 55, Dist.: Cuttack, Area: Ac.0.020dec., KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by North: Narayan Parida, West: Narayan Parida, South: Pramod Kumar Lenka, East: Narayan Parida.
BAJRAKBATI BRANCH / Borrowers: 1) M/s Salla Traders, Prop.: Swadhin Barik, 2) Mr. Swadhin Barik, S/o- Alekha Chandra Barik, Both are at Address: At: 61, C-11, Kanika Chhak, Keonjhar Colony, Tulasipur, Cuttack-753008 / Guarantor: Mrs. Nutan Priyadarshini Barik, W/o- Mr. Abanikanta Nayak, At/PO: Badasada, PS: Khamar, Angul-759118.	₹ 8,39,292.49 as on 24.10.2024 (inclusive of interest up to 31.10.2023 in the A/c. of M/s Salla Traders & 30.06.2024 in the A/c. of Swadhin Barik) + further interest & other charges thereon	24.10.2024 & 18.10.2024 / 31.01.2025	Immovable property standing in the name of Mrs. Nutan Priyadarshini Barik, W/o- Mr. Abanikanta Nayak, At: Plot No.: 1100/3016, Khata No.: 247/736, Mouza: Uttampur, PS: Cuttack Sadar, PS No. 37, Dist.: Cuttack, Area: Ac.0.038dec., KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by North: Guru Charan Swain, West: Road, South: Guru Charan Swain, East: Guru Charan Swain.
GOPALPUR BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. Niranjan Sahu, S/o- Late Raghunath Sahu / Co-Borrower: Mrs. Santilata Sahu, W/o- Niranjan Sahu, Both are at Bander, Gopalpur, Dist.: Ganjam, PIN-761002, Odisha.	₹ 17,27,799.22 as on 19.07.2024 + further interest & other charges thereon from 30.11.2023	07.03.2024 / 01.02.2025	Site an area of residential house situated in Village/Mouza: Ulaputuri under Tahasil: Chhatapur, vide Khata No.: 263/456, Plot No.: 1054/2188 for an area of Ac.01.017dec. under Gharabari, Classification measuring: East-West Width- 14.3ft., North-South Length- 51ft., within the area of Dist. Sub-Registrar Office, Chhatapur, Dist.: Ganjam, Property is in the name of Mrs. Santilata Sahu, W/o- Niranjan Sahu, Bounded by: North: House of S. Tateya, East: House of Chintamani Behera, South: Road, West: House of Pandab Behera.
BERHAMPUR BRANCH / Borrowers: 1) Mr. Upendra Kumar Behera, Prop. of M/s Sri Sai Trader, 2) Mrs. Banita Behera, W/o- Upendra Kumar Behera, Both are At: Baikuntha Nagar, Second Lane, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam.	₹ 44,10,294.92 as on 27.11.2024 + further interest & other charges thereon	27.11.2024 / 01.02.2025	All parts and parcels of Land & Building standing in the name of Mrs. Banita Behera, W/o- Upendra Kumar Behera situated at Mouza: Haridakhandi, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam, Khata No.: 294/2187, Plot No.: 1676/2299, Area: Ac.0.038dec. Bounded by- North: Lane, East: Road, South: Land of Damayanti Sahu & Others, West: Land & House of Kedamath Sahu.

Date: 03.02.2025, Place: Bhubaneswar

Sd/- Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

FOCUS ECONOMY

A DIFFERENT GROWTH PATH



For India to move from a per capita income of \$2,697 today to a per capita income of \$23,380 (ILO's benchmark) requires a different growth path. More of the same approach will not work

that the government will have to change radically to expand fiscal space in the economy. Or the financial constraints will limit public expenditure on social sectors including employment and on development.

Overall, India needs 7 to 8% growth for 25 years continuously to become a developed economy. This does not seem to be plausible or possible at present. It appears that the government is neither able to define the term Viksit Bharat clearly and in detail nor has it been able to design the pathway to Viksit Bharat. For India to move from a per capita income of \$2,697 today to a per capita income of \$23,380 (ILO's benchmark) requires a different growth path. More of the same approach will not work.

The Economic Survey has highlighted trust deficit as a major obstacle to our development, but the budget has nothing to say about how this deficit would be removed. The government wants to ensure that "no one should be left behind" but there is nothing in the budget to assure us of this. The rising inequalities in the country have been blatantly ignored. The concerns of a smaller, more affluent section have been covered while everyone else including the poorest are subject to indirect taxes - income tax is reformed, but we have no idea how GST will be!

The problem really is that there is no open and free discussion on any policy or programme; there are no objective evaluations of these policies and programmes by experts. Without this openness we will not know what exactly is meant by Viksit Bharat and how to reach there.

The writer is a Professor of Economics at the Centre For Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad, and Associate, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, New York.

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The Indian economy today is facing serious problems from the international and domestic fronts. That is the real situation juxtaposed against the vision of Viksit Bharat. Also, the dream of Viksit Bharat 2047 is less than 25 years away. One therefore expected another 1991 moment in this budget. However, the budget has disappointed badly.

While this disappointment is on many fronts, there are some high points. One high point is the relaxation in the income tax rates - no tax up to ₹12 lakh personal income. This will definitely increase the demand in the economy and give a push to growth. About ₹1 lakh crore will be added to the economy through this tax relaxation, and that will have a good multiplier impact. However, the impact will be limited and within our ₹330 lakh crore economy. Around 3.5 crore income tax payers cannot make radical changes in the demand.

Another positive point of the budget is its focus on agriculture, as it is "the key driver of the economy." Programmes like the national mission on high-yielding seeds, Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana, promotion to pulses, and cotton mission are proposed in the budget. However, the funds allotted to agriculture have increased only marginally. The impact of these new programmes will be only marginal if at all.

Again, the focus on "investing on people" in the budget is also desirable. However, the funds allotted to health and education has not shown any significant increase. Though several schemes have been presented, the matching funds are not made available. In the case of education, ₹125638 crore was allotted in the 2024-2025 budget and ₹128650 crore for 2025-2026 - this shows a decline in real terms. Similarly, the increase in the budget for health to Rs

98311 crore also implies only a marginal increase in real terms. Though covering gig workers under insurance and increasing seats in medical education are good steps in the right direction, without additional funds, these programmes may not be effective. It also must be added that the government's focus on insurance has resulted in the neglect of public health services. What people want are good public health services, and not just insurance, which is accessible only when there is hospitalisation. As regards primary health services, the budget allocation to the National Health mission has declined in real terms. It is argued that state governments are expected to spend more on these two sectors; however, the reality is that most states are not spending enough on these sectors. Without strong human capital, economic growth on one hand and the wellbeing of the people on the other hand will suffer badly.

A careful scrutiny of the budget shows that the funds allotted to tribal development, social welfare and rural development including schemes like MGNREGA have declined in nominal or real terms. Also, funds allotted to the PM Poshan Yojana, Swachhata Mission, PM Sadak Yojana,

fisheries, Jal Jivan Mission, PM Urban Awas Yojana and many other such schemes and programmes which concern the uplift of poorer and weaker segments have declined in nominal or real terms. In retrospect, the funds allotted to these programmes also appear to be highly underspent. This clearly reveals the actual lack of concern of the government for pro-poor programmes.

The government has not been successful in the field of providing productive employment. However, it took a positive step in the last budget by announcing apprenticeship programmes along with internship. But the government could spend only ₹300 crore out of ₹2000 crore allotted to this scheme last year. This perhaps reveals the government's actual low commitment to this field. This year again, the government has decided to promote the scheme. Let us hope that they are more committed this year.

Given the financial constraints (arising from huge financial incentives to the corporate sector, writing off their debts and frequently their tax evasion) on the one hand and pressure to reduce the fiscal deficit on the other hand, the budget has announced a fiscal ratio of 4.4 % this year. It is clear



Indira Hirway

OVERALL, INDIA NEEDS 7 TO 8% GROWTH FOR 25 YEARS CONTINUOUSLY TO BECOME A DEVELOPED ECONOMY. THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE PLAUSIBLE OR POSSIBLE AT PRESENT

Gaza: Stark Choice

Palestinians are returning home to northern Gaza, though hardly any structure of their homes still stands. Their hospitals, schools and other basic infrastructure have been reduced to rubble in the wake of incessant and systematic bombardment by Israeli forces. Yet, in the midst of destruction, scenes of tearful reunions are being witnessed almost daily since the cease-fire has come into force. The most telling fact about the return of a fragile peace in the area is that the devastated millions of Palestinians would rather rebuild their homes from the ruins than seek new settlements in Egypt, Jordan or anywhere else as proposed by US President Donald Trump. If forced to accept, that would be a repetition of the "nakba" - catastrophe - that the Palestinians had faced way back in 1948 when Israel was recreated.

It is also significant that Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, is a real estate investor and a donor of Trump's election campaign, who was in Gaza to assess the ground situation. The real intent of Trump's proposal is clouded in mystery. No one is certain but it may be possible Trump is trying to please the Far-Right ruling Israeli faction posing as a friend of the displaced millions of Palestinians uprooted from their homes in Gaza for the past few months' of Israeli depredation. There is also speculation whether in the name of rebuilding Trump wants to secure contracts for US real estate business in which his family has a large share. At the end of his trip to the region 30 January, Witkoff said "almost nothing left" of Gaza and rebuilding the war-ravaged enclave could take 10 to 15 years. According to his report, people are moving north of Gaza to get back to their homes and see what happened. There is neither water nor electricity there.

His assessment comes days after Trump floated the idea that some Arab nations should get involved with and build "housing at a different location where they (Gazans) can maybe live in peace for a change." Any suggestion that Palestinians leave Gaza, territory they want to form part of an independent state, has been anathema to the Palestinian leadership for generations and repeatedly rejected by neighbouring Arab states since the Gaza war began in October 2023. Witkoff's claim that he had not discussed with Trump the idea of moving Palestinians from Gaza seems to have been meant for public consumption alone.

Also interesting to note is the fact that none of the neighboring Moslem countries that were shedding tears for Palestinian brethren, has come forward with tangible assurances, leave aside actual funds, for the reconstruction of the hugely damaged enclave.

It is anybody's guess how long it would take to rebuild Gaza and that cannot be an excuse for displacing the Palestinians who suspect it to be part of the old game of driving them away from their homes, never to get back. A UN damage assessment released this month showed that clearing over 50 million tons of rubble left in the aftermath of Israel's bombardment could take 21 years and cost up to \$1.2 billion. The debris is believed to be contaminated with asbestos, with some refugee camps struck during the war known to have been built with the material. It is also likely that the rubble may have human remains. The Palestinian Ministry of Health estimates that 10,000 bodies are missing under the debris which is quite likely.

The displaced Palestinians are mostly on foot, travelling through areas now majorly in ruins after 15 months of war between Israel and Hamas. About a million people were ordered out of northern Gaza as the Israeli offensive began in October 2023 following Hamas' attack on Israel.

