



Kangana's perspective

Actor and Parliamentarian Kangana Ranaut shares insights into her evolving perspective on homemaking

LEISURE | P2



Job cuts hit US

The campaign by President Donald Trump to radically cut back the US bureaucracy spreads, firing more than 9,500 workers

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Export boost

Plans to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement will help India boost its exports to the US, say exporters

BUSINESS | P11



Sinner banned

Top-ranked tennis player Jannik Sinner accepts a three-month ban in a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency

SPORTS | P12



VICTORY MARCH: Indian eves celebrate as they began their campaign in the Women's Pro League with a 3-2 win over higher-ranked England at the Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Saturday

State economy to grow by 7.2%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: Odisha's economy is estimated to grow by 7.2 per cent in the current financial year, which is higher than the all-India growth rate of 6.4 per cent, according to the state economic survey report for the 2024-25 fiscal.

The report, which was laid before the state Assembly Saturday evening, stated that the size of state's economy proxied by GSDP at current prices is estimated to be at ₹9.5 lakh crore in 2024-25 which has increased by 10 per cent from ₹8.6 lakh crore in the 2023-24 fiscal.

All the sectors have shown robust growth in the financial year 2024-25 and the state is poised for rapid growth in the years ahead. Higher capital investment and investment intent received through Utkarsh Odisha would further increase growth rate in the state in future, an official statement highlighting the key points of the report said.

Similarly, the per capita income has increased by 10.6 per cent to reach ₹1,82,548 in 2024-25 (advance estimate) while per capita income at all-India level

has gone up by 8.7 per cent.

The state's per capita income is 8.8 per cent less than India's per capita income of ₹2,00,162 in 2024-25 and is on a convergent path, it said. Agriculture and allied sector have registered a robust growth rate of 3.3 per cent in 2024-25, which contributed 19 per cent to the Gross State Value Added (GSVA).

The agriculture sector in Odisha is growing on an average higher than the country. Over the last five years, the agriculture sector in Odisha grew at 7 per cent against the national growth level of 4.1 per cent.

Similarly, the industry sector in Odisha is expected to grow at 6.1 per cent in 2024-25 as per advance estimates contributing 43.9 per cent to the Gross State Value Added (GSVA).

The services sector is estimated to grow at 10 per cent in 2024-25 contributing around 37.1 per cent to the state's economy, it said.

Further, the state allocated nearly ₹58,195 crore towards capital outlay in 2024-25 (budget estimates), which is 6.1 per cent of GSDP. The state has the highest capital outlay to GDP among major states in India, it said.

14 Kumbh pilgrims killed in mishaps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj/ Dahold, Feb 15: As many as 14 Maha Kumbh pilgrims died in separate incidents, Saturday. In the first incident, 10 persons travelling in a SUV were killed in a head-on collision with a bus on a highway in the Meja police station area of Prayagraj late Friday night, police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Vivek Chandra Yadav said devotees from Chhattisgarh's Korba district were heading to the Maha Kumbh to take a dip when the Bolero they were travelling in collided head-on with a bus on the highway. All the 10 people travelling in the Bolero died in the accident, while those in the bus suffered minor injuries, the DCP said.

"The news of the death of many people in a road accident on Mirzapur Highway in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh is extremely sad. I express my condolences to the families of the deceased. I wish for the speedy recovery of all those injured," Murmu said in a post on X in Hindi. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident.

In the other incident, four persons were killed and six sustained injuries after a tourist van carrying pilgrims from the Maha Kumbh rammed into a stationary truck on a highway in Gujarat's Dahod district Saturday, police said.

The accident occurred around 2.15 am on the Indore-Ahmedabad highway near Limkheda, an official said.

Child marriages go unabated

Though the government has set an ambitious target to make the state child marriage-free by 2030, it appears to be a distant dream if the revelation made by Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida on the floor of Assembly Saturday is any indication. Despite awareness programmes at various levels and stricter law, over 8,100 child marriages were held in the state in the last six years. Worse, a recent study by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) revealed that over 11,000 children in Odisha are vulnerable to child marriages. The report was based on data from the 2023-24 academic session which showed high rates of school absenteeism and dropouts. Although it has been nearly two decades since the promulgation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, instances of underage marriages still continue largely due to the absence of proper monitoring and law enforcement

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: Despite significant efforts to eradicate the practice, child marriages continue to be a major issue in the state. Gov-

ernment data reveals that the state has recorded a staggering 8,159 instances of child marriages over the past six years.

In a written response to the Assembly, Odisha Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida



highlighted that Nabarangpur district has the highest number of child marriage cases, with a total of 1,347 instances. Ganjam district follows closely with 966 cases, while Koraput district accounts for 636 instances. The other districts that have

featured prominently in the list include Mayurbhanj (594), Rayagada (408), Balasore (361), Keonjhar (328), Nayagarh (308), Kandhamal (308) and Cuttack (154). Significantly, Khurdha, of which capital city Bhubaneswar is a part, also over a hundred child marriages since 2019. The district records 110 child marriages in the last six years. These figures underscore the severity of the problem in these regions.

