



Candid take

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu says actors are 'narcissistic' by nature but they never admit it

LEISURE | P2



Plane crash kills 4

A US military-contracted plane crashes in a rice field in southern Philippines Thursday, killing all four people on board

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Gold's new peak

Continuing the record-setting trend, gold prices climb ₹270 to hit a new lifetime high of ₹86,070 per 10 gram

BUSINESS | P11



India beat Eng

India defeat England by four wickets in the opening ODI to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series

SPORTS | P12

CLASS X EXAM

Stringent measures to check paper leaks

FNN & AGENCIES

Cuttack, Feb 6: The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) in the state is set to introduce stringent measures to prevent question paper leaks and malpractices in the upcoming Class X examination, an official said Thursday. Also known as the High School Certificate (HSC) examination, the fortnight-long test in the state's academic calendar is scheduled to begin February 21.

Addressing a press conference here, BSE president Srikanth Tarai said the Board has incorporated advanced security features such as QR codes, watermarks, and unique serial numbers on question papers to maintain integrity and confidentiality. P3

SHORT TAKES

IAF Mirage fighter jet crashes in MP

Gwalior: A Mirage-2000 fighter aircraft of Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in an agriculture field in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district Thursday after developing a snag, a Defence spokesperson said. Both pilots ejected safely and were being airlifted to Gwalior by a helicopter, he said. The twin-seater trainer aircraft caught fire after crashing in a farmland near Barheta Sani village at around 2:40pm, said the Central Air Command spokesperson, adding a snag led to the accident. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered into the incident, he added.

Rupee hits another low of 87.59 against USD

Mumbai: Rupee plunged 16 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.59 against the US dollar Thursday, as rising odds of a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India in its monetary policy meeting Friday pressurised the rupee. Forex traders said the Indian rupee plunged to fresh record lows amid weak domestic markets and importer demand for dollars.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We are clear winners - out of 32 exit polls, 18 are in our favour



TIGHT VIGIL: Members of Mexico's National Guard queue up to board a plane bound for the northern border after Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum agreed with US President Donald Trump to bolster border enforcement efforts, at Cancun International Airport

State places ₹12.59L-cr demand before 16th FC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The state government Thursday placed a demand of ₹12.59 lakh crore before the 16th Finance Commission headed by Aravind Panagariya.

The demand was placed before the 16th Finance Commission team at a meeting with the state government team led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi here. Giving breakup of the state's demand of ₹12.59 lakh crore, Majhi said Odisha sought ₹9,88,422 crore as the pre-devolution revenue deficit, ₹1,10,434 crore towards state specific bodies, ₹1,00,036 crore towards grant to local bodies, ₹31,004 crore for State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and ₹29,252 crore towards State Disaster Mitigation Fund.

The commission is on a four-day visit to the state. Different states will get grants from the Centre based on the recommendation of the 16th Finance Commission.

"We have demanded ₹12,59,148 crore for the next five years from 2026 to 2031. Odisha government has also demanded enhancement of the state's share in central devolution pool to 50 per cent from the existing 41 per cent," Majhi told reporters. The state also asked the Finance Commission to make provision of 100 per cent grant under SDRF from the Centre and to increase the state's share in central tax from 4.528 per cent to 4.964 per cent.

Humanity, not cuff: Oppn 'National fair' tag for Bali Yatra

Hours after a US Globemaster aircraft carrying 104 deported migrants landed in Amritsar, marking the first mass deportation of Indians by the Donald Trump administration, a united Opposition launched a scathing attack on the Modi government.

Raising the issue of humiliation meted out to the Indian nationals during the journey, Opposition MPs lamented the government's stoic silence over the US high-handedness. With India lacking a law to ensure the safe and humane deportation of immigrants, the Opposition demanded a detailed statement from External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who later clarified that India is currently working on a new legislation for safe deportation of its citizens. The NDA government is, however, yet to explain as to why India did not send its own plane to bring back the citizens with dignity and respect

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Opposition parties Thursday forced repeated adjournments in Lok

NEW LAW FOR SAFE MIGRATION

In the wake of deportation of 104 illegal immigrants by US, the Centre is considering enactment of a new legislation to establish an enabling framework that will promote safe, orderly and regular migration for overseas employment. The proposed legislation on Emigration (Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2024) seeks to replace the Emigration Act of 1983 with a view to facilitating circular mobility of people intending to emigrate for overseas employment. P9

Sabha over deportation of Indians living illegally in US, even as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserted India is engaging the Trump administration to ensure that deportees are not mistreated during flights. Lok Sabha was adjourned on four occasions as Opposition members trooped into the Well of the House and raised slogans over handcuffing of deportees from US during their journey to India.

Jaishankar read a statement in Lok Sabha amid noisy protests by the Opposition. The Lok Sabha was scheduled to take up a discussion on the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman February 1.

Several Opposition lead-

ers, including Congress' Deputy Leader in the Lower House Gaurav Gogoi, had submitted notices to move an adjournment motion over the mistreatment of deportees from the US. Lok Sabha was first adjourned during Question Hour and later at 12 noon when the presiding officer allowed the tabling of parliamentary papers. Similar scenes were witnessed when the House reconvened at 2pm, leading to an adjournment till 3:30pm.

Amid the sloganeering, Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal informed the Lower House that Jaishankar would make a statement on the deportations at 3:30pm, raising ex-

pectation that the proceedings would resume after the external affairs minister's statement.

Jaishankar said US policy on dealing with immigration had provisions to use restraints during deportations and the government would engage with the US to ensure that there was no mistreatment of returning deportees.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned the proceedings for the day as the Opposition protests continued after Jaishankar's statement.

Earlier in the day, Opposition MPs protested the treatment meted out to the Indians by US authorities by staging a demonstration in Parliament complex.

"We, the INDIA parties, shall not tolerate the humiliation of Indian nationals. Modi Government must come out with a detailed statement on the deportation and why did we not send our own planes to bring back the Indians, with dignity and respect, instead of a military plane landing on our soil," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

The Centre's decision to accord 'national fair' status to Bali Yatra will put the famous event on par with fairs like India International Trade Fair (ITF) which will promote the country's industries and products on a large scale, attracting both domestic and international participants.

The fair may receive additional support from the government in terms of promotion, logistics, and infrastructure. However, such promotion may result in diluting the historic and cultural significance of the majestic fair which symbolises ancient Kalinga's maritime prowess that not only set traditions across seas but also drew participation from the hinterlands of eastern and central India since time immemorial

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Bali Yatra, the ancient maritime fair organised in Millennium City of Cuttack every year, has been accorded the much awaited 'national fair' tag.



Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat informed about this in a written reply in Rajya Sabha Thursday.

According to sources, the move will attract more exhibitors and increase its visibility. Moreover, the fair may receive additional support from the government in terms of promotion, logistics, and infrastructure.

Earlier, Biju Janata Dal's Rajya Sabha MP Debashish Samantaray had requested the Union government to accord 'national fair' status to the historic Bali Yatra. P3

Man dies at de-addiction centre; family cries murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Death of a 24-year-old man at a de-addiction centre under mysterious circumstances here Thursday morning sparked controversy after his family members levelled murder charges against the authorities, reportedly over non-payment of fees.

The deceased was identified as Prashant Nayak, a native of Nayagarh district. Laxmisagar police station IIC P Shyam Sundar Rao said, "Prashant was lodged at the facility near Mahadev Nagar by his family members around five months ago. Police enquiries revealed that a tiff ensued between

World's 1st kangaroo embryo produced through IVF

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Sydney, Feb 6: In a first, a team of scientists from University of Queensland in Australia have produced kangaroo embryos through in vitro fertilisation (IVF), in a development they said could help conservation of endangered animals. The researchers made the eastern grey kangaroo embryos using intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), a technique widely used in human IVF, in which a sperm is injected into a mature egg, according to a study published Thursday.

Lead researcher Andres Gambini said that the groundbreaking achievement could support the conservation of Australia's endangered iconic

marsupials, including koalas, wombats, possums and Tasmanian devils. "We aim to safeguard the genetic material of these unique and precious animals for future use to ensure their conservation," he said in a media release.

"While it's difficult to provide an exact timeline, with sustained collaboration, funding and continued technical advancements, we are hopeful the birth of a marsupial through IVF could become a reality within a decade, Gambini added. Eastern gray kangaroos were chosen as the subject of the research because of their overabundance.

Unlike artificial insemination, ICSI does not require abundant live sperm cells, with

The groundbreaking achievement would support conservation of Australia's endangered iconic marsupials, including koalas, wombats, possums and Tasmanian devils



only one being injected directly into the egg. Gambini said that the team is now refining techniques to collect, culture and preserve marsupial eggs and

sperm, Xinhua news agency reported. In 2022, the Australian government unveiled a decade-long initiative aimed at preventing

additional extinctions. This plan encompasses strategies to conserve over 30 per cent of the nation's land area and to safeguard 110 priority species throughout the country.

A 2023 report from the non-profit organisation Australian Conservation Foundation indicates that over 2,200 species and ecosystems in Australia are currently recognised as being at risk of extinction.

In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is one of several techniques available to help people with fertility problems have a baby. During IVF, an egg is removed from the woman's ovaries and fertilised with sperm in a laboratory. The fertilised egg, called an embryo, is then returned to the woman's womb to grow and develop.

leisure



DE NIRO TO STAR IN THE WHISPER MAN

Hollywood legend Robert De Niro has been signed for *The Whisper Man*. The film is an adaptation of Alex North's crime thriller novel. James Ashcroft is set to direct the film with Ben Jacoby and Chase Palmer adapting the screenplay, reports Female First UK.

AFFLECK TO STAR, DIRECT CRIME THRILLER ANIMALS

Ben Affleck's crime thriller *Animals* has been revived, with the Hollywood star now set to take on the lead role in the movie. Affleck had initially considered *Animals* as his next project last year but had only planned to direct.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com accuracy • reliability • trust FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Today, you will crave total freedom in whatever you are doing, says Ganesh. And sheer entertainment is on the cards for teenyboppers, like mall-hopping or going for a film. The kids will demand a Jumbo Berry ice cone. All in all, it will be a family day for you.

TAURUS
In all probability, it is a favourable day to begin financial planning, says Ganesh. You will focus on your relations and leave no stone unturned to make them prosper. You may yearn for a quiet getaway and end up spending a small fortune to get what you want.

GEMINI
You will spend the day safeguarding sentiments of others and it is in your own interest. For most part of the day, probably the entire day, you will be away from your family, mostly on a trip for business or leisure purposes. Today, having a successful career will be only thing on your mind.

CANCER
You are a master of deception, and your sugar-coated comments play a pivotal role in your methods. Today, you will be able to smell trouble from a distance, and will know when to take a U-turn. Your methods may not make you very popular with the so-called moral brigade working with you, but you may think that this is the easiest way to the top.

LEO
Ever been surprised at your own abilities? Today you shall be, says Ganesh. With the perfect blend of amicable gestures and lack of inimical actions, you are poised to become the cynosure of all occasions. The day will bring to the fore your flexible nature, moderate views, and your mature mannerisms in a cocktail that is as heady as the best blend.

