



Breaking stereotypes

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu wants to shatter the myth that a woman is complete only if she's married and has babies

LEISURE | P2



Gabbard back as spy chief

Tulsi Gabbard, Donald Trump's controversial pick to oversee spy agencies, has been approved by a key Senate committee for DNI

INTERNATIONAL | P10



New low for rupee

Continuing its slide, the rupee plunges 36 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.43 against the US dollar

BUSINESS | P11



Form under scanner

Form and fitness of seasoned stars under the scanner as India enter the final phase of their Champions Trophy preparations

SPORTS | P12

CM launches 'Bikashita Gaon, Bikashita Odisha'

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched the 'Bikashita Gaon, Bikashita Odisha' (BGBO) scheme for rural infrastructure developmental projects in the state. He said the implementation of the scheme will end the divide between villages and towns in rural areas and people in rural areas will get all facilities that are available in the urban areas. The CM launched the scheme at Jankia village, about 30 km from here. He said the developmental activities under the BGBO scheme will reach all 53,845 villages across the state in a span of five years. "We focus on the development of villages as 81 per cent of the state's population live in rural areas," Majhi said. The BJP government has announced the BGBO scheme after replacing the 'Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha' (AONO) scheme launched by the previous BJD government. Majhi said the state government has made a budgetary provision of ₹1,000 crore

under the BGBO scheme for the financial year 2024-25 and ₹5,000 crore will be spent in a span of five years. He, however, said that though the previous BJD government had launched the AONO scheme, it did not make any budgetary provision under it. "The BJD government had launched the AONO scheme just before general elections in 2024 to mislead the people," Majhi said. Panchayat Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, local MLAs, and panchayat functionaries were present at the function. The CM said the BGBO has the provision to take up various sustainable rural infrastructure developmental projects like roads, bridges, culverts, school buildings, civic amenities, kalyan mandaps, sports, and other infrastructure development. "The facilities which are available in urban areas will be at the reach of people in villages and this is the objective of the scheme," he said, adding that villages dominated by tribals, backward class, and Dalit residents will get priority in the scheme.



CRICKET CRAZE: Thousands of fans Wednesday descended upon Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, desperate to secure offline tickets for the India vs England ODI Sunday. The scene quickly turned into a stampede-like situation, forcing police to deploy water cannons to disperse the unruly crowd (Report on P3)

Got ransom call for ₹50L: Jaydev Jena

BHUBANESWAR: Senior Congress leader Jaydev Jena Wednesday claimed he has received a ransom call demanding the payment of ₹50 lakh. The former Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president has lodged a complaint with the Capital police station and mailed a letter about the incident to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who also holds the Home portfolio, alleging complete collapse in law and order. "While returning home after addressing a press conference at Congress Bhawan Monday, I received a call from an unknown number... the caller, speaking in Odia, asked me to pay ₹50 lakh or face consequences. He also demanded ₹50,000 immediately. When I asked whether he would kill me if I didn't pay him, he said that cannot be ruled out," Jena told reporters. Asked whether any police action has been taken so far, Jena said, "Police told me they have taken the matter seriously but nothing has happened so far."

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



₹2cr cash seized from govt officer

MALKANGIRI: Odisha anti-corruption Vigilance sleuths Wednesday seized around Rs 2 crore in cash from the house of a state government officer in Malkangiri district during a raid, officials said. The Vigilance officials raided the house of deputy director and project director of watershed department, Malkangiri, Santanu Mohapatra, for possessing disproportionate assets, they said. P3

Trump vows Gaza takeover

From calling Canada as the 51st state of America to laying claim over faraway Greenland, US president Donald Trump had already laid bare his expansionist agenda after winning the presidential polls in November last year. However, his astonishing remark about wanting the US to take control of and redevelop the war-ravaged Gaza Strip as 'Riviera of the Middle East' has sent ripples across the region, while drawing flak from allies and adversaries alike. Since his return to the White House just over two weeks ago, the former New York property developer's 'America First' campaign appears to have evolved into 'America More,' as he becomes increasingly focused on acquiring new territories. It remains uncertain whether Trump will proceed with his contentious plan, peacefully or militarily, or if he is merely adopting an extreme stance as a bargaining tactic as part of his transactional foreign policy



ting Palestinians elsewhere, shattering decades of US policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and drawing regional condemnation. The shock move from Trump was swiftly condemned by regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia which Trump hopes will establish ties with Israel. Trump, in his first major Middle East policy announcement, said he envisioned building a resort where international communities could live in harmony. Trump's son-in-law and former aide, Jared Kushner, last year described Gaza as 'valuable' waterfront property. The casual proposal sent diplomatic shockwaves across the Middle East and around the globe. China said it opposed the

The announcement followed Trump's shock proposal earlier Tuesday for the permanent resettlement of the more than two million Palestinians from Gaza to neighbouring countries, calling the enclave - where the first phase of a fragile Israel-Hamas ceasefire and hostage release deal is in effect - a 'demolition site.' The US taking a direct stake in Gaza would run counter to longtime policy in Washington and for much of the international community, which has held that Gaza would be part of a future Palestinian state that includes the occupied West Bank. Trump's proposal raises questions whether Middle East power Saudi Arabia would be willing to join a renewed US-brokered push for a historic normalisation of relations with US ally Israel. Saudi Arabia said it would not establish ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state, contradicting Trump's claim that Riyadh was not demanding a Palestinian homeland. Trump said that he plans to visit Gaza, Israel and Saudi Arabia, but did not say when he plans to go.

Exit polls give BJP an edge over AAP

The electoral fate of 699 candidates was sealed in EVMS Wednesday as Delhi voted to elect 70 MLAs even as most exit polls predicted an edge for the BJP over the AAP and no gain for the Congress. However, the exit polls have a track record of often misreading the people's mood and going miserably wrong in their predictions. This was evident in the Lok Sabha and Haryana Assembly elections last year. Even in the 2020 Delhi polls, most exit polls had got their predictions wrong. The AAP is eyeing for a third consecutive term, relying on its track record in governance and various welfare initiatives, while the BJP is making a concerted effort to regain control of the capital after more than 25 years. On the other hand, the Congress, which held power in Delhi for 15 consecutive years until 2013, is working to make a comeback after failing to secure a single seat in the last two elections

AAP in the Delhi Assembly polls, while the Congress was projected to make no significant gains from last elections. Two exit polls, however, predicted a victory for the AAP, and as many showed a close contest between them, with an edge for the BJP. The Election Commission will announce the official results after the counting of votes February 8. Among exit polls that predicted a BJP victory, People's Pulse showed NDA was likely to get 51 to 60 seats, while AAP may get 10-19 seats. The Congress, it claimed, will not be able to open its account. According to People's Insight, NDA is likely to get 40 to 44 seats, AAP 25 to 29 seats, and Congress 0-1 seat. The P-Marq exit poll predicted 39-49 seats for BJP and allies, 21-31 seats for AAP and 0-1 for Congress. The JVC exit poll said BJP and allies would get 39-45, AAP 22-31 seats and Congress 0-2. Two surveys predicted AAP's victory - Wee Preside, which gave 46-52 sets for AAP, 18-23 for BJP and 0-1 for Congress, and Mind Brink Media predicted 44-49 seats for AAP, 21-25 for BJP and 0-1 for Congress.

'City killer' asteroid may hit Earth in 8 years

Washington, Feb 5: A colossal explosion in the sky, unleashing energy hundreds of times greater than the Hiroshima bomb. A blinding flash nearly as bright as the Sun. Shockwaves powerful enough to flatten everything for miles. It may sound apocalyptic, but a newly detected asteroid nearly the size of a football field now has a greater than one per cent chance of colliding with Earth in about eight years. Such an impact has the potential for city-level devastation, depending on where it strikes. Scientists aren't panicking yet, but they are watching closely. "At this point, it's 'Let's pay a lot of attention, let's get as many assets as we can observing it,'" Bruce Betts, chief scientist of The Planetary Society, told AFP.

Dubbed 2024 YR4, the asteroid was first spotted December 27, 2024, by the El Sauce Observatory in Chile. Based on its brightness, astronomers estimate it is between 130 and 300 feet (40-90 metres) wide. By New Year's Eve, it had landed on the desk of Kelly Fast, acting planetary defence officer at US space agency NASA, as an object of concern. "You get observations, they drop off again. This one looked like it had the potential to stick around," she told AFP. The risk assessment kept climbing, and January 29, the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN), a global planetary defence collaboration, issued a memo. According to the latest calculations from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, there is a 1.6 per cent chance the asteroid will strike Earth December 22, 2032.

The most infamous asteroid impact occurred 66 million years ago, when a six-mile-wide space rock triggered a global winter, wiping out the dinosaurs and 75 per cent of all species



If it does hit, possible impact sites include over the eastern Pacific Ocean, northern South America, the Atlantic Ocean, Africa, the Arabian Sea, and South Asia, the IAWN memo states. 2024 YR4 follows a highly elliptical, four-year orbit, swinging through the inner planets before shooting past Mars and out toward Jupiter. For now, it's zooming away from Earth - its next close pass will not come until 2028. "The odds are very good that not only will this not hit Earth, but at some point in the next months to few years, that probability will go to zero," said Betts. A similar scenario unfolded in 2004 with Apophis, an asteroid initially projected to have a 2.7 per cent chance of striking Earth in 2029. Further observations ruled out an impact. The most infamous asteroid impact occurred 66 million years ago, when a six-mile-wide space rock triggered a global winter, wiping out the dinosaurs and 75 per cent of all species. By contrast, 2024 YR4 falls into the "city killer" category. "If you put it over Paris or London or New York, you basically wipe out the whole city and some of the environs," said Betts. The best modern comparison is the 1908 Tunguska Event, when an asteroid or comet fragment measuring 30-50 metres exploded over Siberia, flattening 80 million trees across 2,000 square kilometres.

leisure

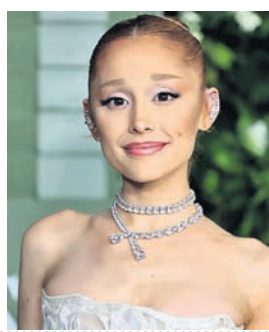


JELLY ROLL NEW MENTOR FOR AMERICAN IDOL

Jelly Roll will mentor the *American Idol* contestants in a new role as the show's 'artist in residence.' The 40-year-old singer will join the ABC talent series during its *Hollywood Week* episodes and will be on hand throughout the rest of the season.

ARIANA GRANDE USES HER BIRTH NAME FOR WICKED CREDITS

Wicked actress Ariana Grande wanted to go by her full name in the movie's credits for an emotional reason. "It makes me feel like a homecoming as my little pieces got lost along the way after I first saw *Wicked* when I was a young girl," shared the 31-year-old.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If your work has anything to do with money, today you will be busy counting your riches! If you've applied for a loan, it may get sanctioned today. Look for variety, says Ganesha, and you may find your day filled with smiles and what not.

TAURUS
You will wake up feeling determined and decisive today, says Ganesha. Be careful as your rigid views may make you seem stubborn. You may not be willing to come half way during a conflict and will make a habit of articulating your viewpoint. Tension at the workplace will eat through most of your time today, feels Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today may not be very meaningful and productive for you, though you will get to spend plenty of quality time with yourself in the afternoon, which may not necessarily be to your liking. By evening, you may feel a little extra sensitive. A lonely day, or as an optimist would put it, you've got the whole day to yourself; it could have been worse (For instance, a day alone with your nagging mother-in-law!).

CANCER
With Ganesha's grace, whatever you think or persevere will be successful. Students will excel and finish pending work. You can display your imagination excellently. In short, a day of happiness and variety.

LEO
Chess is a good start, but it is nothing compared to the strategic intrigues of your day today. Arguments will lead to further arguments, and nowhere else, reminds Ganesha. So, it only makes sense to counter a disagreement with an agreement. But then again, total agreement is doubly secretive.

VIRGO
Avoid all kinds of prejudice and do not allow intolerance to enter your mind today, advises Ganesha. In all likelihood, you will look around yourself in search of love and affection. You will do well to keep negativity at bay as otherwise it may cow you down. Ganesha suggests that you marshal all your courage to live as per your convictions.

LIBRA
Call it your generous side, but today is the perfect day to give back to all those from whom you have received so far. With roots set firmly in community service, it might do you well to extend that helping hand and return something back to them, preferably in the double.

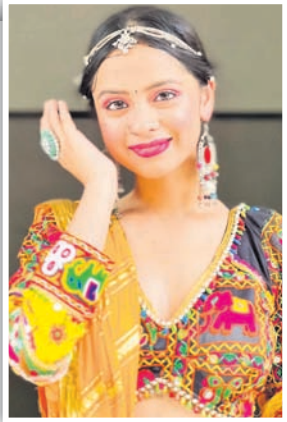
SCORPIO
An upcoming project of a new joint venture will capsize your personal life and keep you on your toes today, says Ganesha. You may not find the results in proportion to the efforts that you put in, but be patient because everything will fall in place only in due time.

SAGITTARIUS
It's time for invitations and grooving all night long. And even eat like a glutton. But, for a change you are not on a mood to party, though it is unlike you. You reject the idea of socialising and hitting the dance floor. And your friends do not like your changed avatar, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
If you are planning to fly to foreign shores for further studies, start documentation and other preparations today, says Ganesha. Whether you are a student or not, on this favourable day, all you need to do is to make a priority list, follow it and finish off your work one by one. If you are associated with Stock Market, expect an advantageous day ahead.

AQUARIUS
You are already overloaded with work. On the top of it, people around you will conveniently put their share of load on your back, and you will take it most of the times. You, however, will not get bogged down by the additional responsibilities.

PISCES
Are you fretting over the obstacles you are facing on the business front? Ganesha tackles the root of your problem and advises you to be patient and have faith in your undertakings. Good things will come your way, in good time. You may find it hard to accomplish even run of the mill tasks that you do easily everyday and this could be because of the unfavorable alignment of the stars but this is only a matter of time and this too shall pass.



Nitanshi: IIFA nod is a dream come true

MUMBAI: Nitanshi Goel, who has won hearts with her character Phool in *Laapataa Ladies*, has bagged a nomination in IIFA's Best Performance in a Leading Role (Female). The actress says it's a dream come true to be contending alongside names such as Alia Bhatt, Katrina Kaif, Yami Gautam, and Shradha Kapoor.

Nitanshi shared: "This nomination is beyond anything I ever imagined. I am truly grateful to the jury for this recognition and honored to be mentioned alongside such incredibly talented actors whom I have looked up to for years."

She went to add, "More than anything, I feel deeply thankful for the love and encouragement from the audience. Every kind word, every message, and every time someone recognizes me—it all means the world to me."

Directed by Kiran Rao, *Laapataa Ladies* last year was chosen and submitted as India's official entry in the Best Foreign Film Category for the Oscars 2025 by the Film Federation of India.

The movie is a slice-of-life comedy about the misadventures of two young brides who become separated on the same train but with different grooms. It is a blend of mistaken identities and laugh-out-loud escapades.

The film has been made under the banner of Aamir Khan Productions and Kindling Productions, with the script based on an award-winning story by Biplab Goswami.

Dhauili-Kalinga Mahotsav from Feb 7; Buddha Samman for Ramahari Das

BHUBANESWAR: The 21st edition of Dhauili Kalinga Mahotsav, organised by the Odia Language Literature & Culture (OLL&C) Department, Govt. of Odisha, and Orissa Dance Academy (ODA) in association with Art Vision, will be held from February 7 to 9 at the Foothills of Dhauili, according to the organisers.

A press meet in this regard Wednesday was attended by OLL&C deputy director Debananda Bariha, ODA Secy Aruna Mohanty, and eminent Odissi exponent Ilena Citaristi.

About 200 artistes from different disciplines such as Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Mohiniyattam, Malakhamb, and others are expected to perform at the event.

This year, the Buddha Samman will be conferred on eminent Odissi singer and composer Guru Ramhari Das. The honour carries a citation, an



anga vastra, and a cash award of Rs. 200,000/-.

Similarly, Odissi danseuse and Central Sangeet Akademi Awardee Sharmila Biswas, renowned singer, composer, and Central Sangeet Akademi Awardee Sangita Gosain, noted Mardala exponent, Odisha Sangeet Akademi Awardee Guru Shri Kalandi Charan

Parida, and art promoter Khirod Mohan Pattnaik will be feted with the Guru Gangadhar Smruti Samman.

The honour carries a citation, an anga vastra, and a cash award of Rs. 100,000/-.

This festival is also supported by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Government of India. P.M.N.

Samantha: Envy is root of all evil

CHENNAI: Samantha Ruth Prabhu is single and happy. In fact, the actress is raring to go and wants to break stereotypes that a woman is happy and complete only if she's married and has babies.