In addition to child marriages, the state is also grappling with the issue of child labour. Over the same period, authorities have rescued 328 children who were working as labourers. **MORE P3**

Inventory of Ratna Bhandar valuables after repairs: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The inventory of valuables stored inside the Ratna Bhandar of Jagannath Temple will be conducted after the completion of ongoing repair work in the treasury, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan informed the Assembly Saturday.

In a written reply to a question from BJD MLA Tusharkanti Behera, the minister said that the Ratna Bhandar was opened July 14, 2024 in accordance with the guidelines approved by the state government.

After shifting the ornaments from the treasury, the repair work is under progress by the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India), he said.

"After completion of the repair work, the inventory of the ornaments will be carried out. Only after that, comprehensive details about the ornaments can be disclosed," added the minister. The previous inventory of the valuables stored inside Ratna Bhandar was conducted from May 13 to July 23, 1978, he said.

3 of family found hanging in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Feb 15: In a shocking incident, a man, his daughter and grandson died by hanging inside their house at Chaulia Khamar village under the Sadar police limits in this district, police said Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Shankarsan Das, 70, a retired Railway employee, his daughter Subarna Das, 40, and grandson Santosh Kumar Das, 18.

The matter came to the fore after villagers found stench emanating from a

room. On being alerted, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Surya Mani Pradhan, and other police personnel conducted a probe. A forensic team was pressed into service. The bodies were brought and sent for post-mortem.

Preliminary inquiry suggested that they might have died by suicide over suspected depression Wednesday.

Sources said that Shankarshan was staying in the village with his wife, Pushpanjali, 67, after his retirement nearly a decade ago. His daughter, Subarna, had

married in the Kankadahad block but had returned to her parental home due to marital disputes. Her son, Santosh, was a Class XII student.

Shankarsan's only son, Prasanna, had been residing in Dhenkanal town for the past 20 years. Locals said that mental distress might have forced the family to stay in the village.

Pushpanjali found her husband, daughter, and grandson hanging in two separate rooms of the house and informed villagers.

The cause of death remains unclear, the ASP said.

SURA ROUSTRAY BACK IN CONG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: A day after Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) revoked his expulsion order, veteran politician and six-time MLA Suresh Kumar Roustray Saturday visited the state party headquarters here.

Roustray said: "I was in acute pain for the last nine months after being expelled from the Congress. I have been in Congress for last five decades. Congress is a temple and Nehru family is God for me. I am happy to return home."

Roustray was expelled from the party during the 2024 general elections on charge of anti-party activities. His younger son Manmath Roustray had contested as a BJD candidate and the father was accused of campaigning for his son and against the Congress candidate in the Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha seat.

"Some people conspired against me and succeeded in removing me from the party. Now I will be actively work for the party," Roustray said. He was expelled from the party for six years. "For the last 50 years, I have been working for Congress. I am still in Congress and will remain forever in the party," he said. Meanwhile, speculation was rife that another Congress leader Bhupinder Singh who joined the BJD in 2014 may return to the party.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, I haven't been summoned by the police yet. Looks like my struggle to be a successful stand-up comic is still on

Uncontacted tribal filmed emerging from Amazon

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rio de Janeiro, Feb 15: A young man from an isolated indigenous tribe has approached a populated river community in the Amazon, Brazil's indigenous affairs agency has confirmed.

The encounter occurred at around 7pm Wednesday in Bela Rosa, a community along the Purus River in the southwestern Amazon region.

Barefoot and wearing a small loincloth, the young man appeared calm and in good health as he waved two wooden sticks, a villager told this agency.

The villager spoke on condition of anonymity, saying Brazil's indigenous bureau Funai had advised locals not to discuss the incident.

The villager said locals believed the man was asking for fire.

Mobile phone footage of the rare encounter showed one resident trying and failing to show the man how to use a lighter.

Funai officials arrived soon after, and after the man was served fish, he was taken to a nearby facility operated by the group. It was not immediately clear who shot the video.

Funai said in a statement



Thursday that a team on site is "providing the necessary care" and is awaiting the arrival of a medical team.

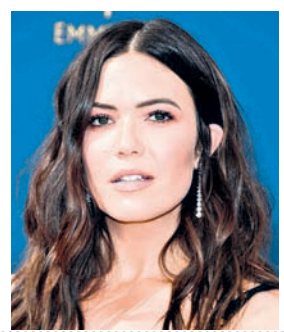
A member of the nearby Juma tribe - whose original pop-

Barefoot and wearing a small loincloth, the young man appeared calm and in good health as he waved two wooden sticks, a local said

ulation has dwindled to just three women - was expected to arrive soon at the site to try to communicate with him.

In 2021, Funai confirmed the existence of an isolated Indig-

leisure



HOW A PHONE CALL SAVED MANDY MOORE'S LIFE

Hollywood star Mandy Moore credits a phone call from her brother-in-law for saving her family as California wildfires neared. Before the official evacuation order, she and her family quickly left their home, escaping danger in time.

KIDMAN: I FEEL IN TUNE WITH WOMEN'S STORIES

Nicole Kidman has talked about what has motivated her to work with several female directors. She said that she wants to work with female directors because she feels "in tune with women's stories" as a "mother, daughter, wife, producer and actress".