VIRGO
You will shine exceedingly well in all the activities that you undertake today. Your dream of starting business operations on foreign shores will fructify today, says Ganesh. You may pay more attention to your personal appearance, which will boost your morale considerably.

LIBRA
Some days are full of new ideas. Today is one such day as you radiate diligence and intelligence. Consider it an auspicious moment to begin new business schemes, especially if you happen to be self-employed. Today, you will be able to think at a level higher and clearer than the rest. But, as happens when you focus more on work, it comes at the cost of family time. Maintain a balance, advises Ganesh.

SCORPIO
Dig in deep and keep yourself in the hunt, says Ganesh. Karma matters, but don't give much thought to the outcome. In matters of joint ventures, adopt a wait-and-watch approach today.

SAGITTARIUS
To do or not to do? That will be the question for most of today as you find yourself pulling out of one dilemma only to trip into the next one. Controversy will surround you and you may find yourself at the crossroads, where you are unsure of which direction to take. Turn to the wisdom of the experienced for proper guidance, advises Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
The most intimidating of ventures can prove successful if fortune favours you; you will be fortunate today, says Ganesh. Those of you dealing in stocks and shares can expect a profitable day ahead, but don't forget to give credit to your spouse; it will be their luck working wonders for you.

AQUARIUS
Bursting with new ideas, you want to make the world a better place! You will give your best in a team and will come up with great schemes and solutions. At gatherings, says Ganesh, you Bulls remain your charming self.

PISCES
Home is where the hearth is, in which the troubles you need to deal with today are smouldering. Running away from your problems will simply have you out of breath; it would be wiser to take a stand and find solutions to petty conflicts without losing your perspective. Make no mountains out of mole hills, says Ganesh.



Rashmika advocates for kindness

Mumbai: Actress Rashmika Mandanna recently took to social media to share a powerful message about kindness.

The actress, known for her roles in films across various languages, posted a series of her photos along with a thoughtful caption that read, "Kindness is so underrated these days. I choose kindness and everything that comes with it. Let's all be kind to each other." The post was accompanied by serene, cheerful photos of the actress, adding a personal touch to her meaningful message.

Meanwhile, Mandanna is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film *Chhaava*, where she stars alongside Vicky Kaushal.

The duo recently attended a promotional event in Hyderabad, where Vicky was seen helping the actress climb a staircase.

The *Pushpa* actress sustained a severe injury to her right foot during a gym session. Rashmika also shared a heartwarming photo

featuring them on her Instagram, captioning it, "You as Vicky Kaushal and as Raaje are most definitely a toofan. You truly have a way of making all of us feel very special. It was so lovely to have you in Hyderabad... and next time, please do allow me to host you properly."

IANIS

New woman in Aamir's life!

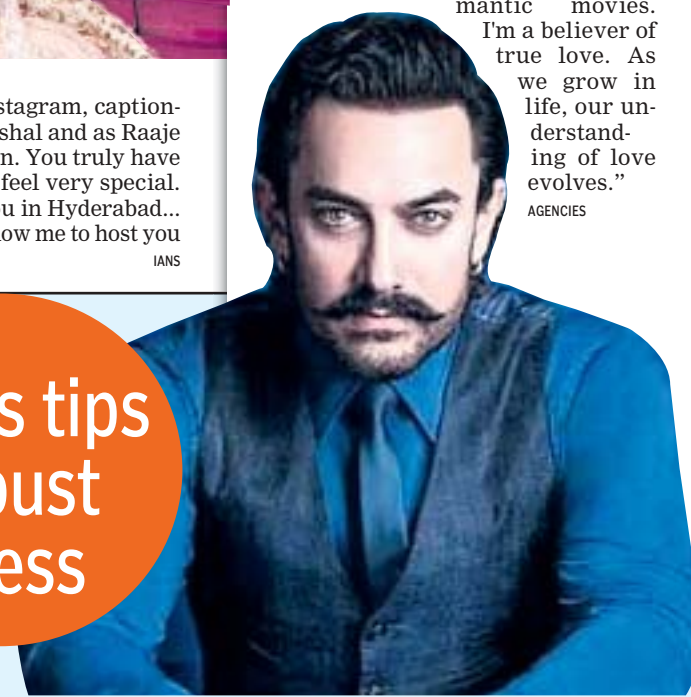
Mumbai: Aamir Khan is currently promoting his son Junaid Khan's film *Loveyapa*. While he's all out promoting this love story, it seems like a new love story has begun for Aamir in his personal life. The actor who announced divorce from his wife Kiran Rao in 2021 seems to have found love again. Aamir is in a relationship with someone and a few days ago, it was also reported that he made his new ladylove meet his family, thus is quite serious about her.

The actor who is about to turn 60-years old in March, is reportedly dating a woman from Bangalore. *Pinkvilla* has now reported that this mystery woman's name is Gauri and she has no connection to Bollywood.

While Aamir has not yet confirmed this news, he had recently said that he's quite emotional and romantic when he's in love. The actor had said at the trailer launch event of his son's film *Loveyapa*, "I'm very romantic, it may sound funny to you, but please ask both my wives. So, all my favourite films are romantic. I get lost in romantic movies."

I'm a believer of true love. As we grow in life, our understanding of love evolves."

AGENCIES



Hyderabad: Samantha Ruth Prabhu is known for sharing her health updates and mental health journey with her fans and followers. In a recent interview, the actress stated that actors are 'narcissistic' by nature but they never admit it.

'Actors are narcissistic'

Speaking to GQ India, Samantha shared that the entertainment industry often amplifies self-doubt and insecurities, making it even more important to find coping mechanisms.

The *Kushi* actress mentioned that she initially felt immense pressure to conform and seek validation in the film industry. She highlighted how the nature of the profession, with constant travel and living out of suitcases, adds to the difficulty of coping with these challenges.

"It gets really, really lonely, and this job has a way of feeding into your worst insecurities, your biggest demons... actors are narcissistic. Let's admit it. So just imagine: you're narcissistic and then surround yourself with people who only tell you what you want to hear. It's a recipe for self-sabotage. Before you know it, you could be spiralling out of control," Samantha said.

AGENCIES



Diljit's tips to bust stress

Mumbai: Punjabi superstar Diljit Dosanjh, whose *Dil-Luminaati Tour* has been a massive rage across the globe, is sharing tips on how to combat ten

sion in routine life.

The actor-singer took to his Instagram, and shared a video in which he can be seen giving advice to people on how to keep tension at bay. The video shows Diljit treating the tension of different people with one slogan, "Tension mitra nun hai nahi". He wrote in the caption, "Tension, ye Bimari Kis Kis Ko Hai?"

(Tension - Who all have this disease?)."

One of the instances in the video also shows Diljit poking fun at the government advisories on his shows when international music artists don't get issued any such advisory. Diljit appeared to be making a backhanded comment on the recently concluded *Coldplay* shows in India.

Earlier, the actor-singer had shared the first look from his upcoming movie *Punjab 95*. He took to his Instagram, and shared an array of pictures in which he can be seen in his character from the film.

The film is based on the life of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra. He was the director of a bank in the city of Amritsar in Punjab during the militancy period in Punjab.

IANIS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

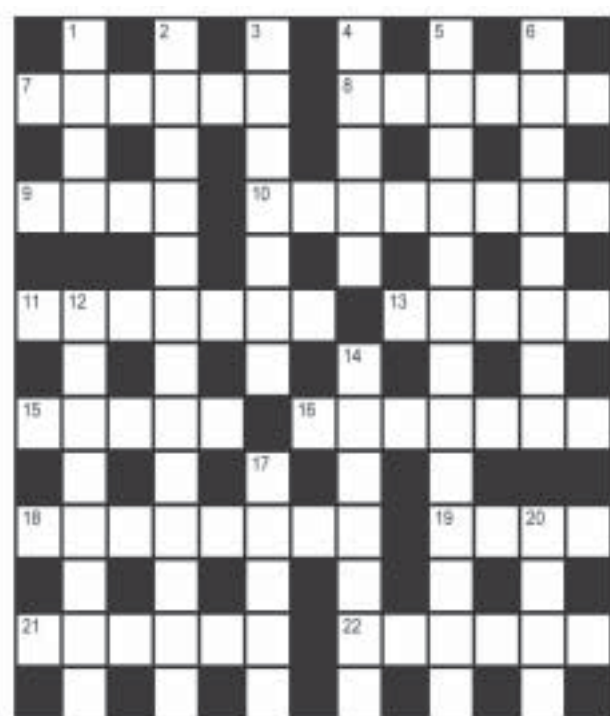


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



Across
7 January's birthstone
8 Give a pep talk
9 Plant fibre
10 Hogwash
11 Paving material
13 Hunter's lure
15 Symbol of freshness
16 Bon voyage party (4-3)
18 Go-between
19 Basilica area
21 Amati
22 Tibetan guide
Down
1 Stopping point
2 Tireless
3 Poem paris
4 Hair colouring
5 Shrewd operator (7,6)
6 Cold-shoulder (5-3)
12 Pedagogue
14 Doc's order (3,4)
17 British guns
20 Gullible sorts

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Singer Manmath Mishra receives Nadabrahma Samman 2025 at an event in Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



downtown

Residents, stakeholders welcome 'national' status to Bali Yatra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 6: The Central government's grant of 'national' recognition to Bali Yatra has triggered excitement among residents of the City and various stakeholders.

The festival, rooted in the Odisha's maritime trade heritage, has long been seeking this acknowledgment, with formal demands dating back to 2019 under the previous BJD dispensation in the state. The recognition has finally been made after a five-year wait.

Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Mayor Subhas Singh said the Central government provides financial assistance of ₹2,000-3,000 crore for the Kumbh Mela. "Now, Bali Yatra is expected to receive similar Central funding. This recognition is expected to elevate Bali Yatra to a national-level fair, attracting visitors from across India and beyond. Businesses from different regions and international delegates, including ambassadors, are also likely to participate," he said.

Cuttack (Barabati) MLA Sofia Firdosh said she had earlier raised the issue of granting national recognition to the Bali Yatra in the Assembly. "Thanks to everyone's efforts, this has become possible. However, it is necessary to consider how small businesses can benefit from it. Promotion of Bali Yatra at the national level should be carried out more extensively," she said.

Sasmita Rath, a writer who lives in Dargahbazar area said such commercial fairs are not



seen elsewhere in the country. "The Bali Yatra has been intrinsically connected with the people of Cuttack for centuries. There has been a long standing demand for it to receive national recognition. This will undoubtedly contribute to the development of Odisha," she said.

"The national recognition of Bali Yatra by the Centre is a significant step. This recognition brings pride and joy to the people of Odisha as it now appears on India's map. Odisha is sure to progress even further," said Abha Kanungoo, president, Odisha Nari Seva Sangha, Cuttack.

Senior railway workers union leader Utkal Bhusan Routray said the national recognition of the historic Bali Yatra is deeply appreciated. "As a resident of Cuttack, I am filled with immense joy and satisfaction with the Central government's announcement," he said.

Previously organised on

a 10-acre site, Bali Yatra has already expanded to 34 acres, thanks to the state government support. With national recognition, the festival is set to grow even further, potentially covering 100 acres. The event duration is also likely to extend from the usual eight or nine days to 15 days, CMC sources said.

