

Rakul's perspective

Actor Rakul Preet Singh says a comfort zone is a beautiful place, but nothing ever grows there

LEISURE | P2



Trump pushes trade war

Donald Trump plans to unveil reciprocal tariffs which could take aim at every country that charges duties on US imports

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Gold prices up again

Gold prices rise ₹140 to ₹88,100 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday amid strong trends in international markets

BUSINESS | P11



Panghal turns pro

India's lone male boxer to win a world championship silver medal, Amit Panghal, becomes the latest from the country to turn professional

SPORTS | P12

Z-category security

cover for Dalai Lama

New Delhi, Feb 13: The Cen-

tre has provided a Z-category

armed protection cover to Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai La

ma in view of potential security

threats to him, official sources

The Union Home Ministry has directed the VIP security

wing of the Central Reserve

Police Force (CRPF) to take

charge of the 89-year-old leader.

Lama would be secured by a

Z-category protection cover of

CRPF commandos in all parts

He had a small protection

cover of the Himachal Pradesh

Police. The security cover was

extended when he travelled to

Delhi or any other place by the

The government has now

granted him a uniform security cover after a review by Central intelligence agencies, a senior

officer said. A team of about 30

CRPF commandos will work in shifts to secure the Dalai Lama

In a similar move, the Home

Ministry has provided a Z-cat-

egory cover to BJP leader Sam-

bit Patra, 50, in Manipur, the

The sources said the Dalai

said Thursday.

of the country.

local police.

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BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 14, 2025

NEW I-T BILL INTRODUCED

New Delhi, Feb 13: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Income Tax Bill, 2025 in the Lok Sabha Thursday and urged Speaker Om Birla to refer it to a select committee of the House.

Opposition members opposed the Bill at the introduction stage but the House passed a motion by voice vote for its introduction. While moving the Bill for introduction, Sitharaman urged Birla to refer the draft law to a select committee of the House. She urged the Speaker to take a call on the proposed panel's composition and rules

The Bill will replace terminologies such as 'assessment year' and 'previous year' with the easier-to-understand 'tax vear' as part of a move to simplify language while removing provisos and explanations.

MODI MEETS US NSA, ELON MUSK

Washington, Feb 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he had a 'fruitful meeting' with US National Security Advisor (NSA) Michael Waltz and they discussed defence, technology and security areas, which are important aspects of the India-US ties.

"Had a fruitful meeting with NSA @michaelgwaltz. He has always been a great friend of India," Modi said in a post on X.

"Defence, technology and security are important aspects of India-USA ties and we had a wonderful discussion around these issues. There is strong potential for cooperation in sectors like AI, semiconductors, space and more," he said.

After his meeting with Waltz, Modi met SpaceX CEO Elon Musk. Musk arrived at Blair House with his three young kids. Modi arrived in the US capi-

tal Wednesday evening for a bilateral meeting with President

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



After making Valentine's couple sanskari. we'll celebrate by watching a Samay Raina comedy show

NATURE'S FURY: Volcanic steam and ashes rise from Mount Etna, Italy

Manipur goes under Centre Guv: 2024 govt change

New Delhi, Feb 13: President's rule was imposed in strife-torn Manipur Thursday and the state Assembly put under suspended animation, a few days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty in the northeastern state. The Manipur Assembly, which

has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as CM after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has claimed over 250 lives so far.

He resigned February 9 and submitted his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla in Imphal, hours after his meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah here.

The decision to impose the Central rule was taken after the Governor sent a report to President Droupadi Murmu.

"After considering the report and other information received by me, I am satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of that state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India," the notifica-



therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 356 of the Constitution, and of all other powers enabling me in that behalf. I hereby proclaim that I assume to myself as President of India all functions of the government of the state of Manipur and all powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor of that state.' The decision to impose the President's rule by the BJP-led Centre came as the party failed to have a consensus on chief ministerial candidate despite having several rounds of discussions between narty's northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and legislators

Singh's tenure as CM was marked by a number of controversies, primarily centred on his handling of ethnic violence, allegations of instigating conflict, and questions regarding his governance.

One of the most significant controversies of Singh's tenure was the ethnic violence that erupted in May 2023. It finally

cost him the key post. The ethnic strife, which saw brutal clashes between the majority Meitei community in the Imphal Valley and the Kuki-Zo tribal groups in the surrounding hills, resulted in over 250 deaths and displaced thousands of people. The state's inability to contain it raised serious concerns about Singh's leadership.

Singh's response to the violence, however, included a public apology in December 2023, where he expressed regret for the deaths and displacement caused by the unrest. In February, a new controversy erupted when audio tapes allegedly featuring Singh were leaked, in which he was purportedly heard discussing how the ethnic violence was instigated with his approval.

Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust, a vocal critic of Singh's handling of the ethnic conflict, sought a court-monitored probe into the authenticity of the tapes. This led to a Supreme Court ruling ordering the CFSL to verify the tapes' authenticity and submit a report.

Meanwhile, Congress said President's rule in Manipur came only after the fabric of state's society was allowed to be 'severely damaged'.

"Finally what the Indian National Congress has been demanding for almost 20 months has happened. President's rule has been imposed in Manipur. This has come after what the Supreme Court called 'the absolute breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state' which saw the killing of over 300 people and displacement of over 60,000 men, women, and children since May 3, 2023," Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"This has come after the fabric of Manipur's society has been allowed to be severely damaged, if not totally destroyed," he said.

a declaration of faith



Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Thursday said the people of Odisha opted for a change of government in the 2024 elections, describing it not just as a political decision but as a 'declaration of faith'

In his customary address in the Assembly at the start of the Budget Session, Kambhampati presented a vision of change and progress for the state.

He remarked that despite Odisha's glorious past and abundant human resources, the state had struggled to fully realise its immense potential. "The state's promises often remained unrealised. The people of Odisha, with hope in their hearts and a vision for the future, opted for change over continuity in the 2024 elections," he said.

that the people were tired of waiting for a transformation that never seemed to arrive. "They embraced the promise of my government that they would listen, understand, and act. Their vote was not just a political decision, it was a declaration of faith," he added. "The new government has

The Governor emphasised

shouldered the responsibility of taking the state forward with a vision of prosperity," he said.

He highlighted several initia tives such as implementation of the flagship 'Subhadra' scheme aimed at benefiting one crore women, 'Samrudha Krushak Yojana' for farmers, and opening the 'Ratna Bhandar' of Srimandir He also mentioned efforts to re vive the Odia Asmita (pride) and launch of programmes to empower the poor, youth, and women.

He also noted that the state gov ernment has received three lakh suggestions for 'Vision 2036', which aims to build a developed Odisha with a target of a \$500 billion economy by 2036. He said the state has implemented the National Edu cation Policy, Ayushman Bharat in the health sector, Kamadhenu scheme for dairy farmers and others. He also mentioned plans to fill 1.5 lakh government jobs over the next five years.

PANIC AS LEOPARD **GATECRASHES WEDDING**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 13: A wedding in Lucknow saw an uninvited guest, a leopard, who strayed into the venue, leaving a Forest official injured, attendees in panic and the bride and groom stranded in a car for hours.

The incident happened in the Buddheshwar road area of the state capital Wednesday night when the leopard entered a banquet hall, creating panic among the guests who frantically started running to save their lives, an eyewitness recalls.

Even the bride and groom who were in the marriage hall ran off and locked themselves in a car, the evewitness said.

Police and the Forest department officials immediately



reached the spot. The leopard was caught and tranquillised after hours of efforts at around 2am. According to police, Forest department official Mukaddar Ali sustained injuries in his hand while catching the leopard.

A guest said that until the animal was caught, the families of both the bride and groom sat in their vehicles for safety. In a video purportedly of the incident, the leopard can be seen snatching an official's weapon as he tries to overpower the animal.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: A new global survey conducted across 30 countries and released ahead of Valentine's Day reveals that Indians are among the least satisfied with their love lives.

The 'Love Life Satisfaction 2025' survey results were led by countries such as Colombia (82 per cent), Thailand (81 per cent), Mexico (81 per cent), Indonesia (81 per cent), and Malaysia (79 per cent). India at 63 per cent, South Korea at 59 per cent, and Japan at 56 per cent were at the bottom.

It was conducted by leading market research and polling company Ipsos with a sample size of 23,765 adults across 30 countries and more than 2,000

"Indians largely live in joint

families and those in nuclear families have familial responsibilities, work pressures, career and societal pressures, leaving less time for romance, physical intimacy and love," Ashwini Sirsikar, group service line leader, Ipsos UU & Synthesio, said in a statement.

The survey also looked at different parameters separately to assess how Indians stacked up. While 64 per cent of Indians polled said they feel loved, only 57 per cent of Indians claimed to be satisfied with their romantic/sex life.

However, as per the findings, more Indians (67 per cent) were satisfied with the relationship shared with their spouse.

"Interestingly, happiness with sex life and partner was seen to be co-related. People in countries that are more sat-



isfied with their relationship with their partner are more likely to be satisfied with their romantic/sex life," it said.

"Some countries were out-

liers, like Brazil, South Korea and India, where people are less satisfied with their partner compared to their level of satisfaction with their romantic/

sex life," it added. The findings also suggested those on a higher income were more likely to feel loved and be happier with their romantic/sex lives.

For instance, it suggested that 83 per cent of high-income earners across 30 countries say they are satisfied with the love in their life compared to 76 per cent of those on a middle income and 69 per cent on a low income. The same trend holds true for their romantic and sex ual satisfaction as well.

"Sixty-seven percentage of people with a high income are satisfied with their sex life compared to only 51 per cent of low-income earners," it said

Around 2,200 individuals were surveyed in India. Of them, approximately 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face and 400 online.

eisure



ANISTON STILL IN SEARCH OF LOVE

After a string of highly publicised relationships, including her marriages to Brad Pitt and Justin Theroux, Hollywood actress Jennifer Aniston has made a conscious effort to keep her personal life out of the spotlight. However, a new report suggests that the actor has not lost hope in finding love.

MILLIE BROWN DOESN'T **HAVE TOO MANY FRIENDS**

Millie Bobby Brown recently shared that she doesn't have many friends. The Stranger Things actress was just 11 when she joined the Netflix series and she admitted growing up on set, where she was privately tutored has left her with a lack of social skills.



JNE FORECAST

accuracy • reliability • trust

Your ability to let go things will reflect in your personal as well as your professional life. Today could be a significant day for you, and Ganesha advises you not to for get your special abilities. Make good use of them so that others too can benefit.

TAURUS

You will be very sensitive about the image you project socially and professionally. Ganesha sees you treating this very seriously and doing everything you can to make this right impression. Today, you will remain decent, dignified and fosussed in all that you do. Do not be too eager to please others

Routine work bores you, and today you will go all out to break free from the shackles of boredom. The results, however, may not be as dramatic. You will have to depend on your children, if any, to rescue you from the tyranny of routine. Monetary gains can be expected either in the form of inheritance of ancestral property or as increment in your basic salary

CANCER

Don't meddle in others' affairs today, suggests Ganesha. For they will not take it kindly. that you must keep your bravado and

Your pride and self-confidence will help you to excel in whatever task it is that you take up today. Other people will also praise you. You will buy new clothes and other possessions that you have been desiring since a long time, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

You will be faced with serious financial problems today. You may even have to pay through your nose to get what you desire. Later in the evening, you might accomplish some short-term goals. Ganesha predicts that some vital business agree ments will end your day in high spirits.

LIBRA

Ganesha says you will be able to improve your relations abroad. There will be good news coming from friends or relatives living abroad. Your working ability and efficiency will make you popular in the office today. In the day today you shall have a variety of good and bad experiences.

SCORPIO

Be vigilant; keep your eyes and ears open for all the events happening around you, says Ganesha. Your intuition is trying to tell you something, trust it. Think and act positively, the rest would fall in place.

SAGITTARIUS Work is likely to keep you on toes. At work place, you

and your opinions will be in demand. Those who are associated with stock exchange and shares will be happy to gain profits during the afternoon. Wait and watch the end result in the evening.

CAPRICORN

You have projected yourself as a confused individual, and rightfully so, as the Lions are most of times in double mind. But, today you'll come up with a specific career plan that will surprise many of the people. Be clear about what you want to do in life, how you want your life to be and make sincere efforts to achieve that stage. quides Ganesha

AQUARIUS

You will take the road to spirituality today and give a miss to materialism. You will visit temples, other religious places, and spiritual leaders to find answers for some of your questions. It will, however, take a while for you to distinguish between mysticism and materialism, and understand that you can have the best of both worlds.

PISCES

You will not take matters to heart needlessly today, and will instead calmly evaluate the bitter words of others to see if there is a grain of truth in them somewhere. This is a good practice and one that should be continued. While you won't be in the mood to tolerate any injustice, you will be able to forgive those who have wronged you and will thus be able to refrain from stoking further, the fires of enmity, says Ganesha.



Maddy talks about re-release trend

Mumbai: Actor R Madhavan recently shared his thoughts on the trend of re-released films like Sanam Teri Kasam, Tumbbad, and Rockstar, which have been enjoying massive success at the box office, while new releases struggle to make an impact. Madhavan, whose 2001 film Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein was re-released in August 2024 after 23 years, attributes this trend to nostalgia. "People want to relive the experience of watching these films in theatres, especially those that didn't get much appreciation when they first released, like Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein and Tumbbad." He adds, "All these films didn't get much appreciation when they first released, but over a period became a cult hit. So, the audiences want to see the original glory and enjoy the nostalgia.' While Madhavan acknowledges the success of

re-releases, he believes it's just a passing trend. 'Re-releases won't be a game-changer; they're mostly extra pocket money for producers," he says, adding that nostalgia doesn't equate to long-term success. He also highlights the challenges for new films, noting that in today's world, filmmakers are competing not only with social media content but also with the nostalgia surrounding older films. "To earn respect, we need to be better than K-pop," he concludes, referencing the growing influence of international content, especially Korean media. AGENCIES



a beautiful place, but nothing ever grows there." - Unknown... One of the biggest reasons people are lazy and always want to do everything tomorrow is because they are too comfortable with their lives. They don't want to change

to the growth that you want.

the way things are going. Doing the things that

you're always doing is easy, but it doesn't lead

"Growth demands that you step out of

your comfort zone and do the hard things. It's easy to watch.' She captioned it as: "It is what Rakul is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film Mere Husband Ki Biwi and had recently shared that her character Antara in the movie is a very headstrong girl and someone who has a lot of selflove as well. Talking about character,

her she shares, "So my character of Antara is a very headstrong girl, someone who has a lot of self-love as well... She's an adventure-loving know, you and a lot into sports." IANS



First Indian female actor to charge ₹1cr

the Indian indus-

try with the liberalisation of economy. As the market opened up, new avenues for earnings emerged, and actors gained unprecedented visibility and endorsement deals. Chiranjeevi was the first Indian actor to earn over ₹1 crore per film with Aapadbandhavudu in 1992. However, the first actress to achieve this milestone was Sridevi.

She charged ₹1 crore for the 1993 film Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja, making her the highest-paid actress in Bollywood at the time. Sridevi's stardom was unparalleled, even surpassing the Khans during her peak. While Shah Rukh, Salman and Aamir

along with other top stars like Sunny

Deol and Sanjay Dutt, earned ₹50-75 lakh during the early to mid-90s, Sri-

devi commanded a fee higher than even her male counterparts. By the mid-90s, she was a dominant force in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi cinema, headlining films like Gumraah, Army, and Laadla. In 1996, at the age of 33, she retired from acting to focus on her family after becoming pregnant with her first child. Her final film before her break was Judaai in 1997. She made a comeback in 2012 with En-

glish Vinglish and later appeared in Puli (2015) and Mom~(2017)before her tragic death

Romance missing from theatres this Valentine's Day

DÖST

Across

1 Rocket carrying

Sydenham, for

a warhead

5 Harness racer

8 Thomas

one

9 Piña colada

Bolivia

13 They can be

acute and

oblique

ingredient

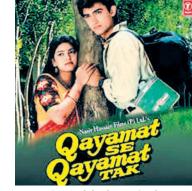
Cruz,

12 Changed, usually

not for the better

New Delhi: It's the season of red roses, hearts and chocolates but couples out on a movie date to rekindle their romance or perhaps begin one can pick only from a historical-actioner or a superhero film, unless they settle for a rerun of a nine-year-old film.

This Valentine's Day, which falls Friday, only three new films would have released. There's Vicky Kaushal's historical action drama *Chhaava*, superhero film Captain America: Brave New World and scattered



screenings of the latest in the Bridget Jones franchise.



It is a far cry from earlier vears when romantic dramas



were an important part of Hindi cinema's release calendar.

That the two romances currently in theatres are the 2016 Sanam Teri Kasam, starring Harshwardhan Rane and Pakistani actor Mawra Hocane, and the recently released Loveyaapa with Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor is telling. The former, a flop when it released, is a surprise hit and the latter is doing humdrum husiness

The inevitable question being asked is this - why have love and longing disappeared from the big screen, the kind shown in Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak, Maine Pyar Kiya and, of course, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge . Have people lost interest or

is it simply a temporary phase as Hindi cinema tries to find a solution to increase footfalls in theatres?

Filmmakers and trade insiders argue that romantic stories will always stay in demand. If the re-release success of some films is any indication, it is time to come up with a great love story once again. But are filmmakers listening.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



CROSSWORD

3 Copy

4 Mystery

grape

11 Sleep

5 Burgundy

6 Custodian

7 Modernise

interrupter

13 Popular salad

ingredient

15 Outlawed

16 Go back on

18 Capital of

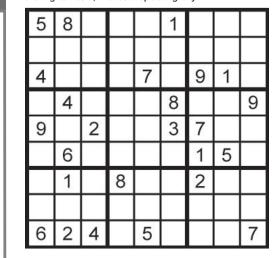
Ghana

23 Chart

20 Flexible joint

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.

SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

- W W S OCELOTESLEEVE

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

14 Silvery

metallic

element

17 Quick bread

wood

21 Camel hair

fabric

22 Parson

25 Oval

1 Broods

2 Tofu base

Down

19 Tough, durable

24 "The Barber of

Seville," e.g.

owntown

Musicians perform during cultural programme 'Barnali' organised by Rudrakshva Foundation, at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Auditorium in Bhubaneswar Thursday



ILLEGAL TREE FELLING

NGT for action against Begunia tehsildar

The direction comes after residents of Chima village under Begunia block approached the apex green body, alleging that over 100 trees were felled illegally for a PMGSY road project May 21, 2024

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed disciplinary action against Begunia tehsildar in Khurda district over allegations of unauthorised cutting of trees for a road construction project under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

According to reports, residents of Chima village under Begunia block had approached the NGT, alleging that over 100 trees, including fruit-bearing and matured ones, were felled May 21, 2024 without approval from the Khurda divisional forest offi-



Notice to CS over CNG station

Bhubaneswar: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has served a notice to the Chief Secretary, seeking a response to a petition challenging the installation of CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) station and District Regulating Station (DRS) in residential areas of the City in violation of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) norms. The Eastern Zone bench of the NGT, while hearing a petition by Sukadev Mohanty, a resident of HIG-179, Kanan Vihar, Phase 1 where a CNG and Piped Natural Gas (PNG) station is being setup, directed the authorities to submit replies within four weeks. The applicant stated that GAIL India Limited had applied for supply of gas pipeline in Bhubaneswar, under Khurda district, and started construction over plot no 457 in Khata 619, Kisan Gocahara in Chandrasekharpur Mouza within BMC. It was alleged that the said construction area is very close to the residential area of Kanan Vihar. The tribunal has scheduled the next hearing for March 26, 2025.

cer (DFO). They claimed that tree cutting was not part of the approved road construction plan for which it led to

environmental degradation and financial loss.

Acting on the complaint, the apex environment watchdog

constituted a committee to investigate the matter. The Eastern Zone bench of NGT, led by Justice B Amit Sthalekar and Judicial Member Arun Kumar Verma, reviewed the findings and confirmed the evidence of illegal tree cutting. They also identified 12 tree stumps during inspections at the site.

The tribunal, in its final order issued January 29, observed gross negligence on the part of Begunia tehsildar for failing to report the illegality

The NGT order said, "There has been a lack of promptitude, sincerity, and devotion towards duty on the part of the tehsildar, leading to grave loss of revenue to the exchequer.'

Consequently, the tribunal directed disciplinary action against tehsildar Tapas Kumar Bishi

Reports from Tangi range officer and the NGT-constituted committee confirmed the presence of tree stumps from species like fasi, kochila, and mai, while evidence suggested the felling of kasi, neem, sal, jackfruit, and aksia.



ALL SET: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi arrives at the state Assembly on the first day of the Budget Session

House pays homage to ex-PM Manmohan Singh

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: The state Assembly Thursday paid homage to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and two former members of the House who passed away recently.

As soon as Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati completed his address on the opening day of the Budget Session, Chief

Minister Mohan Charan Maihi moved an obituary reference on the demise of Singh, former MLAs Bijaya Kumar Mohanty and Sadan Nayak.

Describing Singh as a great economist. Maihi expressed condolences on the death of the former PM, and the two former

BJD president and Leader of

the Opposition Naveen Patnaik Congress Legislature Party leader Ram Chandra Kadam and CPI(M) leader Laxman Munda also expressed their condolences.

The House observed a one-minute silence as a mark of respect for the departed souls.

The Speaker then adjourned the House till 10:30am Friday.

'Spider Satish' arrested for burgling Niranjan's house



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: Police Thursday arrested a man, identified as Satish Reddy alias Spider Satish, a native of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, for decamping with ₹2.50 lakh cash and gold ornaments worth ₹50 lakh from the house of senior Odisha Congress leader Niranjan Patnaik January 26, a senior police

Speaking to reporters here, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack police commissioner S Dev Datta Singh said, "We arrested the accused from the outskirts of Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh after examining more than 400 CCTV footage, call records of 10,000 phone numbers, and 50 suspects.

As the burglar covered his entire body including face with a mask and hands with gloves, it was a very difficult task for the police to identify the accused, he said.

"Multiple specialised police teams were formed to crack the case. The teams visited different places in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala for investigation and finally, it was found that the accused was in Kerala jail for some time in

connection to a case," he said.

"Satish was involved in at least 17 such cases including two cases in Odisha. He robbed the house of a renowned contractor in the same area in Bhubaneswar in 2023," Singh said.

The police commissioner said, "We have seized a car, stolen cash, gold ornaments and other items such apparel. shoes and a torch that he used to commit the crime."

Almost all stolen items and cash were recovered from the accused and those handed over to the victim, said Bhubaneswar DCP Pinak Mishra.

"We got all the stolen cash and most of the ornaments. Our police force is quite capable of cracking such a burglary case. But, there is a need to provide them quality training so that they can crack difficult crime cases more efficiently," said Congress leader Niranjan

Naveen pulls up MLA; buzz in Odisha politics

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: BJD president Naveen Patnaik Thursday reprimanded his party MLA from Champua, Sanatan Mahakud, over the latter's absence in the legislature party meeting held on the eve of Budget Session of the Assembly. The incident sent the chatters abuzz in political circles over the future course of the legislator.

The incident took place on the Assembly premises when Patnaik was walking down the corridor. On the way, Patnaik met Mahakud and asked him the reason for his absence in Wednesday's legislature party

Patnaik's half-a-minute conversation with Mahakud was captured by television channels, the visuals of which went viral immediately. Patnaik was also heard saying whether Mahakud came to the Assembly to see the BJP chief minister.

"Why didn't you attend the party meeting yesterday?" Patnaik was heard asking in Hindi. In his reply, Mahakud said, "I wasn't keeping well." Not convinced with his reply, Patnaik said, "Have you come today to see the BJP CM?'

After Patnaik left the place, Mahakud told reporters that the BJD president enquired about his absence in Wednesday's BJD MLA meeting held at Sankha Bhawan, the state



Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakud rubbished speculation regarding a change in his political allegiance

headquarters of the regional

'Naveen Patnaik is the chief of our party. He can surely ask me. He asked me why I did not attend the BJD legislature party meeting yesterday. I did not go to the meeting because I was unwell," Mahakud said.

Asked about the second question by the BJD president, Mahakud said, "Nothing more than that. You might have heard something else. I am with Biju Janata Dal and I will stay in

the party till end of my tenure in 2029. I cannot go to any other party as I was elected on a BJD

Later, Mahakud rubbished speculation regarding a change in his political allegiance. "The BJD supremo mentioned nothing about switching sides to the BJP. Since Mohan Majhi is the CM, there is no harm in meeting him for the development of my region. He had visited my constituency Champua. There was a cake cutting ceremony after which he gave me a piece of cake. Please, avoid reading too much into it," he said.

The incident sent the chatters abuzz in political circles here, as BJD has already witnessed two of its Raiva Sabha MPs-Mamata Mohanta and Sujit Kumar—resigning and joining the BJP after the BJD lost the 2024 general elections.

Patnaik accuses BJP of usurping his govt's feats

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly and former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday accused the BJP government of hijacking the credits for the achievements of the previous BJD govern-

Speaking to media persons regarding Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati's speech in the Assembly Thursday, Patnaik said: "In the Governor's address today, this BJP government is trying to take credit for many of the achievements of my government. The government should concentrate on various areas where it is failing, like the law and order situation, rising prices and unemploy-

Meanwhile, BJD Leader Goutam Buddha Das said that Governor Kambhampa ti is new to Odisha and has no knowledge of the ground reality in the state.

Das also alleged that the Governor just read out the information supplied by the state government.

However, Industry Minister Sampad Chandra Swain advised Patnaik to introspect on his statement.

"We launched new schemes for women like the Subhadra Yojana, increased MSP for farmers to ₹3,100, and we have been working to fulfil the commitment made during period, the law and order situation is better than their (BJD government) period. During Utkarsh Odisha-Make In Odisha Conclave-2025, we received ₹16.78 lakh crore in vestment intent and signed MoUs of 13 lakhs crores This will generate massive job opportunities in the state. Everyone knows how many MoUs were signed and how much investments were grounded during the former Chief Minister's tenure," said

The Budget session of the Odisha Assembly commenced Thursday with the inaugural address of Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati.

The Governor in his address highlighted various achievements of the state government during the last eight months.

He claimed that the state government led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has taken several landmark decisions with an aim to empower the poor, youth, farmers and women of the state.

The third session of the 17th Odisha Legislative Assembly which is scheduled to continue till April 5 in two phases will have 28 working days. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Maihi, who is also the Finance Minister, will present the budget February 17.

KODAK MOMENT: Members of Nikhila Odisha Jeebika Mission EC Sangha take a selfie while returning from a rally at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar

Liver transplant recipient at SCB dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 13: The second liver transplant recipient at SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH), Manas Muduli, 39, passed away Wednesday.

Muduli, a resident of Nayagarh, was admitted to the Central ICU of the hospital January 22 due to health complications. He breathed his last during treatment in the morning hours. His body has been handed over to his family.

SCB's Additional Superintendent and Nodal Officer of the Liver Transplant Unit, Dr Manoj Pattnaik said Muduli became critically ill due to an infection. "He had previously suffered from similar health issues and was undergoing treatment. Later, fluid accumulation in his abdomen and severe complications led to a second bout of infection, which worsened his condition, ultimately resulting in his death," he said.

Notably, Muduli had been suffering from liver cirrhosis for the past six years. On September 9 last year, he un-



recipient at the top healthcare facility, Manas Barik, 45, is stated to be healthy

derwent a liver transplant at SCBMCH. His wife, Chhabi Muduli, had donated 55 per cent of her liver for the transplant. A team of four doctors, including P Balachandran Menon, Director of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology (AIG), Hyderabad. assisted SCB's medical team in the procedure. However, after the transplant, Muduli was admitted to SCB twice due to recurring health issues.

It is pertinent to mention here that Manas Barik, 45, from Tigiria in Cuttack district was the first liver transplant recipient at the top healthcare facility. The procedure was conducted April 3, 2024, and he is stated to be healthy.

Meanwhile, sources said following the second liver transplant in September last year, there seems to be a slowdown in transplant activities at SCB. Reports indicate that the AIG team has not visited SCB for the past five months and has not conducted follow-ups on transplant recipients.

When asked about it, Dr Patnaik said," The AIG team communicates with patients remotely to assess their condition and suggests treatments and medications, which SCB doctors then administer". He said the AIG team has been unable to visit SCB due to their absence from India.

Orissa POST

Govt fast-tracks Talcher, Phulbani med colleges



Efforts ramp up to ensure early operationalisation of key healthcare institutions in rural regions of the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: In a major move aimed at strengthening the healthcare infrastructure in Odisha, the state government has prioritised the early operationalisation of two vital medical colleges – Pabitra Mohan Pradhan Medical College & Hospital in Talcher, Angul, and the Government Medical College & Hospital in Phulbani, Kandhamal,

A critical meeting to review the status and progress of these initiatives was conducted virtually Thursday, Health & Family Welfare (H&FW) department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Aswathy S led the discussion, which centered on the readiness of infrastructure and key operational factors for both medical colleges.

The meeting also addressed logistical concerns such as ensuring that medical buildings are fully functional, equipment is in place, and all remaining requirements are identified

and resolved promptly.

The primary objective is to secure National Medical Commission (NMC) approval for admitting 100 MBBS students in the academic year 2025-26.

With the aim of accelerating the functionalisation process. the government has directed District Collectors and key officers from Angul and Kandhamal to conduct weekly meetings.

These meetings will focus on eliminating delays and ensuring that all pending actions are completed swiftly, contributing to the expeditious launch of the medical colleges.

The government's concerted efforts are part of a broader strategy to enhance healthcare access, particularly in areas that have long faced a shortage of medical services

By fast-tracking the opening of these medical colleges, the state is reaffirming its commitment to improving healthcare facilities and providing high-quality medical education to aspiring students in the region.

Once operational, the new medical colleges are expected to play a transformative role in both medical education and the delivery of healthcare services, positively impacting the well-being of the people of

ROAD SAFETY IMPACT

Odisha sees decline in urban transformation accidents & fatalities

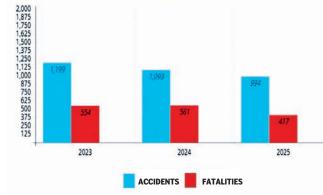
Cuttack/Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: In a significant achievement for road safety, Odisha has recorded a notable reduction in road accidents and fatalities in January 2025 compared to pre-

Official data reveals that the number of accidents in the state dropped by 99 cases, while fatalities decreased by 144, marking a positive impact of the National Road Safety Month.

According to statistics from the State Transport Authority (STA), Odisha witnessed 994 road accidents and 417 fatalities in January 2025. This is a considerable improvement from January 2024, when the state recorded 1,093 accidents and 561 fatalities. The trend is even more evident when compared to January 2023. which saw 1.199 accidents and 554 deaths. The data underscores the effectiveness of intensified road safety awareness and enforcement measures undertaken by the state government.

January is historically one of the most accident-prone months in Odisha, attributed to increased travel for New Year celebrations, picnics, and other festivities. Contributing factors such as drunk-driving, overspeeding, and dense fog conditions make road travel particularly risky during this period.

In response, the state government, led by Chief Minister



Mohan Charan Majhi, launched a month-long campaign titled 'Come Home Safe' to promote road safety and encourage responsible driving behaviour.

Throughout January, the STA, in coordination with Regional Transport Offices (RTOs). carried out extensive awareness programs, enforcement drives, and strict monitoring of traffic violations.

Special measures included enhanced patrolling, surprise checks for drunk driving, and penalties for overspeeding. Additionally, awareness campaigns educated drivers about the dangers of reckless driving and the importance of following road safety norms.

Despite the success of the Road Safety Month, authorities emphasise that continuous efforts are necessary to maintain and further improve road safety. Recognising the increasing number of vehicles on Odisha's roads, the government has implemented additional measures such as observing 'Zero Tolerance Day' every Wednesday. This initiative aims to enhance traffic rule enforcement and ensure strict action against vi

Looking ahead, the Odisha government plans to further expand awareness programs and enforcement activities to sustain the positive trend. By intensifying road safety measures, officials hope to achieve a long-term decline in accidents and fatalities, making Odisha's roads safer for all citizens.

With concerted efforts from both authorities and the public, the state remains committed to its mission of reducing road accidents and ensuring safer travel conditions for all commuters.

Odisha sets vision for

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: In a major push for urban governance transformation, the Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) department held its monthly Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) meeting Thursday. Principal Secretary Usha Padhee chaired the meeting, urging all ULBs to intensify efforts towards shaping the future of Urban Odisha through a holistic approach to urbanisation and reform.

Padhee stressed the importance of efficient public service delivery in achieving sustainable urban development. She called for the swift implementation of key flagship programmes, such as accelerating affordable housing, improving urban infrastructure, and enhancing basic services. The focus was on strengthening the financial sustainability of ULBs, alongside improvements in roads, water supply, sanitation, and public amenities.

Senior officials, including

the director of Municipal Ad ministration Arindam Dakua special secretaries, and additional secretaries, outlined actionable roadmaps with clear timelines for progress across the 115 ULBs, District **Urban Development Agencies** (DUDA), and Development Au thorities.

The meeting also highlighted the government's commitment to urban reform, emphasising capacity-building, digital governance, and community par ticipation.

ULBs were directed to im plement data-driven strategies for better sanitation, waste management, and municipal

Padhee reaffirmed the vi sion: "Urbanisation is not just about expanding cities, but en suring quality living standards for all." The meeting concluded with a collective commitment to strengthening coordination and fast-tracking development projects, aiming to realise Odisha's vision of a Viksit (Devel oped) Odisha.



Odisha signs MoU for jobs Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government

signed an MoU with The Convergence Foundation (TCF) Thursday to boost job creation and productive employment. The agreement, signed by Addiand TCF CEO Ashish Dhawan, aims to enhance employment in manufacturing, services, and agriculture while promoting sustainable livelihoods and economic growth across the state.

MEATHED

WEATHE	K				
	BBSR	CTC			
Max Temp	35.4°	33.8°			
Min Temp	21.6°	21.0°			
Humidity	84%	87%			
Rainfall	Nil	Nil			

and mainly clear sky



MPS celebrates JEE Main results



The school celebrates the outstanding academic achievements of its students, recognising their hard work and dedication to excellence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: Mother's Public School (MPS) is celebrating the exceptional performance of its students in the JEE Main 2025 exams, showcasing their dedication to academic excellence.

XThe top performers are from the school's 'Spark Batch,' a testament to the effectiveness of MPS's focused academic approach. Sai Spandan Nayak emerged as a star achiever

with a remarkable 99.92 percentile, securing a perfect 100 percentile in Mathematics. Other top scorers include Sai Amrit Sagar with 99.87 percentile, Ayushman Sahoo with 99.85 percentile, Ayush Mishra with 99.35 percentile, Rudra Prasad Patra with 99.31 percentile, and Aditya Kumar Sahoo with 99.14 percentile.

School founder and principal, Poly Patnaik, congratulated the students and wished them the best for their future endeavours. She emphasised that the students' success was driven by their consistent attendance, dedication to class tests, assignments, and commit-

ment to never missing a class. "This routine played a significant role in their outstanding performance," Patnaik added, highlighting the importance of discipline in achieving success.

BSF seizes explosives, guns from Maoist camp in Malkangiri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: The Border Security Force (BSF) Thursday busted a Maoist dump in Odisha and seized four IEDs, three guns and some detonators and explosives, officials said.

The cache was recovered from the Silakota reserve forest area in the Malkangiri district.

Officials said troops of the 2nd battalion of the force - under the company operating base (COB) Podia -- recovered four Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). three muzzle-loading guns, explosives and some detonators from the Naxal hideout.

A mobile phone and a power bank were also recovered, they said. The IEDs were defused and the cache was handed over to the local police, the officials said. The BSF is deployed in the state to undertake anti-Naxal operations.



Events on climate resilience & Radio Fair

WORLD RADIO DAY



RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: The Indian Institute of Education and Care (IIEC) and Radio Surabhi, in collaboration with CRA Odisha, organised a capacity-building programme on World Radio Day at the Buddha Mandir complex Thursday. The event aimed to empower climate action teams, urban vouth groups, and community radio practitioners under Unesco's theme "Radio for Resilience".

The chief guest Padma Shri

Ashok Kumar Mohapatra, an eminent neurosurgeon, highlighted the health risks of pollution, emphasising the impact of excessive use of mobile phones and electronic devices.

The event featured technical sessions under the 'Satat Shehar' project, covering topics including climate-resilient urbanisation and the role of media in climate change mitigation among others.

The event saw participation from key figures, including IIEC director Shisir Kumar

Das, environmentalist Bijay Kumar Nanda, and other com munity radio leaders.

11th Radio Fair kicks off in City Bhubaneswar: The 11th edi tion of the International Radio Fair, a two-day event organised

by Outreach, began Thursday at Bhanja Kala Mandap, coin ciding with World Radio Day. The inauguration saw Out reach President Subrat Kumai

Pati, former MP Soumva Ran ian Patnaik, Additional Direct tor of PIB Akhil Kumar Mishra and Vijaylaxmi Pahadsingh wife of the late All India Radio newsreader Upendra Kumar Pahadsingh, in attendance, Pa ti emphasised that despite the dominance of digital media, radio remains an influential and accessible medium for all.