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today ideas will flood your mind, but it is good that you will be able to carry them out efficiently. However, Ganesh warns you not to take rash decisions. Wise people will help you along the way. Pay heed to the advice of experienced people.

TAURUS
Ganesh predicts that today, you will be successful in money matters. There is, at best, only an outside chance that any stimulating event or thrilling escapade will occur today. In short, the day may be boring. Fret not as the dreary day may change into an exhilarating evening, feels Ganesh.

GEMINI
It is better for you to swim with the current in all of today's dealings, suggests Ganesh. This will help you effortlessly deal with even the most morbid state of affairs. No need to be a hero, today. Pleasure is the key word for you. Your performance will be satisfying at work, and more than satisfying back home.

CANCER
You will not only make plans, but will also act on them. So you can save money, time and energy for creative pursuits. The quality of your work and accomplishments will be high. Your creativity plays a key role in your accomplishments in career or business.

LEO
Today, Ganesh advises you to keep the Bhagavad Gita's verses in mind, and persist in fulfilling your duties without bothering about the fruits of your labour. Put in some extra effort to finish off whatever you undertake today. Patience bears its fruits and they are always sweet. Also, Ganesh reminds you that anybody can enjoy pleasure, but only few can handle pressure. So, take your pick!

VIRGO
You better identify your worth in the realms of emotions, feelings and sentiments. You shall warm up to and about everything - from play to colleagues to family. Simultaneously, you may realise where your limitations are. Ganesh predicts that the artist in you will flourish beginning today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today in your office you should be very careful in your work. It is likely that your superiors will not be happy about your work or your ability today. Those of you who are businessmen should try and delay sending off tenders today. Those who have given their job interviews may not get a favorable response to it. There may be a delay in getting your call letters.

SCORPIO
It is likely that you shall learn an important lesson in life today. Remember that spite and envy beget enemies. Ganesh advises you to display some errors so as to make you seem more human and approachable.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, find yourself driving all your thoughts and actions towards your family. You will also spend some superb time with your dearie and discuss intimate matters. A relaxing day today as you spend time with your friends and family, chilling out and having a good laugh or two.

CAPRICORN
It's time to prove your extraordinary skills as a professional, says Ganesh. You will go out of your way, and even double your efforts to accomplish set goals, and chances are that you might succeed. Family and friends will be glad that could take out time to spend some happy hours with them. You will also let them know that they mean the world to you, and no matter what, you will be there whenever they need you.

AQUARIUS
The day begins on high note. You work hard, put your best foot forward and at the end get the final output as per your requirements. Romantic and beautiful, the setting Sun will bring the softer side of your personality to the fore as you will spend the evening with your sweetheart, predicts Ganesh.

PISCES
For you, today will be all work and no pay, says Ganesh. This, however, will not stop you from putting in extra efforts to finish your pending projects and to meet your deadlines. Who else but a Virgo to handle the pain nonchalantly without bemoaning the lack of pleasure?

Sagarika all praise for SRK

Mumbai: *Chak De! India* remains a landmark film for its powerful portrayal of women in sports and Shah Rukh Khan's unforgettable role as Kabir Khan. Recently, Sagarika Ghatge, who played Preeti Sabarwal, reflected on filming a pivotal scene where she intensely locked eyes with SRK.

In an interview with *Hauterrfly*, Sagarika shared that this was her first proper scene with Shah Rukh, making her extremely nervous. Until then, her character had scenes with minimal dialogue. However, SRK's reassuring presence helped ease her nerves.

"She (Preeti Sabarwal) didn't have much to say. She was a quiet character in that way. I was so nervous, but he made it so comfortable. All he told me was, 'Just be yourself, don't think about anything else,'" she recalled.

Directed by Shimit Amin, *Chak De! India* follows former hockey captain Kabir Khan as he seeks redemption by coaching India's women's hockey team.

Beyond *Chak De! India*, Sagarika has appeared in *Fox, Miley Naa Miley Hum*, and *Premachi Goshta*. She also made her digital debut with *BOSS: Baap of Special Services*.



AGENCIES

State to host 'National Short Film Festival on Disability Issues'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The state government, through its Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department, has announced to organise the National Short Film Festival on Disability Issues, titled 'Samarthya'.

The festival, to be organised by RR Events & Cine Production, aims to shed light on the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities while encouraging their participation in various fields and advocating for their rights.

The details of the festival were unveiled during a press meet held at a City hotel Saturday



which was attended by eminent personalities from the film industry and government officials.

Director, RR Events & Cine Production, Ramesh Barik said the festival will accept film submissions from February 17 to March 10, 2025. "Film-makers, students, and content creators from across the coun-

try are invited to participate by submitting short films with duration of two to five minutes, focusing on themes related to disability, inclusion, and empowerment," he said.

Barik said a thorough evaluation process has been put in place, with jury screenings scheduled from March 13 to

March 16, 2025. The shortlisted films will compete in various categories, with winners to be announced during a Grand Award Ceremony March 19, 2025.

