

Defining feminism

Kritika Kamra believes that actresses have a responsibility to support narratives that go beyond surface-level feminism LEISURE | P2

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 317 I www. orissapost.com

No attacks in India

A UN report says terror group Islamic State was unable to mount largescale attacks in India INTERNATIONAL | P10

BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 17, 2025



Exodus from equities

The exodus of FPIs from the Indian equity markets continues as they pulled out ₹21,272 crore in the first 2 weeks of this month BUSINESS | P11

England beat eves

Indian women's hockey team fights back twice before going down 1-2 in shoot-out against England in their FIH Pro League match

SPORTS | P12

12 PAGE | ₹5.00



MAD RUSH: Passengers try to board a train, at the Varanasi railway station, Sunday. Several trains are running overcrowded amid ongoing Mahakumbh Mela

New Delhi Railway Station stampede toll reaches 18

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: The death toll in the overnight stampede at the packed New Delhi railway station rose to 18 Sunday, with authorities saying confusion over almost identical train names after an announcement of the platform number for an arriving Prayagraj-bound spe-cial train sparked panic and a sudden rush.

The dead included 11 women, two men, one male teen and four children, according to a list put out by the Delhi Police. Three people were also grievously injured and 27 others received simple injuries, the Railway Ministry said in a statement, adding that out of them 11 were given treatment and released from a hospital.

As survivors recalled how people trampled over each other amid cries for help, the Delhi Police said it will analyse the CCTV footage to determine the exact sequence of events before chaos erupted at the station Saturday night. The station witnessed a surge of passengers waiting to board trains at platform number 14 and 15 for Prayagraj--where the Mahakumbh is underway. A preliminary probe revealed

that the stampede occurred af-

Oppn guns for rail min's scalp

Opposition parties Sunday squarely blamed the government for "gross mismanagement" at New Delhi railway station that led to a stampede in which 18 people died and demanded Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw resign taking moral responsibility. Several opposition parties, including the Congress, the Left, Trinamool Congress and the Rashtriya Janata Dal, accused the government of fail ing to make elaborate arrangements and "covering up" the actual number of deaths. The BJP leaders, however, sought to defend the government by posting pictures on social media that showed the situation at the New Delh railway station had turned normal. P8

ter some passengers slipped and fell on others while coming down from a foot overbridge.

The Railway Ministry ordered a high level inquiry by a two-member committee into the stampede which also triggered a political blame game.

President Droupadi Murmu and political leaders across the spectrum condoled the loss of lives in the stampede. The Delhi Police found in its initial probe that the stampede happened as passengers got confused between 'Prayagraj Express' and 'Prayagraj Special', and thought they might miss their train, police sources said.

DSP among 2 killed in Panikoili collision

PNN & AGENCIES

Jajpur, Feb 16: Two persons including a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) were killed when their car was hit by a speeding truck in Jajpur district Sunday, police said.

The accident took place on National Highway 215 under Panikoili police limits Sunday afternoon. The deceased police officer has been identified as Balaram Nayak who was working as DSP in the Jajpur district police headquarters at Panikoili while the other deceased is his relative, identified as Purna Chandra Navak. According to reports, the DSP along with his relative was returning to Panikoili from his native place at Ghatagaon in Keonjhar district when a speeding truck hit their car near Kripalu Rice Mill. The local people rescued the two and sent them to Maharaj Jajati Keshari Medical College and Hospital (MJKMCH) in Jaipur Town in critical condition. However, both were declared dead on arrival by doctors.

US DOGE cuts \$21mn 'turnout booster' aid

The US Department of Govern*ment Efficiency (DOGE), led* by Elon Musk, has announced the cancellation of a USD 21 million grant aimed at boosting voter turnout in India as part of a broader reduction of hundreds



tions. He questioned who the beneficiary was, asserting that it was 'not the ruling party for

"USD 21M for voter turnout. This definitely is external interference in India's electoral process. Who gains from this? Not the ruling party for sure!" the BJP's IT department head said on X He claimed that the now cancelled programme was a pointer to the previous Congress-led UPA government allegedly enabling infiltration of Indian institutions by forces opposed to the country's interests.

3rd planeload of deportees arrives

SGPC Sunday strongly

condemned US

authorities for

allegedly not allowing

Sikhs in 2nd batch

to wear their turbans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 16: A US military aircraft carrying 112 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport late Sunday evening, the third such plane bringing deportees amid a crackdown by the Donald Trump administration against illegal immigrants. The C-17 aircraft landed at the airport

at 10.03pm, sources said. Of the 112 deportees, 44 are

The family members of some of the deportees were present at the airport when the plane

background checks. Arrangements have been made for the transportation of the deportees to their respective destinations

On February 5, a US military aircraft carrying the first batch of 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar. Of the deportees in the first batch. 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat, and 30 from Punjab.

A second aircraft Saturday evening brought 116 deportees from the United States, amid questions raised by several

The police have started an investigation to ascertain the cause of the accident.

After getting information about the mishap, Jajpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Yashpratap Shrimal visited the MJKMCH, enquired about the incident and sent the bodies for autopsy.

A manhunt is on to nab the driver of the truck, police said.

er-funded programmes. Other cuts include grants for political processes in several countries, including India's neighbours Bangladesh and Nepal. as well as various international initiatives such as gender equality and environmental projects. DOGE's actions are part of Musk's mandate to curb government waste. The cancellation of the 'voter turnout initiative' in India sparked controversy, with BJP leader Amit Malviya criticising it as "external interference" in India's elections, questioning who benefitted from the funding. These developments come shortlv after Prime Minister Modi's visit to the US, during which he met Musk to discuss collabora-

tive efforts in technology and

New York, Feb 16: The US

governance.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

of millions of dollars in taxpay

cated for voter turnout in India. US President Donald Trump chose Musk to head DOGE last month. Tasked with improving governance and curbing wasteful expenditures, the DOGE in a post on X Saturday announced cancelling many programmes costing hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars.

The department said, "US taxpayer dollars were going to be spent on the following items, all (of) which have been cancelled." The list included USD 486 million in grants to the "Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening" including USD 21 million for voter turnout in India and USD 22 million for inclusive and participatory political process in Moldova. No further details on the funding were given in the post.

Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) led by billion-Reacting to the post, senior BJP leader Amit Malviya aire Elon Musk has announced a series of expenditure cuts, termed the grant as 'external including USD 21 million allointerference' in India's elec-

This comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit to the US, during which he held talks with President Trump, as well as Musk.

The SpaceX CEO met Modi with his family, including three children. The two discussed opportunities in space, mobility, technology, and energy and exchanged notes on efforts at good governance in India and the US.

In its post, the DOGE also cancelled USD 29 million allocated to strengthening political landscape in Bangladesh, as well as USD 20 million for fiscal federalism in Nepal and USD 19 million for biodiversity conversation in the Himalayan nation

from Haryana, 33 from Guja rat, 31 from Punjab, two from Uttar Pradesh and one each is from Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, they added. There are 19 women and 14 minors. including two infants, in the fresh batch of deportees, the sources said.

CM to present Budget today

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will table the annual state Budget Monday. This Budget comes eight months after formation of BJP government in state, and there is widespread anticipation regarding the fiscal strategies that will be unveiled by the Chief Minister. As per reports Odisha government would adopt a long-term strategy and increase allocations for key sectors like agriculture, health, education and infrastructure. The Budget will aim to bolster Odisha's economy by prioritising its traditionally strong mining sector, alongside agriculture, rural development, and tourism.

landed. The third batch of deportees landed in Amritsar within 24 hours of another US military aircraft bringing the second such batch.