The district administration and CMC have been jointly organising the festival. But with national status, Central government officials will now be involved in its management. Unlike other large-scale events, Bali Yatra faces no environmental restrictions from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) as it does not involve any permanent construction.

Nevertheless, with this transformation, Bali Yatra will no longer remain just Odisha's festival, it will become a grand national celebration, drawing visitors and commercial interests from all corners of the country.

Mumbai duo held for ₹32.81L fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Cyber Police Thursday arrested two Mumbai residents for allegedly siphoning off ₹32.81 lakh from a city businessman who mistakenly transferred the money to the formers' bank account.

The duo managed to evade arrest for over a month before being apprehended, said Cyber Police Inspector-In-Charge (IIC) Tereskova Mohapatra.

Mohapatra identified the arrested duo as Neha Naresh More and Prashant Shivbahadur Yadav, residents of Mulund (west) and Ghatkopar (west), respectively. Investigations revealed that the duo had transferred the money to another account before withdrawing a minor chunk for their immediate needs.

According to the complaint, the victim, a business executive at Fortis Chemicals Private Limited, had accidentally transferred ₹32,81,894 to Arya Logistics December 20 while attempting to make a payment to his business partner. Mohapatra said after receiving the amount, Neha, who is the proprietor of Arya Logistics allegedly took her partner Prashant's help in transferring the amount to his personal account. Meanwhile, upon realising the mistake, the victim reached out to Prashant to return the money. However, Prashant allegedly refused and blocked the victim's phone number. Thereafter, the victim lodged a complaint at Cyber Police station. Mohapatra said when the Cyber police personnel reached at Neha's residence in Mumbai they found her missing. The same was observed in Prashant's case, she said.

Subsequently, the police served a notice under Section 35 (3) of the BNSS Act, resulting in their arrest.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



CENTRAL DIVISIBLE POOL

Many states demand rise of share to 50pc: Panagariya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Many states have demanded enhancement of their share from the existing 41 per cent to 50 per cent from the Central Divisible Pool, 16th Finance Commission Chairman Aravind Panagariya said here Thursday.

Several states also wanted a portion of the cess and surcharge being imposed by the Central government, he said.

The divisible pool is that portion of gross tax revenue which is distributed between the Centre and the states. Surcharges and cess are not part of the pool.

"The commission has visited several states and held consulta-

tions. Maximum states demanded an increase in the share in the Central pool to 50 per cent. Only one or two states have demanded a 45 per cent rise," Panagariya said. Panagariya was talking to reporters after a discussion with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. The Commission is on a four-day visit to the state.

He said that the Odisha government is also in favour of making cess and surcharges collected by the Union government a part of the divisible pool for distribution among the states. On the demand for Special Category status for the natural calamity-prone Odisha, he said the subject is not coming under the purview of the

Finance Commission. Earlier, the Planning Commission used to provide such status but NITI Aayog came into its place and no state has got the tag, he said.

Panagariya said, "The Central government is imposing cess and surcharges and 100 per cent of those funds directly go to the budget of the Centre. But, the Odisha government demanded that the cess and surcharges be brought to the divisible pool so that states can also get a share."

The Odisha government has also raised its demand for revising the weightage fixed under different criteria while distributing the divisible pool funds among the states, he said.

**Every person's resolution
Filariasis (elephantiasis)
free India**

**“ Our resolution is-
Healthcare for All ”** - **Shri Narendra Modi
(Prime Minister)**

February 10 is an important day for the country's fight against filariasis.

Filariasis is spread by mosquito bites; its symptoms appear 5-15 years after the bite; it can cause elephantiasis and swelling in the hydrocele.

Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign will run for 2 weeks from 10 February 2025 in 111 districts of 13 states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal)

From this day onwards, health workers will come to your home and give you medicine to prevent filariasis, you must take it.

These medicines are also available free of cost at your nearest MDA booth by the government.

For more information, contact your nearest Health center and Asha Didi

Let us all together make India Filariasis Free

cbc 17102/13/0022/2425

**Free foreign trip!
Click on the link!**

If you click, your money could get stolen.

Don't click on unknown links!

**RBI kehta hai...
Smart bano,
Cool raho**

For more details, visit <https://rbikehtahai.rbi.org.in/ul>
For feedback, write to rbikehtahai@rbi.org.in

Issued in public interest by
**भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA**
www.rbi.org.in

FOCUS EMPLOYMENT

FOSTER GENERATIONAL EQUITY

The flame of the aspiration must be so straight and so ardent that no obstacle can dissolve it.

THE MOTHER



A Sputnik Moment?

After the release of DeepSeek-R1 on 20 January triggered a massive drop in chipmaker Nvidia's share price and sharp declines in various other tech companies' valuations, some declared this a "Sputnik moment" in the Sino-American race for supremacy in artificial intelligence. While America's AI industry arguably needed shaking up, the episode raises some difficult questions.

The US tech industry's investments in AI have been massive, with Goldman Sachs estimating that "mega tech firms, corporations, and utilities are set to spend around \$1 trillion on capital expenditures in the coming years to support AI." Yet for a long time, many observers, including me, have questioned the direction of AI investment and development in the United States.

With all the leading companies following essentially the same playbook (though Meta has differentiated itself slightly with a partly open-source model), the industry seems to have put all its eggs in the same basket. Without exception, US tech companies are obsessed with scale. Citing yet-to-be-proven "scaling laws," they assume that feeding ever more data and computing power into their models is the key to unlocking ever-greater capabilities. Some even assert that "scale is all you need."

Before 20 January, US companies were unwilling to consider alternatives to foundation models pre-trained on massive data sets to predict the next word in a sequence. Given their priorities, they focused almost exclusively on diffusion models and chatbots aimed at performing human (or human-like) tasks. And though DeepSeek's approach is broadly the same, it appears to have relied more heavily on reinforcement learning, mixture-of-experts methods (using many smaller, more efficient models), distillation, and refined chain-of-thought reasoning. This strategy reportedly allowed it to produce a competitive model at a fraction of the cost.

Although there is some dispute about whether DeepSeek has told us the whole story, this episode has exposed "groupthink" within the US AI industry. Its blindness to alternative, cheaper, more promising approaches, combined with hype, is precisely what Simon Johnson and I predicted in Power and Progress, which we wrote just before the generative-AI era began. The question now is whether the US industry has other, even more dangerous blind spots. For example, are the leading US tech companies missing an opportunity to take their models in a more "pro-human direction"? I suspect that the answer is yes, but only time will tell.

Then there is the question of whether China is leapfrogging the US. If so, does this mean that authoritarian, top-down structures (what James A. Robinson and I have called "extractive institutions") can match or even outperform bottom-up arrangements in driving innovation?

My bias is to think that top-down control hampers innovation, as Robinson and I argued in Why Nations Fail. While DeepSeek's success appears to challenge this claim, it is far from conclusive proof that innovation under extractive institutions can be as powerful or as durable as under inclusive institutions. After all, DeepSeek is building on years of advances in the US (and some in Europe). All its basic methods were pioneered in the US. Mixture-of-experts models and reinforcement learning were developed in academic research institutions decades ago; and it was US Big Tech firms that introduced transformer models, chain-of-thought reasoning, and distillation.

What DeepSeek has done is demonstrate success in engineering: combining the same methods more effectively than US companies did. It remains to be seen whether Chinese firms and research institutions can take the next step of coming up with game-changing techniques, products, and approaches of their own.

Moreover, DeepSeek seems to be unlike most other Chinese AI firms, which generally produce technologies for the government or with government funding. If the company (which was spun out of a hedge fund) was operating under the radar, will its creativity and dynamism continue now that it is under the spotlight? Whatever happens, one company's achievement cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that China can beat more open societies at innovation.

Another question concerns geopolitics. Does the DeepSeek saga mean that US export controls and other measures to hold back Chinese AI research failed? The answer here is also unclear. While DeepSeek trained its latest models (V3 and R1) on older, less powerful chips, it may still need the most powerful chips to achieve further advances and to scale up.

Nonetheless, it is clear that America's zero-sum approach was unworkable and ill advised. Such a strategy makes sense only if you believe that we are heading toward artificial general intelligence (models that can match humans on any cognitive task), and that whoever gets to AGI first will have a huge geopolitical advantage. By clinging to these assumptions – neither of which is necessarily warranted – we have prevented fruitful collaboration with China in many areas. For example, if one country produces models that increase human productivity or help us regulate energy better, such innovation would be beneficial to both countries, especially if it is widely used.

Like its American cousins, DeepSeek does aspire to develop AGI, and creating a model that is significantly cheaper to train could be a game changer. But bringing down development costs with known methods will not miraculously get us to AGI in the next few years. Whether near-term AGI is achievable remains an open question (and whether it is desirable is even more debatable).

Even if we do not yet know all the details about how DeepSeek developed its models, or what its apparent achievement means for the future of the AI industry, one thing seems clear: a Chinese upstart has punctured the tech industry's obsession with scale and may have even shaken it out of its complacency.

The writer, a 2024 Nobel laureate in economics, is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Daron Acemoglu

EVEN IF WE DO NOT YET KNOW ALL THE DETAILS ABOUT HOW DEEPSEEK DEVELOPED ITS MODELS OR WHAT ITS APPARENT ACHIEVEMENT MEANS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE AI INDUSTRY, ONE THING SEEMS CLEAR: A CHINESE UPSTART HAS PUNCTURED THE TECH INDUSTRY'S OBSESSION WITH SCALE AND MAY HAVE EVEN SHAKEN IT OUT OF ITS COMPLACENCY



Bruhaspati Samal

THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION MANDATING RETIREMENT AT THE AGE OF 60 AIMS TO ENSURE PERIODIC REJUVENATION OF THE WORKFORCE

In the 46th Episode of KBC (Kaun Banega Crorepati) 16, the show's host, Amitabh Bachchan became surprised to witness the decision of Dr. Neeraj Saxena, a contestant to voluntarily quit after winning ₹3,20,000/- which was a rare and commendable act of selflessness. He chose to step back, allowing younger contestants to take centre stage, emphasising that the amount he won was sufficient for him and that others deserved an opportunity to benefit. This noble gesture, as noted by Amitabh Bachchan, was almost unprecedented in the show's history. It serves as a stark reminder of the need to prioritise the younger generation's aspirations and opportunities, a principle that seems to be lacking in certain government policies. In sharp contrast to Dr. Saxena's actions, the Indian government's increasing practice of reengaging retired personnel in various public sector and administrative roles has drawn significant criticism. This practice undermines the prospects of the country's youth, who already face a severe unemployment crisis. Instead of fostering generational equity, these policies exacerbate the challenges for young job seekers, leaving many disillusioned and sidelined.

India's unemployment crisis has reached alarming proportions. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the unemployment rate as of December 2024 stands at 7.45%. Among the youth aged 15-29, the situation is even bleaker, with unemployment exceeding 28%. This staggering statistic highlights the systemic issues in providing gainful employment to the younger population. Coupled with this is the failure to meet the government's 2014 electoral promise of creating two crore jobs annually. Such unfulfilled commitments have left millions grappling with uncertainty about their future. Adding to the crisis is the government's widespread practice of reemploying retired personnel across multiple sectors. Re-



Critics argue that the government's approach to reemployment is driven more by convenience and cost-efficiency than genuine necessity

ports suggest that over 50,000 retired employees have been rehired between 2020 and 2024 in Central and state government departments. This trend is most pronounced in critical sectors such as defence, public administration, education, and public sector enterprises (PSEs). In the defence sector, for instance, retired officers are frequently reappointed to advisory and operational roles. Public administration sees retired IAS and IPS officers re-hired for consultancy and other responsibilities. Similarly, educational institutions often bring back retired professors.