The event will witness the presence of celebrities from the Hindi and Odia film industries, he said.

The Odisha government has allocated Rs 10 lakh in prize money, to be distributed across multiple categories.

Among those present on the occasion included actress Archita Sahu, filmmaker Sabyasachi Mahapatra, actress Pinki Pradhan, Additional Secretary SSEPD Deepak Rautarai, and Departmental Director SSEPD Niyati Pattnaik.

Kangana on homemaking

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut is successfully balancing her dual roles as an actress and a politician. As the Member of Parliament from Himachal Pradesh's Mandi constituency, she continues to shine in the film industry while navigating politics.

In a recent interview, The *Queen* actress shared insights into her evolving perspective on homemaking. She recalled how her mother once emphasised the importance of managing a household, from making achar (pickle) to growing vegetables. Initially, Kangana dismissed these ideas as outdated, but over time, she grew to appreciate them. Remembering her words, she said, "My mom used to say that as a woman, you should be more invested in homemaking—from making achar (pickle) to ghee (clarified butter) to growing vegetables. I used to think she was saying such silly things. But now, I see things differently."

She went on to say, "I used to think that I was one of the youngest and richest women in the country. But today I am say-

ing the same thing...I think that is the evolution of women. I read a quote that 'You are not born as a woman, but you grow to be a woman'... Today, my mother is happy, and she thinks I have matured and become wiser."

AGENCIES



Rashmika talks about 'chaotic life of an actor'

Mumbai: Rashmika Mandanna is back to shoot with the Salman Khan-starrer *Sikandar* and said that she is back to "this chaotic life of an actor".

The *Animal* actress took to Instagram stories, where she mentioned that she is busy with *Sikandar* night shoot. She shared a picture of herself making a Korean heart as she posed for the cameras.

For the caption, the *Chhaava* actress wrote: "PS - *Sikandar* night shoot. I guess finally we are back to this chaotic life of an actor."

Sikandar marks Salman's return to the big screen after more than a year. The superstar was last seen in *Tiger 3*. The teaser is further elevated by an electrifying background score composed by the acclaimed Santosh Narayanan, whose music perfectly complements the intensity and grandeur of the visuals.

Rashmika's latest release is *Chhaava*, where she plays the role of Maharani Yesubai. The film is a cinematic adaptation of the Marathi novel *Chhava* by Shivaji Sawant. It sheds light on the political turmoil after the demise of Shivaji Maharaj when Shivaji Sambhaji decided to take over the empire.

The actress is also set to appear in several other major releases this year, including *Kubera* featuring Dhanush.

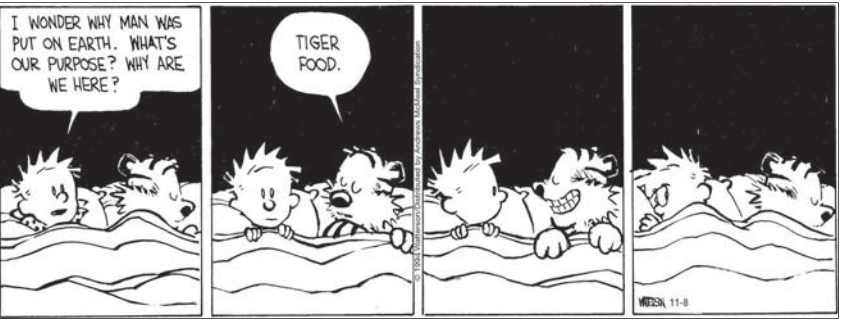


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PEANUTS



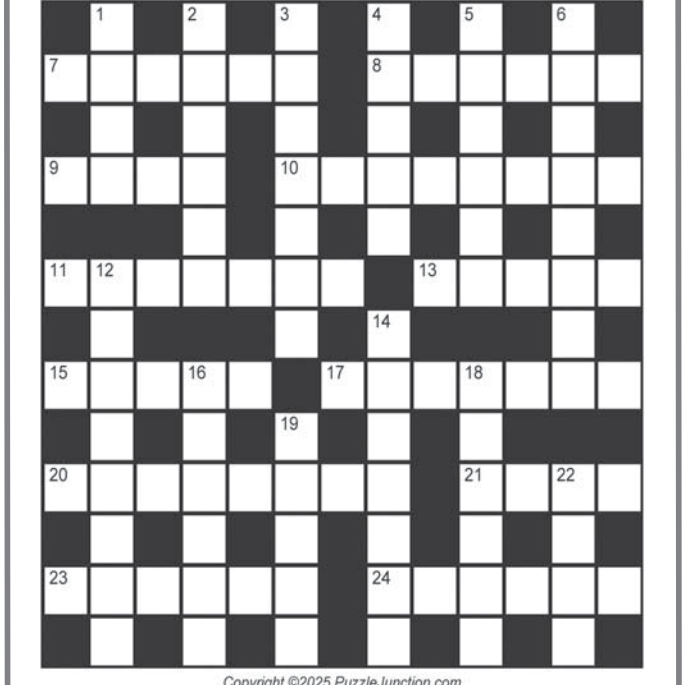
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