Samantha said during a chat with *GQ* about how she feels when people ask her if she's doing fine. She said, "I think this whole concern around me doing alright at this time comes from the place where we still believe that the idea of being a complete woman is being married and having babies. And if at my age, you haven't achieved that, then you are automatically sad and lonely, which is so, so wrong. And un-

true." While there were no names taken in this interview, she was cryptically asked how she feels about people moving on in new relationships, she said, "I've been through too much in my life to dwell on that."

However, Samantha was further probed if she feels joy, bitterness, or envy and she reacted, "Oh no. One quality that I completely dissociate myself from is envy. I refuse to

let that be a part of my core. I think envy is the root of all evil. Everything else is fine, but there's no space for anything as unhealthy as envy."

AGENCIES

Kriti's career turning point

MUMBAI: Kriti Sanon's career took a significant turn with the 2017 film *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, produced by Junglee Pictures. Set to re-release in theatres

on February 7, the film is a light-hearted romantic comedy where she portrayed Bitti Mishra, a free-spirited young woman. Bitti's simple yet stylish persona resonated with audiences, further cementing Kriti's place in the industry.

The success of *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, a film that

also boasted a talented crew including Director Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and co-stars Ayushmann Khurrana and Rajkumar Rao, opened doors for Kriti, leading to roles

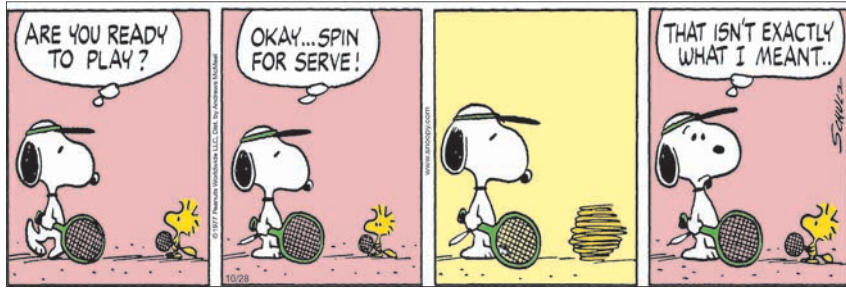
that further showcased her versatility. In a recent interview with *The Indian Express*, she acknowledged the pivotal role of *Bareilly Ki Barfi* in her career, stating that it not only brought her recognition but also effectively dispelled the audience's perception of her being limited to glamorous roles.

Notably, her performance in Maddock Films *Mimi* (2021) garnered critical acclaim and the prestigious National Film Award for Best Actress. This marked a significant milestone in her career, solidifying her position as one of Bollywood's most talented actresses.

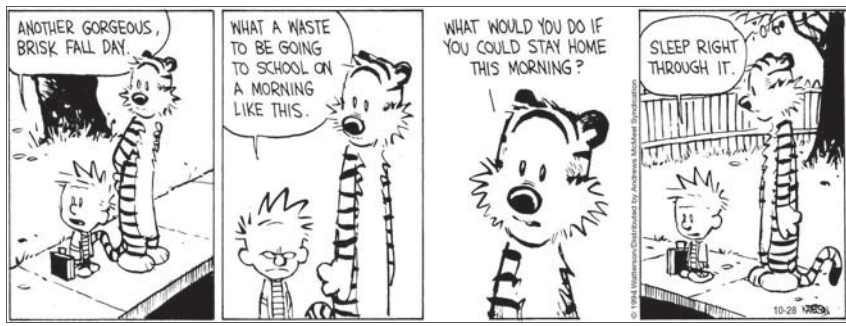
The movie's re-release is set to offer audiences the chance to relive and experience the magic of this heartwarming romantic comedy, a perfect way to celebrate the month of love. AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

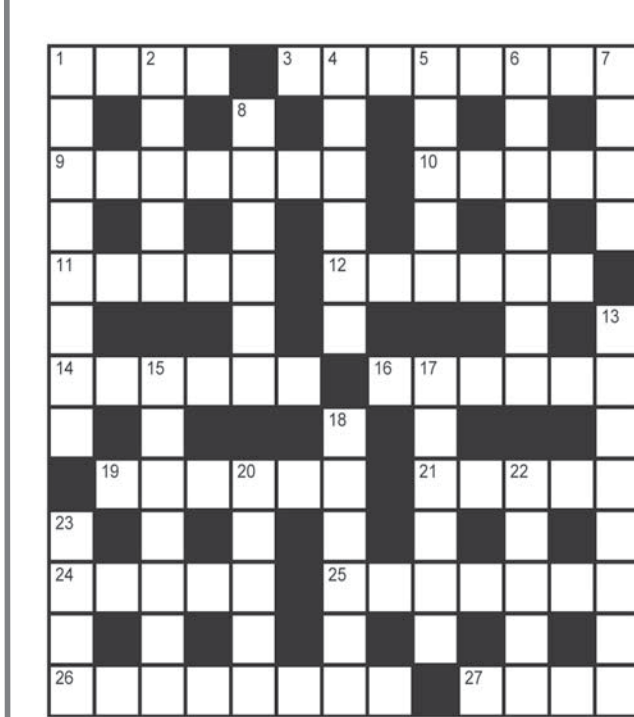


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD

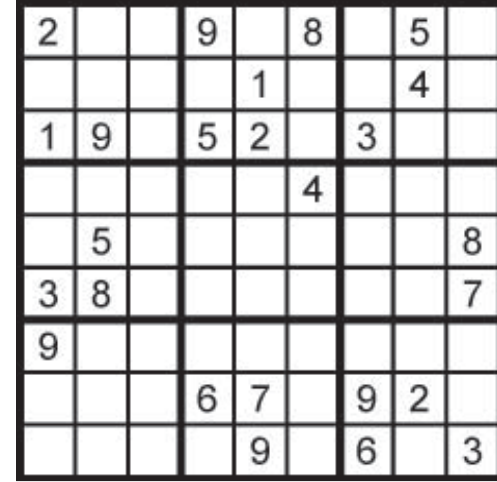


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- Across**
- 1 Decomposes
 - 3 Gypsy dancing
 - 9 Pronounced
 - 10 Ludicrous
 - 11 Oxlike antelope
 - 12 Main course
 - 14 Bugged
 - 19 Squirm
 - 16 Dental option
 - 21 Oomph
 - 24 Feather in one's cap
 - 25 August
 - 26 Monocle
 - 27 Power system
 - 6 Most orderly
 - 7 Dairy aisle buy
 - 8 Span
 - 13 Exiled
 - 15 Fragrance
 - 17 Get back
 - 18 Holdings
 - 20 Angler's basket
 - 22 Primitive weapon
 - 23 Abbey area

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

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Dibyajyoti

Sikun

Bhubaneswar: Two boys drowned in Kuakhai river during immersion of an idol of Goddess Saraswati Wednesday, police said. The deceased boys, both 15 years old, were identified as Sikun Senapati of Ganga Nagar and Dibyajyoti Mahalik of Unit-6 of the City. The boys had gone to Rangabazar area along with their tuition teacher and other students for the idol immersion. The duo carried the idol to the river while others were at the bank. However, they slipped into deep waters and were swept away, police said. The bodies have been fished out and sent for post-mortem. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed deep grief over the deaths. The state government announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh each from the State Disaster Relief Fund for the families of the deceased boys.

downtown

HC vacates stay on 2,753 health workers' posting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 5: Two days after imposing an interim stay on recruitment of Multipurpose Health Workers (MPHWs), the Orissa High Court Wednesday vacated the stay, paving way for distribution of appointment letters to as many as 2,753 MPHWs at a job fair in Capital city February 7.



The HC had February 3 directed the Odisha Subordinate Staff Selection Commission (OSSSC) to put on hold appointment of MPHWs after several candidates filed petitions challenging the recruitment process.

Notably, the OSSSC had released a notification April 29, 2023 seeking applications for recruitment of 2,753 female health workers. It conducted

tests and declared the results in September 2024. However, some candidates had moved the HC alleging that there was negative marking for wrong answers for 100 marks but 13 answers were "wrong" while there was no clarity over answers of eight questions.

The HC then imposed a stay on the recruitment. However, the HC Wednesday withdrew the stay order paving way for the state government to distribute appointment letters to the selected candidates.

The Nijukti Mela (job fair) will be organised at the Capital High School Play Ground February 7 when Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will distribute appointment letters to the new recruits at 3:30pm, said Director of Family Welfare Sanjukta Sahoo.

It is to be noted here that the Chief Minister had recently announced to fill 1.1 lakh vacant government posts and directed the chairpersons of OSSSC, Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) and Odisha Staff Selection Commission (OSSC) to expedite the recruitment process for the same.

SAI Confluence 2025 kicks off



CAPTIVATING SHOW: Kids perform during the opening ceremony of SAI Confluence 2025, a three-day annual event, on the premises of SAI Angan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: SAI Confluence 2025, the three-day annual celebration of SAI Angan, got off to a colourful start at the playschool's Indraprastha Auditorium here

Wednesday.

The cultural extravaganza aims at showcasing the creativity, talent and academic prowess of young minds.

Students regaled the audience with an array of cultural performances, debates, and

academic presentations, covering diverse themes such as innovation, entrepreneurship, management, technology, and academic excellence.

Expressing gratitude, SAI International Education Group Chairperson Silpi Sa-

hoo said, "SAI Confluence 2025 is a joyous celebration of boundless creativity and cultural diversity, a reflection of the immense talent displayed by little stars of SAI Angan. We are committed to nurturing the hidden potential in

every child through holistic education."

Dignitaries, including educationists, graced the inaugural occasion and shared their valuable insights on the significance of holistic education.

INDIA-ENGLAND CLASH AT BARABATI

Tickets sold out amid chaos at counters

Crowd control became a Herculean task as some unruly cricket fans jostled near the counters, leading to a stampede-like situation that prompted the police to resort to a mild lathi-charge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 5: Offline ticket sale for the February 9 India-England One-Day International (ODI) match at Barabati Stadium here saw thousands of fans jostling, leading to a stampede-like situation, prompting

the police to resort to mild lathi-charge Wednesday.

As per the earlier decision, four counters were set up on the stadium premises for sale of tickets February 5 and 6. The Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) had Tuesday decided to sell 11,080 tickets at the counters in these two days. However, all the tickets were reportedly sold out on the first day, Wednesday.

People from across the state were seen crowding near the stadium since Tuesday afternoon. "Even some started queuing up. Police, however, dispersed them in the evening," said an OCA official.

People again began queuing up Wednesday morning. By evening, crowd control became a Herculean task for the security personnel. Some unruly



fans jostled near the counters, leading to a stampede-like situation. Those who managed to get a ticket found it almost impossible to return from the counter. Police resorted to mild baton-charge and even used water cannons to bring the situa-

tion under control.

Cuttack Deputy Commissioner of Police Jagmohan Meena said the situation was under control. "Police had to 'show the lathi' to bring the situation under control," he said.

50-platoon force

The Commissionerate Police will deploy 50 platoons of force for smooth conduct of the ODI match between India and England at the historic Barabati Stadium in the Silver City February 9.

Holding a review meeting at Police Seva Bhawan, Commissioner of Police S Dev Datta Singh said the twin city police is leaving no stone unturned to ensure the match is held smoothly.

"A total of 50 platoons of force will be engaged for the upcoming ODI cricket match. Senior police officers will examine the security arrangements from time to time. The route lining for the traffic movement of players and match officials has also been prepared," he said.

Vig seizes ₹2cr cash from Malkangiri Watershed PD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Malkangiri, Feb 5: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday seized around ₹2 crore in cash from the house of deputy director and project director (PD) of Watershed department, Malkangiri, Santanu Mohapatra during a raid, officials said.

The anti-corruption officials raided the house of Mohapatra after receiving complaints of possessing disproportionate assets, they added.

A total of seven Vigilance teams, headed by two additional SPs, four DSPs, and other staff, conducted simultaneous searches at multiple locations, including Malkangiri, Cuttack, and Bhubaneswar. The operation was carried out based on search warrants issued by the special judge, Vigilance, Jeypore.

"During the searches, a total



of ₹2.06 crore in cash was recovered. Of this, approximately ₹1.98 crore was seized from Mohapatra's house, while the remaining amount was recovered from people connected to him," said a Vigilance spokesperson.

The Vigilance also seized gold jewellery weighing 422 gram, bank, insurance, other deposits worth ₹91 lakh, four high value plots in Bhubaneswar and Jeypore town, a four wheeler, two two-wheelers and household articles worth ₹29 lakh.



REGALING POSE: Artists perform Odissi during International Aira Kharavela Mahotsav - 2025 at Khandagiri in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Couple held for loan fraud

Bhubaneswar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police Wednesday arrested a couple from the City's Patia area for fraudulently obtaining a loan of ₹1.05 crore from a private bank. Ashirbad Pattnaik, who ran proprietorship firm 'AB Solutions', and his wife Manogyan, availed the loan by mortgaging the property they had already used as collateral for another loan. According to the EOW, the couple had mortgaged two flats and a duplex to avail a loan of ₹3.79 crore from Indian Bank in January 2018. In October same year, they used the same property as mortgage to obtain a loan of ₹1.05 crore from the Cuttack Link Road branch of ICICI Bank. As of January 2025, the loan account has an outstanding amount of ₹1.30 crore, the investigating agency said. During the course of their fraudulent activities, the couple sold one of the mortgaged flats while the remaining property were seized by Indian Bank as they failed to repay the earlier loan, the agency added.

BDA converts 580 leasehold properties to freehold in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) has converted 580 leasehold properties into freehold after it received 867 applications seeking the conversion.

"The BDA has so far registered 580 conveyance deeds out of 867 applications submitted. Of these, as many as 462 applications were received online," said a notification issued by the development authority.

Significantly, applications for conversion of land can be submitted via BDA's website <https://bda.gov.in/>.

In the first phase of this initiative, 24 housing schemes have been included for conver-

sion. These schemes include Pokhaript phases I, II, and III, Prachi Enclave plotted scheme in Chandrasekharpur, Lumbini Vihar Housing Scheme in Chandrasekharpur, Udayagiri Vihar in Patrapada, and Lingaraj Vihar in Bhimpur. The development authority also plans to include other housing schemes in a phased manner.

Conversion fee for residential land has been fixed at 3 per cent of the latest benchmark valuation of the homestead land, as determined by the registering authority of the state government (for the year 2024).

BDA has clarified that if a plot is mortgaged to a financial institution, conversion will proceed only after obtaining a no-objection certificate from

the institution. Applicants are also required to submit an affidavit stating that there are no ongoing civil disputes regarding the land. In case of any legal disputes, application for conversion will be reviewed only after the case is resolved and the court order is provided.

Applicants who have encroached upon government land, public undertaking land, or BDA land within its jurisdiction are excluded from the scheme unless they first vacate the encroached land. An affidavit confirming the absence of any such encroachment must be submitted.

Those who have made constructions on the allotted plot and are in possession of the plot for more than five years are eligible to apply for freehold status.

Ditched by partner, woman hangs self

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: A 26-year-old woman, reportedly frustrated over her partner's affairs and betrayal, died by hanging herself from a ceiling fan at her rented accommodation in Laxmisagar police limits here, Wednesday. The deceased, identified as Lopamudra Panda, was learnt to have been in a relationship with her male friend for over four years, according to a police complaint lodged by her younger sister Prakruti Panda.

Prakruti said her sister's partner had promised to marry her. "However, after a brief period of their relationship, Lopamudra discovered that her partner is a

divorcee. Despite this, as Lopamudra insisted on the marriage plan, he turned down her request. Soon, Lopamudra found that his partner's marriage has been fixed with another woman."

An utterly frustrated Lopamudra then approached the man's parents who responded with assaults, threatening her with police complaint, the complainant added. With the pressure mounting, the accused then threatened to make viral her sister's sensitive photos in social media. "This left Lopamudra anguished. Moreover, the constant threats from her partner's family left her on the brink of mental agony," she added.

'Odisha Yatri' to have AI-powered safety protocols

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: 'Odisha Yatri', an innovative mobility app launched for commuters in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, will expand its offerings with deeper integration into public transport network and AI-powered safety protocols, Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra said Wednesday.

"With its zero-commission model and advanced safety features, the app is set to revolutionise urban mobility," Mahapatra said. He emphasised that with



safety at its core, 'Odisha Yatri' has quickly become a trusted travel companion for thousands of citizens. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has formally launched 'Odisha Yatri', underscoring the state's commitment to enhancing passenger safety and promoting smarter, more

sustainable mobility options, the Minister added.