While the government justifies these practices on grounds of retaining expertise and ensuring continuity, the broader socio-economic realities challenge this narrative. The claim of a skill gap, often cited to defend reemployment, appears tenuous when juxtaposed against the fact that India produces over 8 million graduates annually. Among these are a significant number of engineers, doctors, and management professionals who remain underutilised. The persistence of reemployment policies in such a context not only stifles innovation but also deprives the youth of opportunities to contribute their fresh perspectives to the workforce.

The constitutional provision mandating retirement at the age of 60 aims to ensure periodic rejuvenation of the workforce. Overriding this mandate undermines its intended purpose and perpet-

uates an inequitable system where younger aspirants are left to fend for themselves in an already competitive job market. Furthermore, reemployment often disregards the economic and emotional toll on the unemployed youth, many of whom are the primary breadwinners for their families. India's labour force participation rate (LFPR) reflects a worrying trend. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023, the overall LFPR stands at just 39.5%, significantly lower than the global average. Among women, the participation rate is even more dismal at 24.6%, indicating a severe underutilisation of the country's potential workforce.

Critics argue that the government's approach to reemployment is driven more by convenience and cost-efficiency than genuine necessity. Contractual reengagements are often perceived as a less expensive alternative to recruiting new, permanent employees. However, this approach neglects the long-term socio-economic consequences of excluding younger individuals from the workforce.

The government must adopt a multi-faceted strategy. Strict regulation of reemployment practices is essential. Reengagement of retired personnel should be limited to critical sectors where skill shortages are genuinely evident, and even then, it should be accompanied by a clear timeline for transitioning to younger

replacements. Government departments and public sector enterprises must develop robust strategies to groom internal talent for higher roles through targeted training programmes, mentorship initiatives, and opportunities for skill enhancement which would ensure that younger employees are adequately prepared to take on leadership responsibilities, reducing the reliance on retired professionals. Accelerating public sector recruitment drives, particularly in high-demand areas such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development, can significantly alleviate unemployment pressures. Intellectuals and civil society have a crucial role to play in addressing these issues. By advocating for policy changes and raising public awareness about the adverse effects of reemployment practices, they can drive meaningful change. Academics and researchers can contribute by conducting studies on unemployment trends and providing data-driven insights to inform policy decisions. Opposition political parties must also step up to hold the government accountable for its employment policies. By demanding transparency and proposing viable alternatives during legislative debates and public campaigns, they can highlight the gaps in current practices and advocate for a fairer system.

The youth, as the backbone of the nation, deserve nothing less than a system that values their potential and supports their aspirations. The practice of reengagement, while justifiable in specific cases, has become increasingly common, raising concerns about its impact on the country's unemployed youth. By curbing the practice of reemployment and implementing inclusive policies, the government can not only address the current challenges but also lay the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous society.

The writer is a service union representative and a columnist.

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Insights on school performance indicators



Sujit Kumar Mishra

ONLY 57.2% OF STUDENTS IN CLASS V IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS CAN READ A CLASS II TEXT WHEREAS THE SAME IS 82.3% FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted school-going children in various ways, particularly in the rural areas. It created a digital divide among various socio-economic groups, leading to a decline in students' learning levels. The status of the learning level of school students in rural areas in Odisha is examined here, based on the recently released report—The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 (Rural).

The report shows the reading ability of students of Class III, V and VIII who can read Class II level text. For Class III students of government schools, it has dropped from 34.9% to 26.7% and then improved to 37.7% - a more than 10 percentage point recovery. However, in the case of private schools, a declining trend (65.2% to 58.2%) has been observed since 2018. Class V or VIII students not being able

read a Class II text needs immediate policy intervention. As per the 2024 data, only 57.2% of students in Class V in government schools can read a Class II text whereas the same is 82.3% for private schools. In both categories, the increase is minimal over six years (2018-2024). Around one-fourth of students in Class VIII in government schools could not read a Class II text in 2024.

The report also shows the performance of students in Class III, V and VIII in arithmetic. The performance of government school children is quite low as compared to that of private schools. The percentage of class III students who can do at least subtraction declined from 28.1% to 26.8% during the pandemic but subsequently, it has increased to 34.6% during 2024. The base for school-going students in government schools is very low even in

the absence of any external shock and the recovery rate is also found to be very slow. Although the performance in the private schools is relatively better, it is not satisfactory. For instance, in 2024, for Class V students, around 38% were unable to do division in private schools whereas the same was 70.3% in government schools.

A crucial indicator for a healthy schooling environment is the availability of and accessibility to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, which aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal - 6 which deals with improving water, sanitation and hygiene situation for all by 2030. For girls, availability of separate functional toilets not only determines their health and hygiene but many a time it is also one of the important indicators influencing their enrolment, attendance

and retention rate. As per ASER 2024, 31.2% of the schools do not have usable toilets for girls - 9% have no separate provision for girls' toilet; 4.8% have separate but locked provision; while 17.4% have separate, unlocked but not usable provision. Often these factors are found to be instrumental in increased vulnerabilities of adolescent school-going girls. As far as drinking water is concerned, it is an issue in 14.5% of the schools in rural Odisha.

The above mentioned aspects need urgent government intervention to establish a robust education system based on equity and equality, irrespective of the students' socioeconomic background.

The writer is Professor, Council for Social Development, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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

Trump's back-peddalling

Sir, US President Donald Trump's announcement of his country's withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) presents significant challenges to global health governance and international cooperation, and the retraction could lead the US to isolate its health system considerably. As one of the world's largest funders of global health through both international and national agencies, Trump's back-peddalling may curtail efforts to provide lifesaving health care and combat deadly outbreaks, especially in lower-income countries without the means to do so alone. As for India, key programmes, such as tuberculosis eradication and vaccine distribution could entail significant delays and reduced funding if the global health body's resources are stretched thin. Moreover, the absence of the US support might slow down collaborative efforts between Indian organizations and the WHO, potentially impacting initiatives aimed at tackling antimicrobial resistance, improving maternal and child health care, and strengthening the general health systems.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Dangling danger

Sir, Erecting banners and hoardings is the favourite pastime of political leaders and their sycophants. Shockingly, the footpaths and the medians that divide the roads are the favourite areas for the small-time politicians to show-off their sycophancy. It is also observed that most of these posters and advertisement hoardings are illegal with no proper permission taken from the civic bodies. The danger of these hoardings is that they are unscientifically constructed. The loose, oversized and hanging banners cause perennial danger to lives. The tragic Mumbai billboard collapse incident that claimed the lives of 17 people in May 2024 is a stark example. Courts have regularly banned hoardings or have taken states to task for disregarding rules. But barefaced politicians are adept at ignoring such court orders. Moreover, the states which have laws in place to prevent illegal hoardings are lax in their implementation. Uniform rules and regulations across the country for the erection of banners and hoardings would be in the fitness of things.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA



With folded hands and a heart full of devotion, I pray for the peace, prosperity, and well-being of our great nation and the beloved people of Manipur
N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

INDIA HAS RECEIVED \$1.16BLN IN CLIMATE FINANCE SO FAR: GOVT

India has so far received \$ 1.16 billion for climate projects through the financial mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the government informed Parliament Thursday. This amount includes \$ 803.9 million from the Green Climate Fund, \$346.52 million from the Global Environment Facility (for climate change focal area), and \$16.86 million from the Adaptation Fund, according to a written reply in the Rajya Sabha by Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav



of the day quote

The saint tradition of our country is very rich. Whenever the need arose, the saint tradition in India played its role in protecting the country's culture. The saints have created knowledge and kept the country united

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The Shiv Sena is not owned by anyone, it belongs to the workers. Balasahab Thackeray always treated party workers like companions

EKNATH SHINDE | MAHA DY CM

J&K will never be completely normalised and free of terror without the cooperation of & partnership with the local population. Incidents like these risk alienating the very people who we need to carry with us on the road to complete normalcy

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

US DEPORTS INDIAN MIGRANTS

'Punjab given step-motherly treatment'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 6: The Punjab ruling Aam Aadmi party has accused the Centre for treating the state "step-motherly" and asked why the US aircraft that brought back 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar and not Delhi.

Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Auja slammed the Centre for not protesting the deportation of the Indian citizens. A US military plane landed at the Shri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport in Amritsar at 1.55 pm Wednesday. Of those deported, 33 each are from Haryana and Gujarat, 30 from Punjab, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Punjab AAP president and cabinet minister Aman Arora accused the Centre of meting out "step-motherly" treatment to Punjab at every step. "Deportees were from across the country. (Deportees) from other states were more than those from Punjab ... (but) it (plane) landed in Amritsar. I am not objecting to them coming here but by leaving the national capital and landing it (plane) in Amritsar ... there is substance in what you are saying," he said when asked if there



- Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Auja slammed the Centre for not protesting the deportation of the Indian citizens
- A US military plane landed at the Shri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport in Amritsar at 1.55 pm Wednesday
- Of those deported, 33 each are from Haryana and Gujarat, 30 from Punjab, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh

was a conspiracy to defame Punjab by landing the plane in Amritsar. NRI Affairs minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal condemned the "mistreatment" of deportees, terming it "gross human rights violations." He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar must communicate to the US government that deported Indians should be handed over to Indian embassies for their safe return. He also termed the choice of Amritsar airport for deportation as "politically motivated." Amritsar MP Auja echoed similar sentiments Thursday. "Shameful & unacceptable! The Modi govt allowed Indian immigrants to be deported in shackles on a foreign military aircraft. Why no protest? Why not a commer-

cial flight? Why didn't the plane land in Delhi? This is an insult to our people & our sovereignty. The govt must answer," Auja said in a post on X. Congress MLA Pargat Singh too slammed the Centre for landing the US plane in Amritsar. "To protect

the fake #GujaratModel and defame Punjab, the U.S. deportation flight was deliberately landed in Amritsar, Punjab even though most deportees were from Gujarat and Haryana," Jalandhar Cantt MLA said in a post on X.

He alleged that when Punjab demanded international flights, it was not granted permission "to keep it away from its economic benefits."

"The way they were handcuffed and deported, as if they were hardcore criminals, is extremely sad and condemnable. Immigration is a global phenomenon, and people often migrate in search of better opportunities. "Treating them like criminals not only tarnishes the image of our country but also leaves these individuals humiliated," the lawmaker said in a statement. He also questioned the Prime Minister's "silence" on the matter, pointing out the "supposed camaraderie" between Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump. "Modi claims that Trump is his friend. Then why is he not raising this issue with him? Why is he allowing Indians to be treated in such an undignified manner, as if they are criminals?" Kang said. AAP leader Neel Garg criticised the BJP-led Centre for its "apathy" toward the deported individuals.

cial flight? Why didn't the plane land in Delhi? This is an insult to our people & our sovereignty. The govt must answer," Auja said in a post on X. Congress MLA Pargat Singh too slammed the Centre for landing the US plane in Amritsar. "To protect

RAGGING NORMS

UGC notices to 18 medical colleges



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued show-cause notices to 18 medical colleges for not complying with anti-ragging regulations, officials said Thursday.