While the terrible wrongs Hamas has done can never be condoned, its assertion that the Palestinians returning to their homes en masse is a repudiation against any suggestion of mass deportation is no exaggeration. Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif al-Qanou claims the scenes represent another failure of the occupation in achieving the goals of the war of extermination and destruction. It may indeed be a message of defiance to any new attempt to displace them but the cost to the innocents who never had anything to do with the Hamas as an organization is mind boggling. Trump's advice might be the best way forward for inhabitants of Gaza. Either they move their homes and lives far away or actively act against terror outfits like Hamas and Hezbollah. This stark choice now befalls the people of Gaza.

WISDOM CORNER

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They came through you but not from you and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

A man's work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened.

ALBERT CAMUS

We will be more successful in all our endeavors if we can let go of the habit of running all the time, and take little pauses to relax and re-center ourselves. And we'll also have a lot more joy in living.

THICH NHAT HANH

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1789: George Washington was elected to serve as the first U.S. president by a unanimous vote in the first electoral college.
- 1861: The Confederate States of America are established. 6 slave states met in Montgomery, Alabama to form the Confederacy, which lasted only until 1865.
- 1938: Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, a classic portrayal of small-town American life, made its Broadway debut.
- 1945: During the final stages of World War II, the Yalta Conference opened with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin meeting to plan the final defeat and occupation of Nazi Germany.
- 1948: Ceylon (Sri Lanka) proclaims independence within the British Commonwealth. Since the 16th century, the island had been colonized by Portugal, the Netherlands, and Great Britain.

LOL

FREE HAIRCUT

A man and a little boy entered a barbershop together. After the man received the full treatment - shave, shampoo, manicure, haircut, etc. - he placed the boy in the chair. "I'm goin' to buy a green tie to wear for the parade," he said. "I'll be back in a few minutes." When the boy's haircut was

completed the man still returned, the barber said, "Looks like your daddy's forgotten all about you." "That wasn't my daddy," said the boy. "He just walked up, took me by the hand and said, 'Come on, son, we're gonna get a free haircut!'"



SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Making of a climate turning point

Later this year, Brazil will preside over the COP30 in Belém. It is a significant responsibility. As the world marks the tenth anniversary of the Paris climate agreement, there is a heightened sense of urgency about global warming, which has morphed from a future threat into a present emergency. On current trends, the cap on global warming envisioned by the Paris agreement - 1.5° Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels - will not be achieved, and holding this COP in Belém will highlight the pressure on the Amazon, one of the world's most beautiful regions, but also a climate tipping point.

Despite scientists' clear warnings that we are dangerously close to exceeding the planet's limits, emissions records continue to be broken. In 2023, the world generated 57.1 billion tons of greenhouse gases, leading to a carbon dioxide surface concentration of 420 parts per million. The last time Earth's CO2 concentration was so high was 14 million years ago. The Paris agreement's first decade helped the world to redirect the business-as-usual trajectory from an increase of 4-5°C by the end of

this century. As matters stand, if every country meets its 2030 climate targets, the global average temperature is expected to increase 2.6°C. Our role now, at COP30, is to create a roadmap for the next decade to accelerate implementation and to increase ambition to get us to 1.5°C.

Unfortunately, emissions and temperatures have continued to climb since 2015, and the geopolitical landscape has become more unstable and fragmented, with ongoing wars in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, in addition to sharply deteriorating relations between the United States and China. International fora have become political battlegrounds, with little attention paid to the topic under discussion.

This shift was apparent at COP29 - dubbed the "finance COP" - in Baku, Azerbaijan. Some key developed-country governments adopted positions that served their short-term national interests, with no regard for the global consequences. Ultimately, delegates left Baku with an agreement on carbon-market standards and a pledge by rich countries to provide \$300 billion annually in climate finance for developing countries.

Hopes are high that COP30 will be a turning point for climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. With a global stocktake completed at COP28 and the Paris agreement rulebook finalised at COP29, the main task in Belém will be to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements. Our goal at COP30 is to translate promises into practice.

But for that to happen, countries must deliver ambitious and detailed nationally determined contributions (NDCs) ahead of COP30. Brazil, the UK, and the UAE have set a high bar with their updated NDCs, which were submitted at COP29. Now other countries must rise to the challenge. At last year's G20 summit, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva urged member countries to bring forward their climate-neutrality targets from 2050 to 2040 or 2045, while UN Secretary-General António Guterres pushed for implementation of the new targets set in response to the global stocktake.

To enable developing countries to overcome the barriers to pursuing a low-carbon development path - namely, unsustainable debt burdens and high borrowing costs - the global financial architecture must sup-

port climate goals. In Belém, we must establish a credible strategy to mobilize \$1.3 trillion for developing countries and create a plan to align financial flows - public and private, national and international - with the Paris agreement targets.

Given the increasing frequency and severity of climate shocks, adaptation has become a top priority, especially in vulnerable communities. Focusing on adaptation does not imply reduced mitigation efforts. For much of the developing world, mitigation and adaptation happen simultaneously, as part of development.

Every country must come to Belém committed to developing and implementing ambitious national goals, and to creating international enabling conditions that accelerate climate action that leaves no one behind. Only then can we make COP30 the climate turning point the world needs.

The writer is National Secretary for Climate Change at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Brazil.

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Ana Toni

FOR MUCH OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD, MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION HAPPEN SIMULTANEOUSLY, AS PART OF DEVELOPMENT

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



No strategy for inflation

Sir, Despite some positive measures, the Union Budget 2025-26 falls short of expectations in some key areas. There is no mention in the budget on structural reforms, there are no offers of incentives to spur private sector investment, and importantly the budget has failed to introduce any new healthcare scheme. Another major slip-up is the lack of a clear strategy to tackle inflation which is hitting the common man hard. While the Economic Survey projected an easing of inflationary pressures, the budget did not outline concrete measures to address the root causes of rising prices. In spite of the fact that inflation continues to squeeze the middle class, the Union government is yet to present a robust plan to mitigate its impact. Also, expectations were high for significant investments in railway modernisation, electrification, and new routes. However, the sector has received an allocation of ₹2.55 lakh crore in FY 25-26 when compared with ₹2.62 lakh crore allocated for the previous financial year. This underwhelming budgetary support is likely to slow down the railway expansion projects and impact key stakeholders..

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

UDAN success

Sir, Over the years, though many tier-2 cities were connected by private domestic airlines, tier-3 cities still had a long way to go. The Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament has said that 619 new air routes and 88 additional airports were connected through the Centre's "Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik" (UDAN) scheme, also called the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) that saw the light of day in 2016 with a whopping 45,000 million budgetary provision for a period of 10 years. Aimed at providing fillip to 425 unserved and underserved airports by targeting 1000 routes, it was broadly formulated with a 80:20 ratio of Centre: State funding. Though Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has cut the allocation to UDAN in her budget, her announcement that 120 new airports will be connected by air over the next decade is salutary.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

DELHI POLLS: CAMPAIGN ENDS



Union Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah with Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva during a public meeting for Delhi Assembly elections, at Jangpura



In this image released by @AamAdmiParty via X, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal during a public meeting at Mangolpuri in Delhi



In this image provided by AICC, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi during a door-to-door campaign for the Delhi Assembly poll, at Jangpura in Delhi

No respite for fisherfolk Illegal immigrations reshaping Delhi's demographics: JNU report

Since June 16, 2024, the Sri Lankan Navy has detained 425 Tamil Nadu fishermen and seized 58 fishing boats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 3: Ten fishermen from Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of Monday for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

Tamil Nadu coastal police officials confirmed that the fishermen were detained, and their mechanised boat was seized by Sri Lankan authorities. The arrested fishermen, along with their boat, were taken to Jaffna, Sri Lanka. They will be produced before a local court and remanded to judicial custody.

This incident follows a series of similar arrests in recent weeks. On Sunday, January 26, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 34 fishermen from Rameswaram and Thangachimadam and seized three fishing boats.

The detained fishermen were presented before the Killinochchi Court, which remanded them in custody until February 5. In another incident Tuesday, January 28, as many as 13 more fishermen from Rameswaram were arrested, and their mechanised boat was also seized.

Fishermen's associations have strongly condemned these repeated arrests, calling them a serious threat to their livelihood. In response to the ongoing detentions, Tamil



Nadu fishermen staged a large-scale protest in Rameswaram Friday, January 31. Fishermen and their families participated in significant numbers, demanding immediate intervention from the Centre.

Antony John, a fishermen's association leader from Rameswaram, expressed deep concern over the escalating arrests. "The Sri Lankan Navy is arresting our fishermen regularly. On Tuesday (January 28), they even fired at our men, injuring two of them. This has to stop," he said.

John further lamented that fishing in the Palk Bay is no longer safe, as fishermen are not only losing their livelihoods but also their boats and fishing equipment to Sri Lankan authorities. Fishermen's leaders have urged the Indian government to take swift diplomatic ac-

The recurring arrests and boat seizures have severely impacted the livelihoods of our fishermen. Swift diplomatic intervention is essential to safeguard their rights

MK STALIN | CM, TAMIL NADU

tion. Their primary demands include immediate release of detained fishermen from Sri Lankan prisons. Fishermen association leaders have also demanded the retrieval of impounded fishing boats and a bilateral agreement with Sri Lanka to permanently resolve the ongoing issue.

Fishermen's associations across Tamil Nadu have also written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting urgent intervention to prevent mid-sea arrests and protect coastal communities' livelihoods. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin had earlier written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar January 12, 2025, urging diplomatic intervention to secure the release of detained fishermen. In his letter, CM Stalin highlighted the economic distress caused by repeated arrests and boat seizures.

In response, S Jaishankar re-

portedly raised the issue with Sri Lankan President Anura Dissanayake during his visit to India. However, despite these diplomatic discussions, the arrests have continued, fueling frustration among the fishing community.

The frequent arrests have sparked widespread protests, with fishermen accusing both the Union and State governments of failing to provide a lasting solution. Rajagopal CM, a fishermen's leader from Thangachimadam, criticised the government's inaction, stating that many detained fishermen remain in Sri Lankan prisons, leaving their families in severe financial distress.

Fishermen's leaders also pointed out that since 2018, around 270 trawlers have been impounded, significantly affecting their ability to sustain their livelihood.

With protests planned across coastal districts, fishermen's associations continue to demand an immediate and lasting resolution through diplomatic efforts.

The report highlights that the presence of undocumented migrants, primarily from Bangladesh and Myanmar, has disrupted the city's economy and strained resources

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



The report also underscores the severe strain placed on Delhi's public infrastructure, including healthcare, education, water, and electricity. Unauthorised settlements have resulted in overcrowded neighbourhoods and unplanned urban expansion, contributing to environmental degradation.