The deportees will be allowed to head home after the completion of all formalities, including immigration, verification and

Rasulgarh murder: Kev

accused surrenders

Bhubaneswar: The prime suspect

Mancheswar Police station Sunday

Police subsequently arrested the

accused, Rama Naik, of Kedarpalli

slum under Capital police station

limits. "Based on some significant

evidence fetched during the

investigation, we realised she

(Rama) was also involved in the

case and she must be arrested. As

murder case, we will file the charge

sheet after a careful and meticulous

Pinak Mishra, Deputy Commissioner

there is a conspiracy angle to the

investigation in the case," said

of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar.

in the case of a ghastly murder of a youth at Rasulgarh area here

last month surrendered at the

political leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhag want Mann, over the BJP-led Centre's move to allow planes carrying immigrants to land in Amritsar. Mann even accused the Centre of trying to defame Punjab as part of a conspiracy

Gaurav may be trapped: Sarma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 16: Appearing to soften his stand against Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi over the controversy surrounding the Congress leader's British wife. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Sunday suggested that the opposition leader may have been trapped or blackmailed as part of a larger anti-India conspiracy.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event, Sarma expressed sympathy for Gogoi. saying the matter had gone beyond politics with the emergence of new evidence and was now solely related to national security.

Earlier in the day, the BJP leader welcomed the Congress MP's planned legal case over the controversy related to his wife Elizabeth Colburn's alleged ISI links, saying the state government was also mulling a similar step.

"We started discussing this topic about a parliamentarian, but now it has escalated to a much higher level. It is no longer related to Gauray Gogoi. Now, we have proof or information of an anti-India force actively working behind this. We will decide in today's cabinet," Sarma told reporters here.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

The nation wants to know... not about your vision, policies, or work... but the name of your dress designer, sir

TO MA GWANJU

Potential arms-for-minerals deal brings hope, doubt

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kirovohrad Region (Ukraine), Feb 16: The mineral ilmenite is extracted from mounds of sand deep in

the earth and refined using

a method that summons the

force of gravity, resulting in a

substance that glimmers like a

Ukraine boasts vast reserves

of ilmenite — a key element

used to produce titanium — in

the heavy mineral sands that

stretch for miles along the

Much of it, as with all of Ukraine's critical minerals industry, is underdeveloped because of war as well as onerous state policies. That is poised to change if

US President Donald Trump's administration agrees to a deal with Ukraine to exchange critical minerals for continued American military aid. In the central region of Kiro-

vohrad, the ilmenite open-pit mine is a canyon of precious deposits that its owner is keen to develop with US companies. But many unknowns stand in the way



of turning these riches into profit cost, licensing terms and whether such a deal will be underpinned by security guarantees

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday at the Munich Security Conference that he did not permit his ministers to sign a mineral

resource agreement with the US because the current version is not "ready to protect us, our interests." Ukrainian businessmen with knowledge of the minerals industry also privately expressed scepticism about whether a deal is viable.

The capital-intensive industry is unlikely to yield results in years, if not decades, as geological data is either limited or classified. Many question what conditions American companies are willing to risk to build up the industry and whether existing Ukrainian policies that have so far deterred local businessmen will accommodate foreign investors.

"The main thing we can gain is certain security guarantees obtained through economic means, so that someone stronger than us has an interest in protecting us," said Andriv Brodsky, CEO of Velta, a leading titanium mining company in Ukraine.

A deal, which would essentially barter one resource for another, could help strengthen Kyiv's relationship with the Trump administration.









moonlit sky.



country's embattled east.







Isure

E FORECAST



PETE LENDS SUPPORT **TO EX-FIANCEE ARIANA**

Comedian and actor Pete Davidson cheered for ex-fiancee Ariana Grande this awards season and said that he would like to see her win the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. Ariana is nominated for playing Glinda in Wicked.

BENNY OPENS UP ABOUT HIS **INSECURITIES WITH SELENA**

Benny Blanco expressed fears about Selena Gomez possibly ending their relationship, despite their deep bond and her reassurances. The couple, engaged in December 2024, is set to release their first collaborative album, highlighting their supportive and loving dynamic.



Kritika on feminism

accuracy • reliability • trust You may feel empty, and completely down-and-out today. Ganesha says that this may make you feel a bit more inclined to spirituality. Meditation and prayer will engage more of your attention. You will also make considerable material progress.

TAURUS

In all probability, you will discuss certain sacred issues with your beloved today, predicts Ganesha. In the evening, you will be possibly

Ganesha Speaks.com

visiting holy places. You had better make up for the lost time to finish pending work in the afternoon. Think twice before you act, warns Ganesha

GEMINI

A long and hectic day awaits ou. You will be in the mood to finish off long-pending projects at work or at home. There is a chance that your personal life may get affected due to the extra attention you

pay towards work. You need to guard against hurting the feelings of your family members, says Ganesha.

CANCER

You have always been quite prudent when it comes to spending your hard-earned moolah, yet today you may feel stingier. And, you will rightly be so, for there may be unnecessary burdens and demands made on you be your near and dear ones. Although you will be aware of this, you will still be able to keep them happy, affirms Ganesha.

LEO

You will not be able to reap the rewards of your hard work fully today. You will take all matters very seriously today. You

will feel a sense of responsibility and will try to find lasting solutions to problems today. It is a good day to put to rest some worries that have been haunting you for some time now, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

A heady mixture of work and partying is on the cards today. The parties may go on well into the night. You will make the ight decisions today which will prove to be vital in putting you on the road to success. Ganesha says people will profit by engaging you in their work.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that for people you may appear to be a miser but when it comes to your closed ones you will never hold back or hesitate to spend. Today is a good day to take

Mumbai: Kritika Kamra has conwomen's rights gain momentum in

sistently embraced bold choices across television, films and digital platforms. With Saare Jahan Se Acha, recently announced as part of Netflix's new slate, she continues to advocate for women-centric storytelling. In an industry still striving for meaningful female representation, Kritika believes actresses have a responsibility to support narratives that go beyond surface-level feminism.

In a latest interview, the actress said, "Feminism isn't just about social media posts; it requires real-world action. Armchair feminism doesn't work—you have to walk the talk. Sharing a hashtag isn't enough. We need to make conscious choices in our roles, speak up for the right causes and create spaces where women can thrive. It's about actively pushing for gender equality and making tangible contributions to women's empowerment. If you have the resources, use them to build something impactful. Feminism is a lifelong commitment, not a trend.

As discussions on

the entertainment industry, Kritika urges the industry to move beyond performative support for women. By calling out passive engagement with feminist ideals, she challenges both her peers and fans to take responsibility for fostering real change. The Mitron actress further emphasises that for her, choosing roles isn't just about screen time but meaningful representation. Speaking about Saare Jahan Se Acha and Matka King, she asserts, "These films put women at forefront the

in a substantial way. Their journeys matter and that's the kind of storytelling I want to champion." AGENCIES

Sam's cryptic post on love

Mumbai: Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently shared new photos from a shoot on Instagram, drawing attention not just for her stunning look but also for her intriguing caption. This comes amid dating speculations with Honey Bunny director Raj Nidimoru, following comments from her ex-husband Naga Chaitanya about her moving on.