"Today, 'Odisha Yatri' stands as a symbol of safe and reliable travel. It offers advanced features such as real-time trip tracking, live trip sharing, and a robust emergency assistance system integrated with the Odi-

sha Police 112 helpline," he said. Mahapatra highlighted that drivers undergo thorough background checks and regular safety training, ensuring a trusted network dedicated to passenger well-being.

Unlike traditional ride-hailing apps that charge high commissions, 'Odisha Yatri' operates on a unique zero-commission model, allowing drivers to retain 100 per cent of their earnings. This initiative has not only improved livelihoods but has also encouraged drivers to provide exceptional service. Commuters are also benefit-

ing from this innovation. "The app's user-friendly interface simplifies trip booking, while the live trip-sharing feature provides peace of mind to loved ones waiting at home. Currently, 36,297 users are registered, while 1,21,242 users are actively using 'Odisha Yatri,'" the Minister stated.

As Odisha moves towards a more developed future, 'Odisha Yatri' is leading the way in redefining urban transport. With each safe and seamless journey, it is building a smarter and more inclusive future, he concluded.

Crackdown on cars with black films, sirens, horns

Vehicles with illegal modifications will incur fines of up to ₹5,000 and possible imprisonment up to six months



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The Twin City Commissionerate Police is set to launch a special drive against the use of black films, sirens, and multi-toned horns in vehicles starting February 10. The crackdown aims to address safety concerns, enhance road discipline, and ensure compliance with traffic laws.

Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissioner, Suresh Dev Dutta Singh, issued an official letter appealing to citizens to follow the rules concerning vehicle modifications. He pointed out that despite clear legal prohibitions many motorists still use tinted glass or black films on their car windows, as well as multi-toned horns. These modifications not only violate traffic regulations but also pose significant risks to

ACCORDING TO THE LAW, CAR WINDOWS MUST ALLOW AT LEAST 70 PER CENT OF VISIBLE LIGHT TO PASS THROUGH THE FRONT AND REAR WINDOWS AND 50 PER CENT FOR THE SIDE WINDOWS

TINTED GLASS OBSTRUCTS THE VIEW OF THE DRIVER, MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO SEE PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS, OR OTHER VEHICLES

public safety. The tinted glass obstructs the view of the driver, making it difficult for them to see pedestrians, cyclists, or other vehicles, especially in low light conditions. Multi-toned horns can create confusion on the road, disrupt traffic flow,

and are often misused to gain an unfair advantage or intimidate other drivers. Furthermore, they contribute to noise pollution, which is detrimental to public health.

According to the law, car windows must allow at least 70 percent of visible light to pass through the front and rear windows and 50 percent for the side windows. Any vehicle violating these standards will be subject to the special drive beginning February 10.

The Commissionerate Police has urged the public to voluntarily remove tinted films and multi-toned horns from their vehicles before the start of the drive to avoid facing penalties. Those who fail to comply with the legal requirements will be fined ₹ 5,000, and in some cases, could face imprisonment for up to six months.

“Through this drive, we aim to ensure better road safety, reduce accidents, and improve traffic discipline across the Twin City. It is crucial that the public understands the dangers posed by these vehicle modifications and follows the traffic rules to help create safer roads for everyone,” said Commissioner Singh.

The Commissionerate Police is also planning to increase awareness about the importance of these rules and encourage voluntary compliance, as it works toward improving road safety and reducing hazards associated with illegal vehicle modifications.



VOICING DISSENT: Members of trade unions, farmer unions, women and youth groups stage a protest against the Union Budget 2025 at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

Finance Commission acknowledges Puri's need

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The 16th Finance Commission headed by chairman Arvind Panagariya visited Puri Wednesday and held meetings with the functionaries of the municipality to address the city's urban challenges and financial requirements.

The visit was part of the commission's four-day tour of Odisha, during which it aims to engage with state officials and assess financial requirements.

The delegation began its visit by offering prayers at Sri-mandir. Following this, they held discussions at Raj Bhavan



with municipal officials about the town's development needs.

Key issues raised during the meeting included urban infrastructure, sanitation, drainage, waste management, and the need for better street lighting and amenities to accommodate the growing influx of pilgrims.

“Panagariya acknowledged the unique needs of Puri and assured that the Finance Commission would consider these concerns in its recommendations,” an official said, adding that the chairman emphasised the importance of efficient financial planning and resource

allocation to ensure holistic urban development while preserving the town's rich cultural heritage.

After the meeting, the team visited the Blue Flag Sea Beach and later proceeded to the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Sun Temple in Konark, to appreciate Odisha's cultural heritage.

Odisha's finance secretary Saswata Mishra, municipal administration director Arindam Dakua, Puri collector Sidharth Sankar Swain, Puri SP Vinit Agrawal, commission's members Annie George Mathew, Ajay Narayan Jha, Manoj Panda were part of the visit.

WEATHER
BBSR CTC
Max Temp 33.8° 31.8°
Min Temp 23.9° 23.0°
Humidity 90% 87%
Rainfall Nil Nil
FORECAST
Dense Fog

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	78271.28 ↓ 312.53
NIFTY	23696.30 ↓ 42.95
DOLLAR	87.54 ↑ 0.30
EURO	91.24 ↑ 1.09
GOLD	₹84,735 ↓ ₹938
SILVER	₹96,043 ↓ ₹334

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AFFIDAVIT
I, Mohamad Tanveer Khan S/o - Mohamad Sahid Khan, Ward - 6, P.O./P.S. - Barbil, Dist. - Keonjhar - 758035 declare by this Affidavit No. 7121 Dated 5.2.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Tanveer Khan for all future purposes.
Tanveer Khan

OUTR organises Engineer's Cup



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) inaugurated the highly anticipated Engineer's Cup here Wednesday. The grand opening ceremony was elevated by the presence of distinguished dignitaries, including OUTR vice-chancellor Bibhuti Bhusan Biswal as the chief guest, accompanied by guest of honour Jibitesh Mishra, president of games and sports Ashwini Kumar Dash, vice president Jitendra Naik, co-vice president Jagannath

Sethi and Falguni Baliarsingh.

The tournament brings together participants from institutions including, IIT Bhubaneswar, AIIMS Bhubaneswar, KIIT, SOA, XIM, Ravenshaw, and other distinguished universities in the three day event.

The event showcases a broad spectrum of sports such as cricket, football, volleyball, basketball, kabaddi, chess, and more, fostering not only healthy competition but also nurturing essential qualities such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience—hallmarks of successful engineering professionals.

Rotary Club holds road safety rally in Cuttack

CUTTACK: The Rotary Club of Cuttack Cantonment, in collaboration with Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir, Nayabazar, conducted a road safety awareness programme Wednesday. Students from the school's Scout and Guide division participated in a rally, raising awareness about road safety.

The rally was attended by Rotary District chairperson for road safety awareness Amiyabala Parida, along with school Scout and Guide teachers Banita Pati, Manasi Bhattacharya, and Prakash Rana, and other Rotary club members. The rally, which stretched along the Cuttack-Paradip National Highway, captured the attention of passersby as students encouraged commuters to follow road safety rules to protect themselves and their families.

Local residents expressed support, emphasising the necessity of such awareness campaigns due to the frequent accidents on the highway.

BHARATPUR CUSTODY ASSAULT

Panel concludes torture probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The judicial commission, headed by retired judge CR Dash, concluded its inquiry into the alleged torture of an Army officer and sexual assault of his fiancée at Bharatpur police station last year, an official said Wednesday.

The commission completed its inquiry as it is mandated to submit the report by February 28, Subhendra Mohanty, the judicial panel secretary, told reporters.

The state government had formed a judicial commission to thoroughly investigate the alleged incident in which an Army officer was physically assaulted and his fiancée molested in custody at Bharatpur police station on the interven-

ing night of September 14, 2024.

Justice Dash was appointed chairperson of the commission following widespread outrage across the country after the incident. During the inquiry, the commission sought views from the people involved through affidavits, receiving over 500 responses. The commission recorded statements from the Army officer, his fiancée, the accused police officials, and all individuals involved in the incident.

The commission also examined witnesses, evidence, and affidavits. The commission's tenure was initially set to expire January 31. However, it was extended till February 28, 2025.

Replying a question, Mohanty said the commission, in its

report, will indicate who were responsible for the incident and suggest the state government on means to avoid occurrence of such incidents in future.

However, the lawyer for the Army officer's fiancée had sought time until February 15 to interrogate the accused police officials and 35 witnesses. But, the commission could not allow it due to time constraints, Mohanty said.

The incident took place when an Army officer and his fiancée had gone to Bharatpur police station to lodge a complaint of road rage. Instead, they had an argument with the police following which the duo were allegedly tortured in the custody that sparked a major controversy.

Odisha set to launch month-long deworming drive

The drive to start from February 10, targeting over 16 million children and women to improve health and nutrition

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: More than 16 million children and women in Odisha will get deworming doses during a month-long drive which will be launched February 10 across the state, a health official said Wednesday.

The Directorate of Family Welfare, in collaboration with Unicef, will launch the drive to improve the health and nutritional status of children and women in Odisha.

A mop-up round will be conducted February 17 for those who miss the initial dose. Simultaneously, a Vitamin A supplementation programme will be implemented to boost



immunity and prevent childhood blindness.

The National Deworming Day (NDD) campaign targets all children aged 1 to 19 years through schools and Anganwadi centres. Additionally, women of reproductive age (20-24 years) will receive deworming treatment.

Speaking to the mediapersons, Family Welfare Director Sanjukta Sahoo said, “Children and young women will

receive age-appropriate Albendazole tablets from teachers, Anganwadi workers, and ASHAs.”

“Simultaneously, Vitamin A doses will be administered to children aged 9 to 60 months at immunisation sites and Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHSNDs) throughout February, she added.

“The initiative will be implemented in all educational institutions, including pri-

vate schools and childcare centres, benefiting approximately 14.6 million children and 1.77 million women,” said Nutrition joint director Smrutijit Patnaik.

The drive will cover 24 districts, including Angul, Boudh, Bhadrak, Bargarh, and others. Additionally, the Lymphatic Filariasis-Mass Drug Administration (LF-MDA) programme will be rolled out in select blocks of six districts, including Bolangir, Cuttack, and Kandhamal, targeting children aged 1-2 years.

“National Deworming Day is crucial for improving children's health, nutrition, education, and overall well-being,” said Unicef nutrition specialist Sourav Bhattacharjee. Unicef nutrition officer Sanjay Sahoo added that deworming would help prevent intestinal worm infections and contribute to a healthier future for children and women in Odisha.

Youth mobilised to support MDA

BHUBANESWAR: The Odisha government, in collaboration with Project Concern International and the National Service Scheme (NSS), has launched a youth-driven initiative to support Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaigns aimed at eliminating lymphatic filariasis. Traditionally led by healthcare workers, the campaign now benefits from active youth participation in community outreach, awareness, and drug distribution efforts. “By involving young people, we not only ensure the success of this health initiative but also empower them as ambassadors of change,” said Sarita Patel, regional director of NSS, Bhubaneswar. Volunteers from schools, colleges, and youth groups are being trained to administer anti-filarial drugs and educate communities. Youth-led awareness campaigns, including social media outreach, are underway in both rural and urban areas to combat misinformation, said Neelkantha Mishra, director of public health. This initiative marks a significant step in strengthening public health efforts through youth engagement.



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Pipeline work, heavy traffic hassles for jumbo passage



Had the elephants suddenly moved onto the road, there would have been chance of a mishap. However, Forest department staffers were not immediately present at the scene.

Later, upon receiving information, officials reached the spot and assisted the herd in safe crossing of the road. The elephants eventually moved into Naranpur Reserve Forest, according to Keonjhar divisional forest officer Dhanraj HD.

According to the reports of the Forest department which monitors the movement of wild animals, elephants typically travel in the evening or at night, often damaging crops and vegetation. During the day, they seek shelter in the forest. However, when villagers chase them away, they are forced to roam around villages during day time. Unable to find a safe refuge, they often become agitated and attack people.

This human-elephant conflict continues to escalate, leading to various incidents. Bimbardhar Behera, an elephant conservation advocate, urged the government to prioritise elephant corridors, habitats, and migration paths over corporate interests to ensure the protection of jumbos throughout the district.

er wild animals. Large holes dug during the pipeline work have compounded traffic issues which in turn causes problems for animals attempting to cross the road.

On Monday morning, a bizarre scene unfolded near Nekadaghar in Naranpur section of Sadar Range wherein a herd of elephants could not cross NH-20 due to roadside excavation and heavy vehicular traffic. Stranded on one side of the highway, the jumbos caused alarm among pedestrians and motorists. Some bystanders watched from a distance and captured the moment on their cellphones.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 5: The ongoing excavation work for installation of slurry pipelines and heavy traffic on National Highway 20 have emerged as major obstacles for smooth passage of elephants in Sadar and Ghatgaon forest ranges of this district, according to reports.

The pipeline project, which involves breaking of rocks, digging up soil, and clearing forests, is going on for the past few years. This has not only caused extensive environmental damage alongside NH 20, but also created obstacles for safe passage of elephants and oth-



DRAMA FEST: Artistes of Om Theatre Group enacting a scene from a play 'Manchamaya' at a state-level drama festival organised by Srasta at Gandhi Smriti Bhawan in Balasore

Youth killed over love affair in Angul Close shave as wagons jump tracks in Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, Feb 5: An 18-year-old youth was beaten to death over a love affair at Sanagobindapur village under Handapa police limits in Angul district late Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Rahul Samal, son of Dillip Samal of Madhapur village under Handapa police station. Dillip has lodged a written complaint with Handapa police alleging murder of his son following which police registered a murder case (51/25) and began an investigation.

Police have detained an 18-year-old girl, reportedly Rahul's girlfriend, from Angul police station area. The girl was reportedly present at the crime scene.

The main accused, a resident of Sanagobindapur village, is at large, police said.



According to investigators, Rahul and the girl were returning from a "secluded spot" in Sanagobindapur Tuesday night when they encountered a youth

(the accused) of the village. The youth, reportedly a relative of another girl with whom Rahul had been in a relationship, confronted him upon seeing him

with a different girl. Soon an argument ensued between them, and in a fit of rage, the accused hit Rahul on his head with a wooden plank, killing him on the spot.

Villagers, upon learning about the incident, detained the girl and alerted the police.

Handapa police station inspector-in-charge Namita Nayak and Boinda police outpost in-charge Swarup Ranjan Patri reached the spot, seized the body, and sent it for post-mortem.

Police detained the girl for questioning and returned to the crime scene with a sniffer dog and forensic team Wednesday morning.

The dog traced the movement of the accused to his house, but by then he had already escaped.

While the village is tense over the incident, IIC Nayak assured that the accused will be arrested soon.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 5: Residents of Malgodown Basti had a providential escape Wednesday morning when four wagons of a goods train jumped the tracks and fell near their houses.

According to reports, the incident occurred around 6:15am when the slum dwellers were asleep, as the impact of winter is still felt here. Residents woke up to the loud thud of the derailment. "As I came out, I found the wagons just a few metres away from my house and there were several mangled auto rickshaws, trolleys and bikes scattered here and there," said one of the residents.

Another person said, "I heard



the sound and first thought it was a blast then I stepped out of to see that the fallen wagons are just in front of my house."

Soon after the derailment, traffic on the Malgodown-Basanti Colony Road came to a grinding halt and it took more than four hours to decongest the busy stretch. Railway Protection Force (RPF) jawans and other railway personnel reached the spot and tried to ascertain the cause of the incident.

Bandhamunda assistant rail-

way manager Samir Sourabh said, "I can't exactly say now what has happened. We are going to investigate it and then only things will be clear."

Meanwhile, the slum dwellers demanded compensation for the vehicles damaged due to the mishap.

When contacted, Anil Mishra, general manager of South-Eastern Railways confirmed that the mishap was due to a human error. "Whosoever is responsible for the mishap will be taken to task and penalized after a thorough probe," said Mishra. He, however, denied giving compensation as the mishap occurred on the railway land which has been encroached upon by the slum dwellers.

Robbers snatch gold chain from lady cop

Bhadrak: Two bike-borne miscreants snatched a gold chain from a woman police inspector at a vegetable market in Odisha's Bhadrak town, an officer said Wednesday. The robbers snatched the gold chain from police inspector Monalisa Kar when she was in plain clothes and buying vegetables in the market Tuesday evening, the officer said. As Kar raised an alarm, local people chased the miscreants and apprehended one of the culprits, while the other fled with the stolen gold chain. Bhadrak Town police station inspector-in-charge Ajay Sudarshan Bage said the suspect is being interrogated and an attempt is being made to nab the other accused.

11TH BPUT CONVOCATION Technical edu key driver of progress: Guv

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela, Feb 5: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Wednesday asserted that technical education has always been a key driver of progress and it is now more crucial than ever.