"Illegal immigration to Delhi has significantly altered the city's demographic landscape, with a large influx of migrants from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. These migrants often settle in overcrowded neighbourhoods such as Seelampur, Jamia Nagar, Zakir Nagar, Sultanpuri, Mustafabad, Jafraabad, Dwarka, Govindpuri, and many more, where they strain resources and disrupt local social cohesion," the report states.

The influx of these migrants is often facilitated by brokers and agents who help them cross the border, offering fake identification documents in exchange for money. This practice undermines legal systems and electoral integrity, as ma-

ny of these migrants can secure fake voter registrations. "The environmental impact of migrant settlements includes unregulated waste disposal, which contributes to pollution and public health hazards. Migrants' involvement in informal housing markets has led to the proliferation of unsafe and unauthorised housing, posing risks to both residents and the environment," said the report.

"Illegal immigration has contributed to the proliferation of criminal networks, which exploit vulnerable migrants for activities such as smuggling and trafficking," it added. As per the report, political patronage has played a crucial role in enabling migration. "Intelligence reports suggest that local political leaders in West Bengal have provided citizenship documents to migrants, thereby creating a captive vote bank."

It also explained that efforts to deport illegal immigrants are often delayed by bureaucratic challenges and the lack of cooperation from migrants' home countries.

Elections again, 2020 Delhi riot survivors look back at unkept vows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The trust is gone. Five years after riots in northeast Delhi, that is the oft-heard refrain as locals adapt to their changed, polarised neighbourhoods. Shops and houses that were engulfed in flames have been rebuilt but reconstructing lives is quite another thing.

In Shiv Vihar, one of the places most impacted by the communal violence following clashes between supporters and opponents of the Citizenship Amendment Act, the memories linger - somewhat like the ever-present stench from a large



drain that seems never to have been cleaned.

"The area is calm now, but the trust is gone. People live in their own spaces without disputes, but they no longer trust each other,"

said Harpal Singh, a 68-year-old shop owner who moved to the locality 30 years ago.

"When I moved here, this place was predominantly Hindu. Gradually, Muslim families

also started settling here. Now, about 90 per cent of the Hindus have left after selling their property," he said. People are still selling their property and moving away because they are scared there will be a repeat of the violence, Singh added. Some Muslim families have also left the area.

Mohammad Javed Ali echoes his sentiment, and also his words. "Before the riots, people lived together in harmony. Now, they talk to each other, but the trust is gone. People live side by side, but no one trusts anyone anymore," said the 36-year-old who works in an automobile repair shop in the area.

With its narrow lanes, broken roads and piles of garbage everywhere, Shiv Vihar is a world removed from the affluent colonies of the national capital.

The residents are in despair, acknowledging the grim everyday reality of their lives, the lack of basic amenities, the constant stress - and hoping that change is somewhere on the horizon, maybe with the elections February 5.

According to Singh, relief efforts after the 2020 riots were patchy. "Most of the relief went to Muslim families," Singh, who had to take refuge at a nearby Shiv Mandir for eight days during the riots, alleged.

Stalin pays homage to ex-CM Annadurai



Chief Minister, and paid floral tributes at the leader's samadhi at the Marina beachfront.

Chennai, Feb 3: DMK President and Chief Minister MK Stalin led a peace march here Monday marking the 56th death anniversary of CN Annadurai, party founder and former

and K P Munusamy visited the Anna memorial here and paid floral tributes. Former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, along with his supporters paid homage. AIADMK MP D Thambidurai and party leaders paid floral tributes to Anna's statue in Delhi. Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam chief TTV Dinakaran paid tributes to Anna in Madurai.

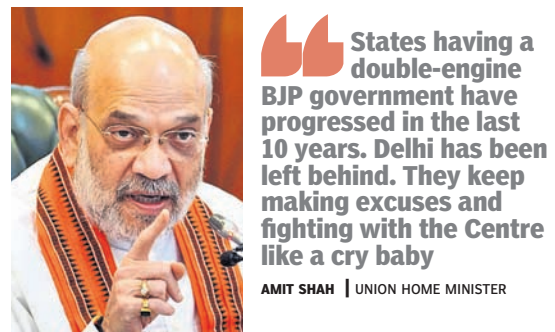
Stalin, party workers and leaders including Duraimurugan, TR Baalu, A Raja, RS Barathi, TKS Elangovan, Ma Subramanian walked from the Anna statue point on Wallajah Road till the Anna memorial on Kamarajar Salai-Anna square, a distance of nearly 2 km.

Office of the Panchayat Samiti, Tentulikhunti. Bid Identification No. 04/2024-25. Construction of CDPO Office Building at Tentulikhunti.

Government of Odisha, Office of the Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nabarangpur. E-Procurement Notice. Construction of CDPO Office Building at Nabarangpur.

Government of Odisha, Office of the Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Phulbani. Bid Identification No. 12/SERWD PHULBANI/2024-25. Road & Building Works.

Government of Odisha, Office of the Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division Ganjam No.-I, Berhampur. E-Procurement Notice. Civil Construction Works.



States having a double-engine BJP government have progressed in the last 10 years. Delhi has been left behind. They keep making excuses and fighting with the Centre like a cry baby

BRILLE VERSION OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION LAUNCHED

Governor of Karnataka Thawar Chand Gehlot launched Monday a Braille-enabled version of the Indian Constitution, to mark 75 years of the Constitution. The project was done in collaboration with Sankara Eye Hospital Bengaluru and CII Young Indians (YI) Bangalore



of the day quote

BJP has internal democracy. If organisational polls take place in any political party in a systematic way, it is only the BJP. From the mandal level to district level to state president polls to national president elections are going about systematically, as decided by the national leadership



This is not just an election, it is a challenge. The BJP knew that people of Milkipur would never abandon the Samajwadi Party, so they ensured the poll did not take place earlier



On one side, there is a party that supports education, women's upliftment, and development; on the other side, there is a party that engages in misconduct



SC refuses to hear PIL

SC terms Maha Kumbh stampede 'unfortunate', asks petitioner to move Allahabad HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Terming as "unfortunate" the January 29 stampede at Maha Kumbh where at least 30 people were killed, the Supreme Court Monday refused to hear a PIL for guidelines over safety of devotees and asked the petitioner to move the Allahabad High Court instead.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said, "It is an unfortunate incident, something which is of concern. But you go to the Allahabad High Court."

The stampede took place on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, one of the most auspicious days of the Hindu calendar, in which at least 30 people lost their lives and 60 were injured in a pre-dawn stampede at Sangam area in Prayagraj.

The bench noted the submission of the UP government, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, that a plea was already filed in the Allahabad High Court and the

KUMBH STAMPEDE



present petition should not be examined in the apex court. He said a judicial inquiry was initiated.

Advocate Vishal Tiwari filed the PIL January 30, a day after the incident in the stampede in Prayagraj.

The petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution sought guidelines to prevent stampedes and protect the fundamental rights of equality and life under Article 21.

The plea, which made the Centre and all the states parties, sought a direction to them to work collectively in ensuring a safe and secure environment for devotees at the Maha Kumbh.

"A petition ... filed under Article 32 of the Constitution of India praying for a writ of mandamus or any other appropri-

ate writs seeking issuance of specific directions, policies and regulations initiate guidelines and directions to state governments to facilitate the people for Maha Kumbh avoid stampede incidents and to determine and initiate assessment to ensure safety, viability, etc., for the enforcement of fundamental right of equality and life under Article 21 of the Constitution and to call a status report," the plea said. Aside from seeking all states to establish facilitation centres at Prayagraj to provide safety

information and assist their respective residents in emergencies, it sought installation of signages and announcements in multiple languages to help pilgrims navigate the event with ease.

"All states shall establish in proper manner their facilitation centres at Prayagraj the Maha Kumbh. These centres shall provide and display the basic information regarding the safety measures and guidelines to the persons coming from their states. In emergency these centres shall be ready for any assistance," it said.

The plea said SMS and WhatsApp messages should disseminate safety protocols to participants.

There is the need for coordination between the UP government and other states to ensure the availability of doctors and nurses at the venue, it added.

The plea sought regulation of VIP movement and said public safety should be prioritised over VIP protocols to prevent congestion and ensure smooth crowd movement.

The stampede took place on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, in which at least 30 people lost their lives and 60 were injured at Sangam area in Prayagraj

SHORT TAKES

Defamation case: Tharoor summoned

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Monday summoned Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on a defamation plea filed by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav posted the matter April 28. "Let the plaintiff be registered as a suit. Issue summons to the defendant (Tharoor). List before the joint registrar April 28," said the court. In his suit, Chandrasekhar claimed Tharoor made false and defamatory statements at various public fora in April, 2024 that severely damaged his professional and personal reputation.

Film producer found hanging

Panaji: Telugu film producer KP Choudhary was found hanging in a rented house in a village in North Goa Monday, police said. The body of Choudhary (44), known for producing Rajinikanth-starrer "Kabali" in Telugu, was found in the rented premises in Siolim village. Superintendent of Police (North) Akshat Kaushal told reporters. He said Anjuna police station's Siolim outpost received information about the death, and further probe is underway.

Ex-army man killed in militant attack

Srinagar: A retired army man was killed and his wife and daughter injured in a militant attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district Monday. Police sources said militants fired from point blank range towards the retired army man Manzoor Ahmad Wagay, his wife Aisha Akther and relative's daughter at Behibagh area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district in the afternoon. The trio sustained bullet injuries and were evacuated to nearby hospital.

5 cops suspended for beating up Imam

Madhubani/Patna: Five policemen have been suspended in Bihar's Madhubani district for allegedly beating up an Imam in custody, a senior official said Monday. According to Yogendra Kumar, the Superintendent of Police of Madhubani, those who have been placed under suspension include the SHO of Benipatti Police Station, a havildar, a constable and two chowkidars. The complainant Mohd Firoz had alleged that he was beaten up by police January 29. Cash assistance for women,

HIGH-DECIBEL CAMPAIGN FOR DELHI ELECTION ENDS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 3: Campaigning for the most hotly contested Assembly election in Delhi ever ended at 5 pm Monday, drawing curtains on months-long, high-decibel electioneering replete with AI-generated memes, acerbic jibes and venomous barbs and a race to woo voters with freebies, including monthly doles to women and the youth.

The ruling AAP and rival BJP and the Congress engaged their star campaigners liberally with the pack being led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet Minister Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Piyush Goyal, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann and Chief Ministers of other BJP and Congress-ruled states. Cricketer Harbhajan Singh and filmstar Shatrughan Sinha added star power to the AAP's campaign. Cash assistance for women,



heated exchanges over alleged corruption revolving around liquor scam and joblessness, water supply and sewers, toxic air, polluted Yamuna and free health insurance dominated the discourse.