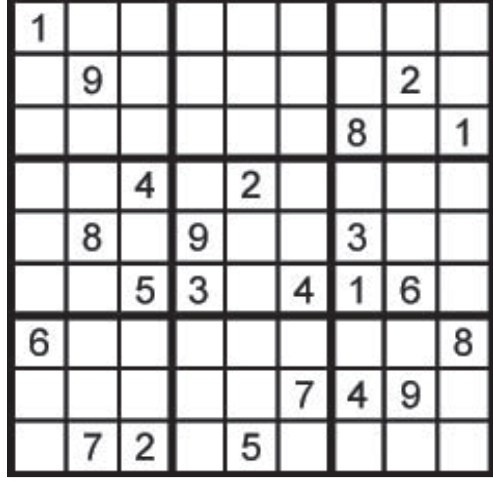
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Despire
 - 8 Arctic treeless plain
 - 9 Malt kiln
 - 10 Smart alecks (4,4)
 - 11 Black magic
 - 13 Wooden shoe
 - 15 Beguile
 - 17 Fill with fear
 - 20 Balladeers
 - 21 Kon Tiki, e.g.
 - 23 Coalition partners
 - 24 Baltic Republic
- Down**
- 1 Roman robe
 - 2 Radio noise
 - 3 Type of marketing
 - 4 Secret supply
 - 5 Poser
 - 6 Canadian forest dweller (4,4)
 - 12 Reverse a decision
 - 14 Archaeologist's finds
 - 16 Anxiety disorder
 - 18 Blue moon, e.g.
 - 19 Charter
 - 22 Fencing sword

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

Farmer issues rock House for 2nd day



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The Odisha Assembly witnessed ruckus for the second consecutive day Saturday as Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress members demanded a special discussion on farmers' issues, including deaths following crop loss, while a senior BJP leader accused former bureaucrat VK Pandian of 'controlling' the actions of BJD members in the House.

As the House assembled for Question Hour at 10.30am, the Opposition members trooped into the well of the House even before Speaker Surama Padhy took her seat and raised slogans against the BJP government. They demanded that a special discussion be held on the farmers' issues after suspending all the business in the House.

While most of the BJD and Congress MLAs were in the well of the House, Congress member Taraprasad Bahinipati was seen

raising slogans standing on a chair near the Speaker's podium.

Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik was present in the House when the BJD and Congress members were agitating in the well of the House.

As the Speaker's repeated appeal to agitating members to return to their seats went in vain, she adjourned the proceedings till noon.

After the adjournment of the House, BJD members marched to Raj Bhavan and submitted a memorandum to Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati on the farmers' issues.

"There is nothing more important than the farmers' plight. The farmers are not being given proper compensation for the crop loss due to the unseasonal rain in December last year. As many as 14 farmers died due to crop loss, some of them due to cardiac arrest. The farmers collapsed on their paddy fields and died, but the

government has not given a single rupee as compensation to the next of kin," BJD deputy leader in Assembly Prasanna Acharya said.

When the House reassembled after the adjournment, it witnessed an uproarious scene as senior BJP leader Jayanarayan Mishra accused former bureaucrat VK Pandian, who was close to former CM Naveen Patnaik, of 'controlling' the BJD members and their actions in the Assembly.

Mishra blamed the BJD members for disrupting the proceedings even after the Speaker agreed for a discussion on the farmers' issues.

"Why do they create ruckus and waste valuable time of the House?" Mishra questioned.

"When I asked BJD members about this in the lobby (a common area for MLAs in the Assembly), they replied they are doing so under the instruction of Pandian," Mishra said, questioning, "Will Pandian run the House?" Mishra alleged that there is a

competition among BJD MLAs to become Pandian's favourite. Mishra's statement sparked a row and the House witnessed noisy scenes with the BJD members strongly objecting to the allegation. They also demanded that Pandian's name be expunged from the Assembly records.

"As per norms of the House, the name of a person who is not a member of the Assembly should not be taken in the House. If the senior MLA (Mishra) has any proof, he should present it before the House. He should also name the BJD MLAs who gave him such information in the lobby," Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik said.

Senior BJD member PK Deb said they demand a special discussion on farmers' issues and not a debate under the norms of the notice for an adjournment motion which is held for only 55 minutes. "Since farmers' issues are much bigger and important, those should be discussed in details. We demand a special discussion and not a 55-minute debate," Deb said.

Outside the House, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling told reporters, "The Opposition plays the role of escapist and does not come for discussion even as the Speaker has allowed for a debate. They (Opposition) are afraid of a debate. The BJD does not have the habit of playing the role of an Opposition party and is therefore failing in its new avatar."

Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati also accused the BJD of disrupting the Assembly. "We had moved an adjournment motion for discussion on the farmers' issues and the Speaker had accepted it. The Congress was ready for the discussion, but the BJD members stalled the House, which is against the interest of the farmers," he said.

Police help sought for ESMA enforcement on discom employees

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The state Energy department has urged the Director General of Police (DGP) YB Khurania to ensure stringent enforcement of Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), 1988 which is in force on employees of all power utilities in the state till April 20 this year.