Addressing students and faculty members at the 11th Convocation of Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) here, the Governor said, "This convocation marks not only the culmination



of an academic journey but also the beginning of a new chapter filled with aspirations, challenges, and responsibilities."

Kambhampati underscored India's advancements in semiconductor technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and space

research, citing projects such as Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan, and Aditya-L1. He reiterated the government's commitment to fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and self-reliance through initiatives such as 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Commending BPUT's adoption of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, he stressed the importance of industry-academia collaboration in enhancing research, skill development, and

employability. He urged graduates to be resilient, innovative, and socially responsible while contributing to India's technological and economic growth.

"We stand at the crossroads of a rapidly transforming world where technology is redefining industries, economies and societies. Our nation's strides in emerging technologies, semiconductor manufacturing, and chip design reflect our commitment to technological sovereignty," he added.

New species of flying fish discovered in Indian Ocean



The species is distinguished by its elongated and broad pectoral fins but lacks the characteristic black markings found in other related species

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 5: A team of researchers from Estuarine Biology Regional Centre at Gopalpur in Ganjam district have identified a new species of flying fish, 'Cheilopogon arcticeps', in the Indian Ocean.

The discovery was made by the researchers of Estuarine Biology Regional Centre in Gopalpur in collaboration with the Zoological Survey of India.

According to Anil Mohapatra, the fish was first identified at Pet-

uaghat fish landing centre in West Bengal. The known range of the fish extends from the western Pacific Ocean to the Bay of Bengal. The species is distinguished by its elongated and broad pectoral fins but lacks the characteristic black markings found in other related species.

Previously, 'Cheilopogon arcticeps' had been documented in China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, and Thailand. These fish are commonly found in coastal waters rather than the open sea.

The research was conducted by Anil Mohapatra, Subhendu Sekhar Mishra, Dipan Roy of Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya, and researchers Sanmitra Roy and Tapan Khatua. Their findings have been published in the prestigious Journal of the Marine Biological Association.

Till date, scientists have identified 80 species of flying fish worldwide, with 24 recorded along India's coastal waters. Fortunately, 'Cheilopogon arcticeps' poses no threat to humans.



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E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI Act, 2002

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to be held on 10.03.2025 from 11:00AM to 05:00PM

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of India under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rules 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice to the borrower, and the Authorised Officer has taken possession of the property described herein below. Offers are invited by the Authorised Officer under Sub-Rule 5 & 6 of Rule 8 of the said Rules by holding e-auction on **10.03.2025 from 11:00AM to 05:00PM**. Public at large and Borrower and Guarantor in general are being informed that E-auction under SARFAESI Act in respect of under noted property will be conducted for sale on the terms & conditions under Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and to following conditions for realization of debts due to Bank.

Date & Time of E-Auction: Dt.: 10.03.2025 from 11.00 A.M. to 05:00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

Last date for submission of EMD & Documents: Dt. : 10.03.2025 from 11.00 A.M. to 03:00 P.M.

Date & Time of Inspection of Property: 07.03.2025, between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.
For inspection please contact the Respective Branch Head or Recovery Department, Zonal Office, Baripada (Nischit, Mob.: 8895188144)

Sl. No.	BALIAPAL BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower / Total Dues	Description of the Property	Reserve Price / EMD / Type of Possession
1.	Borrower: Mr. Purna Chandra Sahu, S/o: Chandra Mohan Sahu, At: Hasimpur, P.O.: Ghantiadi, Via: Baliapal, Dist.: Balasore / Total Dues: Rs.12,38,000/- as on date of NPA plus further interest and expenses thereon	EQM of Land & Building situated over Mouza: Hasimpur, P.S.: Baliapal No.: 487, Tahasil: Baliapal, Dist.: Balasore over Khata No.: 163/186, Plot No.: 570/946, Area: Ac.0.12Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari standing in the name of Mr. Purna Chandra Sahu	₹ 30,97,500/- / ₹ 3,09,750/- / Symbolic

Terms and conditions of E-Auction

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.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in https://baanknet.com

30 DAYS E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO BORROWER(S)/ GUARANTOR(S)/ MORTGAGOR(S)

This is also a 30 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan accounts for settlement of their outstanding dues with the bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date.

Place: Baliapal, Date: 05.02.2025 **Authorised Officer, Bank of India**

FOCUS UNION BUDGET

RURAL INDIA NOT IN RADAR



If the tax cut had not happened, expenditure would have gone up by ₹4.4 lakh crore, enough to boost consumption growth. Moreover, if the tax cut was needed why not impose a wealth tax of just 1% on the super-rich?

tres of skilling is welcome but more such centres are needed. However, spread of both school and higher education is not possible with just ₹1.3 lakh crore, slightly up from ₹1.1 lakh crore in 2024-25.

Insofar as health sector, the setting up of day-care cancer centres in all districts within 3 years has been announced with 200 centres to be operational by 2025-26 itself, there was need to set up at least one wellness centre in each district.

The health sector's share has fallen from 2.31% in 2019 to 1.9% in 2025-26, making it one of the lowest among major economies.

The problem lies in inadequate infrastructure in block and even sub-divisional hospitals and reluctance of doctors to serve in rural areas. With the states starved of funds, the Centre could have given funds to some such hospitals towards improving infrastructure and/or purchase of basic equipment.

INFA

Notwithstanding that the Union Budget is viewed as middle-class oriented, this commentator would have been happier if the thrust had been equally given to the rural sector and the economically weaker sections.

Majority of the population of the country still resides in rural areas, 55 to 60%, and, as such, the thrust areas should be in this sector. But unfortunately, a deep analysis of the Budget over the years reveals that a major share of the investment has been availed by the middle class and urban sector.

India's economic momentum has been slipping with nominal GDP growth for the current fiscal with an ₹2.25 trillion shortfall in projected output. This is because the economy grapples with shrinking consumption, weak wage growth and sluggish private investment.

Additionally, there is distressing unemployment and underemployment scenario. Highly skilled persons as well like engineers and technicians are not finding proper employment.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE DEMAND OF STARTING AN UNEMPLOYMENT ALLOWANCE, AT LEAST FOR SKILLED PERSONNEL, HAS BEEN OVERLOOKED

Watch the too indignantly righteous. Before long you will find them committing or condoning the very offence which they have so fiercely censured. SRI AUROBINDO

Media & Big Tech

As AI slop spreads across the internet, concerns about the future of high-quality information are growing. Without accurate and relevant human-generated data, model collapse - whereby generative artificial intelligence trains on its own output and gradually degrades - seems inevitable.

There is a simple solution: these large US companies could pay for the content they use, whether to develop generative AI or to keep social-media users scrolling. In 2021, Australia's competition authority issued a news media bargaining code requiring platforms to pay for the news from which they profit.

Europe has already taken some steps in this direction. The European Union's Directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market, which came into force in June 2019 and was supposed to be transposed by member states into national law by June 2021, has provided a framework for securing fair compensation for European publishers.

In Denmark, this led to the creation in July 2021 of the Danish Press Publications' Collective Management Organization (or the DPCMO, of which I am CEO). Representing 99% of the Danish news industry, from newspapers and magazines to digital outlets and public-service broadcasters, the DPCMO has been authorized by the Danish Ministry of Culture to grant extended collective licenses.



Karen Ronde

In April 2024, the Danish Press Publications' Collective Management Organization threatened to sue OpenAI if the company did not strike a group deal, as opposed to licensing agreements with individual publications

The DPCMO has successfully pushed some tech companies to negotiate collectively with publishers. Interim licensing agreements have been signed with all search engines on the Danish market, including Google, Bing, Yahoo, and DuckDuckGo.

But other firms have been more obstinate. In April 2024, the DPCMO threatened to sue OpenAI if the company did not strike a group deal, as opposed to licensing agreements with individual publications

Likewise, Apple refused to enter into an agreement with the DPCMO regarding its Apple News app. As a result, the DPCMO, together with the Danish Media Association, the Danish Rights Alliance and the Danish Union of Journalists, reported Apple to the police, alleging that the app's use of news content constitutes a copyright violation.

Meta and ByteDance (which owns TikTok) argued that their social-media sites fall outside the scope of articles 15 and 17 of the EU's Directive on copyright, which provide new rules on content-sharing platforms, and subsequently refused to participate in mediation and arbitration with the DPCMO.

The reason for filing multiple lawsuits is to uphold EU copyright law, which serves as a crucial framework for regulating relations between the press and Big Tech. We have taken inspiration from the French competition authority (L'Autorité de la Concurrence), which found that Google's conduct in relation to its search engine and generative AI chatbot Gemini (formerly known as Bard) has prevented publishers from assessing and negotiating remuneration for neighboring rights and is thus an abuse of dominance.

In the second half of this year, Denmark will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU, which holds agenda-setting powers. Given that one of Denmark's priorities for the presidency is to rein in Big Tech, we urge Engel-Schmidt to lead an EU-wide effort to improve enforcement of the Directive on Copyright.

As Council of the EU president, Denmark must also focus on accelerating efforts to counter mis- and disinformation, including deep fakes, and, relatedly, to improve media literacy. To that end, EU policymakers should seek input from ordinary citizens, not just experts.

Curbing Big Tech's power over news outlets requires policymakers, civil servants, NGOs, academics, collective management organizations, and youth activists to stand together. Perhaps more important, journalists, photographers, and publishers must speak with one voice, so that tech firms cannot divide and rule.

The writer, a former member of the Danish Parliament, is CEO of the Danish Press Publications' Collective Management Organization and a judge in the Danish Court of Impeachment. © Project Syndicate

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Fostering a skilled and inclusive workforce



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM HAS UNDERGONE A REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION, MARKED BY SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS

In the Union Budget 2025, the government has allocated ₹1,28,650.05 crore for the education sector, reflecting a 6.65% increase compared to the previous year.

The Union Budget 2025 allocates ₹78,572.10 crore to the Department of School Education and Literacy, constituting 61% of the total education budget, and ₹50,077.95 crore to the Department of Higher Education, accounting for the remaining 39%. This funding is aimed at driving comprehensive educational reforms, enhancing infrastructure development, and expanding skill training programs across the country.

allocations reflect a strategic approach to building a robust education system that equips India's youth with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a competitive global landscape.

The budget allocation for higher education has seen a notable rise, increasing from ₹46,482.35 crore in 2024-25 to ₹50,077.95 crore in 2025-26, reflecting a significant 7.74% growth. This boost in funding will allow further to elevate the quality of education, strengthen research and innovation efforts, and broaden access to higher learning opportunities, ensuring that more students can benefit from advanced educational resources and contribute to the nation's development.

The Union Budget 2025 introduces transformative initiatives to enhance India's human capital, focusing on skilling and higher education. Under the PM Research Fellowship Scheme, 10,000 fellowships will drive technological research at IITs and IISc. Five National Centres of Excellence will equip youth with global-standard skills for manufacturing, while a ₹500 crore Centre of Excellence in AI for

Education will revolutionise learning. Additionally, 10,000 medical seats will be added to address healthcare workforce demands.

To foster innovation, 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs will be set up in government schools, nurturing creativity and problem-solving. The Bharat Net project will expand broadband connectivity to all government schools, ensuring equitable access to digital resources and bridging the education divide.

India's higher education system is one of the largest in the world, with student enrollments rising significantly from 3.42 crore in 2014-15 to 4.33 crore in 2021-22, marking a 26.5% increase. During the same period, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for the 18-23 age group also saw a notable rise, climbing from 23.7% to 28.4%. To meet the government's ambitious target of achieving a 50% GER in higher education by 2035, it is imperative to double the existing educational network and infrastructure. This expansion will be crucial to

accommodate the growing demand for higher education and ensure that more students have access to quality learning opportunities, paving the way for a more skilled and educated workforce to drive India's future growth.

However, achieving the GER target of 50% by 2035 remains a challenging goal that requires focused efforts and strategic interventions. To move closer to this target, greater emphasis must be placed on expanding Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and online education platforms, which can significantly enhance access to higher education, especially for underserved and remote populations. Additionally, doubling the existing infrastructure will necessitate a substantial increase in funding for higher education, as it plays a pivotal role in creating a skilled and quality human resource pool essential for realizing the vision of a Vikasit Bharat. Without adequate investment and innovative approaches, meeting this ambitious target will remain an uphill task.

The writer is former principal of Nabarangpur College.

Mystery makes history

Sir, Unsurprisingly, India's ace spinner Varun Chakravarthy has been included in the ODI squad for the three-match series against England. The mystery spinner obviously deserves his ODI debut for his outstanding performance in the five T20s against England recently.

Migrants' misery

Sir, The migrants who illegally landed in the US are being sent back by Trump. As a matter of fact, they paid over Rs 40 lacs to reach the US. I am sure that amount was shared all the way to the top Democrats, just like cow smuggling fed all the way to the top in West Bengal and Assam a few years earlier.

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



AP Thirwadi, CHENNAI

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

WISDOM CORNER

If you want to know who your friends are, get yourself a jail sentence. CHARLES BUKOWSKI

Let us not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless when facing them. RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Ignorance is not innocence but sin. ROBERT BROWNING

MAMATA HIGHLIGHTS BENGAL'S GROWTH

Chief Minister announces synergy committee for ease of doing business

BENGAL GLOBAL BUSINESS SUMMIT 2025



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 5: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reaffirmed her government's commitment to industrial growth and a business-friendly environment at the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2025, where Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani announced Rs 50,000 crore investment in the state by the end of this decade. Speaking at the eighth edition of the BGBS, Banerjee announced the formation of a new state-level synergy committee to facilitate ease of doing business in Bengal.

Bhutan's Agriculture Minister Younten Phuntsho attended the summit on behalf of the country, instead of Prime Minister Dasha Tshering Tobgay who was originally expected to lead the delegation.

Banerjee had hinted at possible interference from the national capital over the Bhutan PM's visit, noting Tuesday, "Something is happening in

Delhi" without elaborating.

A key development at the summit was the announcement by Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani, who pledged to invest Rs 50,000 crore in the state by the end of this decade. "Today, in less than a decade, our investments in Bengal have increased 20 times, and we have invested over Rs 50,000 crore. Mamat Didi, we shall double this investment by the end of this decade. Our investments have created over one lakh direct jobs," Ambani said.

"Our investment will span multiple sectors, including digital services, green energy, and retail," Ambani said, reaffirming Reliance's commitment to driving economic growth in Bengal. In her address, Banerjee highlighted the state's ongoing infrastructure development, including the construction of

six economic corridors along national highways.

She also announced the formation of a synergy committee to facilitate business in Bengal. "I am announcing the formation of a new state-level synergy committee to facilitate ease of doing business in the state. It will be a one-stop destination for all forms of clearance for doing business in Bengal," she said.

Banerjee also provided a major update on the Deocha-Pachami coal mine project, calling it a catalyst for the state's industrial sector.

"Infrastructure is ready; coal extraction could begin as early as tomorrow. Job opportunities will also be provided to land donors. Family members of the landowners will be provided jobs. The arrangement for compensation is fully in place," she announced, signaling a step forward for the state's industrial growth.

The summit witnessed other significant announcements, including ITC Ltd's unveiling of a global centre of excellence for artificial intelligence in the New Town area of Kolkata.

The centre was virtually inaugurated by Banerjee, and ITC Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Puri praised Bengal's potential for investments, especially in the hospitality sector.

JSW Group also made a commitment to Bengal, with Chairman Sajjan Jindal announcing a Rs 16,000 crore investment to develop a 1,600 MW power project at Salboni.

BANERJEE EMPHASISED THE STATE'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND ONGOING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIX ECONOMIC CORRIDORS ALONG NATIONAL HIGHWAYS



A farmer prepares an agricultural land for paddy cultivation in Nadia district of West Bengal, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Sukhu launches 'Swachh Shehar, Samridh Shehar'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Feb 5: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Wednesday launched the state government's ambitious 'Swachh Shehar Samridh Shehar' programme.

He also launched the 'Citizen Service Portal' of the Urban Development department and said that the portal has been launched with an aim to provide an integrated end-to-end online solution to all the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of the state.

The portal, an initiative under the 'One State-One Portal' could be accessed using citizen-seva.hp.gov.in platform.

Under this program, various initiatives will be taken for cleanliness, environmental protection and waste management in the ULBs, he said.

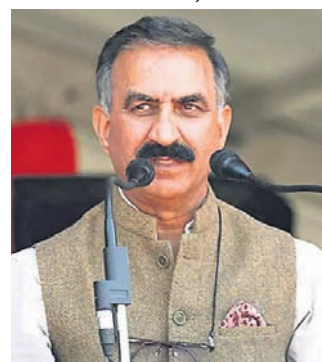
Calling these initiatives transformative, CM Sukhu said nine essential services will be provided initially. Out of these, seven services will be in line with the needs of the citizens and two have been designed for the management of the ULBs.