At the peak of the campaign, the campaign turned into a direct fight between 'Modi ki Guarantee', 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee', and 'Congress ki Guarantee', with all three parties offering freebies to woo voters. The ruling AAP and rival BJP and Congress also locked horns on several occasions over issues of alleged poll code violation, deletion of voters' names, suspected Bangladeshis enrolled as voters and attempts to influence voters using lies and wrong information.

BJP moves privilege notice against Sonia

BJP MPs say remarks are a clear manifestation of the elitist and anti-tribal mindset of Sonia Gandhi

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 03: BJP members in the Rajya Sabha have moved a notice for breach of privilege against senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi for her "poor thing" reference to President Droupadi Murmu and have sought exemplary action.

In a notice to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, the BJP MPs said, "The remarks are a clear manifestation of the elitist and anti-tribal mindset of Sonia Gandhi, who is yet to understand the struggle and sensitivity of a tribal poor." The statement (of Gandhi), the letter says, is inconsistent with the established rules of conduct and Parliamentary ethics and etiquette, which

'POOR THING' REMARK ON PREZ



mandate members to uphold the dignity of constitutional offices and refrain from making disparaging remarks. "The Parliament being the highest legislative body of our democratic system is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining decorum, propriety, and respect for constitutional authorities. Any deviation from the standards diminishes the stature of the institution and compromises the trust that the citizens of



India place in it. Given the gravity of this issue, we urge you to take cognizance of the matter and initiate appropriate disciplinary action against Sonia Gandhi. Such action is imperative not only to uphold the sanctity of Parliamentary rules but also to reinforce the principles of decorum and mutual respect that are foundational to the effective functioning of our democratic institutions," the MPs said. They added that in light of

the seriousness of the matter, especially since it concerns the President, "We request that exemplary action for breach of Parliamentary privileges, ethics, and propriety be initiated against Sonia Gandhi for this contemptuous conduct. We hope the matter will be addressed with the urgency and seriousness that it deserves, BJP members added.

The letter, while flagging as derogatory and slanderous the remarks by Sonia Gandhi, demanded strict action. "We write this with great dismay about certain unparliamentary, derogatory, and demeaning remarks recently made by Sonia Gandhi, a member of Parliament of the Rajya Sabha, against the President of India, which warrant serious consideration and disciplinary action," the letter added. Sonia Gandhi, after President Murmu's address to a joint sitting of the Parliament, said, "Poor lady, the President was getting very tired by the end. She could hardly speak, poor thing."

FALSEHOOD, LIES: EAM

EAM Jaishankar slams Rahul's 'falsehood' on 'Trump invite' claims

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 3: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar Monday hit back at the Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi over his claims that the former went to the United States of America to get an invitation for Donald Trump's inauguration, stating that such falsified statements only go on to harm the 'interests and reputation' of the country abroad.

Jaishankar accused the Congress MP of 'spreading falsehood' about his visit to the United States in December, last year.

Soon after Rahul's startling charge in the Lok Sabha, the Union Minister took to X to debunk the Congress MP's claims and also to disclose the truth behind his US visit.

"Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi deliberately spoke a falsehood about my visit to the US in December 2024. I went to



meet the Secretary of State and NSA of the Biden Administration. Also to chair a gathering of our Consuls General. During my stay, the incoming NSA-designate met with me," Jaishankar wrote on X.

He further stated, "At no stage, was an invitation in respect of PM discussed. It is common knowledge that our PM does not attend such events. In fact, India is generally represented by Special Envoys. Rahul Gandhi's lies may be intended politically. But they damage the nation abroad."

Earlier, Rahul speaking in the Parliament tore into the Modi government over mul-

iple issues and claimed that India's 'lobbying' for an invite to Trump's coronation was unnecessary and uncalled for.

Participating in the debate over the Motion of Thanks to President's address, he claimed that the EAM visited US 'multiple times' to seek an invitation for the Prime Minister to Trump's inauguration event.

"When we talk of the United States, we shouldn't send a foreign minister to get an invite for our Prime Minister to their coronation," Rahul said.

"If we had a strong industrial base, the American President would have come to invite our Prime Minister," he added.



I have heard that in Delhi they do not promote students to Class 10 if they perform poorly in Class 9. They only allow those students in Class 10 who are guaranteed to clear the exam. They fear that if the results are poor, the image of their government will be tarnished

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

INDIAN AIRLINES GOT 728 BOMB THREATS IN 2024

The government Monday said 13 people were arrested in 2024 in connection with hoax bomb threats to airlines. Last year, a total of 728 bomb threats were received by airlines and out of them, 714 were received by domestic carriers, according to data shared by the civil aviation ministry in Rajya Sabha



of the day vote

The Maharashtra government is considering the use of artificial intelligence (AI) on an experimental basis in the agriculture sector to boost productivity and reduce production costs for farmers

We are ashamed that she (Nirmala Sitharaman) is a Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka because there is nothing to boast about regarding her contributions to the state

What is this relationship called? Tayal is still Nayab Saini's best friend, so the question arises who made him oppose BJP candidate?

POST OF THE DAY

Budget Asset Monetization Plan 2025-30 (10 Lakh Crore): Govt will lease assets to private firms to reinvest in new projects > Railways > Highways > Airports to be monetized to fund fresh infra development U know who will get it

SHORT TAKES

Naxalite killed in Chhattisgarh

Kanker: A Naxalite was killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district, police said Monday. The gunfight broke out in a forest along the border of Kanker and Narayanpur districts Sunday afternoon during an anti-Naxal operation, a police official said in Kanker. The operation was launched by a joint team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Border Security Force (BSF) based on inputs about the presence of cadres belonging to the North Bastar and Maad divisions of Maoists in that area, he said.

Chargesheet under UAPA filed against 7

Srinagar: A chargesheet under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) has been filed against seven terror associates in a court here. The chargesheet pertains to a case registered at Khanyar police station under the UAPA act, a police spokesman said Monday. He said eight accused were involved in the case, including a Pakistani terrorist operating under the code name Usman, who was killed in a police encounter.

Student found dead in college hostel

Kochi: A 21-year-old college student was found dead in her hostel room in Perumbavoor Monday morning, police said. The deceased has been identified as Aneeta Binoy, a native of Parampuza in Kottayam district. She was a final-year degree student at Rajagiri Viswajyothi College of Arts and Applied Sciences. According to the police, Aneeta was found hanging from the window panes at around 7 am. A note addressed to her parents was recovered from her room.

MAHARASHTRA POLL RESULTS

70L VOTERS ADDED: RAHUL

With a copy of the Constitution in hand, Gandhi said this is supported by the 'vote of our people and without a secure vote, the Constitution means nothing'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi Monday alleged that about 70 lakh voters, equivalent to Himachal Pradesh's population, were added to the electoral rolls in Maharashtra between the Lok Sabha and state elections, and demanded the Election Commission furnish data to Opposition parties in the state.

Speaking to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address, Gandhi raised several questions over the integrity of the Maharashtra polls held in November last year in which the BJP-led Mahayuti won a massive mandate, and said he was confident the EC would not provide the details sought by the Opposition parties.

With a copy of the Constitution in hand, Gandhi said this is supported by the "vote of our people and without a secure vote, the Constitution means nothing".

"Now, I want to bring to the notice of this House some data about Maharashtra polls. Between the Lok Sabha polls, which the INDIA bloc won, and the Assembly elections, the number equivalent to the population of Himachal was added to the voting rolls of Maharashtra," Gandhi told the



House, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in attendance. Gandhi claimed that the difference between the Lok Sabha polls in June and the state polls in November was that almost 70 lakh voters suddenly arriving.

"More voters were added in Maharashtra in five months between the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls than in five years," the former Congress president said.

Citing an example, he claimed that in a building in Shirdi, about 7,000 new voters were added after the Lok Sabha polls.

"I am not making an allegation, I am only saying that there is something problematic

that the population equivalent to that of Himachal was added in Maharashtra through magic after the Lok Sabha polls," Gandhi said.

"We have requested the Election commission repeatedly that we are not making an allegation, 'give us the Lok Sabha voters' list and that of the Vidhan Sabha. We are saying to the EC that 'please give us names and addresses of voters of all booths from the Lok Sabha elections and the Assembly elections', so we can calculate who these voters are," Gandhi said. He said the new voters have been added mostly in constituencies where the BJP eventually won.

GANDHI CLAIMED THAT IN A BUILDING IN SHIRDI, ABOUT 7,000 NEW VOTERS WERE ADDED AFTER THE LOK SABHA POLLS

India, UK to resume talks on proposed trade agreement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: India and the UK are expected to resume the talks for the proposed free trade agreement from February 24, an official said. The UK trade minister is likely to visit the national capital soon, the official said.

The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.

Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services, including banking and insurance.

The talks for the agreement may get an impetus as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent in the insurance sector.

Munde, aide Walmik Karad met me: Jarange

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Feb 3: Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange Monday claimed Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde met him before the state polls last year along with his associate Walmik Karad, arrested later in an extortion case linked to the murder of a sarpanch.

Munde has been facing the heat since the arrest Karad in the extortion case related to the brutal murder of Massajog village sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh in Beed district in December 2024.

The Minister for Food and Civil Supplies is the NCP MLA from the same district.

The Opposition has been demanding Munde's ouster for an impartial probe into the sarpanch's murder.

Deshmukh was abducted, tortured and murdered December 9, 2024, for allegedly trying to stop an extortion bid targeting an energy firm in Beed district.

The police have so far arrested seven persons in connection with the sarpanch's murder,



while accused Krushna Andhale is still at large.

Karad was arrested in the extortion case, and is in judicial custody.

Asked if Munde had come to meet him, Jarange Monday said, "Everyone was meeting me during the elections. He (Munde) came to me and Walmik Karad was also with him at that time."

The activist said their process for contesting the state polls, held in November 2024, was going on at that time.

"I thought of not meeting them, but they were waiting outside. Then I went to meet them. There, Munde told me about him (Karad)," Jarange told reporters at a hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar where he is currently under-

going treatment.

Jarange said he then asked Munde if Karad was the one involved in embezzlement of money of some people keen on getting harvester machines.

"I told (Karad) to pay back the money to those people through an activist from Gevrai, who was also known to Karad. I knew his name and I later met him when he came to meet with Dhananjay Munde," he claimed without specifying the meeting venue.

Asked about sarpanch murder case accused Andhale, who is still at large, Jarange alleged the man was hiding with political support.

"It is the same gang. He (Munde) and the other one (Karad) are seen in a photo together. They are misleading (investigation in the sarpanch case)," he charged.

Jarange further claimed that Andhale might have been kept in a nearby area.

"He has been kept hidden because he might know some secrets and truth may come out," the activist said without elaborating.