The state government has promulgated ESMA on power utilities such as GRIDCO, Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL), Odisha Hydro Power Corporation (OHPC), Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) and power distribution companies October 21, 2024 for a period of six months to prevent any incidence of strike and maintain industrial peace.

In a letter to the DGP Friday, Energy department Principal Secretary Vishal Dev said degree and diploma engineers of Tata Power Central Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPCODL) staged a dharna outside the corporate office here in protest against their routine transfer leading to law and order situation.

The senior management of the company and even female employees were denied exit from the building even after office hours recently. The situation was brought under control after the intervention of police administration, he said.

The discom management initiated disciplinary proceedings against such unruly behaviour of the demonstrators and lodged FIRs against four association leaders and seven other engineers.

Subsequently, after the intervention of Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, the transfer orders were modified and TPCODL management decided to withdraw the departmental proceedings as a goodwill gesture.

However, the protesters have decided to take their demonstration to the next level by gathering in large numbers from February 11 demanding immediate withdrawal of the chargesheet against 11 officials, Dev said.

PDS RATION Min: e-KYC verification extended till March 31

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: Keeping in view the difficulties faced by people in remote pockets where there is lack of internet connectivity, the state government has once again extended the deadline for e-KYC (know your customer) verification of ration card holders from February 15 to March 31, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krishna Chandra Patra said Saturday.



This is the third time the state government has extended the time for e-KYC verification of the ration card holders. The e-KYC verification process was supposed to end December 31, last year.

Earlier, the government had extended the deadline to January 31, then till February 15, and now, the fresh deadline is March 31, 2025.

Speaking to reporters here, Patra said the extension was made considering the difficulties faced by the people due to the lack of internet services in remote areas.

Efforts are underway to enhance the connectivity infrastructure with network devices set to be deployed at 341 locations throughout the state, he said.

Out of the total of 11,840 fair price shops or public distribution system (PDS) points, 341 are operating offline, of which there is no network at 230 points, and the internet services are very slow at the remaining 111 locations, Patra pointed out.

Mo Bus driver held over fatal mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: A 'Mo Bus' driver was arrested by the Tamando police on charges of killing a person and injuring five others last Friday night, official sources said Saturday.

The accused has been identified as Prasanta Kumar Chhotray, 31, of Bolgarh. According to Tamando police, Nandini Pradhan, her brother Bidyasagar Pradhan and their mother Rajkumari Pradhan were waiting for a bus near DN Regalia Mall when a 'Mo Bus', driven by Prasanta, hit them and dragged them for a few metres.

IN A NUTSHELL

Out of the total of 11,840 fair price shops in the state, 341 are operating offline, of which there is no network at 230 points

There are 3.32 crore PDS beneficiaries under both Central and state schemes, of whom more than 33 lakh have not completed their e-KYC verification

Efforts are underway to enhance connectivity infrastructure with network devices set to be deployed at 341 locations in the state, says FS&CW minister

He said that a total of 3.25 crore people are beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), and 6.48 lakh people have been covered under the State Food Security Scheme (SFSS).

Of the total of 3.32 crore PDS beneficiaries under both central and state schemes, more than 33 lakh people have not completed their e-KYC verification process, the minister said, adding that nearly 12 lakh e-KYCs are pending in remote locations. The government has extended the deadline across the state for the left-out people to complete the process.

The government's e-KYC process requires Aadhaar-based biometric authentication for each family member through e-POS machines.

Every beneficiary under PDS will need to visit the nearest fair price shop for e-KYC verification, official sources said.

Three others - Satyaban Nayak, his wife Angelina Nayak and their son-in-law Sikandar Parida - were also hit by the speeding 'Mo Bus', they said.

Soon, they were rushed to Capital Hospital, where Nandini was declared 'brought dead' and others were admitted.

Instead of helping victims, Prasanta tried to flee the scene, police said, adding that angry locals, however, nabbed him, and vandalised the bus.

On being informed police reached the spot and placated them.

Prasanta has been booked under Sections 281, 125(a)(b), and 106(1) of BNS, they said.

EXAM TIME

As CBSE annual examinations begin Saturday, Class X students enter Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1, an exam centre, in Bhubaneswar



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The people of this country know the pain of forced removals
CYRIL RAMAPHOSA | PRESIDENT, SOUTH AFRICA

POPE RECOVERING

Pope Francis slept well during a quiet first night in the hospital after being admitted with a respiratory tract infection, and was up eating and reading Saturday, the Vatican said. Francis, 88, ate breakfast Saturday morning and read the newspapers while continuing his drug therapy, spokesman Matteo Bruni said



of the day quote

There is no conflict of fundamental interests or geopolitical conflict between China and the EU
WANG YI | FOREIGN MINISTER, CHINA

It was an honour to welcome India's Prime Minister @narendramodi back to the United States, and look forward to continuing to strengthen the US-India friendship
TULSI GABBARD | US DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Senator, you said that democracy doesn't put food on your table. Actually ... in my part of the world, it (democracy) does. Today, since we are a democratic society, we give nutrition support, and food to 800 million people
S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

'Armed forces of Europe must be created'

Zelensky, Scholz take strong stands as new line from Washington under Trump jolts Europe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Munich, Feb 15: Two top European leaders stiffened their spines Saturday over unsettling new policies from Washington under President Donald Trump, as Ukraine's president urged creation of an "armed forces of Europe" and the leader of Germany denounced meddling in its election after US Vice President JD Vance met with a German far-right leader.