"The portal will offer various online public services including trade license, property tax management, grievance redressal, booking of community places to the people. In the coming time, 45 services will be provided through this platform" he said.

The CM said that through the portal, 'garbage IDs' of 2,82,000 households in urban areas would be created for garbage collection and bill issuance.

In future, all these registered units will be provided digital identity plates, he said.

"The government is continuously taking transformative



steps to make the lives of the people easier and simplify the processes. Earlier, works were being done using traditional methodology in all the ULBs, but now we have changed our working style, which has also increased their efficiency," the CM said.

"A comprehensive system has been developed in the state for collecting and disposing

garbage. Modern facilities are being developed for scientific disposal of garbage. Parks, parking for vehicles and other facilities are being expanded in the ULBs. As a result, Shimla city has secured the first position in the Ease of Living Index in the country," he said.

A plan has been prepared to "use world-class technology to clean drinking water" in the state, Sukhu said, adding that a project will be started on a pilot basis in Shimla city, in which ozone and UV technology will be used.

He further said that from February 10, Samadhan Shivirs would be organised at the ward level to resolve public grievances in all the ULBs.

Awareness programmes will also be organised in all the ULBs for two months in the form of Clean City Prosperous City, the CM added.

Himachal Pradesh takes lead in green hydrogen production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Feb 5: Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Wednesday laid the foundation stone for north India's first 1-MW green hydrogen plant at Dabhota in Himachal's Solan district and asked officials to complete the project within a year.

The project, being developed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (HPPCL) in collaboration with Oil India Limited, is set to be established at a cost of Rs 9.04 crore, said an official statement issued here.

He directed the officials to ensure the completion of the project within a year.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister reaffirmed Himachal Pradesh's commitment to becoming India's first green energy state by March 2026.

He emphasised that the Dabhota Green Hydrogen Plant marks a major milestone in the state's renewable energy journey. "This initiative is a crucial step in the state's efforts to establish itself as a leader in renewable energy and sustainability," he said.

INDO-BANGLA INFILTRATION CONCERNS

Bengal to provide more land to BSF

0.05 acres at Binnaguri in Jalpaiguri district and 19.73 acres at Narayanpur in Malda district will be handed over to the BSF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 5: The West Bengal Cabinet Tuesday gave its nod to a proposal to provide land to the Border Security Force (BSF) in two more districts in the state to erect fencing and building outposts along the border and with Bangladesh, a senior official said.

It was decided at a Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the state secretariat Nabanna, that 0.05 acres at Binnaguri in Jalpaiguri district and 19.73 acres at Narayanpur in Malda district will be handed over to the BSF, he said.

In the previous meeting held January 27, the Cabinet decided to give 0.9 acres of land at Karimpur in Nadia district to the BSF to set up outposts or install wired fences.



The chief minister recently alleged month that the BSF was allowing infiltration from Bangladesh. The BJP, on the other hand, accused the TMC government of not helping the authorities in erecting fences along the boundary with Bangladesh.

The Cabinet also decided to bring a Bill in the Assembly proposing to impose heavy fines on those spitting in public places after chewing gutka and betel leaves, the official said.

"The CM has expressed her displeasure over the growing practice of publicly spitting

after chewing betel leaves and gutka and defacing the freshly painted walls and buildings. The Cabinet approved the introduction of a Bill in the Assembly Tuesday, where there would be a provision for imposing fines on those found spitting," he said, adding that the fine could likely be Rs 1000.

The Cabinet, eyeing to speed up the process of police investigations, also approved the creation of 12 new posts of Deputy Commissioner in Kolkata Police, the bureaucrat said. Of them, five would lead probe teams.

"All the positions for the new 12 deputy commissioners would be non-IPS cadre officers," he said, adding that officers could be promoted to the post from the chair of Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Kolkata Police.

The state Cabinet also gave its approval to utilise the unused land of tea plantations for homestays, he said.

"Four tea gardens in the Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri districts have been decided to be used for this purpose," he added.

Fresh snowfall in tourist towns of Himachal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Feb 5: Fresh snowfall was recorded in the higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh, with the Met office issuing a 'yellow' alert for thunderstorm and lightning in some districts Wednesday.

Isolated places in Shimla, Kullu, Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti, and Chamba districts received snow, according to the Met office. Snowfall was also recorded in the famous tourist resort towns of Narkanda and Kufri in Shimla district, Dalhousie in Chamba, and Manali and adjoining areas in Kullu.

There were also reports of snowfall in parts of Mandi district, including Seraj, Prashar, Shikari and Kamrunag.

The snowfall kindled hope among hoteliers of an increase in tourist footfall.

It also brought cheer among horticulturalists worried by a dry spell plaguing the state. Snow is considered good for apple cultivation.

However, the precipitation was insufficient to bring the dry spell to a complete stop.

The Met office said Kothi received 33 cm of snow, followed by Gondla (11 cm), Keylong (9 cm), Kukumseri (8.3 cm), Bharmour (8 cm), Manali (7.4 cm), Jot (6 cm), Kalpa (7.3 cm), and Shillaroo and Khadralla (5 cm each). Shimla town received sleet while adjoining Kufri received 4 cm of snow.

Saloni was the wettest place in the state, receiving 44.3 mm rainfall, followed by Kasol (30 mm), Karsog (24.3 mm), Bhuntar (21.4 mm), Jogindernagar (19 mm), Banjar (18.2 mm), Shimla (16.2 mm) and Gohar (16 mm).

RG KAR DOCTOR RAPE AND MURDER

Parents urge people to keep demanding justice for their daughter

The parents of a doctor who was raped and murdered at RG Kar Medical College urge public protest on her 32nd birthday, February 9, to demand justice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 5: Parents of the deceased woman doctor, who was brutally killed and raped at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here last year, Wednesday urged people to take to the roads demanding justice for their daughter on her 32nd birthday February 9.

In a video statement, the parents of the doctor said they will continue fighting until their daughter gets justice.

"For the last six months, we have been fighting for justice for our daughter. We are the parents of the unfortunate daughter whose dreams were dashed and whatever she had achieved through hard work was destroyed. She would have turned 32 February 9. That day we take to the roads protesting the delay of justice for our daughter," the mother said.

She also thanked everybody who supported them and participated in their demands for justice since the incident took place August 9 last year.

"When she was doing her



MBBS, her birthday was celebrated in the medical college. After she graduated, her birthday was celebrated in her workplace, nursing home and chamber. And then when she got a chance to pursue MD, her

birthday was celebrated at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital," the mother said.

"This year, she is not with us anymore. We will request all working in the hospitals, both state-run and private ones, to

light lamps protesting the delay for justice for our daughter. My daughter used to love flowers a lot, so I will request people to plant one flower plant at their homes and workplaces," she said. The case is being investigated by the CBI following an order by the Calcutta High Court.

A Kolkata court January 20 sentenced civic volunteer Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment until death after he was convicted of raping and murdering the on-duty doctor at the state-run RG Kar hospital.

However, the doctor's parents claimed that the investigation was conducted half-heartedly and several other culprits involved in the crime were shielded.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, BALASORE
No. 331 Dt.: 04.02.2025
'e' Procurement Notice
BID IDENTIFICATION No. SEMIDBLS - 07/2024-25
e-mail ID: mibalasore@yahoo.co.in

No. A-1020: The Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Balasore on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites online percentage rate tender through "e" Procurement (Single Cover) for the works as detailed in the Annexure to this bid notice.

Name of the Work	Improvement to Check Dam in Balasore & Bhadrak District for the year 2024-25.
No. of Works	04 (Four) Nos. only
Estimated Cost	Varies from Rs.3.31 lakh to Rs.15.95 lakh (Approximately)
Cost of Tender Paper	Varies from Rs.2000/- to Rs.6,000/- (Non-Refundable)
Period of Completion	As mentioned against work
Availability of bid documents for sale and receipt through online	From Dt.07.02.2025, 10.00 A.M. to Dt.17.02.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.
Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal	17.02.2025 (5.00 P.M.)
Date of opening of Technical Bid through online	On Dt.18.02.2025 at 11.00 A.M. in the Office of the S.E., M.I. Division, Balasore
Mode of Payment of Bid Cost	Online
Digital Signature Certificate of Bidder	The bidder must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III

The detail tender call notice can also be seen in the DOWR website <http://dowrorissa.gov.in>

Name & Address of the OIT: Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Balasore
A/P.O./District: Balasore
Ph. No./Fax No.: 06762-224461
Email ID: mibalasore@yahoo.co.in

Further details can be seen from the e-market place website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in/District NIC Portal \(baleswar.nic.in\)](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in/District NIC Portal (baleswar.nic.in))
Note: Corrigendum/Addendum/Modification/Additions if any can be seen through Online only.

OIPR-32014/11/0012/2425 Sd./- Superintending Engineer M.I. Division, Balasore



In the future, nuclear power will emerge as one of the main sources of India's energy needs
JITENDRA SINGH | SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MINISTER

ICMR INITIATES PROCESS OF VAX AGAINST AVIAN INFLUENZA

The ICMR has initiated the process of development of an ingenious human vaccine candidate against highly-pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1). The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has invited expression of interest from the eligible organisations, companies, manufacturers for joint collaboration in research and development for development of human vaccine candidate against H5N1



of the day quote

BJP goons created a chaos at multiple locations and were openly shielded by the police and administration



AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

YSRCP will rule this state. We will rule for another 30 years. Nobody can even touch YSRCP



YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | AP OPPN LEADER

Water has no colour, taste, or shape, and everyone needs water. People say whatever they want—I don't know what his (Ashoka's) issue is. Maybe he has some problem. No one has the right to speak about my personal beliefs. My belief and devotion are my personal matters



D K SHIVAKUMAR | K'TAKA DY CM

SHORT TAKES

Rajasthan: 5 dead in separate mishaps

Jaipur: Five people, including a schoolgirl, died and 25 others were injured in three separate road accidents in Rajasthan, police said. The first incident occurred Wednesday in the Balaheri police station area of Dausa, where a truck collided with a bike carrying four people. According to SHO Bhagwan Sahay, two people on the bike were killed in the accident, and the other two were injured. All of them were on their way to Mandawar near Patoli village.

Army honours sniffer dog Teena

Jammu: The Army Wednesday honoured a sniffer dog for exemplary service in detecting explosive materials, including Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Jammu, officials said. Teena, a highly skilled specialist in explosive detection, was honoured by General Officer Commanding, Tiger Division, Major General Mukesh Bhanwala, at headquarters in Jammu, the defence spokesperson said. "Her exceptional service has been a testament to her rigorous training and resilience," the spokesperson said. Teena's remarkable career has been marked by her unwavering dedication and expertise in detecting explosive materials, he added.

4 Noida schools get bomb threats

Noida: Four schools in Noida received bomb threats Wednesday, prompting authorities to rush in police and a bomb disposal squad, officials said. Noida Police said the schools were thoroughly checked but nothing was found and classes were resumed. Police said the threats were received on emails and the cyber team is looking into the matter.

5 women among six Naxalites surrender

Dantewada: Six Naxalites, including five women, surrendered before the security forces in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh Wednesday, a senior police official said. The Naxalites, who were part of the Malanger Area Committee of Maoists in south Bastar, laid down arms before the police and officials of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), he said. The Naxalites surrendered stating that they were impressed by the police's rehabilitation drive 'Lon Varratu' (return to your home/village) and disappointed with the hollow Maoist ideology, he said in a statement.

US plane lands in Amritsar with deported Indians

The move comes amid increasing US immigration enforcement measures, particularly targeting individuals who entered the country illegally or overstayed their visas



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amritsar, Feb 5: A US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal immigrants from various states landed here Wednesday, the first such batch of Indians deported by the Trump government as part of a crackdown it resolved to carry out when it was sworn in last month.

Of the deportees, 33 each are from Haryana and Gujarat, 30 from Punjab, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh, sources said.

The deportees included 19 women and 13 minors, they said. The US action comes just days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington to hold wide-ranging talks with President Donald Trump.

The C-17 Globemaster aircraft of the US Air Force landed at the Amritsar airport at 1:55 pm. There was heavy barricading outside the airport and police personnel were deployed in large numbers. All the deportees were being questioned inside the airport terminal building by different government agencies, including the Punjab Police, and various state and central intelligence agencies to check if they have any criminal record.

The deportees are expected to be allowed to go to their homes following verification and background checks even

though there has been no official word about it yet. Earlier, media reports claimed that the US military plane was carrying 205 illegal immigrants.

Among the illegal immigrants hailing from Punjab, six are from Kapurthala, five from Amritsar, four each from Patiala and Jalandhar, two each from Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, SBS Nagar and one each from Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran, Sangrur, SAS Nagar and Fatehgarh Sahib, sources said. According to them, arrangements have been made by the state government.

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An Amritsar-based elderly man, who came for his grandson, refused to talk to the media outside the airport. Talking to PTI videos in the Mohali district, family members of Pradeep, who is among the deportees who landed at the Amritsar airport, demanded that the Bhagwant Mann government repay the debts they incurred to send the youth to the US.

They claimed that they had to sell their land and take ₹20-25 lakh loan to send the youth to the US for a brighter future. But since he has been deported, the family members demanded that either the Mann dispensation provides them financial assistance to repay their debt or give the youth a government job. Meanwhile, the Congress expressed sadness over "pictures of Indians getting handcuffed

and humiliated" while being deported from the US and recalled that America had to express regret over the treatment meted out to India diplomat Devyani Khobragade in 2013 after the then UPA government retaliated sharply.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday said the media kerfuffle over the deportation of illegal Indian migrants from the United States obscures a few facts.

"This is not the first such plane load, nor is it directly related to the ascent of @realDonaldTrump. There were 1,100 Indians deported in the previous fiscal year (ending September 2024), under Biden, not Trump. As of 2022, there were 725,000 undocumented Indian immigrants in the US -- the third-largest group, outnumbered only by nationals of Mexico and El Salvador, he said.

After Donald Trump assumed office as the US President last month, the country's law enforcement agencies have launched a crackdown against illegal immigrants. Many Indians, who entered the US through "donkey routes" or other illegal means by spending lakhs of rupees, are now facing deportation. Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said on Tuesday that the state government would receive the immigrants and set up counters at the airport.

PM takes holy dip at Sangam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mahakumbh Nagar, Feb 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday took a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam and said he felt "blessed to be at the Maha Kumbh" where he was "filled with a spirit of devotion".

The prime minister held 'rudraksh' beads in his hand during the bathing ritual. Dressed in a deep orange jersey and blue lowers, he offered prayers to the sun and the Ganga amid the chanting of mantras.

"Blessed to be at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. The Snan at the Sangam is a moment of divine connection, and like the crores of others who have taken part in it, I was also filled with a spirit of devotion," Modi posted on X. "May Maa Ganga bless all with peace, wisdom, good health and harmony," he added.

In another post in Hindi, he said, "Today I got the great fortune of performing Puja archana after nothing in the holy Sangam at Prayagraj Maha Kumbh. I got immense peace and satisfaction from the blessings of Maa Ganga. I prayed to her for the happiness, prosperity, health and well-being of all the countrymen. Har-Har Gange."

He also shared some pictures of his visit, captioning the post: "The confluence of faith, devotion and spirituality in the divine and grand Maha Kumbh of Prayagraj is overwhelming everyone." His trip lasted around 90 minutes during which there was minimal use of the road -- barely 3 km in the car. He travelled from Prayagraj airport to a helipad near Sangam in a helicopter and later used motor boat to and fro the confluence of the sacred rivers from Arail Ghat.

This trip was much shorter than Modi's February 2019 visit to Kumbh when he, in a unique gesture, washed the feet of several sanitation workers as a mark of appreciation for



their work and spent around five hours in the Mela. After landing in Prayagraj around 10.30 am Wednesday, Modi took a boat ride from Arail ghat to the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. He was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Adityanath also shared pictures of Modi's visit on social media, saying he offered prayers as per rituals for the "happiness, peace and prosperity" of countrymen. On the way, he acknowledged the greetings of crowds that had lined up on both sides of the riverbanks to catch a glimpse of him.

After the holy dip, the prime minister performed rituals, including an 'aarti' as he got on board a floater, a specially built makeshift platform on the river. He was dressed in a black jacket, white pyjamas, a saffron stole and a Himachali cap for the 'aarti' during which he offered milk and flowers to the holy rivers. He also offered a 'chunari' at the confluence of the rivers. A priest guided the prime minister in the rituals.

Security was stepped up for the prime minister's visit, which comes on a day assembly polls are underway in Delhi and there are bypolls in Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh.