The exhibition featured vintage radios, broadcasting equipment, Ham radios, and gramophones. Notable awards were presented to singer Bar nali Hota, who received the Upendra Kumar Pahadsingh Memorial Award, and retired Akashvani executive Abhay Das, honoured with the Nadiya Bihari Memorial Award.

PANCHAYAT DEVOLUTION INDEX ₹447

Odisha ranks among 'medium scoring' states

CLASSIFIED

SILVER

We Dillip Kumar Nayak and Neelambar Nayak, S/o- Ullash Nayak, resident of Pipili-752104 Lost sale deed document No.- 795/1995 on 07.02.2025 while travelling from Bharatipur to Pipili. If anyone find can contact: 7008793929.

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: The Devolution Index Report on panchayats in the country has placed Odisha under the category of 'medium scoring' statesalong with Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya

However, neighbouring states like West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and eight more have ranked top in the list.

The report provides insights into the progress of decentralisation across states and Union Territories, according to the ministry of Panchavati Rai.

The report, titled "Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States: An Indicative Evidence Based Ranking, 2024" was unveiled by Union Minister of State, Panchavati Raj Ministry, SP Singh Baghel in New Delhi

Thursday.

According to the report, Odisha's performance varies across six dimensions, offering a nuanced view of the state's progress in devolving power to its Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) With an overall score of 50.03,

Odisha has been positioned as a 'medium scoring' state in the Devolution Index (DI).

The scoring has been made taking into consideration various dimensions of development. In the 'Framework' dimension, the state has a score of 69.20. This dimension assesses the implementation of mandatory constitutional requirements such as holding regular panchayat elections, reserving seats for women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, establishing State Election Commissions. State Finance Commissions, and



District Planning Committees. Odisha's score in the 'Functions' dimension is 57.46. This dimension evaluates the functions devolved by the state to panchavats and the role of panchavats in social justice and economic development schemes.

The state scores 53.57 in the 'Finances' dimension. This dimension focuses on the financial resources available to panchayats, including transfers from

Central and state governments. the functioning of State Finance Commissions, the power to collect revenue, and expenditure by panchayats. Odisha is among the states that have released and utilised the funds of the 15th Finance Commission on time, the report states.

Along with Maharashtra, Odisha is one of the states where panchavats incur a significant percentage of the total public

of 27.42 in the 'Functionaries' dimension. This dimension examines the physical infrastructure of panchayats, e-connectivity, and the sanctioned and actual staff position. "Odisha, along

expenditure. Odisha has a score

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, and the Union Territory of Ladakh, needs to focus on developing infrastructure for the better functioning of panchayats," the report points out.

The state's score in 'Capacity Enhancement' is 43.43. This dimension assesses the training institutions and training activities for elected representatives and officials

The state scores 51.92 in the 'Accountability' dimension. This dimension evaluates the accounting and auditing of panchavats, social audits, the functioning of Gram Sabhas,

transparency, anti-corruption measures, and panchayat as sessment and incentivisation.

In the 'Functions' dimension

Odisha, along with Tamil Nadu

and Rajasthan, demonstrates a higher level of panchavat involvement in important schemes. Odisha has been identified as

a state where panchayats play a significant role in public expenditure, sharing the top position with Maharashtra.

"While Odisha shows strengths in 'Framework', 'Functions', 'Finances', and 'Accountability', there is room for improvement in 'Functionaries and 'Capacity Enhancement',' the report adds.

It suggests that Odisha has made notable progress in de volving functions to panchayats and ensuring their involvement in important schemes

ASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR **BOOKING STATIONS** Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488

Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816 Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347 Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Vig nabs Remuna tehsildar over DA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: Remuna Tehsildar Bidyadhar Pati was Thursday arrested bv Odisha Vigilance in a Disproportionate Assets (DA) case for possessing properties to the tune of 204 per cent of his known sources of income.

These properties included three high value flats -- two flats worth approximately ₹2.5 crore at Bhubaneswar and one flat at Balasore, two plots, 937 gram gold, deposits of over ₹1.12

The Vigilance officials have found huge cash deposits over ₹1.5 crores (suspected illicit earnings) in postal and bank accounts of Pati and his spouse during the period from 2022-

Pati was arrested by Odisha Vigilance and forwarded to the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar for possession of DA which he could not account for satisfactorily.

A case was registered against Pati, and his spouse U/s 13(2) r/w 13(1)(b)/12 PC (Amendment) Act, 2018.

During house searches, movable and immovable assets worth crores were unearthed in the name of Bidyadhar Pati and his family members.

After thorough search, inventory and further enquiry, the income, expenditure and assets of Pati were calculated and he was found in possession of DA 204 per cent in excess of his known sources of income.

Such large cash transactions are suspected to be the illicit earnings of Pati during his incumbency as tehsildar at Niali. Nimapada, Karanjia and the same are under investigation, Vigilance sources said.



TAKING TO STREET: Students of Rajendra Narayan High School at Ashok Bazar in Rajkanika block headquarters under Kendrapara district stage a demonstration over the transfer of their headmaster elsewhere ahead of the HSC examination, Thursday. The agitating students relented after Kanika tehsildar Ashok Kumar Dehuri intervened.

11 arrested for youth's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Feb 13: Sundargarh police arrested 11 individuals Thursday in connection with the murder of a youth over several disputes in Bijapada village, under the jurisdiction of Dharuadihi police station.

Sundargarh Superintendent of Police (SP) Pratyush Diwakar confirmed the arrests, stating that the accused were involved in the killing of Chandan Dharua, a resident of Laikera police station area in neighbouring Jharsuguda district

OF THE ARRESTED INDIVIDUALS, SEVEN ARE PRIMARY SUSPECTS, WHILE THE REMAINING FOUR WERE INVOLVED IN THE CONSPIRACY

According to the SP, the police were alerted to an unidentified body found January 19. A case was registered the following day, and during the investigation, it was revealed that all 11 accused were from the Laikera police station limits in Jharsuguda. Of the arrested individuals, seven were identified as the primary suspects, while the remaining four were involved in the conspiracy.

The seven principal suspects in the case were identified as Bibek Kuanr, 19, Arun Naik, 24, Prakash Behera alias Anthadu, 24, Saroj Naik, 25, Chandan Kuanr, 21, Harekrushna Patra alias Kanha, 23, and Sumanta Kuanr, 17. The other four individuals arrested for conspiracy were identified as Raja Dharua, 25, Subrat Patra, 17, Jiban Pradhan, 23, and Kuna Patra alias Munna, 21,

"The accused had longstanding disputes with the victim. and the seven primary suspects had separate grievances with him," Diwakar said. "They planned the murder, while the other four were aware of the plan and aided in the conspiracy." The police also recovered seven knives from the accused.



Process begins for mega steel plant in Keonjhar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, Feb 13: The groundwork has finally begun for establishment of a much-awaited mega steel plant in Keonjhar district. The state-owned Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (ID-CO) has initiated steps to set up the plant after withdrawal of ArcelorMittal from the project owing to opposition.

As part of the process, the company has sent a letter to the Water Resources department requesting a No Objection Certificate (NOC) by the tehsil for identified land. This step is expected to facilitate land acquisition for the project.

Reports indicate that Keonihar district holds an estimated 2 555 million tonnes of iron ore. However, the mineral is exported due to the absence of a major steel plant in the district. In 2006, under the then BJD-led government, Arcelor-Mittal had signed an agreement to set up a steel plant in Patana tehsil. However, the company withdrew in 2012 due to stiff

After Mohan Charan Majhi became Odisha's Chief Minister, he announced plans to establish a mega steel plant in Keonjhar. Subsequently, 12 villages under Chemena RI Circle and Kantiapada RI Circle in Patana tehsil have been identified for the initial phase of land acquisition.

The proposed land spans across multiple villages, including Chemena, Bhrungarajpashi, Chilida, Angikala, Dhanurjaypur, Baradangua, Baliapashi, and Rengalabada under Jamunapashi, Godipokhari, Kodakhaman, Barudipashi panchayats. IDCO has identified 1,497.835 acre private land within these two circles and has applied for an NOC from officials, including the executive engineers of minor and lift irrigation, as well as the chief manager of the Baitarani basin.

Notably, 2,500 acre land is

required for the steel plant. Of this, 1,498 acre private agricultural and fallow lands have been identified in these two panchayats, while 901 acre government land and 91 acre rural forest land have been preliminarily marked, with the Revenue department submitting a proposal to IDCO. The 1,498 acre private land has agricultural land but no homestead land.

The identified land includes 76.580 acre in Jamunapashi, 230.795 acre in Angikala, 55.330 acre in Dhanurjaypur, 52.390 acre in Rengalabada, 17 acre in Chemena, 29.610 acre in Bhrungarajpashi, 238.430 acre in Baradangua, 214.980 acre in Barudipashi, 210.380 acre in Chilida, 148.230 acre in Kodakhman, 145.120 acre in Godipokhari and 75.770 acre in Baliapashi.

Additionally, 3 acre and 22 decimal forest land in the 12 villages has also been identified. Apart from this, the land of Taramakanta tea garden acquired from Bansapal is also under consideration. The government has kept land in Patana block's Chinamalipashi and Sadanga Bahali as secondary and tertiary options for the

Deputy Collector Firoz Khan confirmed that the land identification process for the proposed steel plant is underway.

35 hurt as pilgrim bus hits stationary dumper on way to Mahakumbh

OF THE 35 INJURED PASSENGERS, **THREE ARE** IN CRITICAL CONDITION AND **BATTLING FOR** THEIR LIVES IN THE ICU ADDING TO THE RAGEDY, REPORTS TEN MINORS WERE SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILIES IN THE CHAOS THAT

FOLLOWED POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, Feb 13: At least 35 persons were injured, three of them critically, after a pilgrim bus traveling from Chandaneswar here in Balasore district to Mahakumbh Mela at Pravagraj met with an accident in Bihar near the Uttar Pradesh border, late Wednesday night.

The mishap occurred at around 12:50am when the vehicle collided with a stationary sand-laden dumper after the driver allegedly dozed off at the wheel, Kartik Sahu, a ward member of Jagannathpur panchavat said.

Among the 35 injured passengers, three are in critical condition and battling for their lives in the ICU. The critically injured were identified as Subash Behera, 42, from Kumar Sarisa village, Bapi Sasmal, 35, from Phulbani village, and Ra-

jkishore Sahu, 50, from Naguan village in Bhograi block.

The bus was carrying a total of 80 passengers including men and women, many of whom were rushed to nearby hospitals for treatment. Meanwhile, the driver of the bus fled the scene following the crash.

Adding to the tragedy, reports suggest that ten minors were separated from their families in the chaos that followed.

In response, Bhograi residents have appealed to the Chief Minister, Transport Minister and Balasore District Collector for immediate assistance, including medical aid for the injured and safe transportation of the stranded pilgrims back home. Families of the injured remain in distress and residents in the area are concerned over the devastating road accident.

BJD team visits Koraput, calls for stringent action

Bhubaneswar/Laxmipur: A high-level BJD fact-finding team Thursday strongly condemned the heinous act of gangrape of a minor tribal girl and called for immediate and strict action against the perpetrators. The delegation, including senior party leaders like Snehangini Chhuria, Padmini Dian, Kausalya Hikaka and Sasmita Meleka, visited Laxmipur

OF MINOR

TRIBAL GIRI

in Koraput district Thursday and met the victim's family, local authorities, and

firsthand information. Expressing deep concern, the team strongly condemned the heinous act and called for immediate and strict action against the perpetrators. The team urged the police to expedite the investigation and ensure justice without delay. The delegation assured the victim's family of all possible support and emphasised the need for stringent measures to prevent such incidents. The team will submit a detailed report to BJD President Naveen Patnaik, outlining necessary steps for justice. The BJD leaders vowed to monitor the investigation closely and stand by the victim's family.

community members to gather

Zonal Office:

With reference to our "E-Auction Sale Notice" published in the 'Orissa Post" on 04.02.2025 Bank is cancelling the E-Auction of the Property of Borrower: Mrs. Mandakini Parida of Chakeisiani Branch which was supposed to be held or 10.03.2025. All other facts remain unchanged.

Place:Bhubaneswar Authorised Office

WHEELCHAIR CRICKET

Keonjhar's divyang cricketer shines in nat'l tourney

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, Feb 13: Mangal Lohar. a specially-abled youth from Joda in Keonjhar district, has overcome adversity to establish himself as an exceptional cricketer despite losing one leg. His talent and perseverance have earned him a place on Odisha's team in the national tri-cycle cricket tournament held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, a report said.

Reports said that Mangal's passion for cricket began during his school days. However, an injury to his leg led to complications, and despite extensive treatment, he eventual-

ly had to undergo amputation. Undeterred by his physical condition, he remained determined to pursue cricket. With strong willpower and relentless practice, he honed his skills, proving that disability could not stand in the way of his dreams.

Through hard work and dedication, he excelled at the block and district levels, eventually making a mark in national competitions. In 2022, he represented Odisha in the national wheelchair cricket tournament held in Andhra Pradesh, earning recognition for his outstanding performance.

Mangal is now regarded as a skilled batsman and wick-



etkeeper, demonstrating that with resilience and commitment, anything is possible.

Mangal lost his parents at a young age, leaving him to grapple with financial hardships. Despite his talent in sports, he struggled to secure financial support from major companies. To sustain himself while pursuing his passion for cricket, he initially ran a small betel shop.

Now, he lives with his elder brother With the shop no longer in operation, he is able to travel for competitions thanks to the financial support of his friends. Otherwise, he says, he would not have been able to afford accommodations in Bhubaneswar

Mangal has become an inspiration for young people in his community, earning praise from intellectual circles.

Notably, a report highlighting his talent was twice published in a premier vernacular daily June 2, 2017, and

EAST COAST RAILWAY NAME OF WORK : AUGMENTATION
REPLACEMENT OF POWER CABLI FOR POWER SUPPLY TO SIGNAL GOOMTIES OVER SAMBALPUR

Approx. Cost of the Work
₹ 1,43,13,335.55, EMD : ₹ 2,21,600/Completion Period of the Work : Six

Tender Closing Date and Time No manual offers sent by Post / Courie Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head an

received in time. All such manual offer shall be rejected summarily without an Complete information including e-tende documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen (15 days before the date of closing of tende days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered or IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer pidder can participate on e-tendering Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G) PR-972/P/24-25

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.: S&T/OT/OUT-SOURCING-07-453, Dt.: 06.02.2025 NAME OF WORK : MAINTENANCE & REPAIRING OF SIGNAL & TELECON SSETS BY OUTSOURCING AGENC UNDER ASSISTANT SIGNAL & TELECOM ENGINEER/KENDUJHAR GARH (UNDER SUPERVISION OF SSES / KENDUJHARGARH, SSES BAGHUAPAL & SSET / KENDUJHAR Tender Value : ₹1,38,35,127.90, EMD

2,19,200/-, Tender Document Cost 5,900/-Bidding Start Date: 14.02.2025

ender Closing Date and Time : At 1100 Hrs. of 28.02.2025. No manual offers sent by Post/ Courie

ax or in person accepted against such tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received i me. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected ummarily without any consideration complete information including tender documents of the above tender is available in website www.ireps.gov.in

Note: The prospective tenderers are dvised to revisit the website 15 days efore the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.

PR-975/P/24-25 Khurda Road

Street food vending zone coming up in Sambalpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 13: Street vendors selling food on carts along the roads of Sambalpur is a common sight. However, this scene is set to change soon as the Sambalpur Municipal Corporation (SMC) is implementing an organised vending zone dedicated for street

food in the city. Efforts have begun to relocate street food vendors to a designated, well-structured, and visually appealing area. As a pilot project, an exclusive food street in the



style of 'Khaogali' is being developed near Jail Square in a "butterfly design". In the first phase, arrangements are being made to accommodate 16 vendors.

According to SMC Deputy Commissioner Subhadipta Mohanty. the construction of the food vending stalls is mostly complete, with

only lighting installations awaiting completion. "The goal is to make the facility operational by the end of February. The project, funded under the Mukta Scheme, is being built at an estimated cost of ₹15 lakh," he added.

Once completed, food vendors operating along the road from Jail Square to Kacheri Square will be relocated there. Use of plastic materials will be prohibited in the market, and all vendors will be required to use two separate dustbins for dry and wet waste disposal, and maintain hygienic food handling practices. Customers will have a one-stop destination for a variety of food items in a clean and structured environment. Dedicated parking facilities will also be provided.

Initially named 'Khaogali', authorities have invited suggestions from residents for a Sambalpuri name. Proposals such as 'Khayema Asa', 'Sambalpur Swaad', and 'Khabar Gali' have been received. If successful, similar projects will be introduced in other parts of Sambalpur, author-





Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Applications are invited for the (02) post of Executive Members in National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), New Delhi, (a Non-statutory regulatory authority under Administrative Control of Ministry of Skill Development and

The detailed advertisement along with the eligibility criteria, prescribed proforma and other necessary information are available at the website of this Ministry (<u>http://www.msde.gov.in</u>) Interested candidates may send their applications complete in all respect in the prescribed format to the Joint Director (E&P Wing) either by email (ecopol-msde@gov.in) or by post on or before 5:30 P.M., 28th March, 2025.

Place: New Delhi CBC 63101/11/0006/2425

Sd./- Joint Director. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship







Peace is the first condition, without which nothing else can be stable.

SRI AUROBINDO



Kaushik Basu

The rise of digital

social media has

to shape public

opinion. Voters

believe they are

while - elé belé

- real power is

hands of

the few

active participants

concentrated in the

provided the super

rich with new tools

platforms and

Democratic Erosion

emocracy is under threat around the world, but not because dictators are overthrowing elected governments and seizing power. While authoritarian takeovers still make headlines, they are no longer the greatest threat to free societies. The real danger is more insidious: a gradual yet profound transformation of our

On the surface, these systems appear to be functioning as they should. Elections are being held, and voters are casting their ballots for leaders and parties they believe will represent their interests. But too often, they end up electing politicians who serve only their own interests rather than those of their constituents. While gullibility is not new, it has become so pervasive that it now threatens the very foundation of democratic governance.

To understand how we got here, consider the "elé belé rule." When was growing up in Calcutta (now Kolkata), all smart kids playing in the streets and parks knew the rule. When they played games in the neighborhood, a younger kid - usually accompanied by a doting mother - occasionally would insist on joining them. Rather than refusing outright, the players would whisper to one another the code words "elé belé," signaling that while the new kid could play along,

he was not actually part of the game. If he scored a goal, we would cheer and applaud, but we all knew the truth: his goal didn't count.