Strident speeches from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Day 2 of the Munich Security Conference testified to the impact of a blizzard of Trump decisions that have resonated at home and in Europe, notably his hopes to end the Russia-Ukraine war and nurture perceived allies on the continent.

Ramping up his desire for a more muscular and mighty Europe, Zelensky said Ukraine's three-year fight against an invading Russian army has proved that a foundation exists for the creation of a European army that has long been discussed among some continental leaders. "I really believe that time



The old days are over when America supported Europe just because it always had
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

has come," he said. "The armed forces of Europe must be created." It's unclear whether the idea will catch on with European leaders.

Zelensky has sought greater military and economic support from the European Union for years and repeatedly warned that other parts of Europe could be vulnerable to Russia's expansionist ambitions too.

While the bloc — along with the United States — has been one of Kyiv's strongest

backers, pockets of political disagreement in EU over its approach to Moscow and economic realities, including national debt levels that have crimped defence spending, have gotten in the way of greater support.

Zelensky alluded to a phone conversation between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin this week, after which Trump said he and Putin would likely meet soon to negotiate a peace deal over

Ukraine — breaking with the Biden administration's harder line against Moscow over Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Trump later assured Zelensky that he, too, would have a seat at the table to end the war. The Ukrainian leader insisted Europe should also have one.

"Ukraine will never accept deals made behind our backs without our involvement, and the same rule should apply to all of Europe," Zelensky said. "A few days ago, President Trump told me about his conversation with Putin. Not once did he mention that America needs Europe at the table. That says a lot."

Zelensky insisted that "three years of full-scale war have proven that we already have the foundation for a united European military force. And now, as we fight this war and lay the groundwork for peace and security, we must build the armed forces of Europe."

Noting the presence of NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte in the audience, Zelensky said his idea "wasn't about replacing the alliance. This is about making Europe's contribution

to our partnership equal to America's".

Scholz responds to Vance
Earlier, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he was "pleased" at what he called a shared commitment with the United States to the "preserving the sovereign independence of Ukraine," and agreed with Trump that the Russia-Ukraine war must end.

But also Scholz took aim at the new political tack from Washington, affirming his strong stance against the far-right and said his country won't accept people who "intervene in our democracy" — alluding to remarks by US Vice President JD Vance who scolded European leaders over their approach to democracy. Ahead of February 23 elections in Germany, polls show the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party — whose co-leader met with Vance Friday — currently in second, ahead of Scholz's own Social Democrats.

Alluding to Germany's Nazi past, Scholz said the longstanding commitment to "Never Again" — a return to the extreme right — was not reconcilable with support for AfD.

Three Israeli hostages freed in Gaza, Israel to release 369 Palestinians

REUTERS

Cairo, Feb 15: Israeli hostages Iair Horn, Sagui Dekel-Chen and Sasha (Alexander) Troufanov were freed in Gaza Saturday and Israel began releasing some 369 Palestinian prisoners and detainees in exchange, after mediators helped avert a ceasefire collapse.

The three Israelis were led onto a stage with Palestinian Hamas militants armed with automatic rifles standing on each side of them at the site in Khan Younis, live footage showed, before they were taken into Israel by Israeli forces.

Shortly afterwards, the first bus carrying freed Palestinian prisoners and detainees departed Israel's Ofer jail in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, live footage showed.

The swap of the three Israelis for the 369 Palestinians eased fears that the ceasefire agreement could collapse before the end of the 42-day first stage of a ceasefire deal in effect since January 19.

In what has become known as Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, people broke into cheers and tears when they heard the Red Cross was on its way to deliver the three to Israeli military forces in the Gaza Strip.

SHORT TAKES

Another woman takes over top job at Vatican

Rome: Another woman is taking over a top management job in the Vatican: Sister Raffaella Petrini, an Italian nun, was named Saturday as president of the Vatican City State, making her essentially the governor of the 44-hectare (108-acre) territory in Rome that is home to the Catholic Church. Petrini had previously been the secretary general of the Vatican administration, which among other things is responsible for the functioning of the Vatican Museums, a major source of revenue for the Holy See. She moves into the top job March 1 following the retirement of Cardinal Fernando Vergez Alzaga, who turns 75 that day. Last month, Francis named the first woman to head a major Holy See office, appointing another Italian nun, Sister Simona Brambilla, to become prefect of the department responsible for all the Catholic Church's religious orders.

Looting hits eastern Congo's Bukavu

Bukavu: Chaotic scenes unfolded in the eastern Congo city of Bukavu on Saturday after Rwanda-backed M23 rebels reached its outskirts, while a threat by Uganda's army chief to attack a Congolese town raised fears of the conflict flaring into a wider regional war. The rebels have been pushing south towards Bukavu, the second-largest city in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, since they seized Goma, the largest city, at the end of last month. On Saturday, the World Food Programme's depot in Bukavu, which housed 6,800 metric tons of food, was being looted, a spokesperson told Reuters.