The defaulter colleges include two each in Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Pondicherry; three each in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar; and one each in Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. "It was found that these colleges had not complied with the mandatory requirements set forth in the Anti-Ragging Regulations, 2009 for curbing the menace of ragging. Specifically, it has come to our notice that the institutions failed to obtain the anti-ragging undertakings from students as required by the said regulations," UGC Secretary Manish Joshi said.

The Anti-Ragging Regulations, 2009 mandate that every student and their parents and guardians must submit an anti-ragging undertaking at the time of admission and at the be-

ginning of every academic year.

The colleges include Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital and Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Delhi; Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences in Uttar Pradesh; Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research in West Bengal and Osmania Medical College in Telangana.

Lakhimpur Medical College and Nagaon Medical College and Hospital in Assam; Government Medical College (Bettiah), Katihar Medical College (Katihar) and Madhubani Medical College in Bihar; and Andhra Medical College (Vishakhapatnam), Guntur Medical College and Kurnool Medical College in Andhra Pradesh are also on the list. Other medical colleges which have been issued show-cause notices are Bundelkhand Medical College and Hospital (Madhya Pradesh); JIPMER and Mahatma Gandhi Medical Research Institute in Pondicherry besides Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences and Christian Medical College in Tamil Nadu.

The colleges have been directed to submit a written explanation within seven days from the date of receiving the notice, detailing the reasons for the lapse and the steps they intend to take to immediately rectify this situation.



A boy watches the final rehearsal of IAF aircrafts for Aero India 2025, at Yelahanka Air Force Station, in Bangalore, Karnataka

CMs of Manipur, Haryana take dip at Sangam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 6: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, along with three cabinet ministers and four other BJP MLAs, Thursday took a holy dip at Triveni Sangam in Uttar Pradesh during the ongoing Maha Kumbh and prayed for peace and prosperity of the country and the people of the state.

In a post on X, Singh said, "Standing at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna,

and the mystical Saraswati at Triveni Sangam, one feels the embrace of divinity itself. As the cool waters touch the soul, they wash away not just the dust of the body but the burdens of countless lifetimes."

"With folded hands and a heart full of devotion, I pray for the peace, prosperity, and well-being of our great nation and the beloved people of Manipur," Singh added. Singh shared a video which showed him taking a dip. PWD Minister Gov-

PM attacks Congress for 'family first' policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Congress in the Rajya Sabha accusing it of adopting a policy of 'family first' and appeasement, and said the BJP government only believed in the policy of 'nation first' and 'sabka saath, sabka vikas'.

Replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address, he criticised the Congress for having "hatred and anger" towards B R Ambedkar and said this was reflected in not giving due recognition like the 'Bharat Ratna' to the architect of India's Constitution.

Accusing the grand old party of not respecting Ambedkar, he said the Congress is now forced to speak out 'Jai Bhim' and also they get choked while speaking so. Modi also hit out at the economic policies of the Congress government and the 'Licence quota raj' that gave rise to corruption and affected the country's economic progress and growth.

He also said the entire Hindu community was blamed and its image tarnished across the world for the economic mismanagement and wrong policies of the Congress 'royal



'Modi's speech full of lies, half-truths'

New Delhi: The Congress Thursday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his speech in the Rajya Sabha, saying he kept the "river of lies" flowing and "twisted" history but did not speak on the real issues of the people. The Opposition party also claimed that the Prime Minister's speech was "full of lies and half-truths". Modi Thursday accused the Congress of practising appeasement politics to get votes and asserted that the BJP-led Union government was working on the principle of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. The Prime Minister said the Congress' priority was "family first" and its policies had been focused around it.

family' that led to slow growth, which was coined as the 'Hindu rate of growth'. Modi also targeted the Congress government for imposing Emergency in the country during which the entire Opposition was put behind bars and hand-cuffed. He also cited several examples of film stars, singers and writers against whom action was taken for not lauding the Congress during that time.

SC questions TN governor's delay over assent to Bills

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Supreme Court Thursday questioned the delay on the part of Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi over his assent to the bills passed by state legislative assembly and said "he seems to have adopted his own procedure".

A bench comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said, "He (the governor) seems to have adopted his own procedure. He says, 'I withhold assent, but I will not ask you to reconsider the bill'. It does not make sense to keep withholding assent and not send it to the legislature thereby frustrating the provision of Article 200."

The bench therefore framed several key questions for adjudication on the dispute between the state government and the Governor over withholding of assent to bills. The first one, for instance, reads, "When a state legislative assembly passes a bill and sends it to the Governor for assent, and the Governor withholds assent but the bill is passed again and resubmitted, does the Governor have the authority to withhold it once more?" Another one asks, "Is the discretion of the Governor to present a bill to the President limited to specific matters, or does it extend beyond certain prescribed subjects?" The bench would deal on what considerations influenced the Governor's decision to present the bill to the President instead of granting assent.

'Exposure to air pollution can affect one's daily task performance'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Short-term exposure to air pollution can cloud one's judgment, affecting emotional intelligence and focus and potentially making routine activities more challenging, according to a new study.

Researchers, including those from the University of Birmingham, UK, compared the performance of 26 adults divided into two groups -- one exposed to high levels of air pollution, using candle smoke, and the other to clean air. The team found that brief exposure to high levels of particulate matter (PM) pollution could affect the participants' higher-order cognitive functions, including self-control and sustained attention, which are critical for

work and other aspects of life.

Air pollution has been studied as a major risk factor for neurological diseases, including Alzheimer's and dementia, where cognition and memory are affected. Long-term exposure to PM2.5 pollution has also been linked with poor learning and memory among children.

However, the study, published in the journal Nature Communications, showed that "even short-term exposure to particulate matter can have immediate negative effects on brain functions essential for daily activities, such as doing the weekly supermarket shop," co-author Thomas Faherty from the University of Birmingham said. For the study, the cognitive abilities of the participants, including attention and emotion recognition, were



Air pollution has been studied as a major risk factor for neurological diseases, including Alzheimer's and dementia, where cognition and memory are affected

tested before exposure to polluted air and four hours after. "Results showed significant reductions in selective attention and emotion expression dis-

crimination after enhanced PM (particulate matter) exposure versus clean air exposure," the authors wrote.

Working memory, which

serves as a 'temporary workspace' for storing and manipulating just-learned information, was also measured and found to be unaffected. Therefore, the researchers suggested that inflammation in the brain triggered by pollution could be responsible for the deficits in focusing and recognising emotions.

The results also indicated that certain brain functions could be more resilient to short-term exposure to pollution, they added. Cognitive functioning, including attention and controlled behaviour, is crucial for accomplishing everyday tasks both at work and in other aspects of life.

For example, selective attention -- focusing on what is important and ignoring what is not -- is known to help with

decision-making and achieving goals. Recognising one's own and others' emotions helps in understanding how to behave in a socially acceptable manner.

"Poor air quality undermines intellectual development and worker productivity, with significant societal and economic implications in a high-tech world reliant on cognitive excellence," co-author Francis Pope from the University of Birmingham said.

"Reduced productivity impacts economic growth, further highlighting the urgent need for stricter air quality regulations and public health measures to combat the harmful effects of pollution on brain health, particularly in highly polluted urban areas," Pope said.



We have received investment proposals worth ₹ 4, 40,595 crore during this event. This will create thousands of job opportunities in West Bengal
MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

CSR FUND SCAM: ACCUSED SENT TO POLICE CUSTODY
A local court in Muvattupuzha near Thursday remanded 26-year-old Anandu Krishnan to five days of police custody for further investigation into the case of allegedly duping multiple people by falsely promising scooters and laptops at half price with the help of CSR funds



of the day **QUOTE**

Just like the script of the speech the NDA government wrote for the Hon President, PM Narendra Modi's script in Rajya Sabha today had the same 10 words/phrases missing
DEREK O'BRIEN | TMC LEADER

The SEIL programme, launched in 1965, has created an emotional bridge between the youth of the north-east region and the rest of the country
MANOJ SINHA | J&K LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

We want to invite Rahul Gandhi for Suryapet and AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge for the Medak meeting. We are leaving for Delhi today to invite the leaders
A REVANTH REDDY | TELANGANA CM

POST OF THE DAY

Propaganda: Modi is the most popular leader in the world. Today, India is respected because of him Reality: Indian migrants were chained like Dogs on a Military Aircraft and deported like North Korean Prisoners. Pin Drop Silence in Mainstream Media!
@RoshanKrRaii

'BJP offered 7 AAP candidates ₹15 crore'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: AAP leader Sanjay Singh accused the Thursday of offering money to seven of his party candidates to switch sides, ahead of the Delhi Assembly poll results February 8, prompting the saffron outfit to demand his apology and threaten him with legal action. Singh alleged at a press conference here that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders made phone calls to seven AAP MLAs, who also contested the Delhi Assembly polls, offering them ₹15 crore each to join the saffron outfit.



"Some were even offered (money) at face-to-face meetings," the Rajya Sabha MP said. "This clearly shows that the BJP has accepted its defeat before the results and that is why it is trying something like this," he added. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said in a statement that Singh should either retract his allegations and tender an apology or face legal action. Singh's allegation is an indication of his frustration over the imminent defeat of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidates in the Delhi election, he said. "Singh should not forget that his party leader and the Delhi chief minister is facing a defamation case over her false allegations, similar to those levelled by him," Sachdeva said.

Singh said the AAP has advised its candidates to record such calls and use spy cameras to document what transpires at any face-to-face meeting, if such offers are made. Polling across Delhi's 70 Assembly constituencies took place Wednesday to decide the electoral fate of 699 candidates. The results, scheduled to be announced Saturday, will determine whether the ruling AAP can secure a third consecutive term in the capital or if the BJP's 27-year wait to return to in power in Delhi ends.

Three exit polls predict BJP victory in Delhi Assembly

Three exit polls Thursday predicted a sweep for the BJP in the Delhi Assembly elections with vote share in the range of 48-49 per cent and 45-61 seats in the 70-member House. Axis My India, which got its numbers right in the 2020 Delhi elections, has given a 48 per cent vote share for the BJP-led alliance as against 42 per cent for the ruling AAP. In terms of seats, the Axis My India has projected the BJP winning 45-55 seats, the AAP 15-25 seats and the Congress 0-1. It also shows others winning 0-1 seats. Today's Chanakya has projected the BJP winning a 49 per cent vote share with 45-57 seats (51 with an error margin of six), while AAP may get 13-25 seats with 41 per cent vote share. Others are projected to get 0-3 seats. CNX has predicted a landslide for the BJP with 49-61 seats and 49.05 per cent vote share, while it said the AAP could get 10-19 seats with 41.52 per cent vote share. The Congress could open its account in the Assembly after a gap of 10 years with 0-1 seats and a vote share of 5.37 per cent.

Erode East bypoll: Voter turnout dips by 6.72 per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Erode (Tamil Nadu) Feb 6: The voter turnout in the byelection held for the Erode East Assembly Constituency February 5 has decreased by 6.72 per cent compared to the 2023 bypoll, according to Election officials.