Today, elé belé has become a staple of democratic politics, with ordinary people around the world eagerly throwing their support behind demagogues who don't think they count. For these leaders, a commitment to public service is worse than irrelevant; it threatens the relentless pursuit of wealth and power for themselves and their cronies. Voters who believe they are part of the game are just being played.

The result is democratic erosion. Mainstream economists and political scientists have long relied on the "median voter theorem," which states that in a majoritarian electoral system, political leaders will naturally gravitate toward the preferences of centrist voters, as winning elections requires appealing to the ideological middle rather than the extremes. But today's deepening political polarization and the growing tendency of politicians to embrace radical positions suggest that this assumption no longer holds.

While the underlying causes of this shift remain unclear, it is strongly correlated with the rise of social media. Instead of fostering informed debate,

digital platforms have become powerful tools for spreading misinformation, enabling opportunistic leaders to manipulate and mislead

Since its inception in ancient Athens, democracy has undergone numerous transformations. As technology advances, certain features of earlier democratic systems become outdated. Evolving moral standards can also lead to fundamental reforms. For example, in the Roman Republic, the votes of high-ranking officials and the wealthy carried more weight than those of ordinary citizens. We no longer find this

Similarly, as democracy evolved, the need for stability became evident, leading to the introduction of constitutions. While constitutions can be amended, doing so requires more than a simple majority, ensuring that core institutions are not subject to impulsive change.

With democratic governance under increasing strain, the world once again finds itself at a critical juncture. Today's extreme inequality is eroding democracy in unprecedented ways. The rise of digital platforms and social media has provided the super-rich with new tools to shape public opinion. Voters believe they are active participants while - elé belé - real power is concentrated in the hands of the few.

Curbing inequality is thus not just a moral imperative; it is also necessary for protecting democracy against the threat of authoritarjanism. To this end, we need a tax system that redistributes wealth and income without stifling innovation and entrepreneurship.

There is certainly scope for this. Once they reach a certain level of wealth, the super-rich are no longer motivated by a desire for more money per se, but rather by the desire to outdo their super-rich peers. This implies an opportunity to implement what I call an "accordion tax." which taxes high earners and redistributes the revenue to those with lower incomes in a way that preserves the relative ranking among the rich. Such a system would enable us to reduce inequality and maintain the incentives that drive ambition and innovation.

But individual countries cannot tackle extreme inequality by themselves. International cooperation is essential, given the limits of unilateral action in a globalized world. History has shown that when faced with major challenges, the world can come together to translate bold ideas into action. To save democracy, we must do so again.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

WISDOM CORNER

So long as we love, we serve; so long as we are loved by others, I should say that we are almost indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend.

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost; the old that is strong does not wither, deep roots are not reached by the frost.

You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.

HIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1766: Thomas Malthus, the English economist and demographer best known for his theory that population growth will always tend to outrun the food supply and
- **1876:** The telephone is patented. Both Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray applied for a patent on that day - Bell won.

FOCUS POLITICS

MIDDLE-CLASS 'WAVE'

February 2015, a friend of mine voted for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Delhi Assembly elections. All her life, she had been a steadfast Congress supporter: the first time she switched was in the 2014 general elections when she plumped for the BJP because she was angry at the 'scam' culture in the Manmohan Singh government. Now, months later, she had chosen to vote for AAP. "I like both Modi and Kejriwal," she told me, "They are self-made politicians who are promising change.

Fast forward to February 2025. This time, my friend decided to vote for the BJP. For ten years, she had stuck to the 'Delhi formula': Modi for PM. Keiriwal for CM. The Congress was not on her radar because she felt it was a 'wasted vote' since they had no chance of winning. So why had she chosen not to vote for AAP this time? "Because I felt let down. Do you know I was even an AAP volunteer for a while but now I feel that they are like any other party and Kejriwal is just another politician," she replied.

In the voting preferences of my friend - a representative of Delhi's affluent middle class lies the core reason why AAP and Arvind Kejriwal lost the 2025 elections. When Kejriwal first made a mark on the national stage, it was because he was perceived as the antithesis of the traditional politician. An IITian, a Right to Information activist, a Magsaysay award winner, a founder-member of India Against Corruption, Kejriwal represented the politics of 'hope' above all else. If Narendra Modi was promising 'acche din', then the AAP leader was guaranteeing something even more precious: a complete break from the rent-seeking, grubby politicians who were seen to be corrupt and unaccountable. While the BJP was still tagged as a Hindutva 'communal' party, the Congress was branded as a family-centric party of the crooked elite. As a political start-up, AAP, by contrast, carried no historical baggage. Which is why dreamy, idealistic middle-class professionals gravitated towards



There is still space in Indian politics for a robust streetfighter, someone who raises issues of public concern in a consistent and convincing manner

AAP and made it a remarkably successful political unicorn in a very short time.

Ten years on, the romantic dream of being a 'party with a difference' lies shattered. The same section of middle-class which was so attracted to AAP has chosen to literally dump it in the hope that civic issues like garbage mounds and overflowing sewers will now be addressed. In a sense, the 2025 verdict was the ultimate middle-class 'wave' election at play, one where voters expressed a sense of anger and disquiet with the AAP's style of functioning. A party built on a spirit of voluntarism was seen to have fallen short on governance, tangled in a mix of hubris, histri-

onics and short-term fixes When a bright-eyed Kejriwal in an over-sized muffler moved around Delhi in a small blue Wagon R car, the middle-class cheered him on. The simplicity of his lifestyle was endearing. Now, when he was seen to travel in a cavalcade of SUVs, the middle class wondered if he too had succumbed to VVIP privilege. The so-called 'Sheesh Mahal', the chief minister's redesigned residence, became the ultimate symbol of middle-class betrayal. Many of the alleged luxuries in the house maybe grossly exaggerated by political rivals and a partisan media but the allegations stuck. There are many ruling party MPs who live in far more opulent homes but when you enter public life with the promise not to occupy government bungalows and then move into a rather lavishly appointed

home at tax-payers expense, the public scrutiny is that much greater. The gap between promise and reality could not have been starker.

Which brings us to a key question: can Kejriwal re-invent himself and fashion a political comeback? The obvious answer would be to suggest that with his moral halo being erased, the AAP leader will struggle to recapture lost ground. Unlike the BJP and Congress, AAP doesn't have a durable structure to withstand political turbulence. Those who joined AAP only for a scent of power may well be tempted to desert the party. In the next few months, it is highly likely that the party is weakened by splits and defections and some may even challenge Kejriwal's leadership.

And yet, scripting 54-year-old Kejriwal's political obituary would be premature and erroneous. While the Delhi verdict saw a middle-class rejection of Brand Kejriwal, there was an equally strong endorsement by lower income groups of the AAP's ihadoo, a political symbol identified with a certain class identity. There can be no other explanation for the relatively high 44% support the AAP continues to enjoy in Delhi. In a political milieu where voters have become increasingly transactional, Kejriwal's attempt to provide basic facilities to the poor, be it free power, free water and free busrides to women did not go unnoticed. He may have eventually over-promised and under-delivered on governance but working in a hostile political environment with limited powers made his task unenviable.

Which is also why the BJP should be careful in the manner it seeks to target Kejriwal henceforth. A vindictive mindset that wishes to settle scores may just be the opening the AAP leader needs to hit the streets again. When he was first jailed in 2024 in the alleged Delhi liquor scam, Kejriwal made the mistake of clinging onto office when he would have been probably far better off in relinquishing power and seeking redemption in the people's court. Maybe he ought to have resigned and called for a snap poll when the Centre with brutish authority brought in an ordinance to overturn a Supreme Court verdict and undermine the powers of the elected government. By the time Kejriwal actually handed over charge to his junior colleague Aatishi in October 2024, it was too late. The reservoir of public sympathy had evaporated.

To recapture that common touch and his personal credibility, Kejriwal needs to go back to where it all began for him all those years ago. There is still space in Indian politics for a robust streetfighter, someone who raises issues of public concern in a consistent and convincing manner. The opposition is mostly fragmented and uninspiring. In the circumstances. Keiriwal is still one of the few leaders who possesses the strategic nous and ground level connect to rebuild AAP as part of a wider image makeover. The odds are stacked against him but as an individual who has often punched way above his weight, an electoral defeat may just be the wake-up call he needed.

Post-script: My friend who voted for the BJP hasn't given up on AAP yet. "If the BJP fulfils its promises, its fine. Else who knows I might change my mind again in five years," she says. In Indian politics, nothing is permanent and middle-class choices in particular can be notoriously fickle.

The writer is a senior journalist and author. His latest book is 2024: The **Election That** Surprised India.

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Rajdeep Sardesai

IN INDIAN

POLITICS,

AND

NOTHING IS

PERMANENT

MIDDLE-CLASS

CHOICES IN

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FICKLE

Fiscal prudence & development goals



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

FISCAL PRUDENCE SHOULD BE MAINTAINED IN TANDEM WITH PROGRESS IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

The fiscal health of states is a cornerstone of India's economic development and efficient distribution of resources. Efficient fiscal management spurs growth. improves social welfare and prevents an economy from sliding into fiscal abyss.

On 24 January, Arvind Panagariya, Chairman, 16th Finance Commission, launched the first ever Fiscal Health Index 2025 report of NITI Aayog in New Delhi. The index has been prepared for 18 major states using data from the CAG. The report is based on five major sub-indices namely Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index and Debt Sustainability. The score of a state is calculated based on these five indicators. Based on the index score, the states are classified as Achievers (>50 points), Front Runners (> 40 or ≤50), Performers (> 25, 40 or \leq 40) and Aspirational (25 or

< 25). Based on these 5 sub-indices, a picture of the fiscal health of 18 major states has been given. In this index. Odisha is at the top, surpassing all other states with a total score of 67.8. Since the period of analysis pertains to the financial year 2022-23, it is natural to give credit to the erstwhile state government.

Along with Odisha, only 6 states are in the Achiever's category. Odisha is followed by Chhattisgarh (55.2), Goa (53.6), Jharkhand (51.6) and Gujarat (50.5). Punjab (10.2) ranked at lowest followed by Andhra Pradesh (20.9) and West Bengal (21).

The report says that Odisha is among the few states, complying with the FRBM parameters since 2005, taking prudent measures to keep its fiscal indicators healthy. Odisha's revenue expenditure and capital expenditure increased by 53.5% and 42.0% respectively between 2018-19 and 2022-23.

The state has increased its

expenditure on priority sectors like healthcare and education to meet developmental needs. It was observed that on an average, the revenue expenditure on health and education by Odisha (CAGR 33.8%) was higher than that of the major states (CAGR 22.6%) during 2020-2022.

The ratio of the state's own non-tax revenue to GSDP witnessed an increase from 2.9% in 2018-19 to 5.6% in 2022-23. However, according to the budget text, it was 1.5% of GSDP in 1999-2000, and has increased to 6.07% in 2022-23.

Surprisingly, the report expresses elation as 90% of the state's own non-tax revenue and 45% of the state's own revenue receipts stem from the mining sector with premiums linked to market prices over the lease period, rather than increased extraction. However, revenue from mining is not sustainable.

According to the report, fiscal prudence and efforts to mobilise

its own revenue have reduced the state's fiscal deficit from 6.9% of GSDP in 2000-01 to 2% in 2022-23 which is within the limit of 3% set by FRBM. But according to budget data, the fiscal deficit in 2022-23 was $2.85\,\%$ while other data say it is close to 3%. However, the 2% figure is completely wrong. The question arises as to why the index was prepared for only 18 states, not the rest of states. Further, it is wrong to consider different base years while preparing this in-

dex and providing various data. Undoubtedly, there has been tremendous improvement in the state's fiscal prudence over the years. However, fiscal prudence should be maintained in tandem with progress in human development and employment generation as well as inflation control.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

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:

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

Ban ragging

Sir, Educational institutions are temples of knowledge and enlightenment. They are centres of excellence where students get admitted to gain professional knowledge and acumen and not to get ill treatment and suffer traumatic experience. Friendly atmosphere heightens fellow feeling and brotherhood in the campus. But, ragging vitiates the academic atmosphere in colleges and universities. Ragging is inhuman, brutal, unfriendly and sadistic. It is an attack on basic human rights. It is the outcome of a perverted and diseased mind. Every senior student shouldn't forget that he was a junior some years ago. Ragging causes pain and agony to students. It is an unlawful and dehumanizing act. There should be zero tolerance towards ragging in the country's educational institutions. The University Grants Commission should bring in strict guidelines for banning ragging in campus.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR

Reducing tax burden

Sir, The newly tabled Income Tax Bill, set to replace the Income Tax Act 1961, raises significant concerns for taxpayers. While the bill aims to simplify tax language and reduce litigation, it does little to address the pressing issue of high tax burden for the average taxpayer. Despite claims of simplification, the bill maintains the same income tax slabs and rates as proposed in Budget 2025, offering limited relief. The proposed hike in tax rebate under Section 87A to Rs 60,000 for incomes below Rs 12 lakh is a welcome change, but it is still inadequate for the rising cost of living. Moreover, the new tax regime, with its limited deductions, only Rs 75,000 for standard deduction and NPS contributions, fails to offer taxpavers meaningful options for tax planning, unlike the old regime, which provides more deductions and exemptions. The lack of any substantive changes to the income tax slabs and rates for both new and old tax regimes will leave taxpayers struggling with higher tax liabilities. The government's focus should be on reducing the tax burden on the middle class and providing more avenues for savings and exemptions.

Vishal Mayur, TUMAKURU (KARNATAKA)



TWO STATES





Abdullah optimistic on statehood restoration

in an exclusive

chief

"It's

very hopeful that statehood

Asked if the distance between

Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir

had reduced since he took office

last year, the chief minister said

sometimes some incidents oc-

curred that widened the gap,

pointing to the recent killings of

two individuals in north Kash-

mir's Sopore and in Billawar in

"Both incidents were unfor-

tunate and I feel that they could

have been prevented. They

Jammu's Kathua district.

interview with

minister also

said he had

a "very good

conversation"

minister.

with the home

part of an ongoing

conversation and I am

will be restored soon.'

PTI Videos.

The

The Centre abrogated Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and reorganised the erstwhile state into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in 2019

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 13: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday expressed optimism about the restoration of statehood, saying, "I believe that time has come now.

Asked if he had raised the issue during his meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi earlier this week, Abdullah said the process of statehood restoration was underway and urgently needed to be taken to its logical conclusion.

the Supreme Court upheld the Centre's decision of abrogating Article 370, it made a general mention about statehood being restored "as soon as possible", he said.

The Centre abrogated Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and reorganised the erstwhile state into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in 2019.

"It was discussed as soon as possible and that was over a year ago. We feel that time has arrived now," Abdullah said

first place and now there is a necessity that they be investigated transparently. If someone is held guilty, the law has to take its course," Abdullah said. In Billawar, a 26-year-old

man accused of being involved in militancy allegedly committed suicide February 4 following "police harassment". The day after, a truck driver was killed in army firing when he allegedly refused to stop at a checkpost in Sopore in Baramulla district.

Following the two deaths, the chief minister had said that such incidents "risk alienating

the very people the Supreme Court who we need upheld the Centre's carry with us on

decision of abrogating Article 370, it the road to made a general mention complete normalcy". about statehood being Abdulrestored as soon lah told PTI as possible Videos that OMAR ABDULLAH CM

> rity and police were not the direct responsibility of the elected Union Territory government, it was still their combined responsibility to ensure such incidents did not happen.

although secu-

"As far as the people are concerned, the government is there. They are not going to say who's responsible in the government. It's our collective duty and it should be our aim that such incidents don't happen. That is why this was a major part of my conversation with the home minister," he said.



Workers plant paddy saplings, at a field in Nagaon district of Assam

Capacity building for conservation at Kaziranga

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to the largest population of greater one-horned rhinoceros, making it a critical site for wildlife conservation

Guwahati, Feb 13: International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) in collaboration with Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve is organising a seven-day ITEC-Executive Course on capacity building for wildlife and conservation practitioners in Kaziranga.

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) course, sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs, is being held for the first time at a national park in India and will conclude February 16, an official release said Wednesday.

The initiative brings together 44 officials from 27 countries, underscoring the shared global commitment to wildlife conservation and sustainable development, it said.

The course will cover topics crucial to wildlife and natural heritage management, showcasing India's achievements in big cat conservation, conservation planning and management effectiveness, technology-aided conservation. rhinos as a flagship species

The inaugural session of the course was chaired by the Minister of Environment and

and community engagement,

Forest Chandra Mohan Patowary Tuesday, the release

The ITEC program aims to foster cooperation among developing countries by sharing knowledge, expertise, and best practices, it said.

The primary objectives of the ITEC courses are to offer training and capacity building in various fields, thereby contributing to the socio-economic development of partner nations.

Additionally, the program seeks to promote cultural exchange and strengthen bilat eral relationships, paving the way for sustainable development and global cooperation it added.

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to the largest population of greater one-horned rhinoceros, making it a critical site for wildlife conservation.

LG Sinha directs stronger measures to protect borders

The back-to-back security review meetings took place amid a series of incidents along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu division over the past couple of days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 13: Directing for stronger measures to protect the borders amid a ceasefire violation and a major IED attack in the recent past, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday said all security agencies must work together to counter the cross-border threats.

He also called for intensified efforts to wipe out terrorism from Jammu province and said every perpetrator and supporter of terrorism must pay the price.

"We must strengthen border security against asymmetric threats due to porous border with riverines and difficult mountain range and all the security agencies must work together to provide necessary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



back-up support," the lieutenant governor said, chairing a high-level meeting to review the security scenario in Jammu division. This was the second security review meeting chaired by the lieutenant governor in as many days. Sinha presided over a high-level security review meeting in Srinagar for Kashmir valley Wednesday.

The back-to-back security review meetings took place amid a series of incidents along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu division over the past couple of days.

While two army personnel, including a captain, were killed in a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosion triggered by the terrorists in Akhnoor sector of Jammu Feb-

We must strengthen border security against asymmetric threats due to porous border with riverines and difficult mountain range and all the

> back-up support MANOJ SINHA | LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

ruary 11, a soldier was injured in cross-border firing in Rajouri

security agencies must work

together to provide necessary

sector a day earlier. The Pakistani troops also violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing on the army posts in Poonch sector Wednesday, prompting a befitting reply by the Indian Army.

The security review meeting in Jammu was attended by senior police officers led by DGP Nalin Prabhat, who along with Inspector General of Police, Jammu zone, Bhim Sen Tuti, briefed the chair on the future action plan and the proposed measures to tackle the security challenges to ensure a safe and secure environment for the common citizen, an official spokesman said.