Nepal Deputy PM sustains burn injuries

Kathmandu: Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel Saturday suffered burns during the inauguration of a tourism fair and was airlifted to Kathmandu. Paudel, who is also the finance minister, and Pokhara Mayor Dhanraj Acharya received burn injuries when hydrogen-filled balloons caught fire while lighting a candle at the inauguration of 'Visit Pokhara Year' aimed at attracting two million tourists in 2025. Pun Lama, the mayor's private secretary, told PTI that Paudel sustained injuries in his head and hand while Acharya suffered burns on his face. Both were airlifted to Kathmandu's Kirtipur Burn Hospital through Simrik Air helicopter for further treatment after receiving first-aid treatment at a hospital in Pokhara, Lama said.

HK residents compete to name twin panda cubs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hong Kong, Feb 15: Panda craze has once again gripped Hong Kong as residents compete to name the territory's first locally-born giant panda cubs who just turned six months old.

The competition to name the twin cubs, born August 15, launched Saturday following a celebratory ceremony attended by Hong Kong leader John Lee and other officials at Ocean Park, the theme park that houses the twins, their parents and two other giant pandas that arrived from mainland China last year. Residents can submit their suggestions via the park's website.

Lee said the southern Chinese city now has the largest number



of pandas in captivity outside of mainland China, and the cubs' names would be announced in the first half of this year.

The pair, currently identified as the "Elder Sister" and the "Little Brother", will make their public debut Sunday and meet visitors for five hours daily. The birth of the baby pandas last year made their mother Ying Ying the world's oldest first-time panda mom.

Assault on US agencies: Nearly 10K fired

The firings are in addition to the roughly 75,000 workers who have taken a buyout that Trump and Musk have offered to get them to leave voluntarily. That equals about 3% of the 2.3 million person civilian workforce

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 15: The campaign by President Donald Trump and his adviser Elon Musk to radically cut back the US bureaucracy spread Friday, firing more than 9,500 workers who handled everything from

managing federal lands to caring for military veterans.

Workers at the departments of Interior, Energy, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture and Health and Human Services had their employment terminated in a drive that so far has largely — but not exclusively — targeted probationary employees in their first year on the job who have fewer employment protections.

Trump says the federal government is too bloated and too much money is lost to waste and fraud. The government has some \$36 trillion in debt and ran a \$1.8 trillion deficit last year, and there is bipartisan agreement on the need for reform.

But congressional Democrats say Trump is encroaching on the legislature's constitutional



authority over federal spending, even as his fellow Republicans who control majorities in both chambers of Congress have largely supported the moves.

The speed and breadth of Musk's effort has produced growing frustration among some of Trump's aides over a lack of coordination, including White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, sources told Reuters. **'BETRAYED BY MY COUNTRY'**

Fired federal workers expressed shock.

"I've done a lot for my country and as a veteran who served his country, I feel like I've been betrayed by my country," said Nick Gioia, who served in the army and worked for the Department of Defense for a total of 17 years before joining the USDA's Economic Research Service in December only to be fired late Thursday.

"I don't feel like this has anything to do with federal workers, I feel like this is just a game," said Gioia, who lives in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and has a child with epilepsy. "To sit here and watch people like Mr Musk tweet out how he feels like he's doing a great job, he doesn't realize what he's doing to people's lives."

WEEK'S BEST PICS



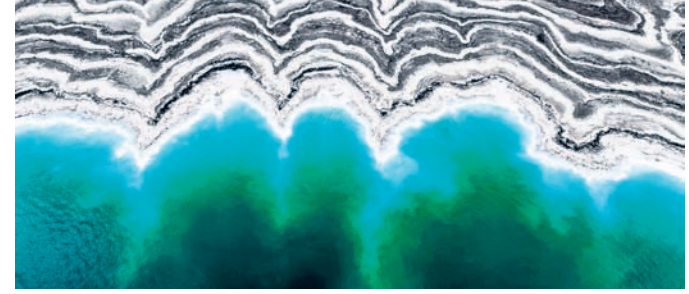
A woman holds heart-shaped balloons at Trocadero Square near the Eiffel Tower on Valentine's Day in Paris, France February 14



Fragments of an explosive device, a radiation warning sign in the foreground, are displayed by Ukrainian authorities after a drone attack at the former Chernobyl nuclear power plant, Ukraine February 14



A Congolese child, displaced by recent clashes between the M23 rebels and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), prepares to leave camp after being instructed by the M23 rebels to vacate the camps on the outskirts of Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, February 12



A drone picture shows part of the Dead Sea and its shore near Ein Gedi, Israel, February 9



A folk artist takes part in a molten iron fireworks performance at Shanghai Happy Valley amusement park during the Lantern Festival, which marks the end of the Lunar New Year celebrations, in Shanghai, China, February 12



Students are greeted by residents as they finish their protest march over the fatal November 2024 Novi Sad railway station roof collapse, in Kragujevac, Serbia February 13