In 2023, the constituency witnessed 74.69 per cent polling, where Congress candidate EVKS Elangovan was declared elected, defeating his nearest rival K S Thennarasu (AIADMK) by 66,233 votes. In 2025, the bypoll was necessitated following the death of Elangovan.

A total of 67.97 per cent of voting was recorded in Erode east Assembly bypoll, authorities said late Wednesday. There were 46 candidates, including 44 independents, in the fray and the contest was only between the ruling DMK's VC Chandirakumar and Tamil nationalist party, Naam Tamizharu Katchi's (NTK) M K Seethalakshmi.

Opposition parties, including the main Opposition AIADMK, have boycotted the polls. All the EVMs from 237 polling stations were sent to the Institute of Road and Transport Technology, Chitode where the counting of votes will be held February 8. A four-tier security has been provided in the strong room where Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are kept, police said.



DEPORTATION NOT NEW: EAM

Jaishankar's statement in the Rajya Sabha came as Opposition parties stepped up their criticism over the treatment meted out to 104 illegal Indian immigrants who landed in Amritsar Wednesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The process of deportation is not new and been ongoing for several years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said Thursday and added that the government is engaging with the US to ensure that deported Indians are not mistreated.



Jaishankar's statement in the Rajya Sabha came as opposition parties stepped up their criticism over the treatment meted out to 104 illegal Indian immigrants who landed in Amritsar Wednesday in a US military plane - many deportees saying they were shackled.

He stressed that the focus should be on the strong crackdown on the illegal migration industry while taking steps to ease visas for legitimate travellers. According to the minister, it is the obligation of all countries to take back their nationals if they are found to be living illegally abroad. This is naturally subject to an unambiguous verification of their nationality, he said.

"This is not a policy applicable to any specific country nor indeed one only practiced by India," he said in the Upper House.

Jaishankar said the standard operating procedure for deportation by aircraft provides for the use of restraints as per the US' policy since 2012. However, the SOPs do not include restraining women and children, he said. "Further need of deportees during transit re-

lated to food and other necessities, including possible medical emergencies, are attended to. During toilet breaks deportees are temporarily unrestrained if needed. This is applicable to chartered civilian aircraft as well as military aircraft," he said. "There has been no change from past procedures for the flight undertaken by the US February 5, 2025."

On the issue of several deportees having properties in the US, the minister said authorities here are working with those deported and getting details to work out a solution. "The process of deportation is not a new one, I repeat not a new one, and has been ongoing for several years," the minister said. "We are of course engaging the US government to ensure the returning deportees are not mistreated in any manner during the flight, Jaishankar said.

SHORT TAKES

Eight dead after bus rams into car

Jaipur: Eight people died and six got injured after a roadways bus rammed into a car in Dudu town near Jaipur Thursday afternoon, police said. Deputy Superintendent of Police Deepak Khandelwal said the bus went out of control and hit the car after one of its tyres burst. Eight people travelling in the car died on the spot. The accident took place in Mokhampura area on Jaipur-Ajmer Highway. According to the police, a Jodhpur depot roadways bus was going to Ajmer from Jaipur.

Husband, in-laws get death sentence

Bareilly (UP): A local court has sentenced a man and his parents to death in a dowry death case. Additional District and Sessions Judge Fast Track Court-I Ravi Kumar Divakar delivered the verdict Thursday, strongly condemning the dowry system and warning society of its devastating consequences. Assistant District Government Advocate Digambar Singh said 19-year-old Farah was killed May 1, 2024, just one year after her marriage.

JD(U) leader shot dead; three held

Gaya (Bihar): A JD(U) leader was shot dead by armed men near his residence in Bihar's Gaya district, and three persons were arrested in this connection, police said Thursday. The incident took place Wednesday night when armed assailants shot at local leader Mahesh Mishra in Churihara village in Belaganj area, a senior officer said. Mishra was block secretary of JD(U) and deputy 'mukhiya' of the Chiraila panchayat under the jurisdiction of Belaganj Police Station. Deputy Superintendent of Police Ravi Prakash Singh said, "Mishra was shot at by armed assailants near his house last night. He was immediately taken to the nearest government hospital, where he was declared dead."

SNIPPETS

Rajnath, Hegseth agree to boost defence ties

NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his American counterpart, Pete Hegseth, agreed Thursday to work on a 10-year comprehensive framework to bolster the India-US defence partnership, especially in the spheres of intelligence, logistics, operational and industrial engagement. Singh said Hegseth reviewed various aspects of the bilateral defence ties in a phone conversation that came less than a week before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned trip to Washington. It was Singh's first phone conversation with Hegseth after the latter was confirmed as the US defence secretary January 25. An Indian readout of the conversation said India and the United States have agreed to work together to draft a comprehensive framework on defence cooperation, aimed at structuring the bilateral collaboration for the 2025-2035 period.

Centre to seek Cabinet nod for gig workers' pension

NEW DELHI: The labour ministry will soon seek the Union Cabinet's approval for a pension scheme for one crore gig workers engaged with online platforms, where social security contribution will be made from their income for every transaction, said an official source. This assumes significance in view of the Budget announcement earlier this month by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman about rolling out of a social security scheme for one crore gig workers engaged with online platforms. Sitharaman had said in her Budget speech that the government will provide them identity cards and facilitate their registration on the e-Shram portal. She had further said that these workers will be provided healthcare under the PM Jan Arogya Yojana. This measure is likely to assist nearly 1 crore gig workers, she had said.

New I-T Bill may come up in Cabinet today

NEW DELHI: The new income tax Bill, to be introduced in Parliament next week, will not have long sentences, provisos and explanations, Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said Thursday. The new Bill, which will replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, is likely to be discussed at the Cabinet meeting Friday, sources said. The new bill, which was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech, will also incorporate the changes made in income tax rates, slabs and in TDS provisions made in the Budget for 2025-26. "When you see next week a new income tax Bill, you will see a very different Bill. The way we write laws is undergoing a change... You will see very less of those long sentences you will not see probably the proviso, explanations..." Pandey said at a PHD Chambers event here. Pandey said the new bill will not put any new taxes, or any new burden.



LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi interacts with students from Nagaland PTT PHOTO

CBI books IRS officer, 6 CAs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The CBI Thursday conducted searches at 18 locations across the country after registering a case against an IRS officer and other officials of the Income Tax department who were allegedly sharing sensitive data on pending assessment with a group of chartered accountants by sidestepping the faceless assessment system, officials said.

In its FIR the CBI has booked Deputy Commissioner Income Tax Vijayendra R posted at Jhandewalan office in New Delhi, purported CA Dinesh Kumar Agrawal, Income Tax inspectors Dinesh Kumar Verma and Binayak Sharma besides five more chartered accountants, they said. The other CAs booked in the case are Shivratna Mangal Singhrodia, Bhavesh Parshottambhai Rakholia, Prathik Lenin, Malik Girish Anand and Sushil Kumar.

"Recently the government of India has introduced a series of futuristic reforms in Direct Tax administration for the benefit of taxpayers and the economy. 'Faceless Scheme of assessment' is one such reform where there is no human interface between taxpayers and tax officials," CBI's spokesperson said in a statement.

The racket of CAs, in active assistance and criminal conspiracy, with some income tax officials were unauthorisedly and clandestinely disclosing the names of assessing officers and appellate officers to the assessee and also unauthorisedly using the sensitive income tax data pertaining to pending assessment or appeal cases and high refund cases to approach the assessee concerned or his CA for pecuniary benefits, it said. The CBI conducted searches in Delhi, Mumbai, Thane, West Champaran (Bihar), Bangalore, Kottayam (Kerala), etc in which incriminating documents, evidences of payment of undue gratification and some digital electronic evidences have been recovered during searches, the statement said.

Centre proposes Diwali for UNESCO heritage status

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: India has sent a proposal to UNESCO for inclusion of the Diwali festival in its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity, Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said Thursday.



Mohan Patil, Shekhawat said the state government sends proposals to the Centre or the Sangeet Natak Akademi, which is the nodal agency to examine the ICH proposals.

REPLYING TO SUPPLEMENTARIES IN THE RAJYA SABHA, CULTURE MINISTER GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT SAID THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAD SENT THE PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE THE DIWALI FESTIVAL IN THE LIST OF ICH OF UNESCO IN 2023

HE SAID THE PROPOSAL IS EXPECTED TO BE EXAMINED BY UNESCO THIS YEAR

SHEKHAWAT SAID THE CENTRE HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF PANDHARICHI VARI, THE ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO PANDHARPUR, OF MAHARASHTRA IN THE ICH LIST OF UNESCO

He said for inclusion of an element in the UNESCO's Representative List of ICH, the state parties are required to submit a nomination dossier on the relevant element for evaluation and examination by the UNESCO Committee.

"No proposal in prescribed format has been received," Shekhawat said. He said the Ministry of Culture, through Sangeet Natak Akademi and the support of the Solapur district administration and the Shri Vitthal Rukmini Temple Trust, Pandharpur, had organised Kala Pravah, a temple festival at Shri Jagadguru Sant Tukaram Maharaj Bhavan last year.

The festival, held June 23-24 last year, included performances of Bharud, Warkari Kirtan, Sapta Khanjiri Bhajan, Dashawtar and Warkari Dindi procession, Shekhawat said.

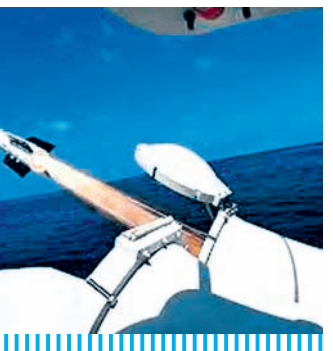
international



The president has made it clear that they need to be temporarily relocated out of Gaza

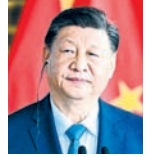
IRAN INAUGURATES FIRST DRONE-CARRIER WARSHIP

Iran has inaugurated its first drone-carrier warship, saying the vessel is capable of operating in oceans far from its mainland, the official IRNA news agency reported Thursday. The report said the vessel, manned by the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's navy, can carry several squadrons of drones as well as helicopters and cruise missiles



of the day quote

China appreciates Thailand's strong measures to combat online gambling fraud. Both sides should continue to strengthen law enforcement, security, and judicial cooperation



We have agreed to increase by 40 per cent the number of flights of deportees both of our nationalities as well as deportees from other nationalities



In the search for solutions, we must not make the problem worse. It is vital to stay true to the bedrock of international law. It is essential to avoid any form of ethnic cleansing



SHEIKH HASINA'S SPEECH

While Hasina was delivering the speech Wednesday night, protesters vandalised and set on fire her father and Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence in Dhaka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka/New Delhi, Feb 6: Bangladesh Thursday lodged a protest with India's acting envoy saying that "false and fabricated comments" by deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina are a "hostile act" against Dhaka, a day after she delivered a virtual address to her supporters from exile in India.

While Hasina was delivering the speech Wednesday night, protesters vandalised and set on fire her father and Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence in Dhaka. Similar cases of vandalism also took place at several other places, targeting Awami League leaders.