He said the IGP railways also gave a detailed presentation on the security architecture of railways and the roadmap put in place to strengthen the security of stations and the tracks.

"Our focus should be on complete wipe-out of terrorism from Jammu division. We should not even have remnants of terrorism in Jammu region," the lieutenant governor said, addressing the meeting.

He called for effective steps to wipe-out terrorism and ensure complete dismantling of the infrastructure and local support of terrorism.

The lieutenant governor directed the police officials to take strongest possible action against those providing logistical and financial support to

terrorism.

among others.

"Every perpetrator and supporter of terrorism must pay the price. We need to equip ourselves with credible intelligence and act more effectively to neutralise the terrorists and ensure the security of citizens," he said. Sinha directed the police officials to make sure that acts of individuals or groups trying to create fear in the society are termed as "terrorist action" and they should be punished as per

He discussed a roadmap for technology driven policing, area domination plan, inter-agency coordination, action against narco-terrorism, building of police force and innovative strategies to improve cyber patrolling and monitoring capabilities.

The lieutenant governor stressed on credible intelligence gathering, sharing of real time operational intelligence and anti-terror operations based on precise inputs.

He also called for strengthening the legal framework to deal with terror propagandists and strengthening of police establishment at local level for modern and efficient policing.

ବାଳେଶ୍ୱର ବନ୍ୟଜୀବ ବନଖକ୍ତ, ବାଳେଶ୍ୱର **OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER BALASORE WILDLIFE DIVISION**

At/Po: KURUDA, Dist.: BALASORE, ODISHA - 756056 Phone No: 06782-256142, e-mail: dfo.balasorewl@odisha.gov.in

Divisional Forest Officer, Balasore Wildlife Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites sealed tenders from reputed intending Manufacturing Firms/ Dealers/ Suppliers having valid GSTIN and PAN Registration No. for procurement of One (01) X-2 PistolTranquilizer with accessories (PNEUDART, USA). The tende papers with detailed terms and conditions will be available in the website www.balasore.odisha.gov.in and www.odishaforest.in in the Office of the DFO, Balasore Wildlife Division, Balasore on payment of Rs. 1,000/ (One thousand) only in cash or Account Payee Bank Draft in favour of Divisional Forest Officer, Balasore Wildlife Division, Balasore during office hours from 14.02.2025 to 25.02.2025. The Tender Papers car be submitted at the below mentioned address on or before 25,02,2025 latest by 05.00 P.M. by Speed Post/Registered Post/ by hand only. The I be opened in the office of the undersigned on 27.02.2025

Post/Courier : Divisional Forest Officer, Balasore Wildlife Division At/Po-Kuruda, Balasore, Pin-756056.

Email-id : <u>dfo.balasorewl@odisha.gov.in</u>

Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer OIPR-08036/11/0007/2425

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF. WATER RESOURCES.

SECHA SADAN, BHUBANESWAR Email Address:cemech.eicwr.od@gmail.com e-Procurement Notice

01 (One)

SSI Units registered under DIC/ NSIC/MSME for Irrigation Shutters/ Hydro mechanical gates.

CEM/MDL-04/2024-25

20 (Twenty) Calendar days

dt.28.02.2025 (upto 5.30 PM)

in the O/o the undersigned)

dt.01.03.2025 (12.00 Noon onwards

Chief Engineer, Mechanical, O/O the

dt.28.02.2025 (5.30 PM)

Rs.20,44,018.00

Mechanical Gate Works

Bid Identification No.CEM/MDL-04/2024-25

2. No. of Works

Category of executors

4. Bid Identification No.

5. Tender Value Period of Completion Date & Time of availability of : From dt.15.02.2025 (10.00 AM) to

bid documents in the portal Last date/time for receipt of bid in the portal

9. Date and Place of Opening of Bid 10. Name of the Officer Inviting

E.I.C., Water Resources, Odisha Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https:// tendersodisha.gov.in. Any Further issue of Addenda/Corrigenda/ Cancellation Notice shall be uploaded in the aforesaid website only.

Sd./- Chief Engineer, Mechanical O/o. Engineer-in-Chief,

Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar

No.O-1469

Guwahati, Feb 13: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Wednesday met Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong and discussed the state's role in strengthening India-ASEAN relations. The Chief Minister's Office

(CMO) in a post on X said the two leaders' talks focused on semiconductors, skilling, green energy and innovation-driven industries "I highlighted Assam's endeavours to be at the core of

India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic partnership through greater collaboration in the emerging knowledge economy, semiconductor, skilling and green energy," Sarma said.

He expressed gratitude for the commitment of Yong, who is also the trade and industry minister of Singapore, in deepening the existing relationship between Assam and Republic of

Earlier during the day, the



CM had a breakfast meeting with key stakeholders of Singapore's semiconductor and other industries with focus on strengthening supply chains and linkages to position Assam as an emerging semiconductor

"At #AdvantageAssam2, we will take the next steps in transforming Assam into a semiconductor hub through trusted supply chains and linkages,"

he added. The companies which took part in the discussion include

Mfg, Keysight Tech, Nordson Corp, Lintec Corp, Cohu Ink, Ecosoftt, Toppan Photomasks, Singapore Business Federation and Indian Ocean Group, the

CMO said. The Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit is scheduled to be held

February 25-26 in Guwahati. Sarma also addressed over 200 business leaders at the Singapore Road Show for the summit and extended a warm invitation to each prospective

Assam's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, during his visit to Singapore, advocated for investment in Assam's emerging sectors such as semiconductors, skills, and green energy

■ ighlighting Assam's strategic importance, he also promoted the state's efforts to become a significant player in the global semiconductor industry

investor to Assam.

"Assam is the PLACE to be! That was the resounding message we conveyed to over 200 business leaders at the #SingaporeRoadShow. I personally invited each prospective investor to join #AdvantageAssam2 and explore the diverse opportunities our state offers," he wrote in a series of posts on the mi-

croblogging site. Singapore's investor community showed great enthusiasm for Assam's unique advantages in harnessing India's economic potential, Sarma claimed.

"Our locational edge, single-window clearance, tailored

Assam to become global semiconductor manufacturing hub incentives, strong law & order, and disciplined workforce stand as our core USPs. With a projected GSDP of \$143 billion, \$SD 12.2 billion in infrastructure revamp, 15 km of roads built daily, a 6,000 MW green energy target, \$4.7 billion in private investment, and a low debt-to-GSDP ratio, Assam offers investors excellent prospects and good ROI." he added.

OIPR-32520/11/0023/2425 **GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, BHADRAK ee_rwbdk2@yahoo.co.in
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works

Identification Online Tender 14/RWD/BDK-II/2024-25, Dtd.11.02.2025 1. Name of the Work:- Building Works as per Annexure. 2. Total Number of Works:- 1 No. 3. Approximate Estimated Cost:- Rs.56.32 Lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor:- As per Annexure. 5. Period of Completion:- As per

Annexure. 6. Other details	:- The details ar	e as follows.	•		
Procurement Officer	Bid	Availability	of Tender On-	Last Date & Time	Date & Time of
	Identification	line for	bidding	of seeking tender	Opening of Bid
	No.	From	То	clarification	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer,	14	18.02.2025	27.02.2025	27.02.2025	28.02.2025
R.W. Division-II, Bhadrak		At 11.30 A.M.	upto 5.00 PM	upto 3.00 P.M.	at 11.30 AM

7. Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in" 8. Any other changes/ Corrigendum may be seen only in website www.tendersorissa.gov.in. 9. **Date of transparent** lottery to be conducted on dt.11.03.2025 at 11.30 A.M. in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Bhadrak. OIPR-25090/11/0017/2425 Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Bhadrak



Keeping pace with the fast-changing technology is another area of challenge. You have to take measures to make accounting and payment systems smooth and effective

SC ORDERS DISSOLUTION OF MEGHALAYA VARSITY

The Supreme Court Thursday ordered the dissolution of the Chander Mohan Jha University in Meghalaya upholding the state government's 2014 decision to shut down the institution over mismanagement and several other shortcomings.





Under the ernment, collapsed within three days with BJP coming to power ATISHI OUTGOING DELHI CM

Governments keep coming and going but relationships continue. We met Kejriwal as a gesture of friendship. However, our democracy is not free and fair. Elections are not free and fair ADITYA THACKERAY | SENA (UBT) LEADER

Many MVA workers have already joined the BJP, left to do the same. Only (ruling) Mahayuti workers will receive funds NITESH RANE | BJP LEADER



Woman's body recovered from lake

Bangalore: The body of a 21-year-old woman was recovered from a lake on the outskirts of the city under mysterious circumstances, police said Thursday. The deceased has been identified as R Sahana, a resident of Harohalli near Hosur, they said. Police stated that the victim's father claimed it was an accident, while her boyfriend alleged it was a case of 'honour killing' as her father had opposed their relationship due to their belonging to different communities.

Protests in Jamia: Over 10 students detained

New Delhi: Over 10 Jamia Millia Islamia University students were detained by Delhi Police for protesting against the university's disciplinary action against two PhD scholars, who were served show-cause notices for allegedly organising a an official said Thursday.

Three killed in road crash in UP

Kushinagar (UP): A truck truck hit an auto-rickshaw here, leaving three persons dead and four others injured. police said Thursday. Those killed were identified as Mansa Chauhan (40), Awadhesh Chauhan (41) and Kanta Chauhan (65), they said. The injured were rushed to the Community Health Centre. Kaptanganj from where doctors referred them to the Medical College in Gorakhpur.

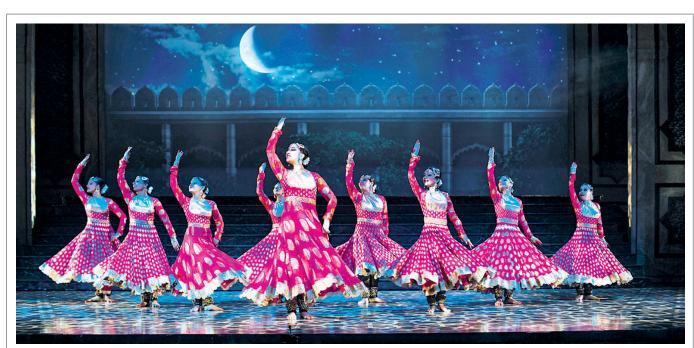
Court issues summons to Dhananjay Munde

Mumbai: A court in Maharashtra's Beed has issued summons to state minister Dhananjay Munde in connection with a complaint filed by his first wife, who accused him of not disclosing information in his affidavit submitted before the 2024 Assembly elections. A Joint Civil Judge Junior Division and Judicial Magistrate First Class (CJJD and JMFC) at Parli in Beed, issued summons to the

Microsoft inaugurates new campus in Hyd

NCP leader February 10.

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy Thursday inaugurated a new campus of Microsoft as the company celebrates its journey of 25 years in Hyderabad. The state-of-the-art 1.1 million sq ft LEED-certified building at Gachibowli, the city's IT hub would house 2,500 additional



Artistes from Feroz Abbas Khan's 'Mughal-E-Azam: The Musical' during their performance

Waqf Bill report tabled in Parliament

New Delhi, Feb 13: The report of the Joint Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill was tabled in both Houses of Parliament Thursday with the Lok Sabha speaker allowing the submission of dissent notes in entirety as demanded by the Opposition and Home Minister Amit Shah asserting the BJP had no objection to it. Committee Chairman Jag-

dambika Pal had redacted parts of the dissent notes contending that they cast aspersions on the parliamentary panel and made personal allegations against him. The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha witnessed stormy scenes with Opposition members trooping to the Wells of the respective Houses protesting against the "undemocratic" action of the committee chairman.

In the Rajya Sabha, BJP member Medha Kulkarni tabled the voluminous report amid protests by the Opposition members. Later, she tabled a corrigendum to Appendix 5 of the report that deals with notes/



minutes of dissent, prompting the Opposition to claim victory. In the face of Opposition protests in the Lok Sabha, Home Minister Shah said his party has no objection to attaching the notes of dissent to the report submitted by the Opposition as per parliamen-

tary practice. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said members of the Waqf committee had met him and discussed certain issues. "Those issues have been included in the annexure," he said as opposition members staged a walkout. The Rajya Sabha witnessed chaos as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju rejected the allegations by Opposition MPs led by Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge that dissent notes were deleted from the report.

Opposition members

trooping to the Wells

'undemocratic" action

of the respective

Houses protesting

of the committee

•In the Raiva Sabha

Kulkarni tabled the

amid protests by the

Congress member Sved Nasir Hussain accused Rijiju -- who is also the Union minority affairs minister -- of misleading the House. "My own dissent note has been redacted," Hussain said. Later at a press conference in Parliament House complex, the Parliamentary

Affairs minister said when the report was tabled in Raiva Sabha, some Opposition MPs raised objections and claimed their dissent notes had been taken out.

"In this, one thing has to be kept in mind that in the annexure and dissent note if any question is raised on the committee like casting an aspersion on the committee, which the chairman feels is not right, then the chairman has the power to remove it, not the report. It's written in the rules, Rijiju said.

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill had adopted the report by a majority vote and that contained changes suggested by members of the ruling BJP, prompting the Opposition to dub the exercise an attempt to destroy Waqf boards. It was adopted by a 15-11 majority vote. The Rajya Sabha also witnessed a walkout by Opposition members and BJP president J P Nadda accused them of being "anti-national" and indulging in politics of appearement.

Aditya Thackeray meets Rahul Gandhi, Kejriwal

Aditya Thackeray, on a whirlwind tour of the national capital, also met the party's parliamentarians amid reports of dissent in the ranks and some leaders planning to join the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, days after their losses in the Delhi Assembly polls, with a message to strengthen the fight for free and fair elections. Aditya Thackeray, on a

whirlwind tour of the national capital, also met the party's parliamentarians amid reports of dissent in the ranks and some leaders planning to join the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

He met Gandhi late Wednesday and called on Kejriwal, the former Delhi Chief Minister, whose party faced defeat in last week's Assembly elections Thursday.

"Is there any difference between the BJP and the Election Commission (EC)?... I don't even know where my vote goes. There needs to be more clarity on EVMs (electronic voting machines) and VVPATs (voter-verifiable paper audit trail)," Aditya Thackeray said. After calling on Keiriwal.

Aditya Thackeray described the meeting as a gesture of friendship. "Governments keep coming and going but relation ships continue. We met Kejriwal as a gesture of friendship. However, our democracy is not free and fair. Elections are not free and fair," he told reporters after the meeting.

He was accompanied by party MPs Sanjay Raut, Arvind Sawant, Priyanka Chaturvedi Sanjay Dina Patil and Bhausaheb Wakchaure, among others. The Congress, Shive Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP) had alleged irregularities in the conduct of last year's Ma harashtra Assembly election, claiming that there were more registered voters in the state than its total adult population.

The three parties, which Vikas formed the Maha Aghadi (MVA) grouping claimed 39 lakh new voters were added between the Lok Sabha elections in May and the November Assembly polls

"We believe we are in a democracy but perhaps we are robbed of democracy. It is a pretentious democracy," Aditva Thackeray said, adding that the Opposition parties should rally together on the issues of "voter and EVM fraud". Adi tya Thackeray's meeting with Gandhi also came against the backdrop of rumblings within the MVA after NCP (SP) chies Sharad Pawar felicitated Maha rashtra Deputy Chief Minister Shinde, who had toppled the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government.



Abhishek reaffirms TMC's solo fight in 2026 state polls

Kolkata, Feb 13: TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee Thursday reaffirmed that the party will contest the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections alone, maintaining its 'Ekla Chalo' (go it alone) policy in the state while remaining a constituent of the opposition INDIA bloc at the Centre.

Speaking at a free health camp 'Sebashray" in his Diamond Harbour constituency's Satgachhia, Banerjee asserted that TMC had successfully contested elections independently in the past and would continue to do so.

"Didi (Mamata Banerjee) has already made it clear that we will fight alone in Bengal. This is nothing new. We fought alone in 2014, 2016, 2019, and 2024. We performed well then, and we will do so again." he said.

Baneriee asserted that it will contest next year's Assembly elections independently if the Congress does not allow it to fight on its own terms, as it is the stronger force in Bengal. "We have said this categorically in the past as well that we continue to be a part of the INDIA bloc. However, if Congress does not wish to explore any way forward or engage in seat-sharing, we will contest alone," he said.

Banerjee dismissed claims that an alliance with the Congress could have prevented BJP's winning 12 seats in the Lok Sabha elections in Bengal, saying, "Ultimately, it is the people's support that matters. Whether we fight alone or in an alliance, it does not make much difference. At best, there could have been a two-to-four seat difference, nothing more.

SNIPPETS

India to conduct 2-crewed space flights under Gaganyaan by 2028

New Delhi: India has broadened the scope of the crewed space flights by 2028, Parliament was informed Thursday. According to the enhanced scope, the Gaganyaan programme will have eight missions -- two crewed and six uncrewed -- Union Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha. Singh said the earlier Gaganyaan programme entailed one crewed mission and two uncrewed ones. The total funding for the programme has been enhanced to ₹20,193 crore to address the programmatic requirements, according to the revised scope that includes new developments for the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and precursor missions, he said. The allocation also covers additional requirements to meet the ongoing Gaganyaan programme, he further said.

CRPF jawans kills 2 before taking his life at Manipur camp

Imphal: A CRPF jawan allegedly killed two of his colleagues and injured eight others before taking his own life at a camp in Manipur Thursday, official sources said. The incident took place at a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp in Lamsang located in the Imphal West district at around 8.20 pm, they said. The accused, Havildar Sanjay Kumar, opened fire from his weapon killing a constable and a sub-inspector of the force on the spot. He later turned the gun on himself and has been declared dead, the sources said. The accused belonged to the F company of the 120th battalion of the force. Fight CRPF personnel have been injured in the firing and they have been shifted to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Imphal, they said.

Court protects Amanatullah from arrest till February 24

New Delhi: A Delhi court Thursday granted protection from arrest till February 24 to AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan for allegedly attacking a police team in Jamia Nagar in the national capital on February 10 and said that allegation did not "seem to carry weight". Special judge Jitendra Singh ordered Khan to join the police's probe in the case whenever directed by the investigating officer. The direction came on the anticipatory bail plea filed by Khan in the case. The court directed police to bring all the documents aside from any CCTV footage related to incident before the court February 24. Delhi Police registered an FIR against Khan for allegedly leading an attack on a police team in Jamia Nagar Monday, alleging that the mobiled by Khan helped a proclaimed offender, Shahwej Khan, an accused in an attempt-to-murder case, escape from custody.