Samantha posted lyrics from Selena Gomez's song Scared of Loving You. She wrote: "If I lose my shit, promise not to laugh. If I throw a fit and get photographed, would you take my side? Would you hold my hand? If they sell a lie, don't let them send me back (sic)." Expressing admiration for the singer, she added hashtags #lyricsforlife and #SelenaGomez.

In the photos, Samantha wore a white outfit with a long skirt featuring tassels, complemented by a broad green belt.

AGENCIES

On the work front, the *Kushi* actress is set to appear in the action fantasy series *Rakt* Brahmand: The Boody Kingdom. The Raj & DK series also stars Aditya Roy Kapoor, Ali Fazal and Wamiqa Gabbi.



Biographical book on Anubhav Mohanty unveiled

BHUBANESWAR: A biographical book titled 'Blockbuster Ru Ballot Box', based on the life of Odia actor-politician Anubhav Mohanty was unveiled at a City hotel here recently. The book, published by Timepass Publications, is authored by Jagrati Shukla and co-authored by the late Astitwa. The Odia version of the book is written by Manas Padhiary.

The book launch event saw participation from film personalities, literary figures, and political leaders. Joining the occasion as chief speaker, writer, poet and lyricist Devdas Chhotray lauded the book and called it "a testament of Anubhav Mohanty's perseverance, dedication, and an unbreakable bond with Odisha."

Speaking at the event, Mohanty expressed his gratitude and said, "This book is deeply personal. It reflects my father's teachings, my struggles, and my love for Odisha. I hope readers find inspiration in these pages.'

The biography is now available in major bookstores in City and at online platforms, offering readers an insight into Mohanty's journey from cinema to politics and his commitment towards public service. PNN

Kareena's stern instruction to paps

Mumbai: It seems the breach in privacy has scarred Kareena Kapoor Khan, as she asked the paparazzi to refrain from taking the pictures of her children. The actress was

seen paying a visit to her father Randhir Kapoor on his birthday Saturday. She was seen dressed in a white shirt and a pair of denims. This comes after the stabbing incident on the actress' husband, Saif Ali Khan. Earlier, Saif

appearance after he returned to his home following the knife attack on him. The actor was seen at a five star property in the Juhu area of Mumbai for a Netflix event. The actor attended the trailer launch of his upcoming streaming title Jewel Thief - The Heist Begins in which he shares the screen with Jaideep Ahlawat.

Last month. Saif was attacked by an assailant who barged into his Bandra house through his youngest son, Jeh's room

As per media reports, doctors removed the 2.5 inches of knife from his wound. The actor was Ali stabbed multiple times in an at-Khan tempt to fight off the accused. The incident took place as the made accused allegedly barged into his their Bandra home, and atfirst pub tacked their house help. lic

your loved ones shopping. You may overspend your budget but the spending will give you a feeling of happiness and contentment.

SCORPIO

Don't run from your troubles, learn to face the challenges and try to solve your problems. This piece of Ganesha's advise is going to help you today. And you very well know why. Take all the tips that come to you sportingly and try to implement it in your practical life.

SAGITTARIUS

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A fresh and renewed you, today all your focus is on your kith and kins. This includes sneaking some time off for your beloved as well! Romantic conversations and intimacy will add some spark to the day. After family, friends too come to take their share.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

CAPRICORN

Singles, you may meet the one of your dreams today and plan about a future together. You will feel and enjoy the exciting feeling of meeting your life partner and letting your heart open in front of somebody, says Ganesha. All of this will not be one sided.

You will aim for the bull's eye today. Whatever you'll do today, will be done with your focus set firmly on your target, says Ganesha. You will not waste vour resource on something unfruitful, and such an attitude will make your iournev smoother and faster.

PISCES

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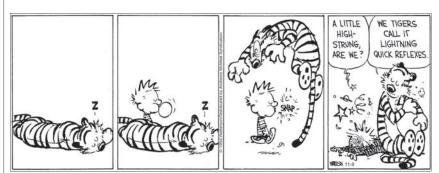
You are likely to find yourself as part of a team involved in tackling a difficult project or task today. The role you will play in this Endeavour will be noteworthy. Your efforts will yield excellent results. Everything you touch will turn to gold today, says Ganesha. Make the most of it.

PEANUTS





CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY





CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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.

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SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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SUDOKU

ISSAP MONDAY | FEBRUARY 17, 2025 | BHUBANESWAR wntown

ANNUAL MAGAZINE

Dignitaries unveil the annual magazine of Sriradharaman Foundation on the occasion of its foundation day celebrations, in Puri, Sunday

NABARD pegs state's credit



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Govt to support IT sector in R&D efforts: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: The Odisha government will be setting up dedicated Centres of Excellence to support R&D efforts in the fast growing IT sector in the state, Electronic and Information Technology (E&IT) Minister Mukesh Mahaling said.

Speaking at a joint discussion centre organised by the Electronics and Information Technology (E&IT) department with NASSCOM recently, Mahaling said, "Odisha's IT industry is rapidly growing, and the Government is committed to support this growth. Further, the Government wants to support the industry in its R&D efforts, and will set-up dedicated Centres of Excellence (CoEs) as part of this endeavor.

The minister said a CoE with senior industry leaders and distinguished academics will also be set up to provide guidance to the government in its IT initiatives

Vishal Dev, Principal Secretary, E&IT department, said the state government's objective is to build a future-ready IT industry in Odisha.

"The upcoming IT Policy provides a competitive and comprehensive set of incentives, and will strengthen Odisha's position in the digital economy. The policy encompasses a range of areas, from IT infrastructure and skill-devel-

opment to sustainability and R&D," Dev said.

A comprehensive presentation on the draft of the upcoming IT Policy was delivered during the event, highlighting its key features and proposed incentives.

This was followed by an interactive question and answer session where officials from the E&IT department provided responses to the queries raised by industry representatives.

Special Secretary of E&IT department Manas Panda and CEO Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC) Pradeep Raut attended the event along with representatives from NASSCOM and Odisha's IT industry.



agriculture sector and banks should come forward and provide credit to ensure these economic benefits reach farmers, he said.

He also lauded NABARD's role in supporting self-help groups (SHGs) and its efforts to skill young women through grant-based entrepreneurship and skill development programmes

The deputy chief minister stressed the importance of strengthening the Farmers

and enabling growth in the

Sibling duo held for woman's murder POST NEWS NETWORK

PNN & AGENCIES

at Rs 2,52,000 crore.

during a seminar.

The credit project for 2025-26

(Rs 2,51,952 crore) is about 20

per cent higher than the pre-

vious vear's Rs 2.10.140 crore.

Inaugurating the seminar,

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak

Vardhan Singh Deo emphasised

the need to increase bank credit

for the state's priority sectors.

saving the state government

has also been supporting this

effort through various schemes.

investing in infrastructure

"The government has been

Tihidi, Feb 16: More than a month after a woman was found hanging outside her lover's house at Gobindpur village in Bhadrak district, police Sunday arrested two siblings, including her lover, on murder charges. Gayatri Das, a resident of Paitipur village under Pirhat

police limits, went missing from her house January 3. only to be found hanging outside the house of her lover Amulya Das at Sapakatia village the next day.