"We called India's deputy high commissioner (Pawan Badhe), as the high commissioner was not here, and handed him our protest note," Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain told reporters at a briefing at his office.

He described Hasina's recent statements as "highly

B'desh summons Indian envoy



aggressive", suggesting that they could have offended the sentiments of the younger generation.

Hossain said Dhaka previously urged New Delhi to prevent her from engaging in such activities, "but we did not receive any response".

He said that the foreign ministry Thursday once again conveyed its objections. "We will observe what actions India takes," he added.

Separately, the foreign ministry in a statement said it asked India "to immediately take appropriate measures, in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding, to stop her from making such false, fabricated and incendiary statements using social media and other communications while she is in India".

The foreign ministry said it lodged a "strong protest with

relationship between the two countries".

Hasina, 77, has been living in India since August 5 last year, when she fled Bangladesh following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's 16-year regime.

In her speech, Hasina called upon the countrymen to organise a resistance against the current regime.

Just before her speech, protesters rallied outside Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 32 Dhanmondi

house in Dhaka following a social media call for a "bulldozer procession". The mob set the house on fire.

The building in the adjacent plot, which had housed the offices of several Awami League outfits, was also demolished. The violent demonstrators also defaced murals depicting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina, in a slightly emotion-choked voice, said Pakistani troops too looted the house during the 1971 Liberation War but did not demolish or set it on fire.

"Today, this house is being demolished. What crime had it committed? Why were they so afraid of the house... I seek

In her speech, Hasina called upon the countrymen to organise a resistance against the current regime

US military plane crash claims 4 in Philippines



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manila, Feb 6: A US military-contracted plane crashed in a rice field in the southern Philippines Thursday, killing all four people on board, US Embassy and Philippine officials said.

The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines confirmed the crash of a light plane in Maguindanao del Sur province. It did not immediately provide other details. The plane that crashed in the southern province was contracted by the US military, US Embassy spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay told The Associated Press, adding that the US Indo-Pacific Command will issue a more detailed statement on the plane crash. The bodies of four people who appeared to be foreign nationals were retrieved from the wreckage in Ampatuan town, said Ameer Jehad Tim Ambolodto, a safety officer of Maguindanao del Sur.

Windy Beaty, a provincial disaster-mitigation officer, told the AP that she received reports that residents saw smoke coming from the plane and heard an explosion before the aircraft plummeted to the ground less than a kilometre from a cluster of farmhouses.

SHORT TAKES

After US, Argentina pulls out of WHO

Buenos Aires: Argentina's president has ordered the country's withdrawal from the World Health Organization due to "profound differences" with the UN agency, a presidential spokesperson said Wednesday. President Javier Milei's decision echoes that of his ally, US President Donald Trump, who began the process of pulling the United States out of WHO with an executive order on his first day back in office January 21. The loss of another member country will further fracture cooperation in global health, though Argentina was expected to provide only about \$8 million to WHO for the agency's estimated \$6.9 billion 2024-2025 budget.

New type of bird flu detected in US

Carson City: Dairy cattle in Nevada have been infected with a new type of bird flu that's different from the version that has spread in US herds since last year, Agriculture Department officials said Wednesday. The detection indicates that distinct forms of the virus known as Type A H5N1 have spilled over from wild birds into cattle at least twice.

3 policemen killed in check post attack

Peshawar: At least three policemen were killed and six others injured when heavily armed militants attacked a police check post in the restive northwest Pakistan Thursday morning, police said. The attackers launched a barrage of gunfire at the Bahadur Khel check post in the Karak district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, bordering Afghanistan. "Unknown terrorists opened fire from all sides at a check post in Karak's Bahadur Khel area, targeting police personnel using light and heavy weapons in an attempt to capture the check post."

Fire at school kills 17 children in Nigeria

Abuja: At least 17 children were killed in a fire that broke out in an Islamic school in northwestern Nigeria, the country's emergency response agency said, as authorities launched an investigation into the cause Thursday. About 100 children were at the school when the fire broke out Wednesday in the Kaura Namoda district of Zamfara state, the National Emergency Management Agency said in a statement.

SNIPPETS

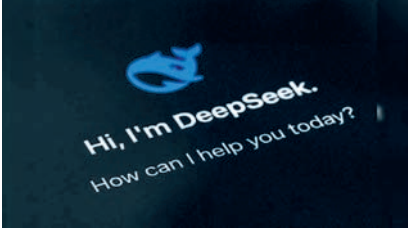
Mexico deploys 10,000 troops near US border

Ciudad Juarez (Mexico): A line of Mexican National Guard and Army trucks rumbled along the border separating Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, Texas Wednesday, among the first of 10,000 troops Mexico has sent to its northern frontier following tariff threats by President Donald Trump. Masked and armed National Guard members picked through brush running along the border barrier on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez, pulling out makeshift ladders and ropes tucked away in the trenches, and pulling them onto trucks. Patrols were also seen on other parts of the border near Tijuana. It comes after a turbulent week along the border after Trump announced he would delay imposing crippling tariffs on Mexico for at least a month. In exchange, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum promised she would send the country's National Guard to reinforce the border and crack down on fentanyl smuggling.



Deepseek curbs: China cries foul

Beijing: After several countries, including India, clamped restrictions on officials accessing the newly-released Chinese AI tool DeepSeek, China Thursday said such actions amounted to politicisation of trade and tech issues and vowed to protect the interests of its firms. China has all along opposed moves to overstretch the concept of national security or politicise trade and tech issues, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here while replying to a question on several countries either banning the use of DeepSeek or restricting its use by officials over suspicions of data leaks. "We have never asked and will never ask any company or individual to collect or store data against laws," Guo said, referring to apprehensions concerning China's 2017 national intelligence law which gave the Chinese government powers over private companies. "China has all along opposed moves to overstretch the concept of national security or politicise trade and tech issues. We will firmly protect the lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies," Guo said.



Several hundred demonstrators rally against President Donald Trump outside the California State Capitol Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Protesters rally against Trump's policies, Project 2025, Musk

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 6: Demonstrators gathered in cities across the US Wednesday to protest the Trump administration's early actions, decrying everything from the president's immigration crackdown to his rollback of transgender rights and a proposal to forcibly transfer Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Protesters in Philadelphia and at state capitols in California, Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin, Indiana and beyond waved signs denouncing President Donald Trump; billionaire Elon Musk, the leader of Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency; and Project 2025, a hard-right playbook for American government and society.

"I'm appalled by democracy's changes in the last, well, specifically two weeks — but it started a long time ago," Margaret Wilmet said at a protest outside the Statehouse in Columbus, Ohio. "So I'm just trying to put a presence into resistance."

The protests were a result of a movement that has organized online under the

hashtags #buildtheresistance and #50501, which stands for 50 protests, 50 states, one day. Websites and accounts across social media issued calls for action, with messages such as "reject fascism" and "defend our democracy." Outside the state Capitol in Lansing, Michigan, a crowd of hundreds gathered in freezing temperatures.

Catie Miglietti, from the Ann Arbor area, said Musk's access to Treasury Department data was especially concerning. She painted a sign depicting Musk puppeteering Trump from

his outraged arm — evoking Musk's straight-arm gesture during a January speech that some have interpreted as a Nazi salute. "If we don't stop it and get Congress to do something, it's an attack on democracy," Miglietti said. Demonstrations in several cities piled criticism on Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency.

"DOGE is not legit," read one poster on the state Capitol steps in Jefferson City, Missouri, where dozens of protesters gathered. "Why does Elon have your Social Security info???"

Taliban suspends Afghanistan's only radio station run by women

Kabul-based Radio Begum was educating Afghan women on health, psychology, and spiritual programmes

AGENCIES

Kabul, Feb 6: The Taliban has suspended Afghanistan's women's only radio channel after raiding it Tuesday, its information and culture ministry said.

The hardline Islamist group has accused the channel of "unauthorised provision" of content and programming to an overseas TV channel, further cracking down on the last few pockets of employed Afghan women which are already under scrutiny and pressure to

operate under Taliban rule. Radio Begum, a broadcast station based in Kabul, launched five months before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021, confirmed the raid and said the Taliban's officials from the information and culture ministry searched the premises of the office and restrained the staff.

The Taliban officials "seized computers, hard drives, files and phones from Begum staff, including Begum female journalists, and took into custody two male employees of the organisation who do not hold any senior management position", it said in a statement Tuesday.

Radio Begum's content is produced entirely by a team of Afghan women. While the Taliban did not mention which foreign TV channel, Radio Begum's sister satellite chan-



nel Begum TV operates from France and broadcasts educational programmes on Afghan school curriculum from seventh to 12th grade.

In Kabul, Radio Begum broadcasted at least six hours of lessons a day, including topics of health, psychology and spiritual programmes tailored for

women across parts of Afghanistan before its shutdown Tuesday.

According to the Taliban's claims, Radio Begum was violating broadcasting policy and improperly used its license.

"This decision comes after

several violations, including the unauthorised provision of content and programming to a foreign-based television channel," the Taliban's information and broadcast ministry said without disclosing when the radio station will be allowed to function normally.

The ministry said it will review all necessary documents to determine the station's future.

From Taliban-controlled Kabul, Radio Begum is known for broadcasting the voices of women across Afghanistan

Radio Begum has denied

According to the Taliban's claims, Radio Begum was violating broadcasting policy and improperly used its license

Business

of the day **quote**

There are 90 crore mobile phone subscribers. Today there are 116 crore mobile phone subscribers. If we talk about internet penetration, there were 25 crore subscribers in 2014 and today the number is 97.44 crore

We are strongly committed to expand our engagement in the renewable energy sector, in line with the government's vision to maximise power generation through sustainable sources

The India and South Asia region continues to be the world's fastest-growing commercial aviation market due to strong economic and trade growth, rising household incomes and investments in infrastructure and development

Q3 RESULTS
Airtel profit soars 5X
New Delhi: Bharti Airtel Thursday reported more than five-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹16,134.6 crore boosted by consolidation of the Indus Tower business and benefits of tariff hikes flowing into the quarter. The company had posted a consolidated profit of ₹2,876.4 crore in the year-ago period. India's second-largest telecom company posted quarterly revenue from operations of ₹45,129.3 crore, about 19 per cent higher than ₹37,899.5 crore it posted in the year-ago period.

SBI profit zooms 84%
New Delhi: The country's largest lender SBI on Thursday reported an 84 per cent jump in standalone net profit to ₹16,891 crore in the December quarter. State Bank of India (SBI) had earned a standalone net profit of ₹9,164 crore in the year-ago period. The bank's total income rose to ₹1,28,467 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal against ₹1,18,193 crore in the same period a year ago, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

PVR INOX net up 3X
New Delhi: Multiplex firm PVR INOX on Thursday reported nearly three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at ₹35.9 crore for the third quarter ended December, supported by record-breaking average ticket prices and food and beverage spend. The company, earlier known as PVR Ltd, had posted a net profit of ₹12.8 crore in the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. Its revenue from operations stood at ₹1,717.3 crore, up 11 per cent in the December quarter of the current fiscal. In the year-ago period, the same was at ₹1,545.9 crore. "Blockbuster movies propelled Q3 to the highest box office earnings of the year," said PVR Innox in its earnings statement.