MCD presents ₹17K-cr budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi. Feb 13: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Thursday presented a budget of ₹17,000 crore for the next financial year with sanitation receiving the highest

allocation of ₹4,907.11 crore. Resides sanitation infrastructure development, education and waste manage ment, have been focused upon in the MCD budget. In waste management, the MCD plans to establish waste-to-energy plants in Narela-Bawana (3.600 TPD) and Ghazipur (3,000 TPD) along with bio-CNG plants in Okhla, Ghogha Dairy, and Ghazipur to process 750 metric

tons of waste daily. The special budget meeting also announced that work is underway to set up bio-methanisation plants with a capacity of 200 metric tons per day, expected to be completed by March 2025.

KERALA RAGGING HORROR CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Kottayam (Kerala), Feb 13: Disturbing visuals of the brutal ragging of a junior student at the Government Nursing College here surfaced Thursday, showing the victim being tied to a cot and his body repeatedly pierced with a compass.

According to footage received by the Gandhinagar police, the victim was stripped half-naked and subjected to horrifying acts, including having dumbbells placed on his private parts after being tied to a cot and having facial cream poured into his mouth. Kottayam District Police Chief Shahul Hameed said that police are investigating whether more students were subjected to rag-

ging. The five students arrested

Wednesday in connection with the case are currently in the district jail after being remanded by a court here. The visuals aired by TV channels showed the junior student-lying on the bed with lotion all over his body and his hands and legs tied with a rope--screaming in pain, unable to move while his body was repeatedly pierced with the compass. The senior students pierced various parts of his body with the compass, counting aloud, "one, two, three".

As the victim screamed in pain, the accused mocked him, taunting and insulting him by calling him a "sexy body". The video recorded by third-year students captured this brutal act of ragging, police said. The abuse took place in the boys' hostel targeting first-year nurs-

ing students. The arrested students have been identified as Samuel Johnson (20), Rahul Raj (22), Jeev (18), Rijil Jith (20), and Vivek (21).

One of the arrested students was an office-bearer of a nursing

student organisation, police said. They were arrested after a case was registered under the Prohibition of Ragging Act, following a complaint that ragging had been ongoing for nearly three months

at the nursing institute, which

day in connection with the case are currently in the district jail after being remanded by a court

The visuals aired by TV channels bed with lotion all over his body and rope--screaming in pain, unable to move while his body was repeatedly pierced with the compass

operates under the Government Medical College.

The accused have also been booked under Sections 118(1) (intentionally causing hurt using dangerous weapons or means), 308(2) (punishment for extortion), and 351(1) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the police said. The accused

students have been suspended,

college authorities confirmed According to the complaint the ragging began in November last year. The complaint also stated that senior students regularly extorted money from juniors Sundays to buy alcohol and frequently assaulted them.

The accused November 16 allegedly forced a first-year student to transfer ₹300 via Google Pay and hand over ₹500 in cash under threats. Police revealed that the money was used to purchase alcohol.

Meanwhile, student organisations in the state condemned the incident, describing it as barbaric and shocking.

SFI state secretary P M Arsho stated the organisation's strong stance against anarchic acts such as ragging. SFI is the student outfit of the CPI(M).

nationa



There are no models that you can build and understand how the trends will be because they are very

dynamic... Despite that, we have tried keeping the assessments as close as possible, keeping India's interests as topmost

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

DHARAVI REDEVELOPMENT SURVEY CROSSES 50K MARK

The Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) notched up a major milestone Wednesday by completing over 50,000 door-to-door surveys which is the highest in Mumbai Slum Rehabilitation Authority's (SRA) history

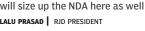


acted very irresponsibly and it should be condemned. This is the politics of appeasement and this is being done to weaken the country JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA | UNION MINISTER

opportunity to be a minister for the third time. PM Modi believes in Dr Babasaheb



As long as we are around in Bihar, they cannot form a government here. The people have sized







& EVM frauds by "The fraud that took place in Maharashtra &

Haryana will repeat in every state" The battle launched by LoP Rahul Gandhi is growing stronger

Three cops booked

Muzaffarpur: Three police

officers in Bihar's Muzaffarpur

district have been booked for

the alleged custodial death of

a young man, who was found

hanging from the ceiling of a

police station lock-up last week

a senior official said Thursday.

According to Superintendent

Vidyasagar, an FIR has been

of Police (Rural), Muzaffarpur,

lodged against the then SHO of

Kanti police station Sudhakar

and constable Raghu Paswan.

Dhankhar to visit

Jammu tomorrow

New Delhi: Vice President

a day-long visit to Jammu

Saturday, his office said.

During his tour, the vice

Jagdeep Dhankhar will be on

president will preside over the

10th convocation of Shri Mata

Vaishno Devi University. He

will also visit Mata Vaishno

Devi and Bhairon ji temples.

prime minister Manmohan

Following the death of former

Singh in December last year,

Kashmir was postponed due

to state mourning.

Noted vocalist

Mumbai: Renowned

Prabhakar dead

Hindustani classical vocalist

has passed away in Mumbai

following a brief illness, his

family said Thursday. He was

80. Karekar breathed his last

family said in a statement.

at his residence in Shivaii Park

Pandit Prabhakar Karekar

Dhankhar's visit to Jammu and

Pandey, sub-inspector S K Singh

over custodial death

SHORT TAKES



MPs raise issue of Allahbadia's comments at Parl panel meet

Allahbadia, who has apologised for his comments dubbing it as a "lapse in judgement", failed to appear in connection with a probe into his controversial comments on Samay Raina's now-deleted YouTube show "India's Got Latent"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 13: The controversy around Ranveer Allahbadia's remarks dominated headlines yet another day after a parliamentary panel Thursday asked the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to submit a note on the issue by February 17 and Assam police summoned the influencer.

Allahbadia, who has apologised for his comments dubbing it as a "lapse in judgement", failed to appear in connection with a probe into his controversial comments on Samay Raina's now-deleted YouTube show "India's Got Latent". He was asked to remain present at Mumbai's Khar police station Friday, an official said.

At a meeting of the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, members from different parties voiced concern over Allahbadia's comments and called for stringent measures to punish him and to ensure that such an incident does not recur.

The Mumbai police as well as Maharashtra Cyber Department have also asked Raina, who was a part of the controversial reality show "India's Got Latent", to appear before them in the next five days. Allahbadia, who was expected to



visit the Khar police station Thursday, did not turn up, and told police that he was afraid of the media, an official said. The Assam Police has also asked Allahbadia, Chanchlani, Raina, Jaspreet Singh and Apoorva Makhija to be present in person in connection with a case filed in Guwahati for allegedly promoting obscenity in a publicly accessible online show.

A team of the cyber police from Assam is currently in Mumbai. The comedians will have to be present in person within four days, Guwahati Joint Commissioner of Police Ankur Jain told reporters here Thursday. This comes just days after Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske raised the issue in Parliament as he called for a law to regulate social media.



On Wednesday night, musician A R Rahman became the latest celebrity to have joined the growing discourse around Allahbadia's comment, which many have deemed "vulgar' and "irresponsible".

At the "Chhaava" audio launch, the music maestro said the past week has been all about "what happens when the mouth opens" as he made an oblique reference to the raging controversy surrounding Allahbadia.

At the event, held Wednesday night in Mumbai, Kaushal asked Rahman to describe his music using "just three emojis".

"You want me (to) keep my mouth closed," Rahman said after some contemplation, referring to the emoji. "I think in the past week we have seen what all happens when mouth opens," he added, eliciting laughter from both Kaushal and the audience.

To which Kaushal replied: Talk about roasting." Raina Wednesday announced that he was deleting all episodes of "India's Got Latent" and that he will fully cooperate with all the investigating agencies in their probe. The comedian said it was "too much to handle" for him. The Mumbai Police have so far recorded the statements of seven persons, including social media influencer Apoorva Makhija, in connection with controversial comments, officials said Thursday. A team of the Assam Police is also in Mumbai to investigate a case in connection with the controversy, an official said.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has also asked Allahbadia, Raina, and other panellists Mukhija, Jaspreet Singh, and Ashish Chanchlani, as well as the show's producers Tushar Poo jari and Saurabh Bothra to appear before it February 17 in New Delhi. Chanchalani, who was scheduled to host the screening of Hollywood film "Captain America: Brave New World" on Valentine's Day, said he was skipping the event citing health concerns.



View of the rebuilt Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) office, Keshav Kunj, at Jhandewalan, in New Delhi. RSS has moved back its office in the city to its old address following the near completion of the rebuilding project spread across over 3.75 acre premises, housing three 13-storey towers and around 300 rooms and offices in total

Modi meets US NSA Michael Waltz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he had a "fruitful meeting' with US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz and they discussed defence, technology and security areas, which are important aspects of the India-US ties.

"Had a fruitful meeting with NSA @michaelgwaltz. He has always been a great friend of India," Modi said in a post on X. "Defence, technology and security are important aspects of India-USA ties and we had a wonderful discussion around these issues. There is strong ootential for cooperation in sec tors like AI, semiconductors, space and more," he said. After his meeting with Waltz, Modi met SpaceX CEO Elon Musk. Musk arrived at Blair House with his three young kids.

Modi arrived in the US capital Wednesday evening for a bilateral meeting with President Donald Trump. The meeting with Waltz was the first engagement of the day. External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval were present at the meeting. After arriving at Blair



House, the President's Guest House, Modi met US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. "Congratulated her on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary," Modi said on X. Just hours before her meeting with Modi, Gabbard took the oath of office as the 8th Director of National Intelligence in the presence of Trump.

PREZ RULE IN MANIPUR

TMC, Cong slam govt

President's rule was imposed in strife-torn Manipur Thursday and the state assembly was put under suspended animation, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty in the northeastern state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 13: The ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal and the Congress Thursday described decision to impose President's rule in strife-torn Manipur as a "very delayed" move, and accused the BJP-led central government of destroying democracy in the northeast-President's rule was im-

posed in Manipur Thursday and the Assembly put under suspended animation, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty in the state.

TMCspokesperson Joy Prakash Majumdar told reporters here that Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah were responsible for the ethnic clashes and the continuing uncertainty in Manipur.

"For so many days, they allowed the situation to remain so. Now, when the term of the



assembly was set to expire and the performance of Singh is under the scanner, the BJP is thrusting President's rule in the state, which had once elected the party with the hope of peace and good governance. The BJP has betrayed different ethnic communities in Manipur," he

Majumdar also accused the saffron party of "killing democracy" in Manipur and "aiding ethnic polarisation", which backfired. Echoing him, senior Congress leader Adhir Chowdhury held the Centre responsi-

sleep and wellbeing.

"If you eat right, you will be

able to write your exams better!

The fourth episode of 'Pariksha

Pe Charcha' will be all about

eating and sleeping well in the

run-up to exam prep. Listen to

Shonali Sabherwal, Rujuta Di-

wekar and Revant Himatsingka

ble for the present situation in Manipur. "The Central government did not act when people were killed, women raped and houses set afire (in Manipur). Now, when all the ploys have failed with no successor to take over the reins, the BJP is imposing President's rule," the former MP said. Meanwhile, BJP MP and

spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said the central leadership took "the right step at the right time", and President's rule will help Manipur develop like other saffron party-ruled states.

To a question, Bhattacharya admitted that due to "mishandling" of certain issues by the N Biren Singh-led government, things became "a bit complicated", but the Union Home Ministry kept a firm grip on the situation.

Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as chief minister after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has claimed over 250 lives so far.

Shinde-led Sena PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Mumbai, Feb 13: Former Shiv

Ex-Sena (UBT) MLA

quits party, joins

Sena (UBT) MLA Rajan Salvi Thursday joined the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde a move that is seen as a jolt to party chief Uddhav Thackeray

Salvi, who represented Ra iapur assembly constituency in Ratnagiri district from 2009 2024, lost the November 2024 assembly polls to Shiv Sena's Kiran Samant, brother of state Industry Minister Uday Samant. Since then Salvi was up set with party leaders, blaming

them for his electoral defeat. Salvi had quit as a deputy leader of Sena (UBT) Wednes day. The party has several functionaries with that designation. In a letter to Thacker ay Wednesday, Salvi said, "In the prevailing circumstances and amid the internal politics within the organisation. I won't be able to do justice to my post. Accepting moral responsibility for my defeat, I am resigning as

Addressing a press conference at Anand Ashram, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said the Shiv Sena (UBT) under Thackeray was plagued with infighting.

the deputy leader of the party.

Masterclass for students at Pariksha Pe Charcha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Learning to become masters of technology and not slaves, using AI wisely and making own decisions are among the mantras shared with students during a technology masterclass as part of the Prime Minister's Pariksha Pe Charcha area here Wednesday night, his broadcast Thursday. Sharing the mantras were

> YouTuber Gaurav Chaudhary, popularly known as "Technical Guruji", and Radhika Gupta, the MD and CEO of Edelweiss Mutual Fund, at a special session of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'. an annual event in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students appearing for board examinations.

In a shift from the traditional town hall format. Modi preferred a more informal setting this time and took the students to Delhi's iconic Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction with them ahead of board exams. Eminent personalities like boxer MC Mary Kom and

spiritual leader Sadhguru

If you eat right, you will be better! The fourth episode of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' will be all about eating and sleeping well in the run-up to exam prep. Listen to Shonali Sabherwal, Rujuta Diwekar and Revant Himatsingka share their views on this subject NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER



have also shared their experiences and knowledge with students on key aspects of life and learning in different episodes of Pariksha Pe Charcha this year. Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone Wednesday shared tips on stress management while opening up about her own struggle

with depression.

Next in the series is a chat on "Good nutrition fuels a sharp mind" with nutrition experts Shonali Sabherwal, Rujuta Diwekar and Revant Himatsingka, which will be broadcast Friday. The guests will share insights on healthy eating,

technology and not slaves.

in a post on X.

share their views on this sub-

ject tomorrow," PM Modi said

In the broadcast Thursday, Chaudhary told students to "learn to become masters of Technology should play the role of a good enabler but your own intelligence, sharpness and creativity should take precedence". He guided students on using technology effectively, ensuring it becomes their greatest strength rather than a distraction in their studies.

Chaudhary also highlighted the benefits of smart study apps, digital notes and online learning platforms, helping students integrate technology into their academic journey. He advised students to use AI as a tool rather than relying on it entirely and encouraged them to embrace real-life experiences beyond technology. Sharing anecdotes about the era of "floppy disks" (electronic data storage devices) and the evolvement of technology since then. Gupta said now artificial intelligence can play the role of a good study partner.

Google, T'gana ink pact

Hyderabad: Google Thursday announced a strategic

collaboration with the Telangana government to harness the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence across the state in various sectors. This collaboration formalised through an MoU aims to drive the development and implementation of AI solutions. It focuses on key sectors. including agriculture, mobility, education, sustainability and governance. Additionally it seeks to foster innovation, bridge the digital divide and equip the workforce with futureready skills, said an official release. The MoU exchange took place in the presence of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. IT Minister Sridhar Babu, and Google representatives. Under this agreement. Google will collaborate with the Telangana government to develop AIpowered agricultural solutions to support farmers and enhance mobility through transit data integration and road information sharing.

Police arrest 46 linked to Jamtara gangs

Kolkata: West Bengal Police has arrested 46 people allegedly linked to the notorious Jamtara gangs involved in phishing, online frauds and financial scams, a senior police officer said Thursday. Under the state's 'Cyber Shakti' initiative, multiple raids were conducted in Birbhum, Asansol, Durgapur, Chandannagar and Purba Bardhaman which led to the seizure of 84 mobile phones and an equal number of SIM cards.

international

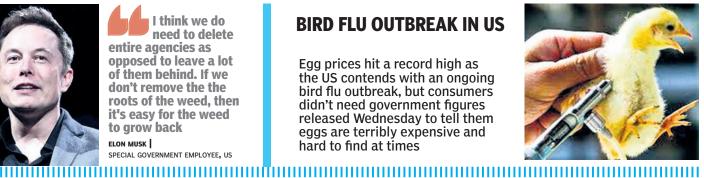


I think we do need to delete entire agencies as opposed to leave a lot of them behind. If we don't remove the the roots of the weed, then it's easy for the weed

ELON MUSK

BIRD FLU OUTBREAK IN US

Egg prices hit a record high as the US contends with an ongoing bird flu outbreak, but consumers didn't need government figures released Wednesday to tell them eggs are terribly expensive and hard to find at times



get, Russia remains a threat well beyond be no negotiation about Ukraine

without Ukraine. And Ukraine's voice must be at the heart of any

JOHN HEALEY | UK DEFENCE SECRETARY

A Chinese J-16 fighter released flares on Tuesday that passed within 30 meters (100 feet) of a P-8 Poseidon surveillance jet in daylight and in international air space

RICHARD MARLES DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA The Kashmir issue should be addressed

according to the **UN resolution** through dialogue and keeping in mind the aspirations of the people

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

SHORT TAKES

Paul Kapur appointed for South Asia job: US

Washington: Paul Kapur, an expert on South Asian security, has been nominated by President Donald Trump to be the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs. Kapur, if confirmed by the Senate, will replace Donald Lu. In January. the US State Department confirmed the departure of Lu. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, as his term concluded January 17, 2025. The Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs deals with US foreign policy and US relations with the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Indian-origin Kapur is a professor in the Department of National Security Affairs at the United States Naval Postgraduate

Gas explosion at food court kills 4, injures 26

Taipei: A gas explosion at a department store in Taiwan Thursday killed four people and injured 26, fire authorities said. The blast occurred at the food court on the 12th floor of the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store in Taichung city, the Taichung Fire Bureau said. Among the dead were two people visiting from Macau, Macao's Tourism Office confirmed Thursday. Local media reported that they were part of a family of seven who were there for tourism. The other five were also injured are now being treated at local hospitals in Taichung. Dozens of firefighters were deployed to the scene at about 11:30 am Parts of the building's exterior were damaged and scattered fragments were

2 Indians arrested for gold smuggling

strewn on the streets.

Kathmandu: Two Indian nationals were arrested in Nepal Thursday on charges of smuggling gold into the country. The police arrested Mahesh Amrit Mani, 27 and Rahul Khadu, 24, from Nagdhunga, the main entry point to Kathmandu by land route. The two from Maharashtra were bringing the vellow metal into Nepal without paying customs duty, according to Nepal Police. The police have initiated further investigation into the matter after taking them into custody. Separately, an Indian national was arrested from the Parsa district of southern Nepal Thursday for carrying 500 grams of hemp.