MAHA KUMBH STAMPEDE

Kharge says 'thousands' died; treasury protests



Even as Chairman Dhankhar called Kharge making the claim a 'very sad moment' and asked him to withdraw his statement, the Leader of Opposition insisted the government give the correct figures and continued with his speech

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Monday paid tributes to "thousands" who died in the January 29 Maha Kumbh stampede, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches even as Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar asked him to retract the statement.

Kharge, the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, was quick to add that "this is my estimate (and) if this is not right you (the government) should tell what is the truth". He said he was ready to be corrected.

"I did not say 'thousands' to blame anyone. But how many people died, give that information at least. I will apologise if I am wrong. They should give figures how many died, how many are missing," he said.

There was a stampede during the Amrit Snan on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya January 29. According to the figures provided by the Uttar Pradesh government, 30 people were killed and 60 others were injured.

However, while participating in a debate on the Motion

of Thanks to the President's address in Rajya Sabha, Kharge used the phrase "the thousands who died in Kumbh" to pay tributes to the deceased.

"I pay my tributes to the people who died in Maha Kumbh... the thousands who died in Kumbh," he said, leading to the protest by the ruling members.

Kharge, however, added this was his estimate and the government should provide the "correct" figures.

"This is my estimate, if this is not right you should tell what is the truth. I am asking you to declare what the actual numbers are. If I am wrong I am ready to correct," he said.

Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar urged him to retract his statement. "The LoP has indicated a scenario using figures to the extent of thousands. I appeal to him, in this House, whatever is spoken, carries great weight. You have spoken something which has numbed everyone," Dhankhar said.

"A message that goes from here, even if it is contradicted, goes to the whole world. Can you go to that extent? I would appeal to you as one of senior most leaders of this country, if you put a figure in thousands I can only appeal to your consciences," he said.

Kharge said he did not mention the figure to blame anyone.

Even as Chairman Dhankhar called Kharge making the claim a "very sad moment" and asked him to withdraw his statement, the Leader of Opposition insisted the government give the correct figures and continued with his speech.

Maha village passes ballot paper voting resolution

Pune: A gram panchayat in Maharashtra's Sangli district has passed a resolution supporting the use of ballot papers instead of EVMs in future elections to "protect the Constitution," a gram sabha member has said. Bahe village in Walva tehsil of Sangli district is perhaps the second village in western Maharashtra to pass a resolution discarding EVMs for ballot papers. In December, the gram sabha of Kolewadi village in Karad (south) constituency in Satara district resolved to cast votes in future polls on ballot papers. "The gram sabha in Bahe village passed a resolution recently supporting the use of ballot papers in all future elections instead of Electronic Voting Machines. We also appeal to other villages and their respective gram panchayats to pass similar resolutions to safeguard and protect the Constitution and democracy," said a Bahe gram sabha member. The villagers submitted the resolution to the tehsildar, he said.

'It's your battle, you have to fight it'

Uss gali meein kuch hua, iss khabar se mar gaye! Aur phir kuch log, marjane ke darr se marr gaye!!

Says an eminent Urdu poet. He speaks of the phantom fallacy of a panic-stricken mentality when the mere news of happenings across the street caused some to die while others perished, felled by just the fear of dying.

Cancer kills but the fear of cancer kills faster. Walk into a cancer care clinic and a miasma of despair hangs heavy. Emotions spread taunt on stressed faces, giveaway creases on knitted brows, and an anxious demeanor vainly dodging doomsday prophecies is plastered all over.

Unlike the star reporters of today, the journalism of yore frowned on the faintest attempt at putting self before news. The story spoke and the byline bore the burden. This once, a sliver of liberty would be in order for I am both the subject and the object of this engagement having faced the diagnosis and fought the disease over the last one year.

I bow my head in respect for those who fell victim to fear and gave up as well as the ones who fought valiantly but in vain. I raise it to salute the fighting spirit of millions who reso-

lutely refuse to be cowed by dread and remain the standard bearers of faith.

Today, February 4, is World Cancer Day observed to raise awareness and encourage its prevention, detection and treatment. Led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) in support of the World Cancer Declaration, 2008, it is observed by the United Nations and targets misinformation, raises awareness and works to reduce stigma. The themes for the years 2025-2027 is "United by Unique" and places people at the centre of care and their stories at the heart of the conversation.

It is normal to feel frightened, anxious and even panicky when you are diagnosed with cancer. Was it not something that always happened to others? Why me? is the next question that corrodes logical thinking. A 14-hour work day and an incessantly pre-occupied 'upper crust' was brought to a grinding halt by a first prognosis. A round robin 'tournament' of tests confirmed the diagnosis. "Oh, but the prostate variety you carry is the prince of cancers. There are much deadlier dragons cruising the cancer world" opined a urologist seeking to make light of an ashen-faced fellow's fears. Senior surgical oncologist Dr Kinnar Shah was



more direct, advising surgery soonest. Dr Chirag Desai, one of the most dynamic oncologists in the country concurred.

The surgical intervention done and over with, one hoped for better times. These seemed to be at handshaking distance but then there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. And the slide began.

Another round of tests confirmed the worst fears. The cancer had metastasized or in other words while the prostate had cleaned up, another form of it had spread, moving on to the liver, part of the lungs and even the collar bone.

It was the final frontier. Appetite evaporated, the smell of food turned repulsive, silence was soothing, talking too taxing, turning sides in bed was akin to climbing Mount Everest, the toilet, a torment and the weight down, a 30 kilogram. "Medi-

cines alone are not enough, it's your battle, you have to fight it with every ounce of will power your frail body can summon" ran the constant refrain from physician Desai. Given into his medical care, the super-specialist was straddling a thin line with a 75 year old newshounds battered body and its ability to withstand chemotherapy and such other medicines.

As life ebbs and the end stares one in the face, it leaves just one of two choices. The easier one is to give-in and slink away silently while the difficult one is to face, fight and forge back into reckoning. Hanging from a cliff, the abyss is enticing when the hands are bone-tired.

The only thing that stood in between the two were the apprehensive faces of a family in distress straining every nerve and muscle to reclaim hope for their loved one. They just refused to throw in the towel, how could I let go of life? And so began the arduous trek back, inch piled on weary inch. It has taken months and the return journey still continues. "Like there are no temporary beginnings, there are also no permanent endings. The watchword is caution, lifestyle changes and constant monitoring," says the doctor adding "life is a gift, live it properly." So one has picked

up the threads of life and gone back to work. Meanwhile, there is a tacit pact with the disease. Let sleeping dogs lie. You don't harass me, I won't kill you. In this entire process there is one major takeaway. The fear of death has died.

This is not my story alone but that of the predicaments, possibilities, and probabilities of numerous others battling the dread and the disease.

According to the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCON) estimates, there were 19.3 million cancer cases worldwide for the year 2020. India ranked third after China and the USA. GLOBOCON predicted that cancer cases in India would increase to 2.08 million accounting for a rise of 57.5 per cent in 2040 from 2020.

As of July 2023, Gujarat had 73,382 cancer patients while India accounted for 14,61,427 cancer cases in 2022. In 2020 Gujarat had 69,660 cancer cases and India had 13, 92,179 cases.

According to the Indian Journal of Medical Research the crude rate of the cases of cancer in India stood at 100.4 per 100,000. In India, one in nine people are likely to develop cancer in their lifetime and the incidence of cancer cases is estimated to increase by 12.8 per cent in 2025 as compared to 2020.

international



USAID is a criminal organization. Time for it to die
ELON MUSK | TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ADVISER, US

PAK PREZ TO VISIT CHINA

President Asif Ali Zardari will travel to China Tuesday on a five-day state visit during which he will discuss a broad spectrum of bilateral relations with the Chinese leaders, with a focus on economic and trade cooperation, security collaboration, and the multi-billion dollar economic corridor



of the day quote

What we have tragically seen almost every day in recent times, namely children dying beneath bombs ... is unacceptable. To kill children is to deny the future
POPE FRANCIS | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

For thousands of years, people of all religions have been living together in this country irrespective of caste, colour and religion. The country belongs to all of us and is a safe place for all people regardless of religion or caste
MUHAMMAD YUNUS | CHIEF ADVISER, BANGLADESH

Losing the US was terrible, but member states have tremendous capacity to fill in those gaps. The US is leaving a community of nations. It's essentially breaking up with you
MICHAEL RYAN | WHO EMERGENCIES CHIEF

Europe braces for Trump trade war

The new US president has declared that he will soon impose tariffs on imports from the EU, having just ordered similar measures on goods from Canada, Mexico and China

REUTERS

Brussels, Feb 3: European leaders were bracing for US tariffs Monday after President Donald Trump imposed sweeping levies on Mexico, Canada and China that will affect billions of dollars worth of trade, roiling global markets and currencies.

Trump said the tariffs against the three largest US trading partners, which take effect Tuesday, might cause Americans some short-term pain, but "long term, the United States has been ripped off by virtually every country in the world".

Speaking at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida Sunday, Trump indicated that the 27-nation European Union would be next in the firing line, but did not say when.

"They don't take our cars, they don't take our farm products. They take almost nothing and we take everything from them," he told reporters.

EU leaders meet

EU leaders meeting at an informal summit in Brussels Monday said Europe would be prepared to fight back if the US



The US is the EU's largest trade and investment partner and has consistently imported more goods than it has exported to the bloc. The US goods trade deficit stood at 155.8 billion euros (\$161.6 billion) in 2023

- Experts warn of inflation, slower economic growth
- Trump says tariffs will 'definitely happen' with EU
- EU leaders meet to discuss tariff threat response

The declarations of the new American administration of President Trump pushes the Europeans to be more united, more active to respond on subjects of their collective security
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

The bloc could respond if necessary with its own tariffs against the US but stressed it was better for the two to find agreement on trade.

Luxembourg's Prime Minister Luc Frieden said: "I think tariffs are always bad. Tariffs are bad for trade. Tariffs are bad for the United States."

Trump hinted that Britain, which left the EU in 2020, might be spared tariffs, saying: "I think that one can be worked out". EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said there were no winners in a trade war, saying that if one broke out between Europe and the United States, "then the one laughing on the side is China".

In Europe, economists at

Deutsche Bank said they were currently factoring in a 0.5% hit to gross domestic product (GDP) should Trump impose 10% tariffs on the bloc.

DEADLINE FOR CANADA, MEXICO, CHINA

The tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, outlined in three executive orders, are due to take effect 12:01 am ET (05:01 GMT) Tuesday.

Trump said he would speak Monday with the leaders of Canada and Mexico, which have both announced retaliatory tariffs of their own, but downplayed expectations that they would change his mind.

"They owe us a lot of money, and I'm sure they're going to pay," Trump told reporters.