The accused were identified as Amulya Das, the alleged lover, and his elder brother Bijay Das. The arrests were made after investigations revealed that the duo had strangulated the woman to death before hanging her to pass it off as a suicide.

Producer Organisation (FPO) ecosystem for socio-economic development. He also urged bankers to fi-

nance value chains and innovative and new-age projects to drive agricultural growth and enhance farmers' incomes.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said that Odisha has been growing faster and better and banks have to improve the quality of lending. He advised all stakeholders that efforts have to be

put to achieve the current year targets.

"Start-ups also need credit and banks have to come forward," Ahuja said, adding that allied sectors such as dairy goatery and fisheries have tremendous potential in the state, and banks have to increase the credit flow to the sector.

Sudhanshu KK Mishra, CGM NABARD said concerted effort is needed for increasing the credit flow to priority sector with focus on agriculture, and allied sector in particular.

Commissioner-cum-Coop eration Secretary Rajesh Pra bhakar Patil said that the state government's focus is towards livelihood and cooperation sector which will increase multifold in coming months. He added that the credit flow from banks to the priority sector in

Odisha needs lot of urgent improvement and attention.

Shaadi, Utsav ya Tyohar... Lijjat Papad Ho Harbarm Karram Kurram... Kurram Karram...

Website : www.lijjat.com





media. Giving details of the padyatra, Patnaik said Das will undertake the 60 km-long padaya-

tra from Bhubaneswar to Puri Tuesday. It will start from Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here 10 am, and cover Shishu Bhavan, Rajmahal, Kalpana, Ravi Talkies Square before

Key suspect in City murder case surrenders PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: The prime suspect in the ghastly murder of a youth here last month surrendered at the Mancheswar Police station Sunday. The Police subsequently arrested the accused Rama Naik of Redarpalli Slum, under Capital police station limits.

"Based on some significant evidence fetched during the investigation, we realised she (Rama) was also involved in the case and she must be arrested," said Pinak Mishra, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar. He said that the family members of the victim. Sahadev Navak, had mentioned



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: Newly appointed Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das who will undertake a 'Sankalp Padyatra' from Bhubaneswar to Puri before assuming charge will not make any political speech until he has darshan of Lord Jagannath, a senior Congress leader said.

Addressing a press conference here Sunday, Chairman of the Sankalp Padayatra Committee and former MLA, Debashis Patnaik said, "The new OPCC president will not make any political speech until he has darshan of Lord Jagannath and sought his blessings. After returning from Jagannath temple, Das will address the

reaching Lingipura at 1 pm.

After a lunch break, the walk will start again from Lingipur and reach Pipili. The participants of the padayatra including Das will spend the night at Pipili and start the journey on the following day and reach Teisipur. After lunch, they will start again and spend the night in Chandanpur on the way to Puri.

The padayatra will start from Chandanpur February 20, and after having lunch at 'Bata Mangala' in the afternoon, the newly appointed OPCC president will have a darshan of Lord Sri Jagannath and seek his blessings, Patnaik said.

He said the objective of the padayatra is to establish the Congress as the number one political party in the state and to wish for the progress of Odisha along with the successful transformation of the state.

Rama as the key conspirator in the FIR.

He also stated that the family members had earlier approached the cops seeking her arrest. During the course of the investigation, police also found that a conspiracy had been hatched to murder Sahadev, Mishra said.

The DCP said that seven persons, including Rama, have so far been arrested in the case. He revealed about the involvement of more persons in the murder conspiracy.

It is pertinent here to mention here that bike-borne miscreants had hacked Sahadev to death near the busy Rasulgarh Square area under Mancheswar Police limits January 8.

Sahadev, who lived in Kedarpalli slum under the Capital Police station area, was returning home after dropping her daughter at her school in VSS Nagar area in the morning when the miscreants assaulted him with sharp weapons. The police later initiated an investigation into the case, registering a case on the basis of a complaint lodged by the deceased's wife.

She alleged that some residents of the slum who are engaged in selling brown sugar killed her husband for protesting against the illegal trade of drugs in the locality.

TROPHY TOURS SRIMANDIR



POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Feb 16: Ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025, the tournament's trophy was taken to Srimandir here, Sunday. According to reports, the trophy was brought by authorities of Kolk-

ata Knight Riders (KKR), the defending champions, to seek blessings of the presiding deities at Srimandir. This was part of the KKR's trophy tour ahead of the tournament in March this year.

Notably, Kolkata Knight Riders won the IPL trophy last year, and team members are optimistic about retaining the current trophy.

Excited servitors performed a special Puja for the trophy as a large crowd gathered at the temple to witness the event.

Later during the day, the trophy was put on display at the Nexus Esplanade mall in Rasulgarh where hundreds of fans jostled for selfies with the coveted cup.

Reports suggest that the trophy will be taken to several famous temples across the country for similar puja ceremonies.



OrissaPOS

MONDAY | FEBRUARY 17, 2025 | BHUBANESWAR

Jowntown



MPSO 2025 CONCLUDES

'Blue Economy has potential for employment generation'



Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati emphasises fisheries and livestock as key to growth, livelihoods, and sustainability

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: The fisheries sector, often termed the 'Blue Economy', holds immense potential for employment generation, nutritional security, and foreign exchange earnings, said Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati at the closing ceremony of Matsya-Pranee Samavesh Odisha (MPSO) 2025, the state-level Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Fair, held at Biju Patnaik playground in Baramunda Sunday

The Governor emphasised that Odisha's vast coastline and inland water resources provide an opportunity for the state to become a leader in fisheries, aquaculture, and animal resources development. He urged stakeholders to work with missionary zeal to drive economic growth and improve rural livelihoods.

Stressing the importance of diversification, he said, "Traditional farming alone may not always sustain rural households. Integrating dairy, poultry, and fisheries with modern techniques like scientific feed management and disease control can enhance productivity and profitability.

He also highlighted the need for value addition through processing and marketing, which can help farmers secure better prices for their produce.

Government initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsva Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and Mukhyamantri Matsyajibi Kalyan Yojana are playing a crucial role in strengthening the fisheries sector, providing direct benefits to three lakh fishers over the next five years. Similarly, the livestock sector is supported by the National Livestock Mission, Rashtriva Gokul Mission, and various state schemes, including Mukhyamantri Kamdhenu Yojana, Prani-Sampad-Samrudhhi Yojana, and Mukhyamantri Prani Kalvan Yojana, which focus on dairy development, healthcare, and productivity enhancement. The Governor encouraged Governor urges stakeholders sustainability, and modern techniques for economic growth

DMMSY and Mukhyamantri Matsvaiibi Kalvan Yoiana aim to benefit three lakh fishers, boosting productivity and rural livelihoods

farmers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to embrace innovation, digital platforms, and sustainable practices. He highlighted the role of AI and data analytics in disease monitoring. smart feeding, and productivity enhancement, stating that such interventions could revolutionise fisheries and livestock farming.

"Matsya-Prani Samavesh Odisha 2025 is not just a platform for discussions but a movement to empower farmers,' the Governor said. He urged all participants to apply the knowledge gained at the event in their fields, farms, and fisheries to build a self-reliant Odisha and contribute to a strong and developed India-Viksit Bharat. Among others, Fisheries

and Animal Resources Development Minister Gokulananda Mallik and Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar Vashishth, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Mayor Sulochana Das and OUAT vice-chancellor Pravat Kumar Roul were present at the event. Horticulture department Director Nikhil Pavan Kalyan delivered the vote of thanks

BJP APPOINTS 13 DISTRICT CHIEFS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: The BJP Sunday announced the names of its newly-elected presidents of 13 organisational districts in the state.