Armed men in Congo raped hundreds of children: UNICEF

During the week of January 27 to February 2, health facilities in the restive region reported 572 rape cases, a more than fivefold increase compared to the previous

week, 170 of those treated

were children

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dakar, Feb 13: Armed men in eastern Congo raped hundreds of children and recruited child soldiers at unprecedented levels, the UN children's fund said Thursday, as the conflict in the mineral-rich region intensified



Trump's tariffs

could target all

countries with

duties on US

Experts warn

of challenges

in structuring

reciprocal tariffs

'In the North and South Kivu provinces, we are receiving horrific reports of grave violations against children by parties to the conflict, including rape and other forms of sexual violence at levels surpassing

anything we have seen in recent years," UNICEF's Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement.

"One mother recounted to our staff how her six daughters, the voungest just 12 years old, were systematically raped

More than 100 armed groups are vying for control of Congo's mineral-rich east in a decades-long conflict that has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises

by armed men while searching for food," Russell added.

More than 100 armed groups are vying for control of Congo's mineral-rich east in a decades-long conflict that has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. The Rwanda-backed M23 rebels — the most prominent armed

group in the region — captured Goma, the region's largest city, in late January in a major escalation of the years-long fighting with government forces. During the week of January

27 to February 2, health facilities in the restive region reported 572 rape cases, a more than fivefold increase compared to the previous week, Lianne Gutcher, Chief of Communications at UNICEF in the Democratic Republic of Congo, told The Associated Press. 170 of those treated were children, she added. Armed men perpetrated the rapes but it was unclear what specific armed group or army they belonged to, Gutcher said. "It is suspected that all parties to the conflict committed sexual violence," she added

Kyiv, EU alarmed by prospect of 'dirty deal' after Trump-Putin call



Kyiv/Brussels, Feb 13: Ky iv and its European allies de manded Thursday that they be included in any peace negotiations, after US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with Russia's Vladimir Putin and said Ukraine could neither have all of its land back nor join

Russia's financial markets soared and the price of Ukraine's debt rose at the prospect of the first peace talks since the early months of Europe's deadliest war since World War Two, soon to enter its fourth year. But Trump's unilateral over

ture to Putin, accompanied by apparent concessions on Ukraine's principal demands. raised alarm for both Kyiv and the European allies in NATC who said they feared the White House might make a deal with out them. "We, as a sovereign country,

simply will not be able to accep any agreements without us, Ukrainian President Volody myr Zelenskiy said.

He said Putin aimed to make his negotiations bilateral with the United States, and it was important not to allow that.

European officials took an exceptionally firm line in pub lic towards Trump's peace overture, saying any agreement would be impossible to implement unless they and the Ukrainians were included in negotiating it.

"Any quick fix is a dirty deal," European foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. She also strongly denounced the apparent concessions offered in advance.

"Why are we giving them (Russia) everything that they

'RECIPROCAL TARIFF'

Trump pushes trade war

The Republican president's latest round of market-rattling tariffs has ratcheted up fears of a widening global trade war and threatened to accelerate US inflation

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 13: US President Donald Trump said he plans to unveil reciprocal tariffs Thursday afternoon but gave no details about his latest tariff plan, which could take aim at every country that charges duties on US imports.

"Today is the big one: reciprocal tariffs," Trump wrote on his social media platform. He later posted he would de-

tail the latest in a barrage of tariffs on imports to the US he has unveiled since taking office last month in a press conference at 1 pm.

That will come a few hours ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's White House visit. Modi, who is scheduled to arrive at 4 pm, oversees a government that imposes the highest tariffs on US exports of any major US trading partner.

The Republican president's latest round of market-rattling tariffs has ratcheted up fears of a widening global trade war and threatened to accelerate U.S. inflation. Trump, who took office Jan 20, has already announced tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports beginning March 12, imposed 10% tariffs on goods from China, and imposed a 30-day hold on tariffs on goods from neighboring Canada and Mexico.

Trump's trade advisers were finalizing plans Wednesday for the reciprocal tariffs the US president has vowed to impose on every country that charges duties on US imports, ratcheting up fears of a widening global trade war. Trump said Monday he was also looking at separate tariffs on cars, semiconductors

and pharmaceuticals. Trade experts say structuring the reciprocal tariffs that Trump wants poses big challenges for his team, which may explain why the latest duties were not announced Tuesday.

Trump officials could opt for a more easily implemented flat 10% or 20% tariff rate, or a messier approach that would require separate tariff schedules matching U.S. tariffs to each other country's rates, said William Reinsch, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Damon Pike, a trade specialist and principal with the US division of accounting firm BDO International, said the reciprocal tariffs that Trump envisioned would result in a monumental undertaking, given that each of the 186 members of the World Customs Organization had different duty rates.

Car plows into Munich crowd, injuring dozens

Munich, Germany, Feb 13: At least 28 people were hurt when a car driven by an Afghan asylum seeker ploughed into a crowd in Munich Thursday in what the state premier said was probably an attack, putting security back in focus before next week's federal election. The suspected attack came

hours before international leaders including US. Vice President JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy were due to arrive in the southern German city for the Munich Security Conference.

"We currently believe that we have at least 28 people injured, some of them seriously,' said a police spokesperson.

Police said a white car had approached police vehicles that were accompanying a demonstration of striking workers, before speeding up and slamming into people. One shot was fired at the suspect and it was unclear if he was wounded, police added.

Officers detained the 24-yearold driver. They said his motive was unclear.

"It was probably an attack,"



Herrmann, but he had not been

One shot fired as driver, an Afghan asylum seeker, detai

Bavarian leader says it was probably an attack

forced to leave due to security concerns in Afghanistan. Immigration and security issues have dominated campaigning ahead of the February 23 election, especially after other violent incidents in recent weeks, with polls showing the centre-right con-

servatives leading followed by Bavaria state premier Markus the far right. want even before the negotia In December, six people were Soeder told reporters. tions have been started?" said killed in an attack on a Christ-Bavarian interior minister Kallas. "It's appeasement. It has Joachim Herrmann said the mas market in Magdeburg. never worked."

Hamas affirms willingness to move ahead with Gaza ceasefire

Cairo/Jerusalem: The Palestinian militant group Hamas signalled Thursday that a crisis threatening to unravel the Gaza ceasefire deal could be avoided despite uncertainty over the number of hostages due to be released Saturday and disagreements over aid supplies. The 42-day ceasefire has appeared close to failure this week amid accusations on both sides of violations to the agreement sealed last month with the help of Egyptian and Oatari mediators and US support. Hamas said it did not want the deal to collapse, though it rejected what it called the "language of threats and ntimidation" from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump. They have said the ceasefire should be cancelled if the hostages are not released. "Accordingly, Hamas reaffirms its commitment to implementing the agreement as signed, including the exchange of prisoners according to the specified timeline," Hamas said in a statement. Hamas whose Gaza chief leader Khalil Al-Hayya is visiting Cairo for talks with Egyptian security officials, also said both Egyptian and Qatari mediators would press on with efforts "to remove obstacles and close gaps"

BNP expects India to repatriate Hasina

Dhaka: Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's party Thursday said it expects India to repatriate her rival counterpart Sheikh Hasina to stand trial after a UN fact-finding report claimed her ousted regime tried to hold onto power through systematic attacks and killings of protesters last year. Bangladesh Foreign Ministry said a reminder to India for Hasina's extradition request already made last year would be sent if necessary, and said the timing for it "is an issue that requires diplomatic and political decision." The nearly 16-year-long Hasina's Awami League (AL) gime was toppled in a students' uprising August 5 2024 when she fled Bangladesh for India. Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told a press conference here that the UN report said the mass killings, human rights violations, and the destruction of democracy and institutions were carried out on Hasina's orders and it was "proven" by the report that "Hasina is a fascist who has tortured, persecuted and killed the people of this country." He said he thanked the UN fact-finding committee for the report.



Special forces from Greece and Spain participate in the Steadfast Dart 2025 exercise, involving some 10,000 troops in three different countries from nine nations and represent the largest NATO operation planned this year, in Nea Anchialos, central Greece, Thursday, Feb. 13

Jurassic fossil from China rewrites history of bird evolution

Based on the new discovery, scientists speculate that the emergence of the earliest birds could be traced back to an even earlier time, possibly 172 million to 164 million years ago

REUTERS

Beijing/Fuzhou, Feb 13: Scientists have unearthed in southeastern China the fossil of a quail-sized bird that lived about 150 million years ago during the Jurassic Period and

possessed surprisingly modern traits, a discovery that rewrites the history of avian evolution. The newly identified bird. called Baminornis zhenghen-

sis, joins the similarly aged

Archaeopteryx, discovered in Germany in 1861, as the oldest-known birds. But Baminornis, about six inches (15 cm) long, was far more advanced anatomically and a better flier than crow-sized Archaeopteryx, a creature seemingly half bird and half reptile. While Archaeopteryx boasts

a long and skinny tail resembling a raptor dinosaur like Velociraptor, Baminornis has the shortened tail of a modern bird an important aerodynamic innovation that helps shift the body's center-of-mass forward toward the wings.

The fact that the two earliest-known birds display quite different anatomies and inhabited different parts of the world separated by about 5,500 miles (8,800 km) - suggests that millions of years of avian evolution had already occurred before their appearance.



author of the study published Birds evolved from small feathered dinosaurs. Based on Wednesday in the journal on the new discovery, the first Nature. "Baminornis zhenghbirds arose 172-164 million ensis looks more like modern years ago, millions of years earbirds than Archaeopteryx, lier than previously believed, Wang said, calling its discovery according to paleontologist "a landmark to me and other Min Wang of the Institute of evolutionary biologists." Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chi-

nese Academy of Sciences, lead

Until now, Archaeopteryx was the only unquestionable bird known from the Jurassic,

he newly identified bird, called Baminornis zhenghensis, joins the similarly aged Archaeopteryx, discovered in Germany in 1861, as the oldest-known birds

But Baminornis, about six inches (15 cm) long, was far more advanced anatomically and a better flier than crowsized Archaeopteryx, a creature seemingly half bird and half reptile

which ended roughly 145 mil-

lion years ago. "This fossil (Baminornis) indicates that Jurassic birds probably already had a global distribution and were much more diversified than previously thought," said paleontologist and study co-author Zhonghe Zhou of the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and

Paleoanthropology in China. The Baminornis fossil was discovered in 2023 during scientific fieldwork in Fujian Province's Zhenghe County The fossil preserves much of the bird's skeleton but lacks the skull, leaving a gap in the understanding of its diet and lifestyle that could be interpreted from its jaws and teeth. Wang said Baminornis probably had teeth, as did Archaeopteryx. Until now, the oldest-known

birds with short tails lived about 20 million years later than Baminornis, including Eoconfuciusornis, Protopteryx, Cruralispennia and Archaeor nithura. Unlike Archaeopter yx, Baminornis has a pygostyle - a bone plate formed by fused vertebrae at the end of the vertebral column. "A short tail ending with a pygostyle is a universal feature of extant birds. It provides attachment for fan-shaped tail feathers facilitating more sophisticated and powerful flight," Zhou said.

Business



Our pulses production was badly hit last year and the prices were high so we had to import. But I don't think this year we are going to import similar quantity, it will be much less

PRALHAD JOSHI | FOOD AND

GAIL TO EXIT US SHALE VENTURE

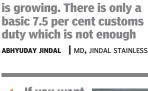
State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd plans to exit its shale gas venture in the US, following in the footsteps of Reliance Industries Ltd and Oil India Ltd. India's largest gas transportation and marketing company has floated a tender to sell its 20 per cent interest in Eagle Ford Shale Assets in Texas US, according to the tender document



100,000 startups, 100+ unicorns, and being the 3rd largest ecosystem glob-

ally, India is a powerhouse of innovation. It's time to connect the dots globally AMAN GUPTA | CO-FOUNDER, BOAT

If other markets are all getting closed, then they will come to India because India



If you want a good salarv hike and good progression in vour salary. you need to be



ANKIT AGARWALA | MD, PAGEGROUP

SHORT **TAKES**

Steel imports rise to record high

New Delhi: India's finished steel imports rose to an all-time high in the first 10 months of the financial year that started in April, according to provisional government data reviewed by Reuters Thursday, India, the world's second-biggest crude steel producer, imported 8.3 million metric tons of finished steel during April-January, up 20.3% from a year earlier, the data showed. The country remained a net importer during the period, the data showed. It turned net importer of steel in the 2023/24 fiscal year. with imports rising steadily since then and primarily led by China.

IOC signs \$7-9bn long-term LNG deal

New Delhi: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's largest oil firm, has signed a \$7-9 billion deal to import LNG from UAE on a long-term 14-year contract. IOC signed a long-term deal to receive 1.2 million tonnes per year of LNG from the United Arab Emirates beginning 2026 for 14 years. "ADNOC Gas has signed a 14-year sales and purchase agreement with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) for the export of up to 1.2 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to India's largest integrated and diversified energy company which will be supplied from Das Island liquefaction facility," ADNOC Gas said.

Paytm Money pays ₹45.5L to settle case

New Delhi: Paytm Money, an arm of fintech firm One97 Communications, Thursday settled with markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to alleged violation of norms after paying Rs 45.50 lakh in settlement amount. The case stemmed from alleged violations of Sebi's technical glitch framework outlined in its circular dated November 25, 2022. The order came after Paytm Money filed a settlement application in September last year, proposing to settle the instant proceedings initiated against it, without "admitting or denying the findings of facts and conclusions of law". the instant adjudication proceedings initiated against the noticee vide SCN dated July 24, 2024, is disposed of in terms of the settlement regulations," Sebi's adjudicating officer Asha Shetty said in the order

FAG-END SELLING

Market rout deepens ₹88,000-MARK

Sensex, Nifty pare early gains to close lower for 7th straight session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 13: Benchmark

dipped 32.11 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 76,138.97. The index stayed in the positive zone for the most part of the session. The benchmark gyrated 751.1 points between the day's high of 76,764.53 and low of 76.013.43.

13.85 points or 0.06 per cent to 23.031.40.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Adani Ports, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, State Bank of India, Nestle and Titan were among the laggards.

jaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Zomato were the biggest gainers.

vestors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,969.30 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data

mism driven by easing domestic inflation data, the rally lost momentum amid uncertain global cues and subdued corporate earnings. Furthermore. a surge in Chinese technology stocks, fuelled by heightened interest in artificial intelligence, redirected FIIs in pursuit of

indices Sensex and Nifty pared early gains to close lower for the seventh straight day Thursday, dragged by fag-end selling in select IT and banking shares and foreign fund outflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex

The NSE Nifty slipped

Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, Ba-

Foreign Institutional In-

"Despite initial market opti-



by 0.07 per cent.

per cent).

MARKETS

HAVE BEEN IN A

CORRECTIVE PHASE

FOR OUITE SOME

TIME NOW WITH THE

HEADLINE INDEX NIFT

FALLING 12% FROM

THE PEAK

Among BSE sectoral indices,

BSE Focused IT tanked 0.98 per

cent, IT dropped 0.93 per cent,

FMCG (0.66 per cent), teck (0.64

per cent), consumer durables

(0.44 per cent) and oil & gas (0.34

BSE Healthcare, metal, fi-

ties, telecommunication.

power and realty were

As many as 2,089

vanced and 127 re-

mained unchanged

In Asian markets,

declined

1,858 ad-

nancial services, commodi-

the gainers.

stocks

while

on the BSE.

Seoul and Tokyo settled in the

positive territory while Shang-

hai and Hong Kong ended low-

er. European markets were

trading on a mixed note. US

markets ended mostly lower

Global oil benchmark Brent

crude declined 0.94 per cent to

Wednesday.

SUN PHARMA	+3.12%	
TATA STEEL	+2.99%	TOP GAINERS
BAJAJ FINSERV	+2.97%	
BAJAJ FINANCE	+2.27%	
KOTAK BANK	+1.46%	

As FIIs continued to maintain their sell stand, the market is beginning to get more volatile with investors booking profit in

PRASHANTH TAPSE SENIOR VP (RESEARCH), MEHTA EQUITIES

select frontliners

more attractive returns.

"Market participants are now closely monitoring the outcome of the Trump-Modi discussions for any trade and tariff concessions for a potential pullback rally," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Continuing the downward trend, retail inflation fell to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegetables, eggs, and pulses.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.43 per cent while midcap index went up marginally

GOLD RECLAIMS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Gold prices rose Rs 140 to Rs 88,100 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday amid strong trends in the international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

87.960 per 10 grams Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity went up Rs 140 to Rs 87,700 per 10 grams from the previous

cent swing bottom and traded higher on Thursday, as haven demand remains intact in retariff announcements by President Trump that are scheduled to be implemented shortly. Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

800 to Rs 98,000 per kg Thursday. The white metal had settled at Rs 97,200 per kg in the previous trading session.

Investors remain worried that US President's trade tariffs might trigger a global trade war, which continues to act as a tailwind for safe-haven metals like gold SAUMIL GANDHI | SENIOR ANALYST (COMMODI-

In futures trade on the MCX. gold contracts for April delivery climbed Rs 364 to trade at

Rs 85,845 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices gained once again despite the US CPI (Consumer Price Index) data not rising significantly and the US Federal Reserve indicating no urgency in cutting rates, Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

The safe-haven appeal of gold continues to support its strength, keeping the broader bullish sentiment intact, Trivedi added.

Silver futures increased Rs 191 to Rs 95,693 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Adani pulls out of **SL** power projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Adani Green Energy, the renewable arm of billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate, has withdrawn from two proposed wind power projects in Sri Lanka, following the Island nation's new government deciding to re negotiate tariffs.

"Adani Green Energy has conveyed its Board's decision to respectfully withdraw from further engagement in the re newable energy (RE) wind energy project and two transmission projects in Sri Lanka," the firm said in a statement. The company was to invest a

total of \$1 billion in generating electricity from wind at two projects and laying transmitting lines to take it to users. The plan came under the

scrutiny of the newly elected administration under President Anura Kumara Dissanayake who wanted to reduce electric ity costs. "However, we remain com-

mitted to Sri Lanka and are open to future collaboration if the government of Sri Lanka so desires" AGEL said.

Adani group, however, continues to be invested in a \$700 million terminal project at Sri Lanka's largest port in Colombo

ROBUST OUTLOOK

Value MFs attract ₹1,556cr inflow PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi. Feb 13: Investor confidence in value mutual funds remains robust, with the category witnessing an inflow of Rs 1,556 crore in January, indicating a shift in their focus towards fundamentally strong yet undervalued stocks.

This represents a slight increase from the Rs 1,514 crore inflow registered in December, according to data from industry body Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

However, despite the inflow assets under management (AUM) in this category declined from Rs 1.88 lakh crore in De

cember to Rs 1.83 lakh crore in January. This decline in AUM high lights some challenges, but the

outlook for value funds in 2025 remains optimistic. Santosh Joseph, Co-founder

and CEO of Germinate Investor Services, said the future of value funds will largely depend on sectoral trends and macroeco nomic conditions.