Economists said the Republican president's plan to impose 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico and 10% tariffs on China would slow global growth and drive prices higher for Americans. Trump

China renews threat to retaliate against US

Taipei: US President Donald Trump's trade war with Canada, Mexico and China is ramping up over the production and importation of the opiate fentanyl, along with trade surpluses and illegal border crossings by migrants from across the globe. China has reiterated its threat to take "necessary countermeasures to defend its legitimate rights and interests" following Trump's decision to impose 10 per cent tariffs on China for allegedly doing too little to stem the production of precursor chemicals for fentanyl. The Foreign Ministry statement issued Sunday did not mention any specific retaliatory measures, but said "China calls on the United States to correct its wrongdoings, maintain the hard-won positive dynamics in the counter-narcotics cooperation, and promote a steady, sound and sustainable development of China-US relationship." China says the US action violates World Trade Organisation rules and has vowed to bring a case before the body that governs global commerce.



Canadians cancel trips, ban US products

Toronto: Canadians have canceled trips south of the border, boycotted US alcohol and other products and even booted at sporting events after US President Donald Trump announced 25% tariffs on most of Canada's goods Saturday. Though Trump had pledged to put tariffs on Canada and Mexico before taking office, the perceived act of economic warfare on a country that is so close to the United States culturally and geographically still came as a shock to many Canadians. "It feels like Trump wants to restructure the world order," Drew Dilken, mayor of the Canadian border city of Windsor, said in an interview. "He's willing to start with his closest ally... If he's willing to do this to Canada, what's he willing to do to everybody else?" Trump slapped a 25% import tariff on all Canadian goods, except energy products, which will carry a levy of 10% while entering the United States.



SHORT TAKES

Surge in terror attacks

Islamabad: Pakistan witnessed a sharp increase in terror attacks in January 2025, surging by 42 per cent compared to the previous month, a think tank has said. Quoting the data released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), Dawn reported Monday that at least 74 militant attacks were recorded nationwide, resulting in 91 fatalities, including 35 security personnel, 20 civilians and 36 militants. The report highlighted an intensified counterterrorism campaign by security forces, which led to elimination of at least 185 militants in January, making it the second deadliest month for militant casualties since 2016. The highest number of militants killed in a single month since 2016 was recorded in December 2024, when security forces neutralised 190 militants. The combined toll of militant attacks and security operations in January stood at 245 fatalities, comprising 185 militants, 40 security forces personnel and 20 civilians.

Syria car blast kills 19

Damascus: A car bomb exploded on the outskirts of a northern Syrian city Monday, killing at least 19 people, all but one of them women, and leaving more than a dozen wounded, hospital workers said. The dead included 18 women and one man, a nurse at the hospital, Mohammad Ahmad, told The Associated Press. Another 15 women were wounded, some of them in critical condition, according to the local Syrian civil defence. It was the seventh car bomb explosion in Manbij in just over a month, said Munir Mustafa, the deputy director of civil defence.

Belgium gets new PM, one who long tried to gut nation, seek autonomy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Feb 3: Belgium has a new prime minister whose political purpose was long to break up the nation, gut the state structures and give ever more autonomy to his northern Flanders at the cost of everyone else.

Bart De Wever took the oath early Monday, looking straight at King Philippe, the latest monarch of a royal house he so long had little but disdain for because it symbolised the old concept of Belgian unity.

"I swear allegiance to the king," he said.

It was another indication how times change, and bold demands for Flemish independence have made room for the hope of gradual change and finding a renewed balance between Dutch-speaking Flanders, with 6.7 million people, francophone Wallonia, with 3.7 million, and multilingual Brussels, with 1.2 million.

The prime minister and leading ministers took the oath in Dutch and French while several



others on the 15-member team from both sides of the linguistic divide stuck to their own language during a short ceremony at the Royal Palace.

"You can ... not take part in a government and wait until the system can be taken as a whole. I never believed in that," he told De Standaard newspaper.

"The other option is to take part when you can, and obtain things for your community, and that is what we did."

"When you don't take part, you are certainly left empty handed," he added.

Language issues are woven throughout the past century, as the French-dominated na-

De Wever, the first Flemish nationalist to lead Belgium is a sharp critic of its French-speaking region of Wallonia

tion gradually made way for a balanced political scene while Wallonia's industrial prowess waned and Flanders' economic power rose.

De Wever of the Flemish nationalist N-VA party succeeds Alexander De Croo, who has remained in office as a caretaker since the June elections last year. De Wever will join his fellow European Union leaders at a summit in Brussels later Monday.

"We will have a government that will clean up the budget, reward work, implement the strictest migration policy ever, abolish the nuclear phase-out, and invest in safety," N-VA said in a statement.

FEWER FIGHTERS

Ukrainian soldiers lose battlefield gains

With Russians in control of dominant heights, Ukrainian supply routes are now within their range



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pokrovsk Region, Feb 3: A dire shortage of infantry troops and supply routes coming under Russian drone attacks are conspiring against Ukrainian forces in Pokrovsk, where decisive battles in the nearly three-year war are playing out — and time is running short.

Ukrainian troops are losing ground around the crucial supply hub, which lies at the confluence of multiple highways leading to key cities in the eastern Donetsk region as well as an important railway station.

Moscow is set on capturing as much territory as possible as the Trump administration is pushing for negotiations to end the war and recently froze foreign aid to Ukraine, a move that has shocked Ukrainian officials already apprehensive about the intentions of the new US president, their most important ally.

Military aid has not stopped, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said.

Ukrainian soldiers in Pokrovsk said that Russian forces switched tactics in recent weeks, attacking their flanks instead of going head-on to form a pincer movement around the city. Heavy fog in recent days prevented Ukrainian soldiers from effectively using surveillance drones, allowing Russians to consolidate and take more territory.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian commanders say they do not have

enough reserves to sustain defense lines and that new infantry units are failing to execute operations. Many pin hopes on Mykhailo Drapatyi, a respected commander recently appointed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as ground forces chief, to shift the dynamic and counterattack.

"The war is won by logistics. If there is no logistics, there is no way to supply it," said the deputy commander of the Da Vinci Wolves battalion, known by the call sign Afer. "(Russians) have learned this and are doing it quite well."

New recruits not ready

Ukrainian soldiers in Pokrovsk said shortages of fighting troops are "catastrophic" and challenges are compounded by newly created infantry units that are poorly trained and inexperienced, putting more pressure on battle-hardened brigades having to step in to stabilize the front line.

Afer, the deputy commander, complained that new recruits are "constantly extending the front line because they leave their positions, they do not hold them, they do not control them, they do not monitor them. We do almost all the work for them."

"It's not because they have lower quality infantry, but because they are completely unprepared for modern warfare," he said of the new recruits.

CATASTROPHE LINGERS

Santorini quake swarm worries experts

Quakes continued rattling the island through the night and Monday morning, many over magnitude 4.0, forcing many residents, including entire families, to spend the night in their cars

REUTERS

Santorini, Feb 3: Schools were closed and emergency crews deployed on the volcanic Greek island of Santorini Monday after a spike in seismic activity raised concerns about a potentially powerful earthquake.

Precautions were also ordered on several nearby Aegean Sea islands — all popular summer vacation destinations — after more than 200 under-sea earthquakes were recorded in the area over the past three days.



weekend and Monday to assess the situation, while schools were ordered shut on the nearby islands of Amorgos, Anafi and Ios.

On Santorini, residents and visitors were advised to avoid large indoor gatherings and areas where rock slides could occur, while hotels were instructed

to drain swimming pools to reduce potential building damage from an earthquake.

Fire Service rescuers who arrived on the island Sunday set up yellow tents as a staging area inside a basketball court next to the island's main hospital.

"We arrived last night, a

All scenarios remain open. The number of tremors has increased, magnitudes have risen, and epicentres have shifted northeast.

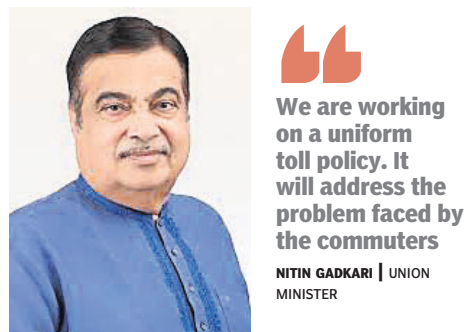
While these are tectonic quakes, not volcanic, the risk level has escalated

GERASIMOS PAPAIOPOULOS | SEISMOLOGIST, GREECE

26-member team of rescuers and one rescue dog," said fire brigadier Ioannis Billias.

Crescent-shaped Santorini is a premier tourism destination with daily arrivals via commercial flights, ferries, and cruise ships. The island draws more than 3 million visitors annually to its whitewashed villages, built along dramatic cliffs formed by a massive volcanic eruption over 3,500 years ago.

Business



We are working on a uniform toll policy. It will address the problem faced by the commuters
NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

WHITE-COLLAR HIRING UP 4%

White-collar hiring activities in January witnessed 4 per cent growth driven by traditional sectors, including FMCG, pharma and insurance, according to a report released Monday. "The 4 per cent hiring growth is tempered as IT recovery settles in, however, strong growth in most core sectors, including FMCG, pharma, insurance and hospitality is a good sign and augurs well for a cracking 2025 in terms of white-collar hiring," Naukri Chief Business Officer Pawan Goyal said in a statement quoting NaukriJobSpeak Index.



of the day quote

There is no concern about the value of the rupee. The volatility in rupee is being managed by the RBI



TUHN KANTA PANDEY | FINANCE SECRETARY

My estimate is that we will cross USD 800 billion in exports, another record given the world situation



PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

The government has maintained its thrust on capex though the spend of Rs 11.2 lakh crore is lower than the spending of around 13 lakh crore that I was hoping for, based on the past trend. But still, capex spend is at a robust level and will give a boost to the core sectors



SAJJAN JINDAL | CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, JSW GROUP

Markets tumble over Trump tariffs

REUTERS

Washington/Brussels, Feb 3: Global financial markets fell Monday over tariffs imposed on Canada, Mexico and China by US President Donald Trump, while world leaders steered themselves to respond to his next moves, with the European Union in the firing line.

Trump said his tariffs on the three largest US trading partners, which take effect Tuesday, might cause Americans some short-term pain, but "long term, the United States has been ripped off by virtually every country in the world".

Global stock markets and currencies tumbled over concerns that the tariffs would trigger an economically damaging trade war. Futures for Wall Street's S&P 500 fell more than 1.7% before the opening bell, on the heels of the year's biggest daily losses on a string of Asian and European bourses. Speaking in Washington Sunday after returning from his Mar-a-Lago estate, Trump indicated that the 27-nation European Union would be next in the firing line, but did not say when.

"They don't take our cars, they don't take our farm products. They take almost nothing and we take everything from them," he told reporters.

EU leaders meeting at an informal summit in Brussels Monday said Europe would be prepared to fight back if the U.S. imposes tariffs, but also called for reason and negotiation.

Arriving at the talks, French President Emmanuel Macron said if the EU were attacked in its commercial interests it would have to "make itself respected and thus react".