The new presidents include Niranjan Mishra from Bhubaneswar, Jajati Keshari Patnaik from Angul, Bhagaban Panda from Bhadrak, Nabakishore Shabar from Gajapati, Debjani Pradhan from Jajpur, Raghunandan Panda from Jharsuguda, Pandit Kumar Bismajhi from Kandhamal. Biswaranjan Badjena from Khurda, Shiba Muduli from Koraput, Tapas Ranjan Martha from Nayagarh, Gopi Anand from Rayagada, Benudhar Dash from Subarnpur and Purnima Kerketa from Rourkela Earlier January 25, the party had announced names of newly-elected presidents of 23 out of its 37 organisational districts in Odisha



FUN AND FROLIC: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi attends the Celebrity Cricket League at Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Sunday

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: A three-day residential training programme on natural farming

ficials from the Agriculture. Horticulture, Veterinary departments, and Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) participated in the training.

Sambhav's secretarv-cum-chief executive Sabarmatee delivered the inaugural address, emphasising the importance of natural farming and expressing grat-

Govt officials trained in natural farming itude to the state and Central governments for recognising Sambhav as a training centre

The inaugural session was led by Jami Surya Rao, Agriculture department additional director Kishore Mahaling and Horti culture department joint di rector Prafulla Kumar Bhanja They provided an overview of NMNF and discussed the roles and responsibilities of officials in promoting natural farming.

They also highlighted the im portance of NGOs, Farmer Pro ducer Organisations (FPOs) Community-Based Organisa tions (CBOs). CSR initiatives and research institutions in scal ing up natural farming practices

The second day of the pro gramme focused on practical training and field demonstrations at Sambhay, covering essential aspects such as land preparation, water conservation seed conservation, mulching techniques, and their benefits.

Nanpur Mahotsav held

Bhubaneswar: The Nanpur Mahotsav 2025 was organised at the Creative Hands Art Gallery in Nanpur village, Jajpur district, Saturday by internation ally acclaimed writer and painter Prafull Mohanti. Last year, on his 90th birthday Mohanti transformed his two-storev house into an art gallery, which nov houses hundreds of paintings created by him and other artists. The event witnessed the participation of noted singer Susmita Das, former Ravenshav University vice-chancellor Devdas Chhotray, eminent painter Ramhari Jena, and several other dignitaries. A cultural programme was held, featuring rural artwork, literature, folk songs, dance performances, and traditional craftsmanship. The festival attracted artisans, dancers, poets, and singer with the aim of promoting and preserv ing the art and culture of Nanpur village said Mohanti. A special tribute was paid to Mohanti's friend, Derek Moore, on his 14th death anniversary, with the inaugu ration of a statue in his memory.

DHW explores Mahima Cult



POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Feb 16: The 23rd

Baba Nityananda Dash of Ba da Matha Balakaldhari Samaj briefed visitors on the histo-

in Delhi stampede

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CM mourns lives lost

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday expressed deep sorrow over the tragic stampede at New Delhi Railway Station, which claimed 18 lives and left several injured late Saturday night.

Majhi took to social media, stating, "Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of precious lives in the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Former Chief Minister and

New OPD block at Sishu Bhawan now operational

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack. Feb 16: The new ly-constructed outpatient department (OPD) at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Post Graduate Institute of Paediatrics (Sishu Bhawan) in Cuttack began operations at the G6 building from Saturday.

The Medicine OPD and Surgery OPD are now functioning on the ground floor of the G6 building, with paediatric doctors attending patients from 9am onwards. Previously, the Medicine OPD operated in just two rooms of the old building, leading to overcrowding. With the new setup, ten rooms have been designated for doctors in the Medicine OPD, with six already in use. The Surgery OPD has four cabins allocated for patient consultations.



was recently held at the Centre of Natural Farming, Sambhav, in Rohibanka, Nayagarh district. The programme aimed at training state and district officials and was supported by the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, in collaboration with National Institute

of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) and the Odisha Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department. A total of 32 government of-

edition of Dhenkanal Heritage Walks (DHW) took place Sunday at Joranda, the spiritual headquarters of the Mahima Cult. Around 30 heritage enthusiasts from Dhenkanal. Angul, Bhubaneswar, and Rourkela participated in the walk, led by DHW convener Suresh Prasad Mishra.

Prominent participants included District Journalist Association president Prasana Kumar Pattanaik, photographers Subrata Bala and Hrudananda Behera, Narayan Pattanaik, Bipin Pani, and students from Dhenkanal College.

Located 25 km from Dhenkanal district headquarters, Joranda is a revered pilgrimage site for followers of the Mahima Cult, a spiritual movement that originated in Odisha in the 19th century. It advocates the worship of a single, formless God known as "Alekh Brahma" or 'Mahima", rejecting idol worship and polytheism. The site is home to the sacred Joranda monastery and temple dedicated to Mahima Gosain, the movement's founder.

The participants were welcomed with flower bouquets by members of Joranda Anchalika Bikash Samiti, Joranda Sahitya Sambad Ghara, and Joranda Absaraprapta Karmachari Sangha, represented by Anandi Charan Mohanty, Sukanta Kumar Bala, and Sushanta Dash.

ry, philosophy, and relevance of the Mahima Cult. "Mahima Dharma's teachings remain relevant today, advocating equality, simplicity, and devotion to a formless divine.' he said.

The participants visited several significant religious sites, including Niti Mandir, Gadi Mandir, Sunya Mandir, and Akhanda Dhuni Mandir. The tour concluded with a Bhikhya Prasad offering, a traditional sacred meal.

Baba Nityananda Dash also spoke about the Mahaprayan of Mahima Gosain, marking the saint's departure from the physical world, and the Magha Mela, an annual congregation of devotees at Joranda. The festival continues to be an essential spiritual event, attracting followers from across the country.

He emphasised that preserving and promoting Mahima Dharma is essential to safeguarding Odisha's cultural and spiritual heritage. "These locations are not only places of worship but also spaces where people connect with nature and their inner selves," he added.

The 23rd Dhenkanal Heritage Walk at Joranda provided visitors with a deeper appreciation of Odisha's rich spiritual traditions, reinforcing the importance of cultural preservation.

Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik also conveyed his condolences. "Deeply saddened to learn about the loss of so many lives in the stampede. My thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their loved ones," he posted, wishing a swift recovery for the injured.

The stampede occurred due to overcrowding on platforms 14 and 15, where passengers were waiting to board trains to Prayagraj, the site of the ongoing Maha Kumbh. The surge in the crowd led to chaos, resulting in the tragic incident.

Several new amenities have been introduced to enhance patient convenience, including eight ticket counters, a pharma-



cy, drinking water facilities, and improved waiting areas.

Additionally, security personnel from Lalbagh Police Station have been deployed to monitor the premises, ensuring safety and overseeing the entry and exit of construction workers, as some finishing work is still pending.

Patients and visitors have welcomed the facility's expansion. Talking to Orissa POST, Purnachandra Routray from Adaspur said, "Earlier, the OPD was cramped, and waiting conditions were difficult. The new facility has eased the

crowd and provided proper seating arrangements." Rasmita Hota from Salepur praised the improved cleanliness, urging hospital staff to maintain hygiene standards.