"The key sectors that drove the value fund rally in 2023 and 2024, including metals, real estate, construction, capital goods, PSUs, and manufacturing, are expected to maintain their strength. This will be bolstered by continued government infrastructure spending and industrial expansion," Joseph said.

TIES), HDFC SECURITIES The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs

close of Rs 87,560 per 10 grams. "Gold recovered from a re-

sponse to multiple disruptive Silver prices also jumped Rs

GOLD & SILVER



SECOND BIGGEST GLOBALLY

Chevron to set up \$1 billion engineering centre in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Energy giant Chevron is setting up a \$1-billion engineering and innovation centre in India, its second biggest in the world, as it looks to tap the country's engineering and technology talent to support its global operations and projects, its

Sahni said. The Chevron Engineering and Innovation Excellence Center (ENGINE) in Bangalore is not a back office but a centre that will do works ranging from understanding geol-

India head Akshay

ogy for oil and gas production and carbon storage to developing digital twins for oil refineries and advanced process monitoring to improve supply reliability, he said on the sidelines of the India Energy Week here.

It will be the company's larg-

This is where we plan to do high-end engineering work, with support from, obviously, AI and data science staff

est centre outside of the US.

'ENGINE is a state-of-theart technology hub to support Chevron's global projects and operations. This is where we plan to build a diverse and inclusive workforce that will deliver technology solutions to support affordable, reliable and ever cleaner energy for a

growing world," he said. mands while contributing to a

AKSHAY SAHNI | INDIA HEAD, CHEVRON

Chevron ENGINE aims to hire 600 employees by the end of 2025, with further expansion planned, building a diverse and inclusive workforce that will address today's energy de-

lower-carbon future, he said.

Utility vehicle demand aids highest-ever Jan PV despatch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Passenger vehicle dispatches from companies to dealerships witnessed an increase of 1.6 pc year-onyear in January at 3,99,386 units driven by robust demand for utility vehicles, industry

body SIAM said Thursday. It was the highest-ever passenger vehicle dispatch for the month of January.

Total passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 3.93.074 units in January last year.

Utility vehicle dispatches from companies to their respective dealers rose 6 per cent to 2,12,995 units last month as against 2,00,917 units in January 2024.

Passenger car wholesales remained flat at 1,27,065 units last month as compared with 1,26,505 units in the year-ago period, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said in a statement.

Van dispatches last month declined 6.4 per cent to 11,250

The recent Union Budprioritising long-term

economic growth, particularly the personal income tax changes and reduction in interest rates by the RBI will help to drive demand in the auto industry

RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

units from 12,019 units in January 2024.

"Passenger Vehicles posted its highest-ever sales of January in 2025 of 3.99 lakh units, with a growth of 1.6 per cent as compared to January 2024," SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon stated.

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India sold 1,73,599 units last month, an increase of 4 per cent as compared with 1,66,802 units in January last year. Hyundai Motor India dis-

patched 54,003 units to dealerships, a decline of 5 per cent as against 57,115 units in January last vear.

Mahindra & Mahindra saw its wholesale rise to 50,659 units in January from 43,068 units in the year-ago period. Total two-wheeler dispatches

increased by 2.1 per cent year-

on-year at 15,26,218 units last

month as against 14,95,183 units in January 2024, SIAM said. Scooter dispatches increased 12.4 per cent year-on-year to 5.48.201 units last month.

Motorcycle sales however declined 3.1 per cent year-on-year

to 9,36,145 units in January. Moped sales declined marginally year-on-year to 41,872 units last month.

Total three-wheeler dispatches rose by 7.7 per cent year-onyear to 58,167 units, from 53,991 units in January last year.

The intent was to join

global competition, but

forces to win in the

As long as these sectors con tinue to show resilience and growth potential, value invest ing is likely to remain an attractive strategy in 2025, he added.

Nissan, Honda ditch \$60bn merger talks, face new

Yokohama, Feb 13: Nissan and Honda ended merger talks to forge a \$60 billion carmaker Thursday, pitching Nissan deeper into uncertainty and underlining the challenge for legacy auto companies as Chinese rivals upend the industry.

The talks between Honda, Japan's second-largest automaker, and Nissan, its third-largest. were announced in December but were soon complicated by growing differences, including over the balance of power in the tie-up. It was Honda's proposal that

that ultimately sank the deal, sources have said. The two said they would continue with an earlier agreement

Nissan become a subsidiary

THE WORLD'S NO 4

Nissan is in many ways the OXCONN SAYS IT IS OPEN most troubled TO TAKING A STAKE of major legacy automakers, having never fully recovered from the years of crisis and

by the 2018 arrest and ouster

of former chairman Carlos

"Honda is pretty confident and has a lot in their favour, whereas Nissan is in a bad place. They don't have a dance

The merger would have created the world's fourth-biggest auto group by vehicle sales after Toyota, Volkswagen and Hyundai.

Mitsubishi, a junior partner in the alliance Nissan has with Renault, had been part of the merger discussions although sources had said it was unlikely to participate. It also bowed out of the talks Thursday.

RESTRUCTURING Nissan, which also Thursday cut its full-year forecast for the

third time and reported anoth-

this was not going to realise Nissan's potential, so I could not accept it MAKOTO UCHIDA | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NISSAN

I am really disappointed. I felt the potential was great, but I also knew actions that would bring pain were necessary to realise

TOSHIHIRO MIBE | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HONDA

the turnaround programme it first unveiled last year.

It now aims to close a plant in Thailand by June, it said and two more plants, which it did not name, after that. It has previously said it would cut 9,000 jobs and reduce global capacity by 20%

Foxconn Chairman Young

company would consider taking a stake in Nissan but that its main aim was cooperation. Nissan shares soared more

Liu said Wednesday that his

than 60% and Honda's jumped around 26% in late December after the merger talks were first reported December 17 Those gains have since been pared to 21% for Nissan and 11% for Honda. Nissan's market capitalisa-

tion is now nearly five times smaller than that of Honda which is about 7.5 trillion yen (\$48.6 billion). A decade ago, the pair were both worth around 4.6 trillion yen.

Sources said in December that Nissan would need to further reduce its capacity in China, where it operates eight fac tories through its joint venture with Dongfeng Motor. It has already suspended production at its Changzhou plant as part of efforts to optimise operations.

to cooperate on technology NISSAN MOTOR CORPORATION and other areas, collaboration analysts say is crucial, given the threat posed by BYD, and other Chinese EV makers, which have gobbled up market share with sleeker, more software-rich cars. The Japanese automakers also face the added threat of tariffs in the Unit-**MERGER**

ed States on cars they import into the US from Mexico, an important manu-HONDA HAD WANTED TO MAKE facturing hub. **SOURCES SAY**

management turmoil sparked

partner right now," said Christopher Richter, Japan autos analyst at brokerage CLSA. "They probably need to think about doing something different."

er big drop in quarterly earnings, said it would accelerate **CT SQUAD SELECTION**

High-risk-high-reward stance this time: Salima Tete India will open their campaign against England at the



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 13: It aligns with head coach Gautam Gambhir's high-risk-high-reward approach but can India's Champions Trophy squad, having lost its game-changing pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah to injury, deliver the goods at the ODI showpiece?

The answer to that question is not particularly straightforward given the audacious calls taken to decide the final 15.

The selection risks start with the drafting in of five spinners. The Dubai-bound flight will feature Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy in a spin-heavy bowling attack.

Harshit Rana has replaced Bumrah with the more experienced Mohammed Siraj relegated to the group of non-travelling reserves alongside young batter Yashasvi Jaiswal and all-rounder Shivam Dube.

India's matches will be held in Dubai, a venue where pacers have found more success traditionally in the 50-over format.

Available data shows that the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, where India will play all their matches, has hosted 58 ODIs since 2009, and pacers have taken 466 wickets here at an average of 28.6 and economy

The spinners have combined to take 334 wickets till now at the DICS, and their average goes up to 30 but with a slightly better economy of 4.2

Spinners' role in Dubai

From outside, having five spinners looks like an over-estimation of the conditions. But the management took a chance with Chakravarthy because of his excellent recent form.

Chakravarthy has been trusted to deliver in a multi-nation tournament, after his failure to do so in the T20 World Cup 2021 at the same venue.

What might have tilted the

No families with Team India

New Delhi: Families will not be accompanying the Indian cricket players heading to Dubai February 15 for the ICC Champions Trophy as the BCCI's new travel policy comes into effect for the first time with this tournament. Given that the the duration of the tour is just over three weeks even if the final March 9 is taken into consideration, the BCCI will not allow families to accompany the players. As per the new policy, families can be with players for a maximum of two weeks during a tour which is of 45 days or more. The BCCI policy document states: "Players absent from India for more than 45 days during overseas tours can be joined by their partners and children (under 18) for one visit per series (format wise) of up to a two-week period."

scales in his favour is the fact that none of India's league stage opposition in the Champions Trophy -- Bangladesh, Pakistan and New Zealand -- have played him before.

The way he managed to trouble England in the ongoing home series on account of being an unknown entity for the visitors also worked to his advantage.

But on the flip side, it leaves Kuldeep Yadav in peril. With Jadeja and Axar being the first-choice spinners considering their batting prowess, the fight for the third spinner's slot will be between Kuldeep and Chakravarthy.

If India follows the template of the recent second ODI against England at Cuttack, Chakravarthy can pip the leftarm wrist spinner, at least in the initial stages of the Champions Trophy.

Why Siraj was overlooked Another selection paradox is placing Rana ahead of Siraj as Bumrah's replacement for a tournament in which teams will have to do the tight-rope walk of three matches in the league phase.

Conventional thinking says that experience more than explosiveness matters in such events, but the wise men went ahead with Rana.

According to skipper Rohit Sharma, ineffectiveness with the old hall led to Sirai's omission from the marquee event.

On that count, Rana has al ready given them two examples of his ability to strike when the white ball loses its lacquer.

In his T20I debut, Rana was the sixth bowler, a much-debated concussion substitute for Shivam Dube, and walked away with game-changing figures of 3 for 33.

In ODIs, Rana went for a few runs, but showed the gumption to bowl across three spells in three various passages of the match. The risk that the management has taken is to trust Rana to grow in his role quickly and deliver in a high-pressure tournament as and when he is called for. Why was Jaiswal dropped

A common line of thinking can be that the selectors wanted a bowler with some mystery element about him in the squad once Bumrah was ruled out with a lower back injury.

So, they picked an in-form Chakravarthy. Fair call. But why select him in place of Jaiswal, an opener?

Should they have replaced a spinner for him? Perhaps Washington Sundar could have been the one to be omitted to accommodate Chakravarthy.

However, in one shot, the selectors have also avoided the opening conundrum that haunted them in the first ODI against England at Nagpur.

It was tough to accommodate Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer in the same eleven but an injury to Virat Kohli gave them a temporary relief.

Once Kohli came back, Jaiswal missed out in the second match, and the big wigs did

We are well-trained

India will open their campaign against England at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium, hoping to erase the memories of an eighth-place finish last season, where they ended *up only ahead of the United States*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: India's women's hockey captain Salima Tete is confident that her team will give an improved performance when the Bhubaneswar leg of FIH Pro League commences Saturday and will not be pulled back by its disastrous showing in the previous season.

India will open their campaign against England at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium, hoping to erase the memories of an eighth-place finish last season, where they ended up only ahead of the United States.

The other teams in fray here are Germany, Spain and world No 1 Netherlands. India scored only 16 goals

last season in comparison to champions Netherlands, who smashed a mind-boggling 63 goals. The country is currently

ranked ninth in the world, while powerhouse Germany are fourth, England seventh and Spain eighth. India will begin their cam-

paign in the Pro League with two matches against England February 15 and 16, followed by clashes against Spain February The side will also face chal-

lenging opponents in Germany and world No 1 Netherlands February 21, 22 and February 24, 25 respectively. "We can't wait to play at the

worked extremely hard in the camp and I am confident that we have a squad.

good enough to play on-par with all our opponents. With the support of the home crowd, we have crucial matches coming up and we need to focus on winning

HARENDRA SINGH | HEAD COACH, INDIA

Kalinga Stadium again and win as many points as we can. We are facing challenging opponents but I am confident that the girls are ready to take on the challenge and do their best on the field," Tete said.

Head coach Harendra Singh said he was optimistic about the team performing on an even keel against their higher-ranked opponents.

India clinched their third Asian Champions Trophy title beating China at home in November last year, giving them the boost they needed after missing out on a Paris Olympics berth.

With a blend of experienced players like Savita, Sushila Chanu, Nikki Pradhan, Vandana Katariya, Udita, Lalremsiami and Sharmila Devi alongside star youngsters like Deepika, Sunelita Toppo and Jyoti in the ranks, India have a well-balanced squad.

SHORT **TAKES**

Gukesh fights back

Hamburg: World champion D Gukesh fought back from a hopeless position to eke out a draw against Alireza Firouzja of France in the first game of the final round of the first Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour here. Fighting for the seventh spot in the last-eight qualifiers, Gukesh tried his way out to score his first victory which still eluded him and the Indian was defending for the major part and survived some real scary moments before getting a much desired draw in another long drawn

3 Pak players fined

Karachi: International Cricket Council (ICC) has slapped Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi. Saud Shakeel and Kamran Ghulam with fines and a demerit point each for their belligerent behaviour during the tri-series match against South Africa here. Shaheen was fined 25 per cent of his match fee for breaching Article 2.12 of the Code, which pertains to "inappropriate physical contact with a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee or any other person (including a spectator) during an International Match.'

INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

OFC eye playoffs spot



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: A topsix finish and a play-offs berth at stake, Odisha FC would be wary of facing Hyderabad FC in their home Indian Super League (ISL) match here Thursday.

With 26 points from 20 matches, courtesy six victories, six losses and eight draws, Odisha FC are currently at seventh place and they would aim to notch as many wins as possible with just three matches left after Friday's game to make it to the top-6 which will allow them

feature in the play-offs. The Juggernauts will threaten Hyderabad FC with their attacking prowess, hav ing netted 38 goals in their 20 matches, with Diego Mauricio leading the pack, courtesy of nine strikes to his name. Jerry Mawihmingthanga and Mourtada Fall have scored five and four goals respectively.

Overall, the two sides have squared off against each other 11 times in the ISL, with Odisha FC and Hyderabad FC winning six and four matches respectively. One match has produced a draw.

Odisha FC head coach Sergio Lobera has asked his team to bring about all their focus into the coming fixture against Hyderabad FC.

"It will be a mistake to think where we would end up in one month's time. The focus should be on the game against Hyderabad FC, who have shown their potential against strong teams,



Ace gymnast Rakesh Patra delivers a spectacular performance in the Parallel Bars event and clinches the gold medal



secures the bronze medal in the K1W-500m event



Kayaking team including Oinam Bidya Devi, Oinam Binita Chanu, Shruti Chougule and Dhanamanjuri Devi deliver a spectacular performance to clinch the gold medal in the K4W-500m event

RCB names Patidar as captain for IPL 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 13: IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday named Rajat Patidar as its captain for the upcoming season starting March 21, replacing South African Faf du Plessis who was released from the squad last year.

Patidar was among RCB's retained players before the mega auction in November, 2024 and has the experience of leading Madhva Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (ODI)

The 31-year-old, who signed up with the franchise in 2022, guided Madhya Pradesh to the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final where his side lost to Mumbai by five wickets last year. "Rajat has the simplicity, (he) cares about the people around him, we have closely seen how he has led Madhya Pradesh, we really liked it, RCB chief coach Andy Flower said at the franchise event to announce Patidar's elevation.

The right-hander was also the second highest run-getter in the premier domestic T20 tourna ment, behind Ajinkya Rahane scoring 428 from 10 matches.

Pugilist Panghal turns professional

vault event

New Delhi, Feb 13: India's lone male boxer to win a world championship silver medal, Amit Panghal, has become the latest from the country to turn professional.

One of India's most accomplished male boxers, the 29-year-old has signed with US-based talent management company Critical Sports and Entertainment.

"Critical Sports and Entertainment is proud to announce the signing of world-renowned Olympian boxer Amit Panghal," the agency wrote in an Instagram post.

"As he shifts once again to the professional ranks, Amit

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SILVER-MEDALLIST

brings a wealth of experience, skill, and a champion's mentality. We alongside co-manager Connor Burke are honored to welcome him to the Criti-

cal Sports and Entertainment family and look forward to guiding him on this exciting next chapter of his career." The Haryana boxer, who competes in the

51kg category in the amateur circuit, is yet to be allocated his profes-

sion-

fight. The development comes just a month after world championship bronze-medallist Nishant Dev also made the switch to professional boxing.

A former world number one, Panghal has won medals in all major international competitions except the Olym-

Panghal once dominated the sport with gold medals at the Asian Games

and Asian Championships, along with

historic silver at the 2019 World Championships.

Gymnast Tapeswarnath Das claims silver medal in the

However, his international appearances have been limited in the past four years. After an early exit from the Tokyo Olympics, Panghal lost his place in the Indian team.

He later won a gold medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games before qualifying for the Paris Olympics, where he was eliminated in the pre-quarterfinals by Zambia's Patrick Chinyemba. With this move, Panghal follows in the footsteps of 2008 Olympic bronze-medallist Vijender Singh, Vikas Krishan, Mandeep Jangra, and Neeraj Goyat, who also moved to professional boxing after a good run in the amateur circuit.

Despite losing, India finishes second in the group, enough to help the team qualify for the quarters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Qingdao, Feb 13: Indian shuttlers went down to South Korea 2-3 in a Group D tie of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship, but they had already made it to the quarterfinal after finishing second in the pool here Thursday.

India, who had made a sizzling start on Wednesday defeating Macau 5-0, fought till the very end before the men's doubles pair of M.R. Arjun and



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy lost the deciding rubber in straight games to Jin Yong and NA Sung Seung. The mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto started the proceedings by winning opening game 21-11, but lost the next two 12-21, 15-21 to go down in 56 minutes.

India's top-seeded women's player here Malvika Bansod found world No. 19 Sim Yu Jin a very tough opponent to handle, as the youngster, runner-up in the 2022 edition of the Syed Modi International, went down without a fight 9-21, 10-21 in just 27 minutes

Chennai shuttler Sathish Karunakaran, however, pulled one back following a hardfought win over Cho Geonyeop 17-21, 21-18, 21-19 in one hour 12 minutes, before the women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, ranked ninth in the world, brought In dia on an even keel following a 19-21, 21-16, 21-11 win over Kim Min Ji and Kim Yu Jung.

The deciding fifth game, saw the men's doubles pair of M.R. Ar jun and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy fight tooth and nail before losing to Sung Seung and Jin Yong 14 21, 15-23 in 53 minutes

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