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany said the bloc could respond if necessary with its own tariffs against the US, but stressed it was better for the



two to find agreement on trade.

Trump hinted that Britain, which left the EU in 2020, might be spared tariffs, saying: "I think that one can be worked out."

The US is the EU's largest trade and investment partner. According to the Eurostat data from 2023, the United States had a deficit of 155.8 billion euros

(\$161.6 billion) with the EU in the trade of goods, offset by a surplus of 104 billion euros in services.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said there were no winners in a trade war, and if one broke out between Europe and the United States, "then the one laughing on the side is China".

Financial market reaction

SENSEX FALLS BY 319 POINTS

Mumbai: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower Monday tracking weak global markets amid concerns over US President Donald Trump imposing tariffs on some of its trading partners. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 319.22 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 77,186.74, snapping its five-day rally. Intra-day, it tumbled 749.87 points or 0.96 per cent to 76,756.09. The NSE Nifty declined 121.10 points or 0.52 per cent to 23,361.05. From Sensex shares, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, ITC, Power Grid, NTPC and Reliance Industries were the major laggards. Among the gainers, Bajaj Finance jumped over 5 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel and Maruti also ended higher. "Slump in global equity markets weighed negatively on Indian benchmarks after Trump announced tariffs on China, Mexico and Canada which fuelled pessimism amongst the investors. Besides, the rupee depreciating sharply raised concerns that foreign investors are unlikely to reverse the selling trend," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.15 per cent to USD 76.50 a barrel.



EUROPEAN, ISRAELI INVESTORS TO VISIT INDIA NEXT WEEK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: A large contingent of investors from four European nation bloc EFTA and Israel are visiting India next week to explore business opportunities, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

Visit of more than 100 investors from EFTA member countries assumes significance as it has signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with India on March 10, 2024.

Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates, and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.

The pact is expected to come into force by the end of this year. Goyal said EFTA representatives are coming with over 100 investors. More than 200 investors are expected to visit from Israel. The three-day visit will start from February 10.

"Big companies are coming. People with interests in technology and setting manufacturing units (are coming)," he added.

The EFTA bloc committed an investment of USD 100 billion - USD 50 billion within 10 years after the implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion in the next five years - which would facilitate the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India. This is a first-of-its-kind pledge agreed upon in any of the trade deals signed by India so far.



January factory activity growth hits 6-month high

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 3: India's factory activity started 2025 on a positive note, growing at the quickest pace in six months in January largely buoyed by resilient demand and strong output, a private survey showed Monday, encouraging firms to hire at a record rate.

That could bring a sigh of relief for Asia's third-largest economy, which has seen a slowdown in growth over the past few quarters as consumption remains weak.

The HSBC final India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global, rose to 57.7 last month from December's 12-month low of 56.4. It was a tad below an early estimate that showed a rise to 58.0.

The index has been above the 50-mark separating expansion from contraction since July 2021. "India's final manufacturing PMI marked a six-month high in January. Domestic and export demand were both strong, supporting new orders growth," noted Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

New orders - an indicator of

overall demand - grew at the sharpest rate since July partly driven by strong export orders, which expanded at the quickest pace in nearly 14 years. The sub-index measuring output hit a three-month high.

That boosted confidence for the coming 12 months, with firms expanding their workforces at the strongest pace since at least March 2005, when the survey began.

Easing inflation pressure also helped. Input prices increased at the weakest pace in nearly a year enabling firms to raise selling prices at a slower pace last month.

This is welcome news given headline inflation has stayed above the Reserve Bank of India's medium-term target of 4% for most of the past year.

The RBI will cut its key repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% after its Feb. 5-7 meeting, according to a majority of economists in a Reuters poll.

India slashed personal tax rates in its annual budget Saturday, as the world's fifth-largest economy focuses on boosting domestic demand amid uncertainty over the global economic outlook due to potential new tariff barriers.

Anchor looks to expand its presence in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Anchor, one of the big names in oral care industry, hosted its distributor's meet 2025 at a city hotel, Sunday, unveiling the much anticipated Anchor Red Toothpaste TV campaign.

The event saw prominent personalities like Karan Shah (Director) and Kunal Shah (Marketing Head); Sandeep Abhi (Senior Vice President) including actress Archita Sahu as brand ambassador of Odisha.

The programme showcases the new advertisement along with an in-depth explanation of the product's unique features. A certificate distribution ceremony was also organised to acknowledge the support and loyalty from distributors.

Asit Roy emphasised the significance of the campaign in the Odisha market, saying, "Archita has great face value in Odisha due to her successful film career, and people trust her. We believe that with her association, our product will flourish in the Odisha market and earn the trust of consumers."

RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 3: The RBI is likely to reduce the key interest rate by 25 basis points this week after keeping it on hold for two years, complementing the Union Budget initiatives to push consumption-led demand, though the sliding rupee continues to be a concern.

As the retail inflation has remained within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone (less than 6 per cent) for most of the year, the central bank can take rate action to boost growth hit by sluggish consumption, opined experts.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the repo rate (short-term lending rate) unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February 2023. The last time the RBI had reduced the rate was during the Covid times (May 2020) and thereafter, it was gradually raised to 6.5 per cent.

Newly appointed Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra will be chairing his first Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting starting Wednesday.

The decision of the six-member panel will be announced on Friday (February 7).

"There is a higher probability of a rate cut this time for two reasons. First, the RBI has already announced liquidity enhancement measures, which have improved conditions in the market. This appeared to be a prerequisite for cutting rates," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Sabnavis further said the Union Budget has provided a boost and it may be appropriate to lower the repo rate in tandem to support the same.

The Reserve Bank has announced measures to infuse Rs 1.5 lakh crore worth of liquidity in the banking system on Jan-



uary 27.

"We can expect some changes in the forecast on growth in particular as the NSO had projected 6.4 per cent for the year. It would be interesting to see if the RBI would provide a forecast for growth in FY26, though this normally is published in the April policy," he added.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head - Research and Outreach at Iera, opined that the growth inflation dynamics have improved since the December 2025 policy meeting.

"We don't assess the fiscal stimulus provided by the Union Budget to have a significant bearing on inflation. Accordingly, we think the balance is tilted in favour of a rate cut in the February 2025 policy review," she said.

However, if global factors cause a further material weakening in the INR/USD cross rate over the course of this week, then the anticipated rate cut may get delayed to April 2025, Nayar added.

Monday, the rupee plunged 55 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.17 (provisional) against the US dollar.

The Union Budget presented in Parliament Saturday has announced major income tax concessions to spur consumption especially for the middle class with a view to boost demand.



The new Anchor Red Toothpaste is marketed as a first of its kind vegetarian toothpaste, targeting consumers of all ages in the state.

Sandeep Abhi highlighted, "This is the first vegetarian toothpaste in the market, and we are confident it will resonate with health conscious consumers in Odisha."

Brand ambassador Archita Sahu expressed her excitement about the partnership, saying, "I have always associated myself with brands I believe in. It's important to me that the products I endorse are trustworthy and good for the people. I'm glad to be a part of the Anchor family and to promote a product I truly trust."

Most Indians believe AI skills will boost career: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Nearly 94 per cent of Indian professionals surveyed believe that mastering AI skills will fast-track their career growth, according to 2025 Global Workplace Skills Study conducted by Emeritus.

The study underlined that India is experiencing a transformative wave of Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in workplaces, prompting working professionals to learn the necessary skills and tools for the future.



The study, which surveyed over 6,000 respondents across 18 countries aged 21-65 work-

ing across sectors such as finance and insurance, manufacturing, software & IT ser-

vices, and education, among others, revealed that Indian professionals are leading the global AI adoption curve.

"An impressive 96 per cent of Indian professionals are using AI and generative AI tools at work, significantly higher than the 81 per cent in the US and 84 per cent in the UK. As a result, 95 per cent of Indian workers report increased productivity due to these technologies, outpacing the global average," it revealed.

Indian professionals are prioritising AI skills to stay

competitive, with 90 per cent considering AI and generative AI crucial for future career success.

Moreover, 94 per cent view AI expertise as essential not only for career advancement but also for diversifying across industries -- far surpassing the global average of 87 per cent.

Notably, machine learning is among the top five most sought-after skills in India, with professionals twice as likely as global counterparts to focus on it, as per the report.

Pragg triumphs over world champion

Praggnanandhaa beats Gukesh in "crazy, exhausting" final day tie-breaker to clinch Tata Chess title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wijk Aan Zee, Feb 3: The Indian juggernaut in international chess remained unstoppable as Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa fought through exhaustion and nerves to defeat world champion D Gukesh in a clash of compatriots to clinch the Tata Steel Masters title for the first time in his prolific career. The bespectacled 19-year-old from Chennai, a city that has become the cradle of Indian chess, came from behind to upstage the 18-year-old world number three 2-1 in the tie-breaker of the event's 87th edition here Sunday.

This was after both players ended up tied on 8.5 points after losing their 13th-round games. While Gukesh lost to fellow Indian Arjun Erigaisi, Praggnanandhaa went down to Vincent Keymer of Germany.

In the tie-breaker, there was huge drama typical of two young players looking to win each and every game they played in the tournament as they played the tie-break.

"I am still shaking, it was such a crazy day. I don't know how to express. I didn't really expect to win. Somehow things went my way," Praggnanandhaa told the official tournament

website after his triumph. Asked if it was the most tense day of his chess career, which began when he was a mere two years of age.

"Today is more special because I won the tournament. Definitely most stressful day," he responded.

The teenager became the first Indian after Viswanathan Anand to win the title. Anand won it thrice (2003, 2004 and 2006) individually when it was called the Corus Chess Tournament, named on the title sponsor of that time. The legend also shared the honours twice (1989 and 1998) in its earliest form of Hoogovens Tournament.

Praggnanandhaa faced the Benoni with reversed colours in the first game of the tie-break and it seemed like he had equalised easily in the middle game.

However, Gukesh had other thoughts as he kept trying and won, thanks to a blunder by Praggnanandhaa that cost him a full rook.

In a must-win second game of the tiebreaker, Praggnanandhaa employed the Trompowsky

opening, and this time Gukesh could claim a slight advantage with his black pieces.

"I was just trying to relax, to rest a bit. It was a very difficult game. Against Vincent I didn't play anywhere close to the level I was playing here. I should buy something for Arjun. At some point I thought Gukesh was better," the former world youth champion quipped.

"For sure, (this win) it is the highlight. When I came here, I wanted to win but the field was very strong. I didn't really think about it much until yesterday," he added.

"I am completely exhausted. I was also quite tired. I just want to get some rest now."

During

I am still shaking, it was such a crazy day. I don't know how to express. I didn't really expect to win. Somehow things went my way

R PRAGGNANANDHA | GRANDMASTER



the tie-break, by just keeping his position together, Praggnanandhaa patiently waited and capitalised on an unforced error from Gukesh to first knock down a pawn and then his technical abilities were enough to see the normal blitz games through with a 1-1 score.