The construction of the G6 paediatric care building, costing approximately ₹127.35 crore, began in 2020. Despite delays, the project was completed two years ago. Following a directive from the High Court, the facility has now been fully operationalised, significantly improving paediatric healthcare services at Sishu Bhawan.

WEATHER						
	BBSR	СТС				
Max Temp	34.0°	35.4°				
Min Temp	18.0°	17.4°				
Humidity	67%	71%				
Rainfall	Nil	Nil				
FORECAS Clear Sky	r	Ö				

Mapping long Covid: Work begins on review of studies

whe healthcare sector in India still doesn't know the exact nature of the burden of long Covid with OPDs seeing a surge in patients but no proper documentation. That's the gap researchers in Gandhinagar have set out to fill with a review of various studies so the big picture becomes

clear. Researchers from the Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar (IIPHG) are in the process of identifying studies to be included for the review to help discern an overall pat-



tern in trends, including effects and risk factors. The review is funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Despite visible, grave symptoms, long Covid continues to evade diagnosis, as scientists have found no significant laboratory markers that could indicate its presence.

"Long Covid is definitely a chronic condition, but we do not know the exact nature of its burden," said Komal Shah, associate professor at the IIPHG.

'Studies report a surge in out-patient department (OPD) cases, especially among those with high risk of the condition -- these are the people with co-morbid conditions, the elderly, or those who had severe COVID-19 infection. However, this is not very well documented," Shah told PTI.

According to her, there must be more than 30 studies. But these need to be collated.

"This will be finalised once we are done with the screening (of the studies)," the co-lead researcher said.

The protocol outlining the methodology of the review is listed in an article, published in the journal Frontiers in 'Rehabilitation Sciences'.

Though the world is well past the emergency of COVID-19 pandemic, the disease continues to be studied, especially for the long Covid symptoms, such as fatigue and cognitive distur bances, noted to persist beyond the acute infection period.

A recent study by research ers from Germany, published in the journal PLOS Medicine showed that nearly two-thirds of patients with long Covid continue to grapple with symptoms, including a reduced ca pacity for exercise, in the sec ond year of illness.

However, studies emerging from India in this regard carry scattered data. PTI

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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.

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state



NCPCR orders inquiry into child marriage cases in Jajpur school



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 16: Expressing concern over reports of child marriage incidents at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KG-BV), a residential school in Jajpur, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has directed the district Collectors of Jajpur and Keonjhar to submit a report on the issue within seven days.

According to a complaint filed by social worker Mantu Das with the NCPCR, there have been multiple allegations, including dropouts and child marriages, at the residential school. The Education department, however, has failed to take appropriate action to ad-

ods, Das alleged.

dress these issues. As a result, students at the school have been absent for extended peri-

Among the affected students, three girls had been married off at a young age, with two of them becoming mothers before they were 14. These early pregnancies (and motherhood) have resulted in severe social and economic challenges for the young girls. Moreover, these underage mothers have been excluded from various government schemes, including food security entitlements. Das added.

Das alleged that despite being aware of the urgency of the situation, the district administration preferred to drag its feet over the issues which made him knock on the doors of the NCPCR, seeking direction for a detailed probe. The Commission has also or-

dered necessary legal steps to be taken as per the provisions of the Child Protection Laws, he said.



SOCCER TOURNEY: Players of United Sports of Jalda and TCFC of Hamirpur fight for glory at the final match of 3rd Lazarus Lakra Memorial knock ou football tournament organised by the Friends Club, Rourkela at Sector-6 ground in the City Sunday

Work on Kharla river bridge moves at snail's pace

Residents are forced to take a 5-km detour to reach Kuchinda town POST NEWS NETWORK

Kuchinda, Feb 16: The sluggish construction pace of the bridge over Kharla river, connecting Kuchinda town in Sambalpur district, has raised apprehension among locals that it might take another year for works to be over.

According to reports, the consultancy agency engaged for the construction of the bridge had signed an agreement with the Public Works Department to complete the project by May 25, this year.

However, looking at the current status of work, meeting the deadline appears quite unlikely. Concerned locals said the work might be extended by over a year, and the bridge would be ready for use only by May 26, 2026

It is pertinent to mention here that earlier an iron bridge was originally built over the Kharla river in 1903 during the British era. The bridge was known as Jhulen Setu or Jhulen bridge as it was a suspension bridge. Over time, it weakened, and Sep-

tember 9, 2022, it collapsed after being hit by a heavy iron-laden truck. That had completely disrupting communication on the road.

Although a bypass on the national highway was incomplete at that point of time, authorities made emergency arrangements to restore vehicular movement. Meanwhile, the public urged the district administration and government for the construction of a permanent bridge.

Finally, a tender worth Rs 13.71 crore was approved for the bridge, and Monalisa Engicons, a consultancy agency, was awarded the contract. The construction began May 25, 2023.

Over the years, while the foundation has been laid, work on the bridge pillar spans has only just begun. Locals alleged that a lack of accountability on part of the Works department, coupled with inefficiency of the consultancy firm, has slowed down the construction of the

bridge significantly. They said although the initial deadline for completion was fixed for May 25, 2025, given the



current pace of work, finishing the project within the stipulated time remains uncertain.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the bridge has left many families in distress, particularly those relying on businesses near Mandir Chhak and Panchamukhi Chhak in Kuchinda. Adding to the woes, they alleged, the main road now lies in a state of disrepair, making travel difficult. The bridge had been a crucial

connection for residents of 31 panchayats, including 21 in Jamankira block, two in Kuchinda block, and eight in Tileibani block of neighbouring Deogarh

district. Since its collapse, people have been forced to take a detour of more than five kilometers to reach the city.

Concerned residents claimed they had repeatedly urged Nabin Bage, the former Assistant Executive Engineer of Kuchinda's public works department, to expedite repairs. They accused Bage of neglecting the issue by citing bureaucratic and technical hurdles.

During a public grievance hearing attended by state Panchayati Raj, Drinking Water and Rural Development Minister Rabinarayan Navak, Kuchinda residents had once again demanded immediate action for the early completion of the bridge works. In response, Nayak had assured them that discussions with the relevant department were underway, and that steps would be taken to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile, when contacted, Assistant Executive engineer Sanjay Kumar Nayak, who assumed charge recently, said if the work is not completed within the set timeframe, higher authorities will be formally notified.

Queried over the allegations, former Assistant Executive Engineer Nabin Bage said that the bridge works started following the laying of the foundation May 25, 2023. "However, the work had to be abandoned due to rains. It resumed only in December, 2023," he said.

He said an anicut under the under-construction bridge has proved a stumbling block in the completion of the project as water level rises up to the level of the bridge. "This is only delaying the works which will not get completed within the deadline. The authorities will be urged to enhance the deadline after it expires," he added

Mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles begins in Rushikulya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Feb 16: Forest officials Sunday spotted the much-awaited mass nesting of Olive Ridlev sea turtles near Rushikulya river mouth in Ganiam district.

Over 11,000 turtles have laid eggs on the first day of the mass nesting in the 4-km-long stretch of the rookery, said Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Berhampur, Sunny Khokkar.

The mass nesting will take place for a few more days, as several turtles are in the sea waiting for nesting, said forest officials, adding that the mass nesting will be followed by sporadic nesting in the area.