ITC profit down 7%
New Delhi: Diversified entity ITC Ltd Thursday reported a decline of 7.27 per cent in consolidated net profit to ₹5,013.16 crore for the December quarter. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹5,406.52 crore in the year-ago period, ITC said in a regulatory filing.



India is a key strategic growth market for Rolls Royce and we are confident that our industry-leading marine gas turbine generators are an ideal choice to power the Indian Navy's future fleet
JOHN SHADE | EVP FOR US BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE PROGRAMMES, ROLLS-ROYCE DEFENCE

CHATGPT FACES GLOBAL OUTAGE

ChatGPT, one of OpenAI's most popular Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools Thursday faced a global outage as millions of users were unable to access the service. Many frustrated users took to social media platforms like X Thursday to report that ChatGPT was not working for them. The complaints indicate that the issue is widespread, with reports coming in from different countries



SAFE-HAVEN DEMAND

Gold continues record bull run



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Continuing the record-setting trend, gold prices climbed ₹270 to hit a new lifetime high of ₹86,070 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday as the rupee slid to all-time low levels and stock markets closed with losses. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity gained ₹270 to hit a new high of ₹85,670 per 10 grams. The metal had finished at ₹85,400 per 10 grams Tuesday. Bullion markets were closed Wednesday due to Delhi Assembly elections. Sustained buying by local jewellers, a weak rupee and losses in equity market aided the rally in the yellow metal, traders said. In this year, the yellow metal has soared by ₹6,680 per 10 grams or 8.41 per cent on safe-haven demand and firm global trends. However, silver prices remained flat at ₹96,500 per kg. On Thursday, the rupee plunged 14 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.57 (provisional) against the US dollar as rising odds of a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India in

its monetary policy meeting Friday pressurised the rupee. A weak rupee makes the dollar-priced gold imports dearer. The precious metal, however, dropped in futures trade. The April month contract of gold fell ₹41 to ₹84,526 per 10 grams on MCX, retreating from record levels hit Wednesday. Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said, "Market participants remain focused on the upcoming RBI monetary policy and the US non-farm payrolls and unemployment data scheduled for release on Friday." "Rupee movement and Comex gold trends will play a crucial role in determining the next price action for gold," Trivedi added. Silver futures for March delivery declined ₹934 or 0.97 per cent to ₹95,031 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). In the global markets, Comex gold futures for April delivery decreased by \$12 per ounce or 0.41 per cent to \$2,881 per ounce. On Wednesday, the Comex futures surged to hit another high of \$2,906 per ounce.

THE YELLOW METAL CLIMBS ₹270 TO HIT FRESH PEAK OF ₹86,070 PER 10 G
IN 2025, GOLD HAS SOARED BY ₹6,680 PER 10 GRAMS OR 8.41% ON SAFE-HAVEN DEMAND AND FIRM GLOBAL TRENDS

Zomato to rebrand as 'Eternal', unveils new logo

Eternal will comprise four major businesses as of now -- Zomato, Blinkit, District, and Hyperpure

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 6: Indian food and grocery delivery platform Zomato said Thursday it will rename the company to "Eternal" and unveiled a new logo, a move that comes more than two years after it began using the new name internally. Eternal would comprise its four major businesses - food delivery vertical Zomato, quick-commerce unit Blinkit, live events business District and kitchen supplies unit Hyperpure, the company said. "We thought of publicly renaming the company when

We also thought that we would publicly rename the company to Eternal, the day something beyond Zomato became a significant driver of our future. Today, with Blinkit, I feel we are there. We would like to rename Zomato Ltd, the company (not the brand/app), to Eternal Ltd
DEEPINDER GOYAL | FOUNDER, ZOMATO



something beyond Zomato became a significant driver of our future," Founder Deepinder Goyal said in a letter to shareholders. "Today, with Blinkit, I feel we are here," Goyal said. The move marks a shift for

the company, from when investors were skeptical about Zomato's acquisition of Blinkit in mid-2022, to quick commerce-led growth drawing increasing investor interest. Blinkit as well as early bird

Swiggy's Instamart have driven a shift in the way Indians shop, and forced retailers such as Reliance Industries' JioMart as well as Amazon and Walmart's Indian business to launch their own quick-commerce services.

Foreigners step up bond buys before anticipated rate cut

RBI'S MONETARY POLICY DECISION IS DUE FRIDAY AND MARKETS WIDELY EXPECT A 25-BASIS-POINT RATE CUT AFTER A GAP OF NEARLY FIVE YEARS

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 6: Indian government bonds are seeing increased buying interest from foreign investors ahead of an anticipated interest rate cut from the Reserve Bank of India this week. Foreigners have net bought ₹182 billion (\$2.09 billion) worth of debt in the past seven days, surpassing the aggregate purchases from these investors in the previous 19 weeks, clearing house data showed. "I would expect the central bank to start with a token rate cut of 25 basis points this week," said Ashish Vaidya, managing director and treasurer of global financial markets at DBS Bank India. Portfolio managers that are underweight on Indian bonds have started rebalancing their portfolios, as they might not want to miss out on the rally and underperform the global bond indexes, Vaidya said. Overall foreign purchases of Indian bonds with no invest-



ment limit have surpassed the \$20 billion mark since JPMorgan announced the inclusion of Indian debt in September 2023. Expectations were further bolstered by the central bank's announcement of a mega liquidity infusion package and its bond purchase in the secondary market. The 10-year benchmark bond yield has eased 20 basis points from its highs hit three weeks ago, while overnight index swap rates have dipped by over 30 ba-

sis points in the same period. Investors point to the risk of reversal of these flows, especially from shorter-term bonds, if the central bank does not deliver a rate cut. "RBI's inaction could lead to disappointment and a sell-off in bond markets, pushing bond yields higher. The lack of a rate cut could increase volatility in bonds as investors reassess their positions," said Manish Bhargava, CEO at Straits Investment Management.

PROFIT TAKING

Sensex, Nifty slide for 2nd straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty slid for the second consecutive day Thursday amid caution ahead of the RBI's monetary policy decision and fresh foreign fund outflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 213.12 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 78,058.16 due to profit-taking in blue-chip shares such as Bharti Airtel, ITC and SBI. The index opened higher but slipped into the red in morning deals due to selling by investors. During the day, it tumbled 427.29 points or 0.54 per cent to 77,843.99. The NSE Nifty declined 92.95 points or 0.39 per cent to 23,603.35 with 30 of its constituents closing lower. Among Sensex scrips, Bharti Airtel fell by 2.47 per cent to emerge as the biggest loser. Airtel after the market hours reported a five-fold jump in profit for the third quarter of 2024-25. Adani Ports, Infosys, Axis Bank, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers. "The benchmark indices experienced a moderate decline as investors awaited the RBI's decision on a potential rate cut amidst the ongoing trade war. The broader market remained cautious and in a consolidation phase despite the government's focus on boosting consumption to cushion lower growth," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. As many as 2,030 stocks declined while 1,908 advanced and 125 remained unchanged on the BSE. The BSE barometer gauge declined 312.53 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at 78,271.28 Wednesday. The Nifty dropped 42.95 points or 0.18 per cent to 23,696.30. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned net sellers Wednesday offloading equities worth ₹1,682.83 crore.

Auto retail sales rise 7% in Jan: FADA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Automobile retail sales in India rose 7 per cent year-on-year in January at 22,91,621 units, driven by robust demand across segments, dealer's body FADA said Thursday. Overall retail sales stood at 21,49,117 units in January 2024. "Our observations indicate that each vehicle category - 2W, 3W, PV, tractor and CV-witnessed positive momentum, pointing toward sustained consumer confidence and steady market recovery," the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President CS Vigneshwar said in a statement. Passenger vehicle retail sales jumped 16 per cent year-on-year to 4,65,920 units last month. Many dealers noted improved demand but also point-



Inventory levels have improved, dropping by around five days to 50-55 days, suggesting improved supply-demand balance
CS VIGNESHWAR | PRESIDENT, FADA

PV RETAIL SALES JUMPED 16% YOY
CV SALES SURGE 8% YEAR-ON-YEAR
TWO-WHEELER RETAILS RISE 4% YOY

ed to last year's heavy discounting, which helped clear older models and shift registrations, Vigneshwar said. Two-wheeler retails stood at 15,25,862 units last month, an increase of 4 per cent, as compared with 14,65,039 units in same month last year. Sales in urban areas outpaced rural on a Y-o-Y basis, growing by 5 per cent compared to 4 per cent. Dealers cite new model launches, marriage season de-

mand and improved financing as key growth drivers, Vigneshwar stated. However, concerns about rising interest rates, rural liquidity challenges and market uncertainty still linger, he added. Commercial vehicle sales rose 8 per cent year-on-year in January to 99,425 units. While higher freight rates and passenger carrier demand provided a boost, many dealers cited low cash flow, strict

financing policies and sluggish industries (like cement and coal) as major hurdles, Vigneshwar said. Tractor sales rose 5 per cent year-on-year to 93,381 units in January while three-wheeler retail sales rose 7 per cent to 1,07,033 units last month. FADA noted that riding on the momentum of a promising start to 2025, the auto retail sector enters February with cautious optimism. According to a latest survey, nearly half of dealers (46 per cent) anticipate growth this month, while 43 per cent expect sales to stay flat and 11 per cent foresee a dip, the industry body said. This blend of sentiments underscores the industry's complex landscape, where bright spots are tempered by ongoing challenges, it stated.

INDIGO PLANS DIRECT FLIGHTS TO EUROPE

The airline signs pact with Norse Atlantic for Boeing 787-9 lease

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: Domestic carrier IndiGo Thursday said it has entered into a pact with Norse Atlantic Airways for the damp lease of one Boeing 787-9 aircraft, amid its reported plans to fly directly to Europe. The widebody aircraft will arrive in the country in the coming weeks and is expected to start operations in March 2025, IndiGo said in a statement. It also said that both IndiGo and Norse Atlantic will continue exploring opportunities to contract additional aircraft



This would be the first time IndiGo will induct a Boeing 787 aircraft in its fleet. As of now, Tata Group-owned Air India has these planes in operation

and increase their collaboration further. IndiGo currently has two widebody B777 aircraft in its

Our vision is to transform into a global player by 2030 while having strong roots and continuous expansion in India, and we are strategically moving ahead in that direction
PIETER EILBERS | CEO, INDIGO

which the Gurugram-based airline operates to Istanbul from Delhi and Mumbai. Wet lease of an aircraft by an Indian carrier involves the leasing of foreign aircraft, along with crew, maintenance, and insurance. The plane is also under the operational control of the foreign operator (lessor) and subject to regulatory requirements of the foreign civil aviation authority concerned. In a damp lease, the lessor

provides the maintenance along with the aircraft but not the crew and insurance. The pact is initially for a period of six months, which can be extended by up to 18 months, subject to regulatory approvals, IndiGo said, adding the two partners remain "committed" to exploring opportunities to further extend this period, subject to regulatory approvals. IndiGo said it is committed to expanding its international footprint to cater to the growing demand for international travel to and from India. To support and accelerate its long-haul expansion, IndiGo has placed a firm order for 30 Airbus 350-900 wide-body aircraft with an option for an additional 70 aircraft, with deliveries expected to commence from 2027, it said.