This took the match into sudden death, where Praggnanandhaa drew white and once again Gukesh was better with some imaginative play on the queen side that netted him a pawn.

The sudden death had a time control of two minutes and thirty seconds for white against three for black but that did not deter Praggnanandhaa from trying to defend an inferior endgame.

Just while the position looked completely drawn and another game was on the cards, Gukesh lost control in the battle of nerves and first lost a pawn then his last remaining knight.

Praggnanandhaa showed perfect technique to take the full point and his maiden victory at the Masters.

For Gukesh, this was the second year running when he tied for first position and lost the tiebreaker. In the previous edition, Gukesh had lost to Chinese Wei Yi.

FIH PRO LEAGUE HOCKEY

Free tickets for Bhubaneswar leg



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Hockey India has announced that all tickets for the men's and women's FIH Pro League matches in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, scheduled from February 15 to 25 will be free of charge for fans at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium.

This gesture underscores Hockey India's commitment to promoting the sport and creating an inclusive, fan-friendly environment. Fans can easily secure their tickets through www.ticketgenie.in by registering their details to receive a virtual ticket. With this hassle-free system, there will be no need for redemption of online purchases, ensuring smooth entry to the stadium on match days, Hockey India said in a release.

Competing in the Bhubaneswar stage of the FIH Pro League 2024-25 will be top men's teams from England, Spain, Germany, Ireland, and India, while the women's teams from Germany, England, the Nether-

lands, Spain, and India will also battle it out. Each team will face off twice during this stage of the tournament.

The Indian Women's Hockey Team will begin their FIH Pro League 2024-25 campaign February 15 with a match against England, followed by the men's team taking on Spain in their first game of the tournament on the same day.

We are proud to host the FIH Pro League in Bhubaneswar, a city that has become synonymous with world-class hockey. By offering free tickets, we hope to create an electrifying atmosphere in the stadium, with fans from all walks of life coming together to celebrate the sport. This is a special opportunity for Odisha and India to showcase our passion for hockey on a global stage, Hockey India chief Dilip Tirkey said.

Hockey India secretary general Bhola Nath Singh added, "We are thrilled to make this edition of the FIH Pro League more accessible than ever before."

SHORT TAKES

CT Tickets for India sale from Monday evening

New Delhi: The tickets for India's three group-stage matches in the 2025 Champions Trophy and the first semifinal, scheduled to take place in Dubai, UAE, will be put on sale from Monday evening, said the International Cricket Council (ICC). Tickets for the aforementioned four matches will be available for purchase from 4 pm Gulf Standard Time (GST) on Monday, which translates to 5:30 pm Indian Standard Time (IST). ICC said the general stand ticket prices at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium will start from 125 Dirhams (approximately 2964 Indian rupees) and are available to purchase online on the official ticketing website. ICC further said tickets for the 10 Champions Trophy matches taking place in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, which went on sale last week, are now available for online purchase.

At 15, Jonathan clinches gold

Dehradun: Fifteen-year-old Bengaluru shooter Jonathan Antony delivered a grand performance on the biggest domestic stage when he outwitted Paris Olympics bronze-medallist Sarabjot Singh and the more fancied Saurabh Chaudhary to clinch the 10m air pistol gold at the National Games here Monday. Jonathan, whose shooting career took wings when he won gold in the CBSE South Zone Rifle Shooting Competition in 2022 while studying in eighth standard, shot a superb 240.7 for Karnataka in the final to overcome the challenge of Services veterans Ravinder Singh (silver, 240.3) and Gurpreet Singh (bronze, 220.1) and Sarabjot, who won a bronze in the Paris Olympics' 10m air pistol mixed team event with Manu Bhaker last year.

Samson fractures index finger

New Delhi: Star wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson has fractured his index finger after being hit by a Jofra Archer scorching during the fifth T20 International against England in Mumbai and will be out of action for more than a month, side-lining him from the upcoming Ranji Trophy quarterfinals. It is learnt that Sanju has returned to his home base Thiruvananthapuram and will only start training after completing his rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA), he would need NCA's green light. While he hit another six and four, the swelling increased once he was back in the dug-out. The scans showed a fracture.

Esports: Gods Reign crowned champions



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 3: Gods Reign showcased exceptional performance and outplayed the nation's finest teams to emerge victorious in the Mobile Challenge Finals in Season 6 of the BGMI Mobile Challenge, the Snapdragon Pro Series event which concluded in Noida.

Gods Reign claimed the coveted title and the top prize of INR 50,00,000 Sunday, cementing their position as one of the best BGMI squads in India.

They emerged victorious in the multi-titled mobile esports league, supported by Snapdragon Pro Series (SPS), ESL FACEIT Gr, Qualcomm Technologies Inc, and NODWIN Gaming, held from January 31 to February 2 at the Noida Indoor Stadium.

Accumulating a total of 155 points and 4 Winner-Winner Chicken Dinners (WWCDs), Gods Reign emerged as the champions. Their dominance was evident in their ability to balance precise strategy and relentless aggression, leaving their mark as one of the most formidable teams in the tournament.

Team K9 Esports finished as the runners-up with 153 points, narrowly missing the top spot and claiming INR 20,00,000 in prize money, while Team Versatile finished third with 143 points and took home INR 8,00,000.

Spower was awarded the MVP award for his exemplary displays and leadership, leading Team Versatile to a third place podium finish. Team Gujarat Tigers captured and upheld the true spirit of the competition as the breakout stars, completing their inspiring journey from the Open Qualifiers to the Finals with a commendable ninth place finish, showcasing the incredible depth of talent in India's esports ecosystem.

Expressing his jubilation after their momentous victory, Ammar 'Destro' Khan, the IGL

of Gods Reign said, This win is a testament to the hard work, trust, and dedication every player on our team has put in. We faced challenges last year but we pushed through tough moments and stood strong together. And today, we lift the trophy as champions. Huge credit to Nodwin Gaming & ESL for organizing such a smooth and competitive event, and of course, to our fans - your energy and support mean everything to us. This is just the beginning of GDR that you all knew.

Season 6 of the SPS BGMI Mobile Challenge was a testament to the growing synergy between ESL FACEIT Group, Qualcomm Technologies Inc., and NODWIN Gaming. Together, they have created a platform that bridges local talent with international visibility, driving unprecedented growth for the Indian gaming ecosystem.

"The Snapdragon Pro Series BGMI Mobile Challenge Season 6 embodies what esports is all about community, competition, and creativity," said Sam Braithwaite, VP of Game Ecosystems, Mobile at EFG. "Through our partnership with NODWIN Gaming, we've built a platform that not only nurtures talent but also unites players, fans, and stakeholders in a shared celebration of excellence. This tournament has demonstrated the immense potential of Indian esports to captivate audiences and inspire the next generation of gamers, proving that the region is ready to compete on the global stage."

The Snapdragon Pro Series BGMI Mobile Challenge Season 6 highlighted and celebrated the economic and cultural impact of esports in India. With a prize pool of INR 1 crore, the tournament demonstrated the growing financial opportunities within the sector. Community engagement reached new heights, with fans rallying behind their favourite teams.

38TH NATIONAL GAMES

Taekwondo director replaced amid match-fixing allegations

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dehradun, Feb 3: The National Games Technical Conduct Committee (GTCC) has removed T Praveen Kumar as director of competition for taekwondo following allegations that results in 10 of the 16 weight categories were decided even before the competition began.

S Dinesh Kumar was appointed as the new director of competition, following a strong recommendation from the three-member Prevention of Manipulation of Competition Committee (PMCC).

According to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), officials appointed by the Taekwondo Federation of India (TFI) had allegedly pre-decided the winners of various weight categories in exchange for bribes. "The asking price is Rs 3 lakh for gold medal, Rs 2 lakh for silver and Rs 1 lakh for bronze," the IOA was informed. Further investigations revealed that T. Praveen Kumar had appointed office-bearers and executive members from some state associations—as well as an equipment vendor—as sports-specific volunteers for the selection trials.

Odisha FC settle for draw

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Kalinga Warriors were held to a 2-2 draw by NorthEast United FC in a hard-fought encounter at the Kalinga Stadium Monday. Both teams fought hard, with the Kalinga Warriors salvaging a late equalizer after falling behind twice. Thoiba 78' and Isak 90+3' scored for Odisha FC.

The Kalinga Warriors started strong, pressing early on as created chances, with Rahul KP and Jerry M both coming close but failing to find the net. Hugo Boumous was also involved in the build-up, but his shot in the 23rd minute was off target. Despite the pressure, the first half ended goalless.

The second half saw Odisha continue to press, with Hugo heading just wide in the 47th minute. Isak's curling shot in the 51st minute was saved comfortably, and Amrinder Singh made a crucial one-on-one save to deny NEUFC. However, in the 67th minute, Northeast United broke the deadlock. Alaaeddine Ajarai continued his goalscoring form and gave NEUFC the lead with a header from a set-piece.

Odisha responded in the 78th minute when Isak delivered a



brilliant cross to Thoiba, who powered his header past the goalkeeper to level the score.

NEUFC regained the lead just five minutes later, with Ajarai heading in another cross from a set-piece in the 83rd minute.

As the match seemed to be slipping away from Odisha, Isak found a last-gasp equalizer

in the 3rd minute of stoppage time. His late strike ensured a share of the spoils in an exciting encounter that ended 2-2.

Odisha FC now turn their attention to their next match, traveling to Goa to face the Gaur's February 6, 2025, at the Fatorda Stadium. The match is set to kick off at 7:30 PM.

Kiss by 'my boss' was wrong: Hermoso

REUTERS

Madrid, Feb 3: Spanish women's World Cup winner Jenni Hermoso confronted former soccer federation boss Luis Rubiales at his trial Monday, saying she did not agree to the kiss that triggered a national backlash against sexism in sport.

"I didn't hear or understand anything," she added, looking nervous at first but then calm as she took questions for more than two hours. "The next thing he did was to grab me by the ears and kiss me on the mouth... I felt disrespected."

WORLD CUP WIN OVERSHADOWED
Rubiales has said the kiss was consensual and in the aftermath he initially scoffed at critics as "id-

er for a Mexican club as well as Spain's national team. Rubiales and his co-defendants - former women's national team coach Jorge Vilda, former Spanish football federation (RFEF) sporting director Albert Luque and the RFEF's former head of marketing Ruben Rivera - will testify on or after Feb 12.

- Former football boss Rubiales accused of assault and coercion
- "That should never happen," Hermoso says of kiss at World Cup
- Encounter seen by millions worldwide at 2023 award ceremony
- Controversy triggered backlash against machismo in sport



I knew I was being kissed by my boss and that should not happen in any social or work environment

JENNI HERMOSO | FOOTBALL PLAYER, SPAIN