Mass nesting of the turtles in Gahirmatha, however, was yet to start this year so far, the officials said. We are expecting this time, a record number of turtles to lay egg in this place, said Rabindra Nath Sahu, secretary, Ganjam district sea turtle protection committee.

According to Basudev Tripathy, senior scientist of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), this was the ideal time for the mass nesting of Olive Ridley in the Rushikuklya river mouth. Meanwhile, the forest de-



partment has taken measures to protect the eggs and engaged local volunteers to provide a safe environment for mass nesting by the turtles. The entire four-km long stretch of the beach was fenced to restrict the entry of visitors to the nesting site, said a forest officer, adding that this would continue for the next 50 days till the hatchling emerges from the eggs.

The forest officials also re quested the nearby civic bodies and industrial houses to switch off the street lights during the mass nesting period to facilitate the turtles for smooth nesting.

The female turtles dug the pits in the beach and lav eggs The pit is covered with sand by the turtles before they dis appear into the sea. A female turtle lays around 100 to 150 eggs. The mother turtle, however, does not wait to see the baby turtles emerge from the eggs.

Two boys drown in Bhadrak village pond PDS rice black-marketing thrives in Paralakhemundi

Bhadrak, Feb 16: Two minor boys drowned in a village pond Sunday morning while playing near it at Guagaon village under Basudevpur Municipality limits in Bhadrak district.

The incident happened around 10 am at Radhaballavpur village, under the jurisdiction of Basudevpur police station and municipality limits

Police identified the deceased as 13-year-old Jyotirmaya Behera, son of Satyaban Behera, and 17-year-old Rajendra Behera, son of Kanhu Behera. A pall of gloom and mourning descended in the village after reports of their deaths spread.

According to police, the boys were playing near the



pond when they accidentally slipped and fell. Hearing their cries for help, locals rushed to rescue them.

While one of the boys was pulled out from the pond by the locals, the other was retrieved by fire service officials

Both were taken to Basudevpur Hospital, where doctors declared them dead on arrival. said Lopamudra Navak. inspector-in-charge (IIC) of Basudevpur police station.

Police have sent the bodies to Bhadrak DHH for post mortem examination.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, Feb 16: The illegal trade of government-subsidised rice has allegedly turned Gajapati district into a hotspot for black market dealings, with authorities struggling to rein in the illicit business.

Sources said despite repeated media reports and public outcry, the Supply department has failed to take any effective action, thereby, allowing traders to continue their operations unchecked. According to reports, three

locations within the Paralakhemundi constituency-Gumma, Ranipentha, and Kashinagarhave emerged as the key hubs

for the black-marketing of Public Distribution System (PDS) rice. While such activities have occasionally come under administrative scrutiny, district officials seem indifferent to the ongoing violations.

Insiders, like former MLA K Narayan Rao, alleged that whenever black-marketing traders are nabbed, they are discreetly released with administrative assistance, rather than facing legal consequences. This pattern has only emboldened those involved in the illicit trade, making it increasingly difficult to control the situation, he added.

The issue cropped up again after a truck loaded with approximately 300 quintals of



PDS rice was discovered near a well-known rice trader's shop in Paralakhemundi February 9 night. The truck, bearing registration number AP-39T-5358, was intercepted by members of the local Truck Drivers' Association, which immediately alerted both the administration and the media.

Following the receipt of the alert, officials from the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department, along with police personnel, arrived at the scene. However, even twenty-four hours after the seizure, no concrete action had been taken.

When queried over the same, Inspector Prashant Bhupati of Paralakhemundi police station admitted that while the truck had been brought to the police station at the request of the Supply department, no formal case had been registered. Despite repeated attempts to obtain comments, Supply department officials remained tight-lipped about the incident. G Rabi, president of Truck **Owners** Association alleged that a particular rice trader in the area is repeatedly buying PDS rice and despatching the stock to Andhra Pradesh and other states. "He is refusing to abide by the norms and carrying out the trade in cahoots with local officials," Rabi alleged.

The Truck Owners' Association has accused local authorities of indirectly supporting corrupt traders, despite the government's efforts to curb such black-marketing activities, under food security laws.

Meanwhile, there is growing public demand for the district administration and higher authorities to intervene and put an end to this racket.



SPLENDID PERFORMANCE: Girls perform Odissi at the annual function of Biju Patnaik Women's Degree College at Sonepur in Subarnapur district

NCLP closure: Future of child labourers in limbo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela. Feb 16: The absence of a dedicated programme like the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) has left a significant gap in addressing the needs of child labourers in the Steel City.

The NCLP, an important initiative to protect and educate children engaged in hazardous work, was discontinued in Sundargarh district three years ago. Sources said the project, which aimed to rehabilitate and reintegrate children working in hazardous conditions into society through education and vocational training, had been a significant effort to safeguard the future of these vulnerable children.

Launched in 1988 by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the NCLP aimed to provide education to children aged between 9 and 14 years

working in hazardous conditions. The project was implemented across 312 districts in India, with a focus on offering education, vocational training, midday meals, healthcare, and stipends. By 2007, over 1.2 million children had benefited from this programme. District project committees, under the leadership of local administrations, played a vital role in the execution of the project, collaborating with non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In Rourkela, NCLP started in 2007, and was active until 2022 when it was absorbed into the larger "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" (Universal Education Campaign). According to reports, the abrupt closure of the project left many children who had benefited from the initiative without support. The children. especially school dropouts who had gained educational opportuରାଜ୍ୟ ଜର୍ମଗୁରି କାମା ବି

nities, are now deprived of the services that once improved their lives, sources added.

The NCLP operated in the most vulnerable areas of Rourkela, including Bandhamunda, Gopabandhupali, Sitalpada, Malgodam, Sector-6, Panposh basti, among others, where it ran education centres for child workers. These centres provided informal education. vocational training, midday meals, and health services. Volunteers were engaged to educate children and equip them with skills. However, with the discontinuation of the NCLP. these children are once again at risk, with no viable alternatives

in place to protect them, social workers said.

Local social workers like Arun Parida have called for the revival of NCLP-like projects. "I urge the government to update the earlier model and include a more comprehensive curriculum for these children, especially those at risk of criminal activity and exploitation," he said.

Gopal Chandra Mangaraj a Child Welfare Officer, said, "While the project has been discontinued, further action will be taken if new directives are issued by the Central government to address the needs of these children.'

Meanwhile, despite the closure of NCLP, the struggle to combat child labour continues in Rourkela. According to reports, in 2022, eight child labourers were rescued, while in 2023 their figure stood at four. Last year, 10 of them had been rescued.



power post



FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

Higher always higher! Let us never be satisfied with what is accomplished.

THE MOTHER

Transatlantic D Rift

fissure seems to have appeared in the decades-old alliance between Europe and the United States. This drifting apart is visible if developments of the past week are any indication. During the three-day Munich Security Conference, which wrapped up on 16 February, US Vice President JD Vance delivered a harsh ideological critique of Europe. He accused its leaders of stifling free speech, neglecting to address illegal migration, and shying away from the genuine concerns of their constituents. In the aftermath, European leaders have been grappling with a more stringent stance from Washington on matters such as democracy and Ukraine's future, as the Trump administration disrupts long-standing transatlantic norms established since World War II.