Step up fight against terrorism in J&K, Shah tells security agencies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday directed all security agencies to step up the fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir with the goal of achieving 'zero infiltration'.

Chairing two high-level review meetings in as many days here on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, he also said the ecosystem of terror in the Union Territory has been weakened due to the sustained and coordinated efforts of the Narendra Modi government. He asked all security agencies to take more stringent action on infiltration and acts of terror with a ruthless approach, saying the goal should be to uproot the existence of terrorists.

Shah said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is committed to wiping out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasised the Modi government's policy of zero tolerance against terrorism to achieve the goal of a terrorism-free Jammu and Kashmir and directed all security agencies to remain vigilant and continue to work in synergy to eliminate terrorism in the Union Territory.

6 Oppn-ruled states demand roll back of UGC draft rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: Hitting out at the Centre over the draft University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations, the Congress Wednesday said the justification that the rules have been updated for compliance with the National Education Policy does not withstand scrutiny and must be rolled back.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the State Higher Education Ministers Conclave was hosted in Bengaluru by Karnataka minister M C Sudhakar with six ministers or their representatives from Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand (all-opposition ruled states) adopting a 15-point resolution on the UGC's "draconian" draft Regulations, 2025.

"The constitutional principle of federalism is sacrosanct and the quality of higher education should be one of the ultimate endeavours of the Ministry of Education," he said.

The Conclave was organised by the Department of Higher Education, government of Karnataka Wednesday to discuss the various provisions of the draft University Grants Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education Regulations, 2025 and Grading of Higher Education Institutions based on implementation of NEP 2020.

Patanjali Group partners with IBSFINtech for tech adoption



AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 5: FMCG conglomerate Patanjali Group Wednesday said it has partnered with IBSFINtech for the deployment of integrated treasury management solutions for digital transformation.

"As a global brand, this collaboration reinforces our commitment to harnessing cutting-edge solutions...It aligns with our global expansion goals and addresses growing complexities of international operations, forex management, hedging strategies, and market volatility," Patanjali Foods CEO Sanjeev

Asthana said in a statement. By simplifying financial ecosystems and ensuring real-time insights, Patanjali Group CFO Kumar Rajesh said, Patanjali has achieved unmatched operational transparency, agility and resilience. "These advancements have fortified governance structures and empowered the organisation to navigate dynamic financial landscapes with confidence," he added. Highlighting the strategic significance of embracing digital transformation, CM Grover, MD & CEO of IBSFINtech, "At IBSFINtech, we take immense pride in partnering with Patanjali, an iconic 'Made in India' organisation, to lead this transformative journey. By streamlining processes, reducing manual intervention, and enhancing risk management, the platform empowers Patanjali to drive better financial planning and resource optimisation".



Tourists take a ride after boat operations resumed following a two-day strike by boat drivers in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

'Less than 4% students completed SWAYAM courses since 2017'

The panel asserted that digital initiatives would only provide "lukewarm response" in terms of engagement unless the department started proactively assisting in placements, wherever possible, or establishing a platform associated with SWAYAM for connecting recruiters to students

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: Less than four per cent of students enrolled for SWAYAM courses have completed the programme since 2017, with complaints including outdated content, inflexible teaching, and poor infrastructure, a parliamentary panel has pointed out.

Headed by Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, the committee has noted that digital initiatives in education would only provide lukewarm response in terms of engagement unless the Union education ministry proactively assisted in placements, wherever possible, or established a platform associated with

SWAYAM for connecting recruiters to students.

The Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports presented its report in the Rajya Sabha Tuesday on "Review of Education Standards, Accreditation Process, Research, Examination Reforms and Academic Environment in Deemed, Private Universities and other Higher Education Institutions".

The SWAYAM platform facilitates hosting of courses, taught in classrooms from Class IX till postgraduation, to be accessed by anyone, anywhere at any time. All the courses are interactive and available free of cost to learners.

"The committee observes that



the National Digital University (NDU) promises inclusive, flexible, and affordable education aligned with NEP (National Education Policy) goals. However, its foundation, SWAYAM, fac-

es significant challenges. Since 2017, less than 4 per cent of enrolled students have completed SWAYAM courses," the panel said in its report.

"Complaints include outdat-

ed content, inflexible teaching, and poor infrastructure. Teachers report inadequate training, low compensation, and technical hurdles, undermining their efficiency. The 1:15 teacher-student ratio is disregarded in the online model, leading to overcrowded virtual classrooms," it added.

Additionally, only 4 per cent of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and 7 per cent of Other Backward Classes students have Internet-enabled computers, according to Oxfam India 2022, questioning the NDU's equity claims, the panel further said.

The panel asserted that digital initiatives would only provide "lukewarm response"

in terms of engagement unless the department started proactively assisting in placements, wherever possible, or establishing a platform associated with SWAYAM for connecting recruiters to students.

"The committee, therefore, recommends that the department should also take steps to ensure courses are completed by candidates, since major private online platforms suffer from this," it said. "The department should also consider establishing a separate cell for ensuring greater participation of students from underprivileged sections of society and should also monitor their enrolment and progress diligently," it added.



I never bowed before anyone, nor will my party workers bow before anyone

LALU PRASAD | RJD SUPREMO

U'KHAND REGISTERS 1ST LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP UNDER UCC

Only one live-in relationship has been registered in Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) portal in the first 10 days of its implementation...

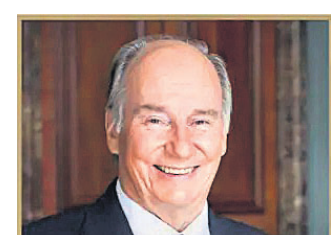


Ismaili Muslim leader Aga Khan dies aged 88

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: One of the greatest patrons of built heritage and the man behind the revival of decaying sites like Sundar Nursery and Humayun's Tomb...

Aga Khan IV, a spiritual leader of the Ismaili Shia Muslim community, was known for his development work around the world, including India.



The spiritual leader, who over the decades turned into a business magnate, became famed for building homes, hospitals and schools in developing countries.

His interests, however, extended to preserving and revival of cultural heritage across countries, including India, through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)...

Under the trust's patronage, India saw the restoration of the 16th-century Humayun Tomb, a UNESCO world heritage site in Delhi...

He was designated as the Aga Khan V, the 50th hereditary imam of the Shiite Ismaili Muslims, in his father's will.

K'taka HC issues notice to banks on Mallya's plea



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The High Court Wednesday issued a notice to banks in response to the petition filed by fugitive businessman February 3

Bangalore, Feb 5: Liquor baron Vijay Mallya has submitted before the Karnataka High Court that the ₹6,200 crore debt he owes to banks has been recovered...

The High Court Wednesday issued a notice to banks in response to the petition filed by fugitive businessman February 3.

Senior advocate Sajan Poovayya, representing Mallya, argued that the winding-up order against Kingfisher Airlines and its holding company, UBHL, had been upheld at all judicial levels...

Poovalah informed the court that a debt recovery tribunal (DRT) had ordered Kingfisher Airlines, as the primary debtor, and UBHL, as the guarantor, to pay ₹6,200 crore.

That order attained finality. However, between 2017 and now, the ₹6,200 crore has been recovered multiple times over. According to an admitted statement, as of today, the recovery officer confirms that ₹10,200 crore has been recovered.

regained their dues, and even the Finance Minister informed Parliament that ₹14,000 crore has been recovered,

He clarified that the petition does not dispute the repayment of loans, but argues that under the Companies Act, once the debt is fully repaid, the guarantor company (UBHL) has no remaining liability and can seek revival.

However, this process requires a certification from the recovery officer confirming that the debt has been fully settled, which has not yet been issued. Meanwhile, recoveries continue without clarity on whether the primary debt has been entirely paid.

Additionally, it seeks a record of any assets belonging to Mallya, UBHL, or third parties that remain with the banks but have not yet been utilised for loan recovery.

AAP, BJP trade allegations over 'fake voting' in Delhi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: The Aam Aadmi Party and BJP indulged in intense blame game with both sides alleging voting malpractices in different constituencies as polling for 70 Assembly seats in Delhi progressed Wednesday.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Delhi told PTI around noon that the polling process was going on "smoothly".

A few EVMs were replaced during mock polls and actual voting also, the CEO said.

"We have a sufficient number of reserve EVMs. A strong technical team along with sector officers are sorting out EVM-related issues then and there," she said.

High drama unfolded in Seelampur when a BJP leader alleged that some people wearing burqas were attempting fraudulent voting. However, police denied any fake voting in the area.

Following allegations of fake voting by the BJP in Seelampur, AAP workers resorted to slogan shouting. The Delhi Police, however, dismissed the charges, pointing to security deployed in the area.

said. Seelampur resident Safdar Ali told PTI that BJP candidate Anil Gaur alleged that people were indulging in fraudulent voting.

Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia alleged that money was being distributed from a house in Jangpura and shared a video of the purported act on X.

The BJP's New Delhi seat candidate Parvesh Verma took to X to accuse Sisodia of resorting to "hooliganism" as he shared a video purportedly showing the AAP leader angrily demanding action against BJP workers.

DCP Chauhan said only the elderly and those who cannot walk were allowed to go to polling booth in vehicles but others were stopped outside the Election Commission-mandated

Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia alleged that money was being distributed from a house in Jangpura and shared a video of the purported act on X

New Delhi district election office said in a post on X that some alleged instances of relievers of polling agents not being allowed inside polling booths were reported by political parties.

The BJP's New Delhi seat candidate Parvesh Verma took to X to accuse Sisodia of resorting to "hooliganism" as he shared a video purportedly showing the AAP leader angrily demanding action against BJP workers.

In Kasturba Nagar, police received information that two men allegedly attempted fake voting at Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in the Andrews Ganj area. They were caught by the Delhi Police and were being interrogated, police sources said.

of the day quote

The Bru people have been resettled permanently in Tripura, with the government providing them with education, health and livelihood

The government is working full-time to provide essential services such as roads, electricity and water on a priority basis to the people of the state

President Trump's loud thinking on the future of Gaza is bizarre, dangerous, and totally unacceptable

POST OF THE DAY

AAP claims they are winning. BJP claims they are winning. Exit polls can't make out who's winning. Meanwhile 150-year old party is happy that at least they won't be zero. Will they ever wake up?

SHORT TAKES

Three workers die as wall collapses

Hyderabad: Three workers died and another was injured when mud collapsed on them during the foundation work for a cellar at an under-construction site here Wednesday, civic officials said.

Student ends life in college hostel

Bangalore: A 19-year-old nursing student died by suicide, hanging herself from a ceiling fan inside her hostel room at her college in Ramanagara, on the outskirts of the city, police said Wednesday.

Over 450 fall ill in Kolhapur village

Kolhapur (Maharashtra): More than 450 persons fell ill due to suspected food poisoning after attending a village fair in western Maharashtra's Kolhapur district, police said Wednesday.



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

MP: Five more cheetahs released from enclosure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sheopur, Feb 5: Five more cheetahs were released from enclosures into the forest at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district Wednesday.

With this, of the total 26 cheetahs at the KNP, seven are out in the wild. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released female cheetahs Dheera and Asha along with Asha's three cubs in the wild in the afternoon.

He also reviewed the Cheetah Project with the officials, he said.

On Tuesday, CM Yadav had shared news that two cubs were born to cheetah Veera. The KNP is now home to 26



cheetahs, including 14 cubs.

Earlier in December last year, cheetahs Vayu and Agni were released in the wild from their big enclosures.

On September 17, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released eight Namibian cheetahs - five females and three males - into enclosures at the KNP as part of the world's first intercontinental translocation of the big cats, seven decades after the animal became extinct in India due to hunting and habitat loss.

Nearly four lakh chickens perish in Andhra

According to the animal husbandry official, usually, this phenomenon is seasonal and manifests every year, however, due to higher numbers of migratory birds coupled with the negligence of poultry farmers, number of deaths has gone up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, Feb 5: Nearly four lakh chickens perished in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh and vicinity over the past 45 days, prompting the Animal Husbandry Department to send samples for testing to ascertain the cause, said an official Wednesday.

Animal Husbandry Department director Damodar Naidu said samples were sent to a high security lab in Bhopal and also Vijayawada for confirming the disease causing these deaths.

Farmers are also neglecting biosecurity measures, which is the main reason for the spread of diseases," Naidu told PTI. Some farmers dumped dead birds in the canals and on garbage dumps in the streets, leading to the spread of the infection, he said, adding that basic precaution was neglected, resulting in the deaths of the fowls.

According to the animal husbandry official, usually, this phenomenon is seasonal and manifests every year, however, due to higher numbers of migratory birds coupled with the negligence of poultry farmers, number of deaths has gone



up. "We are conducting a series of sensitisation meetings to apprise farmers about biosecurity importance. Vets are also visiting the farms to advise the farmers on health and hygiene. We are hoping that the incidence will come down by this weekend," said Naidu.

Among other causes, Animal Husbandry officials are suspecting the role of an avian influenza which has to be confirmed by the Bhopal laboratory. Incidentally, there is a vaccine for low pathogenic strain of avian influenza but not for high pathogenic strains and any viral outbreak, especially in flock management, where hundreds of birds are reared together, individual attention cannot be extended.

Hence, Naidu said better poultry management practices and biosecurity are key. Observing that mortality will be around 0.5 percent in poultry farms, he said the current crisis shot it up to 4 percent. Up to two percent mortality is common during summer and winter months and an alert will be issued only when it doubles. We have alerted the field vets to be cautious and guide the farmers, said Naidu, adding that poultry death claims mostly came from West Godavari district.

In the wake of this crisis, poultry farmers are asking the government for compensation and rescheduling of loans, he added. As per the Animal Husbandry Department's estimates, there are eight crore commercial chickens in the poultryies and two crore domestic chickens with households in the southern state.



Saudi Arabia will not stop its tireless work towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital, and that the kingdom will not establish diplomatic relations with Israel without that

EARTHQUAKES KEEP RATTLING SANTORINI

Earthquakes rattled Greece's volcanic island of Santorini every few minutes through the night and into Wednesday as authorities bolstered their emergency plans in case the hundreds of tremors over the past few days are a harbinger of a larger quake to come



of the day quote

We are trying to bring back those who are under trial on charges of crimes against humanity at the ICT

MD JAHANGIR ALAM CHOWDHURY | HOME ADVISER, BANGLADESH

We have increased patrolling and arrests. Our actions will continue while having talks with the Indian authorities on the issue

NALIN JAYATHISSA | MINISTER OF HEALTH AND MASS MEDIA, SRI LANKA

The United States had committed \$15 million to the trust fund that finances the multinational force. With \$1.7 million of that already spent, \$13.3 million is now frozen

STEPHANE DUJARRIC | UN SPOKESMAN

Trump faces global backlash

REUTERS

Washington/Paris, Feb 5: President Donald Trump's proposal for the US to take over war-torn Gaza and create a "Riviera of the Middle East" after resettling Palestinians elsewhere has shattered US policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sparking widespread condemnation.

The shock move from Trump, a former New York property developer, drew rebukes from international powers including Russia, China and Germany, which said it would bring "new suffering and new hatred". Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rejected the proposal outright. Trump, in his first major Middle East policy announcement, said he envisioned building a resort where international communities could live in harmony after over 15 months of Israeli bombardment devastated the tiny coastal enclave and killed more than 47,000 people, by Palestinian tallies.

It is not clear whether Trump will go ahead with his controversial proposal or is simply taking an extreme position as a bargaining strategy. Trump said that he plans to visit Gaza,

GAZA PROPOSAL



Michael Milshtein, a former intelligence officer and one of Israel's leading specialists on Hamas, said Trump's comments put Israel on a collision course with its Arab neighbours. "Maybe Trump is trying to promote pressure on the Arab states (so) they will not create any obstacles if he tries to promote a normalisation between Saudi Arabia and Israel," he said. Trump provided no specifics as he announced his proposal while welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House Tuesday. He said he and his team had been discussing the possibility with

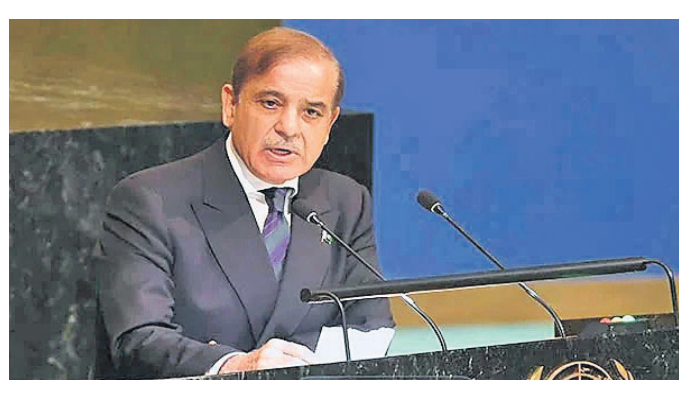
Netanyahu would not be drawn into discussing the proposal, other than to praise Trump for trying a new approach. Jordan's King Abdullah said Wednesday he rejected any attempts to annex land and displace Palestinians. Egypt said it would support Gaza recovery plans without Palestinians leaving the territory. The casual proposal sent diplomatic shockwaves across the Middle East and around the globe. World leaders said they continued to support the two-state solution that has formed the basis of Washington's policy in the region for decades, which has held that Gaza would

- Trump's proposal draws international condemnation
• Saudi Arabia rejects displacement of Palestinians
• Palestinians fear another 'Nakba'
• Netanyahu says Trump is thinking with fresh ideas

be part of a future Palestinian state that includes the occupied West Bank.

Some critics have said his expansionist rhetoric echoes old-style imperialism, suggesting it could encourage Russia in its war in Ukraine and give China justification for invading self-ruled Taiwan. Trump would like Saudi Arabia to follow in the footsteps of the United Arab Emirates, a Middle East trade and business hub, and Bahrain which signed the so-called Abraham Accords in 2020 and normalised ties with Israel. But Wednesday, the kingdom's foreign ministry said Saudi Arabia rejected any attempts to displace the Palestinians from their land and said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had affirmed this position in "a clear and explicit manner".

Pak PM calls on India for 'meaningful' Kashmir talks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 5: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday said Pakistan wants to resolve all issues, including Kashmir, with India through talks as he reiterated his "unwavering" support for the Kashmiri people.

Sharif made the remarks while addressing a special session of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad on the occasion of the "Kashmir Solidarity Day", an annual Pakistani event to show support for the Kashmiris. "We want all issues, including Kashmir, to be resolved through talks," Sharif said.

"India should come out of the thinking of August 5, 2019, and fulfil promises made to the UN and launch a dialogue," he said, referring to the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution that revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories. Prime Minister Sharif said that the only way forward for Pakistan and India was a dialogue, as already written in the Lahore Declaration of 1999, which was agreed upon when then-prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Pakistan.

India has repeatedly said it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has repeatedly told Pakistan that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "was, is and shall forever" remain an integral part of the country. The ties between the two countries nose-dived after India abrogated Article 370. Sharif also accused India of amassing weapons, saying that accumulation of arms would not bring peace or change the fate of people of this region. He urged India to be wise, saying the way to progress was peace. "Pakistan will continue to offer its unwavering moral, diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiri people till the realization of their right to self-determination," he said.

"The only solution to the Kashmir issue is the right of self-determination under the UNSC resolution," he said. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Sharif also asked the international community to put pressure on India to allow the Kashmiri people to "freely determine their future for lasting peace in the region".

SHORT TAKES

France govt survives no-confidence vote

Paris: France's government survived a no-confidence vote Wednesday in parliament, and the state budget for 2025 was finally adopted. Prime Minister François Bayrou had used special constitutional powers to get the budget bill approved without a vote by lawmakers, which triggered the no-confidence motion. Only 128 lawmakers approved the motion, far from the 289 votes - or half the National Assembly's seats - needed for it to pass. Both the Socialists and far-right National Rally lawmakers had said they wouldn't support the motion, giving it no chance to succeed.

Thailand cuts power to Myanmar border areas

Bangkok: Thailand Wednesday cut off power supplies to areas in Myanmar where scam networks operate, following a public outcry demanding government action to tackle the problem. Parts of Myanmar bordering Thailand, including Myawaddy and Tachilek, are known as havens for criminal syndicates who have forced hundreds of thousands of people in Southeast Asia and elsewhere into helping run online scams including false romantic ploys, bogus investment pitches and illegal gambling schemes.

UK diplomat visits Ukraine

Kyiv: British Foreign Secretary David Lammy arrived in Kyiv Wednesday, bringing a new support package for Ukraine a day after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said more than 45,000 of his country's troops had died in the almost three-year war with Russia. Lammy was due to announce 55 million pounds (\$69 million) in new support, including 3 million pounds to send Ukrainian grain to war-ravaged Syria through the World Food Programme.

Philippine vice prez impeached by House

Manila: Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte was impeached by the House of Representatives Wednesday after more than the required number of legislators, many of them allies of the president with whom she has had a bitter political feud, signed a petition to remove her from office. House of Representatives Secretary General Reginald Velasco told a general meeting of the lower chamber of Congress that at least 215 lawmakers have signed a petition to impeach Duterte, more than enough for the powerful House to impeach her.

US withdraws from UN Human Rights Council

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Feb 5: President Donald Trump signed an executive order withdrawing the US from the UN Human Rights Council, prohibiting any future funding for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

Trump Tuesday also directed the US to review its participation in the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the body that uses culture and history as a bridge-building mechanism between nations. "The United States helped found the United Nations (UN) after World War II to prevent future global conflicts and promote international peace and security. But some of the UN's agencies and bodies have drifted from this mission and instead act contrary to the interests of the United States while attacking our allies and propagating anti-Semitism," the Executive order said.

The executive order said that as in 2018, when the US withdrew from the UNHRC, the US will reevaluate its commitment to these institutions and three UN organisations that deserve renewed scrutiny are the UNHRC; the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).



Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia place flowers at a shooting on the outskirts of Orebro, Sweden, Wednesday

Senate committee backs Gabbard as US spy chief

Hindu-American Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii, had faced bipartisan scepticism about her suitability for overseeing the spy agencies

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 5: President Donald Trump's contentious nomination of Hindu-American Tulsi Gabbard as director of national intelligence cleared a major hurdle Tuesday when a Senate committee backed her for confirmation despite doubts

about her lack of experience and past statements seen as supporting US adversaries.

Senator Tom Cotton, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told reporters the panel had voted to report Gabbard's nomination favorably to the full Senate.

The vote was a narrow 9-8, several committee members said. Two sources familiar with the result said it had been along party lines, as every Republican on the committee backed Gabbard and every Democrat voted against her.

No date has been announced for Gabbard's consideration by the full 100-member Senate, where she cannot afford to lose



the support of more than three of Trump's fellow Republicans and still be confirmed, given unified Democratic opposition.

Gabbard's confirmation would continue a trend of unanimous or near-unanimous Republican support for

Trump's nominees in the Senate, underscoring his influence on his party as he begins his second term.

A handful of Republicans on the intelligence panel had not said whether they would support Gabbard but two -

Senators Susan Collins and Todd Young - announced this week that they would vote for Gabbard.

Democrats, and some Republicans, had expressed doubts about the choice of Gabbard, a 43-year-old former Democrat without significant intelligence experience, for the position overseeing all 18 US intelligence agencies. During her confirmation hearing, Gabbard faced sharp questioning from senators from both parties about her past defense of former US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden and comments seen as supportive of Russia.

SNIPPETS

China calls for cooperation with EU

Beijing: China is willing to work with the European Union to boost cooperation and respond to "global challenges," its foreign ministry said Wednesday, as the bloc faced potential US tariffs on its shipments to the world's largest economy. "The world is facing the risk of division, fragmentation and disorder," said Lin Jian, spokesperson at the Chinese ministry. "China-EU relations have all the more strategic importance and global influence." The EU's trade chief said Tuesday that the bloc wanted to engage swiftly with the United States over President Donald Trump's planned tariffs. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned that talks with Washington would be tough. As transatlantic ties come under strain with Trump's tariff threats, China hawks within the EU such as von der Leyen are showing signs of willingness to rethink the relationship between Beijing and Brussels, a bond that had been tested by trade tensions and China's ties with Russia.



Nepal ends solo expeditions on Mt Everest

The revised regulations require a high-altitude support staff or mountain guide to be assigned for every two climbers for peaks above 8,000 metres, including the 8,849 metres tall Mt Everest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Feb 5: The Nepal government has formally ended solo expeditions on Mt Everest and other mountain peaks above 8,000 metres by making one mountain guide mandatory for two climbers, according to revised mountaineering regulations. The sixth amendment to the Mountaineering Regulation came into force Tuesday after it was published in the Nepal Gazette, the government's official publication.

The revised regulations require a high-altitude support staff or mountain guide to be



assigned for every two climbers for peaks above 8,000 metres, including the 8,849 metres tall Mt Everest.

For other mountains, the rule requires at least one guide per group, according to a notice published in the Nepal Gazette.

Under the previous rule, one mountain guide was sufficient for a group of climbers scaling mountains above 8,000 metres. "The government has made guides mandatory to ensure the climbers' safety on the mountain," said Arati Neupane, Director at the Department of

The government recently hiked the royalty to climb Mt Everest from \$11,000 per person to \$15,000, effective September 1 during the spring season

Tourism. The amendment was made to minimize the risk associated with mountain climbing,

she added. This new regulation should have been made long ago, as it would have a positive impact on mountain tourism, said Mingma G Sherpa, Managing Director of Imagine Nepal Treks, a tourism company.

He, however, said that the royalty to climb Mt Everest should not be increased, as it would discourage expeditions from coming to Nepal.

The government recently hiked the royalty to climb Mt Everest from \$11,000 per person to \$15,000, effective September 1 during the spring season.

Under the revised regulations, the royalty fee for foreign climbers attempting to climb Mt Everest from the south route in the spring season (March-May) has increased from \$11,000 to \$15,000 per person.

The climbing fee for the autumn season (September-November) has increased from \$5,500 to \$7,500. For winter (December-February) and the monsoon (June-August) season, the fee has increased from \$2,750 to \$3,750.

Business



India is an incredibly important market for AI in general, for open AI in particular, it's our second biggest market. Tripled users here in the last year, but mostly seeing what people in India are building with AI at all levels of the stack, chips, models, you know, all of the incredible applications
SAM ALTMAN | CEO, OPENAI

OLA FORAYS INTO E-BIKE SPACE

Ola Electric Wednesday said it has forayed into the electric motorcycle segment with the launch of its Roadster X series. "Motorcycles are at the heart of India's mobility landscape. With our electric motorcycles, we're driving the EV revolution deeper into the core of Indian mobility," its Chairman & Managing Director Bhavish Aggarwal said



of the day quote

When we talk about the rupee-dollar rate, there are two elements to it—one is the appreciation of the US dollar... and much of what you see... is now due to the US (dollar) appreciation. So that is really not under our control, and not something our policymakers have to worry about
ARVIND VIRMANI | MEMBER, NITI AAYOG

The company has delivered a record-breaking calendar year 2024 with its highest ever bookings, collections, operating cashflows, earnings and deliveries
PIROISHA GODEJ | EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON, GODEJ PROPERTIES

India's position as a global GCC hub continues to strengthen, with the number of centres expected to grow to over 2,100 by 2030, driving a market size nearing \$100 billion
SACHIN ALUG | CEO, NLS SERVICES

Q3 RESULTS

Swiggy loss widens
New Delhi: Food and grocery delivery major Swiggy Wednesday reported widening of consolidated loss to ₹799.08 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024. The company had incurred a net loss of ₹574.38 crore in the year-ago period. Total expenses surged to ₹4,898.27 crore from ₹3,700 crore in October-December FY24. Revenue from operations also increased to ₹3,993.06 crore from ₹3,048.69 crore, a regulatory filing said. Notably, Swiggy's overall Gross Order Value (GOV) grew 38 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to ₹12,165 crore.

Info Edge net zooms

New Delhi: Info Edge - the parent entity of Naukri - Wednesday reported a 61 per cent year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit at about ₹242.6 crore for quarter ended December 2024, and the board also approved split of shares in the ratio of 1:5. The share split is aimed at enhancing the liquidity of company's equity shares and encouraging participation of retail investors by making shares of the company more affordable, according to a statutory filing by Info Edge. The revenue from operations - on a consolidated basis - was nearly 15 per cent higher at ₹722.3 crore in Q3FY25.

Tax woes mount for foreign automakers

Govt accuses Kia of evading taxes of \$155 mln in Volkswagen-like dispute

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 5: India has accused South Korea's Kia of evading taxes of \$155 million by misclassifying component imports but the carmaker has denied wrongdoing, the latest fight by a foreign automaker with New Delhi over tariffs, according to a document and two sources.

Kia competes with Hyundai and Maruti Suzuki in the world's third-largest auto market, where it has a share of 6% of roughly 4 million units a year, and its Kia Seltos and Sonet SUVs are among the top sellers.

Foreign companies in India face headaches from high taxes and long-drawn-out investigations.

For example, Tesla has publicly complained about high taxes on imported EVs and Volkswagen last week sued over a demand for a record \$1.4 billion in back taxes that it called "impossibly enormous".

Tax officers sent a confidential notice to Kia's Indian unit in April 2024, flagging alleged tax evasion of ₹13.5 billion, according to a government notice Reuters is reporting for the first time.

The offence centred on incorrect declaration of imports of components for the assembly of the carmaker's luxury Carnival minivan, the notice showed.

In a statement to Reuters, Kia India said it made "a detailed response, supported by comprehensive evidence and documentation to substantiate" its stand and the authorities were still reviewing the matter.

Kia India is committed to complying with all regulations and has "consistently cooperated with" authorities, it added.

In its 432-page notice, the government said tax authorities found Kia's Carnival "car model was being imported in parts or components in separate lots" via different ports, with the "intent to discharge lesser customs duty".

Kia devised the strategy to ensure the imports "could not (be) detected by customs," it added in the notice, issued by a customs commissioner in the southern city of Chennai.

Two sources said Kia's case was similar to that of Volkswagen, accused of evading a higher tax of 30% to 35% applicable on parts imported in "completely knocked down" or CKD form in a single shipment, instead shipping separate parts over



days, making them eligible for a tax rate of just 10% to 15%.

During the investigation, Kia's website showed the Carnival model sold in India as being in "CKD" form, with retail sales of 9,887 units between 2020 and 2022, the tax notice said.

The Volkswagen investigation spanned 14 car models from the Skoda Kodiaq to the Audi A3 and the Volkswagen Tiguan.

In contrast, Kia's case concerns only the Carnival model,

The law was clear and some automakers were flouting it by not paying applicable CKD duties. If they are on the wrong side, then the department will have to issue a notice
SANJAY KUMAR AGARWAL | HEAD OF INDIRECT TAXES

Kia privately contests India tax evasion demand: Sources
Accusations similar to VW case on import of auto parts
Kia India action covers Carnival model, notice shows

a seven-seater priced around \$73,500, which is among its most expensive cars in India.

KIA COULD FACE \$310MN PAYOUT
Indian tax rules could require Kia to pay up to \$310 million if it loses the dispute, or roughly

Services sees slowest pace of growth in over two years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: India's services sector activity expanded at the slowest pace in over two years in January amid softer increases in sales and output, a monthly survey said Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HS-BC India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell from 59.3 in December to 56.5 in January - its lowest level since November.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"India's services sector lost growth momentum in January, although the PMI remained well above the 50-break-even level. The business activity and new business PMI indices eased to their lowest levels since November 2022 and November 2023 respectively," Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said.

In contrast to the trend for total new orders, there was a quicker increase in international sales. Survey participants noted gains from clients in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas. The overall rate of expansion hit a five-month high.

"... New export business partly countered the downtrend and continued to rebound from a dip



in late-2024, in line with official data which showed India's services exports shining in December and capturing a larger share of global trade," Bhandari said.

The survey noted that ongoing improvements in new business intakes and rising capacity pressures prompted service providers to recruit additional staff at the start of the last fiscal quarter.

According to them, full- and part-time positions had been filled. The rate of job creation accelerated from December and was among the fastest seen since data collection started in December 2005.

Service providers in India were confident of a rise in business activity over the course of the coming 12 months. Some of the reasons listed for upbeat forecasts include advertising, efforts to price competitively and new client enquiries.

TPWODL commissions new PSS in Jharsuguda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TPWODL) has successfully commissioned a new 33/11 KV AIS Power Sub-Station (PSS) at Pokhrasale, Jharsuguda, which was charged and made functional February 4, 2025.

The inauguration was led by Ashish Kumar Patjoshi, Chief of Operations at TPWODL, along with senior company officials.

The new PSS will benefit around 5,000 consumers, including domestic and commercial areas in Pokhrasale, Pandkimal, Lariapali, Jhirlapali, Jogiadihi, and nearby regions. Previously, these areas were



served by the Kolabira PSS. Parveen Verma, CEO of TPWODL, emphasised, "We've prioritised infrastructure development in Jharsuguda district, ensuring timely project completion through meticulous planning and teamwork."

RECORD-BREAKING RALLY

US-China trade war pushes gold prices

Gold's relative strength index is at 76, indicating that the price has surpassed the "overbought" territory that starts at 70
REUTERS



Bullion hits all-time high at \$2,869.68
Global gold demand up 1% in 2024: WGC
Silver, platinum prices rise more than 1%
Trump in no hurry to talk to Xi amid new tariff war

Washington, Feb 5: Gold prices jumped 1% Wednesday, continuing their record rally, driven by safe-haven demand amid the escalating US-China trade war, while the spotlight was also on payrolls data from the world's largest economy.

Spot gold rose 0.9% to \$2,867.59 per ounce by 09:06 GMT, after rising 1% and hitting a record high of \$2,869.68 earlier in the session. US gold futures gained 0.7% to \$2,895.

China imposed tariffs on US imports in a prompt retaliation to newly introduced US duties on Chinese goods, reigniting the trade war between the world's two largest economies, while US President Donald Trump stated he is in no rush to speak with President Xi Jinping to de-escalate tensions.

Meanwhile, three Federal Reserve officials warned

The potential economic consequences of a trade war between the US and China are causing investors to fear a global recession and rising inflation
DOMINIK SPERZEL | HEAD OF TRADING, HERAEUS METALS GERMANY

that Trump's trade tariffs could drive inflation, with one suggesting that uncertainty over price outlooks warrants slower interest rate cuts. Investors this week are watching out for the ADP employment report and the payrolls report, which could shed further clues on the US rate path.

Bullion is considered an inflation hedge, but higher

interest rates could dampen its appeal as the metal yields no interest.

"Gold is overbought and needs to correct," said StoneX analyst Rhona O'Connell, adding "there is still scope for further upside, but barring any black swans we still expect to see the price topping out this year."

Meanwhile, global gold demand rose 1% to a record 4,974.5 metric tons in 2024, driven by higher investment and increased central bank purchases in the fourth quarter, according to the World Gold Council.

Spot silver rose 1.1% to \$32.44 per ounce, platinum gained 1.3% to \$976.05 and palladium added 0.8% to \$998.00.

2-FOLD RISE YEAR-ON-YEAR Foreign brands flock to India in 2024

27 new foreign retail brands enter India last year amid rising consumer demand for luxury items

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: As many as 27 new foreign retail brands entered India during 2024, almost double from the preceding year, to establish their presence in the Indian market and meet growing consumer demand for luxury items, according to JLL.

Real estate consultant JLL India highlighted that in 2024, 27 new brands of international origin entered India, nearly doubling from 14 in 2023.

"In the past four years, 60 retailers of international origin have forayed in the country to cater to Indian consumers' perpetual preference for global brands," it said.

Beauty, cosmetics and wellness; footwear, bags and



accessories; and fashion and apparel were the top three retailer categories to set retail footprint in the country

in 2024.

"India has attracted significant attention from international retailers, who have

India's retail landscape is evolving rapidly. The influx of international brands, coupled with the expansion plans of domestic brands, has led to a surge in demand for high-quality retail spaces in prime locations
KUNAL RISHI | COO, PARAS BUILDTech

steadily increased their efforts to establish a presence in the country over the past four years," said Rahul Aroa, Head (Office Leasing & Retail Services), and Senior Managing Director - Karnataka, Kerala, India, JLL.

Last year, 27 international brands entered the Indian market, with 56 per cent

originating from the EMEA (Europe, the Middle East and Africa) region. French and Italian retailers, in particular, made notable inroads.

"Delhi-NCR emerged as the preferred location for over half of these international retailers to open their inaugural stores, followed by Mumbai. The luxury retail sector maintained its strong momentum, with high-end brands leasing about 1,90,000 square feet of space in 2024," Arora said.

Luxury retailers continue to show keen interest in expanding their footprint in India, primarily within the fashion and apparel segment, which accounted for nearly half of the total luxury space leased during the year.

Equities drop ahead of RBI policy

Profit-taking after Tuesday's rally and the rupee plunging to record low levels also hit market sentiment
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Feb 5: Taking a breather after recent rally, stock markets closed lower on Wednesday as investors turned cautious ahead of the RBI's monetary policy decision later this week and trade war concerns.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 312.53 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at 78,271.28 with 21 of constituents closing down and nine with gains. During the day, it went lower by 367.56 points or 0.46 per cent to 78,216.25. The NSE Nifty dropped 42.95 points or 0.18 per cent to 23,696.30. The index moved between a high of 23,807.30 and a low of 23,680.45

during the day. Sensex had jumped 1,397.07 points and Nifty soared 378.20 points to settle at one-month highs Tuesday following firm global trends.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Asian Paints dropped over 3 per cent after the firm reported a 23.5 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹1,128.43 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024 amid downturning due to muted demand and weak festive season.

Titan, Nestle, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, Zomato and Bajaj Finserv were also among the laggards. Adani Ports, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors and HDFC Bank were among the major gainers.

Combination woes plague India

Men in Blue look for balance against England in last series before coveted CT tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 5: Form and fitness of seasoned stars is under the scanner as India enter the final phase of their Champions Trophy preparations with the three-match ODI series against England starting here on Thursday, aiming to find the right balance for some specific slots in the line-up.

The likes of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have been under tremendous scrutiny after their dismal run in red-ball cricket.

The two stars, after making hyped but disappointing appearances in Ranji Trophy last month, will be eyeing strong performances in a format that they have dominated for several years.

They were the top two run-getters of the 2023 World Cup with Kohli scoring 765 and Rohit smashing 597.

Since that World Cup, which India let slip in the final after going unbeaten throughout, the two have only featured in a three-match ODI series loss to Sri Lanka where Rohit scored two fifties while Kohli didn't have a great run.

The slump intensified in Tests and in the last three months, the two heroes of India's most recent T20 World Cup triumph have faced numerous calls to decide on their future.

The ODI series against England is India's only tune-up tournament for the Champions Trophy, to be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19. The eight-team competition could be a make-or-break event for the two stalwarts who have already retired from T20Is.

However, their form is not the solitary concern for the outfit.



One of the grey areas is the wicket-keeper's slot. Who among KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant should get the nod for the playing XI?

With skipper Rohit and his deputy Shubman Gill likely to open, followed by Kohli, Shreyas Iyer and Hardik Pandya, the wicketkeeper-batter is likely to slot in at number five.

Rahul, who kept wickets in Pant's absence during the 2023 World Cup, performed admirably, scoring 452 runs and proving to be one of India's most consistent middle-order batters.

His stability has been instrumental in creating a formidable ODI setup, but his strike rotation in the middle overs remains a concern.

On the other hand, the left-handed Pant offers variety in India's right-hand dominated top order. Additionally, his unpredictability, raw power, and ability to clear with breath-taking

NO CLARITY ON BUMRAH'S AVAILABILITY

India captain Rohit Sharma Wednesday said that the Indian team is still waiting for clarity on Jasprit Bumrah's injury and his availability for the upcoming Champions Trophy in Dubai. Bumrah had suffered a back injury in the fifth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series in Australia. Though he was included in the ODI squad for the England series, with the provision that he will be available for the third match of the series in Ahmedabad, he was quietly removed from the updated squad that the BCCI sent after the inclusion of spinner Varun Chakravarty. On Wednesday, Rohit clarified that Bumrah has to undergo some scans in the next couple of days, the results of which will clarify about his availability for the third ODI and the subsequent Champions Trophy. "We are awaiting some scan reports and once we get them, we will have more clarity on Bumrah and whether he will be available for the third ODI against England," Rohit said at the pre-match press conference ahead of the first ODI against England at Nagpur. Though Bumrah's injury was initially expected to be a minor setback, it has turned out to be more serious than anticipated, and as a result, the pace spearhead has been sent for treatment to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bangalore. Bumrah is currently undergoing treatment there.

ing ease make him the X-factor. The Indian think tank could always go with both but that would likely come at the ex-

pense of Iyer, who despite under-performing in the Sri Lanka series, has been a prolific contributor. His exploits in

IGF objects to IOA's meddling in IGU polls



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 5: The International Golf Federation (IGF) has strongly objected to Indian Olympic Association's interference in the Indian Golf Union elections, and recognising the rival faction led by Harish Kumar Shetty, saying the IOA has "no jurisdiction" over the federation's poll process.

The IOA had given recognition to the IGU led by Shetty while declaring the other body, headed by Brijinder Singh, void in a letter issued December 30.

In a strongly-worded letter to IOA president PT Usha, IGF executive director Antony Scanlon, said the world body fully supports the election won by the Singh faction held December 15.

Shetty and Singh held separate elections and AGMs under different Returning Officers (ROs).

The election of Shetty's faction was conducted by retired Allahabad High Court judge OP Garg, while Singh was re-elected in polls conducted by retired Punjab and Haryana High Court judge, Rameshwar Malik.

"We write to object in the strongest terms to your interference and that of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) in the recent Annual General Meeting and election of office bearers of our National Federation member, the Indian Golf Union (IGU)," Scanlon wrote in his letter.

"The IGF have found no reason to question the legitimacy of the IGU Annual General Meeting and election of the office bearers held on 15 December 2024 at Tamarind Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi (where Singh was elected president) and believe they were held in accordance with their constitution and the procedures of the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011."

"As such, we recognise and fully support the office bearers announced by the Returning Officer HJ Rameshwar Singh Malik and ratified by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. We contend that neither the IOA nor you as President of the IOA has any jurisdiction over the IGU Annual General Meeting nor its electoral process."

The Sports Ministry has also pulled up the IOA for recognising IGU elections won by the Shetty-led faction.

Scanlon said the Shetty-led

faction's election was "non-constitutional and invalid".

"We find it extraordinary that the IOA would actively undermine the IGU electoral process and facilitate a faction holding a non-constitutional and invalid alternate Annual General Meeting and elections at the premises of the IOA.

"Additionally, that your interference then extended to wrongly recognising this faction's elections and in turn to undermine the credibility of the constitutionally and fairly-elected IGU executive," the letter read.

"Therefore, the IGF-recognised executive body of the IGU, in accordance with Article 28 of the Olympic Charter, remains the member body for golf affiliated to the IOA. As such to recognise another executive body, not affiliated to the IGF, is in direct contravention of the Olympic Charter. We strongly implore you to immediately rectify this matter."

Scanlon also hit out at the IOA for removing golf from the ongoing National Games roster.

"Notwithstanding your spurious intervention in the electoral process of the IGU, we are also extremely disappointed with your decision to remove golf from the programme of sports at the 38th All India Games.

"It is regrettable that your actions serve to punish the athletes for political purposes and in direct conflict with Article 27.2.2 of the Olympic Charter whereby the role of an NOC is 'to encourage the development of high performance sport...'

"This decision does nothing but discourage high-performance golf athletes in India. As such, the IGF implores you to reconsider this decision and to place the athletes' interests above those of personal and political interests," he wrote in the letter, which was also marked to the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

"The IGF is guided by and believes strongly in the values of Olympism and as such it is regrettable that we find ourselves in disagreement with the IOA and that you choose to act without mutual understanding and respect for the Olympic Charter and for our athletes and National Federation.

"As such we have been compelled to copy the International Olympic Committee on this letter so as they are aware of your inappropriate actions," Scanlon added.

SHORT TAKES

Abhishek skyrockets

Dubai: In-form India opener Abhishek Sharma leapfrogged 38 places to the second spot in the ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings for batters while his teammate Tilak Verma dropped a rung to the third place Wednesday. Abhishek produced the best innings of his fledgling international career when he smashed a quick-fire 135 in the fifth and final T20 against England in Mumbai, leading India to a thumping 4-1 series win. Abhishek's innings came off just 54 deliveries and was adorned with 13 sixes. It was the highest score by an Indian men's player in the shortest format. As a result, the 24-year-old zoomed to the second spot in the latest ranking.

Halep hangs racquet

Bucharest: Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep announced her retirement from tennis at age 33 after a first-round loss at a tournament in her home country of Romania Tuesday, ending an injury-filled comeback from a doping suspension.

OFC CHASE FIRST-EVER WIN AGAINST FC GOA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Margao, Feb 5: Odisha FC will look to secure their first-ever ISL win against FC Goa to bridge the gap and enter play-offs when the two sides lock horns here Wednesday.

The Gaurs are aiming for a third league double against Odisha FC, since they had won the reverse fixture by a 4-2 margin January 4.

FC Goa have won seven out of the 11 encounters against the Juggernauts in the ISL, which makes them only one of the two teams in the league's history besides Mohun Bagan Super Giant (against East Bengal FC), to stay unbeaten against a single opponent after facing them over 10 times.

In their previous clash, FC Goa lost 1-3 to Jamshedpur FC, which snapped their 12-game-long unbeaten run that com-



prised eight triumphs.

The Gaurs will be eyeing to avoid consecutive defeats in the same season for the first time since April last year, when they were defeated by Mumbai City FC twice.

Odisha FC, on the other hand, have momentum in their side since they won their last away game by 3-2 against Bengaluru FC and then drew 2-2 at home against NorthEast United FC.

Prior to the match against the Blues, the Sergio Lobera-coached side was on a three-game-long winless streak on the road (D2 L1).

The Juggernauts have previously managed back-to-back away wins only twice, between November-December 2024 and December 2023-February 2024.

FC Goa are placed third in the points table with 33 points from 18 matches, as they have won nine encounters and drawn six times. They will want to surpass the second-placed Jamshedpur FC (34), whereas Odisha FC are also three points (25) adrift the sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (28).

Odisha, Haryana book spots in women's football final in National Games

POST NEWS NETWORK

Haldwani, Feb 5: The semi-finals of women's football at the 38th National Games saw Odisha and Haryana secure remarkable victories, booking their spots in the final.

In the first semi-final, Odisha defeated Delhi 5-1. Rebecca Zamthianmawi scored Delhi's lone goal, while Odisha's Pyari Zaxa netted one with Malti Munda scored a brace while Sumitra Hembram and Jabamani Tudu got their names on the score-sheet.

In the second semi-final, Haryana triumphed over West Bengal 4-1. Ranjita Devi scored the only goal for West Bengal, while Haryana lead by captain Mamta (7' & 28'), Neha (23'), and Sharda (54') led their team to a convincing victory.

Odisha and Haryana will now face each other in the final, with football enthusiasts eagerly awaiting this exciting showdown.

Ronaldo says he is best football player ever

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, Feb 5: Cristiano Ronaldo approaches his 40th birthday with the same confidence and self-esteem as he has always boasted throughout his successful career.

Ronaldo, the former Real Madrid star who now plays in Saudi Arabia, will turn 40 Wednesday and apparently has no doubt about who should be considered the best soccer player ever.

"I am the greatest scorer in history," Ronaldo said in an interview with Spanish television channel La Sexta. "Although I am not left-footed, I am the most complete player who has ever existed."

"I play well with my head, I take good free kicks, I am fast, I am strong, I jump... I have never seen anyone better than me."



I am the greatest scorer in history. Although I am not left-footed, I am in the top 10 in history for goals scored with the left foot. These are numbers, I am the most complete player who has ever existed

CRISTIANO RONALDO | FORMER STRIKER, REAL MADRID

than once, that he feels he will go out as the best ever in the history of soccer. Whenever he was asked about the discussion of who is better, him or Lionel Messi, he always praised the Argentine but ended siding with himself.

Trump's new order to bar transgender female athletes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 5: President Donald Trump will sign an executive order Wednesday designed to prevent people who were biologically assigned male at birth from participating in women's or girls' sporting events.

The order, which Trump is expected to sign at an afternoon ceremony, marks another aggressive shift by the president's second administration in the way the federal government deals with transgender people and their rights.

The president put out a sweeping order on his first day in office last month that called for the federal government to define sex as only male or female and for that to be reflected on official documents such as passports and in policies such as federal prison assignments.

Trump found during the campaign that his pledge to "keep men out of women's sports" resonated beyond the usual party lines. More than half the voters surveyed by AP VoteCast said



support for transgender rights in government and society has gone too far.

He leaned into the rhetoric before the election, pledging

to get rid of the "transgender insanity," though his campaign offered little in the way of details.

Wednesday's order — which

in pursuing gender equity in athletics and preventing sexual harassment on campuses.

"This executive order restores fairness, upholds Title IX's original intent, and defends the rights of female athletes who have worked their whole lives to compete at the highest levels," said US Rep. Nancy Mace, a Republican from South Carolina.

Every administration has the authority to issue its own interpretations of the landmark legislation. The last two presidential administrations — including Trump's first — offer a glimpse at the push-pull involved.

The Biden administration rolled back that policy last April with one of its own that stipulated the rights of LGBTQ+ students would be protected by federal law and provided new safeguards for victims of campus sexual assault. The policy stopped short of explicitly addressing transgender athletes. Still, more than a half-dozen Republican-led states immediately challenged the new rule in court.