In a scathing address on 14 February, Vance openly challenged the justification for US defence of contemporary European values, depicting a landscape of European politics marred by media censorship, cancelled elections, and political correctness. He contended that the real danger to Europe did not arise from external forces like Russia or China, but rather from the continent's own withdrawal from its 'most fundamental values." Throughout his speech, he consistently questioned whether the US and Europe still shared a common agenda. 'If you are afraid of the voices, the opinions and the conscience that guide your very own people ... If you're running in fear of your own voters, there is nothing America can do for you, nor for that matter is there anything you can do for the American people," Vance said.

Not only that, Vance held a meeting with Alice Weidel, the leader of Germany's Far-Right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party, in Munich. This meeting breaks a longstanding taboo in German politics, especially as the new administration in Washington seeks to engage with and support Far-Right populist parties throughout Europe. The timing of Vance's meeting with Weidel is particularly noteworthy, occurring just weeks before a German election where the anti-immigrant, anti-Moslem party is expected to secure a strong second-place finish amid rising anti-establishment sentiment.

US President Donald Trump's efforts for a swift resolution to the Ukraine conflict have raised concerns and uncertainty across Europe. Leaders of European countries were already aware of the potential challenges posed by a second Trump presidency and the strain it could place on transatlantic relations. However, the recent phone call between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin sent shockwaves through the European Union (EU) and in the capitals of nations who are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Following their conversation, Trump announced that he and Putin would likely meet soon to discuss a peace agreement for Ukraine, and he later reassured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that he would also be included in the discussions. Nevertheless, US officials have indicated that European nations would not participate in the peace process. This has sparked growing anxiety among Europeans about being completely excluded from the talks regarding Ukraine and possibly from the broader restructuring of the new international order.

Unsettled over the policy shift from Washington, French President Emmanuel Macron has called for an emergency meeting with European leaders, including UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, amid rising concerns about Trump's efforts to dominate the Ukraine peace process. The meeting, anticipated to take place on 17 February, is expected to address the US attempts to sideline European leaders in the negotiations, Europe's stance on Ukraine's potential NATO membership, and the provision of security guarantees for Ukraine, whether through NATO or a separate European armed force, as suggested by Zelenskyy.

The swiftness with which European leaders, including Starmer despite the UK having left the EU, are uniting shows the urgency of the matter and also the scare that has been put into the very hearts of those leaders. There are lessons that India too should learn from these moves by Trump. Undoubtedly, Europe, much more than Asia, is far more valuable for the US when matters of security and military preparedness are taken into account. It could probably be since most white Americans can trace their ancestry to different parts of Europe. Lesson in this is that a country like India better learn to stand up for itself and get ready for all eventualities.

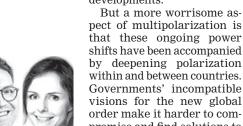
AGE OF MULTIPOLARIZATION

t has become a truism of foreign-policy debates nowadays that the world is at the dawn of a multipolar era. Whether such an international order will ever fully emerge is debatable. But the process of "multipolarization" is already underway, as a larger number of states gain the ability to influence global developments.



Tobias Bunde & Sophie Eisentraut

THE **MULTIPOLAR WORLD THAT IS NOW EMERGING** WILL LIKELY **BE DRIVEN BY CONFLICT IN THE ABSENCE OF SHARED RULES AND** INSTITUTIONS



that these ongoing power shifts have been accompanied by deepening polarization within and between countries. Governments' incompatible visions for the new global order make it harder to compromise and find solutions to shared challenges. These divisions are evident

in the deepening bifurcation between democracies and autocracies, especially in policy fields such as human rights. global infrastructure, and development cooperation. Polarization is also visible in new power brokers pursuing their own visions for their respective regions. The Kremlin, for example, is clearly working toward a Russian-led order in Eurasia, while China, buttressed by its Belt and Road Initiative, is seeking to establish hegemony over East Asia. Global rules, principles, and structures of cooperation are being supplanted by multiple competing and conflicting orders.

Polarization has intensified within countries, too. In the United States, Donald Trump's return to the White House epitomizes the new power of divisive politics and is bound to strengthen illiberal forces in European and other countries where an "us versus them" mentality has taken hold.

The shift to multipolarity may well have played a part in spurring this domestic polarization. In many Western



Instead of enabling powerful countries to keep each other in check and ushering in a new era of relative peace and stability, multipolarity risks fueling instability. It looks set to trigger new arms races and trade wars and prolong existing intrastate conflicts, and could even sow the seeds of a great-power war

intensifying political polar-

ization at both the national

and international levels, the

hopes and aspirations that ma-

ny - particularly in the Global

South - have for a more multi-

polar world will go unmet. The

multipolar world that is now

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en by conflict in the absence of

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Moreover, rather than fos-

tering more inclusive global

governance, multipolarity

may undermine cooperation:

great-power war.

Instead of enabling powerful

democracies, the shift of power to emerging countries has raised concerns about their own relative decline. The liberal international order, the thinking goes, has unfairly benefited not only global elites at home but also rising powers abroad – China most of all.

At the same time, by throwing governments into gridlock and leaving them very little room for maneuver, domestic polarization ties the hands of democratic leaders, rendering them unable to improve foreign relations and strengthen global cooperation. Illiberal populist leaders, for their part, have few incentives to help build consensus among countries, given that a divided international environment chimes with their narrative of "all against all."

Against this backdrop of

a larger number of countries now wield enough influence to disrupt collective decision-making, while positive leadership is in short supply. And while some hope that this shift will strengthen international law by reducing Western countries' ability to apply its principles selectivelv, more governments may end up claiming special rights for themselves.

The world urgently needs to "depolarize" politics. But it is far from clear how this can be achieved – or who would even be willing to take up the effort. Some believe that the divisions associated with greater multipolarity could be overcome if global governance structures embraced the new power centers. But others fear that this will not be enough to build the consensus needed to strengthen common rules - let alone reform them or create new ones.

Few of today's leading governments have shown a genuine interest in devising a great-power agreement that would benefit the broader international community. Instead, many seem intent on exploiting the deepening polarization of global politics to achieve domestic and geopolitical goals. Multipolarity and the polarization of both national and international politics are thus deeply intertwined. A better future depends on whether a world with more poles can find ways to mitigate dangerous divisions. What is clear is that such efforts must start at home.

Tobias Bunde is Director of Research and Policy at the Munich Security Conference. Sophie Eisentraut is Head of **Research and Publications** at the Munich Security Conference. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

CYBERCRIME SPECTRUM

Safeguarding digital payments

ayments through digital mode have now become mainstream. We now

of two debits of Rs 49,999 and Rs 49,000 from her account by

the fraudster had the debit card credentials and remote online fraudsters. The mo-

However, the possibility of being easily traced does not deter tricksters from making easy money. It may lead to the inference that the culprits have been escaping the clutches of law. A pan India specialist agency should be created to prevent/ detect such sort of crimes lest people lose faith in digital payments. Not only should the siphoned money be recovered, the culprits also be nabbed to face the law One more issue, which is discouraging use of digital payments, needs to be mentioned. When you offer to swipe your debit/ credit card for making payment to shopkeepers, many of them insist for 2% extra, especially in case of shopping for durable goods. Issues like these need to be sorted out so that unsuspecting public does not become prey to frauds/ extra payments. People will become wary of digital payments unless online frauds are stemmed effectively.

WISDOM CORNER

It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be.

ISAAC ASIMOV

If time is not real, then the dividing line between this world and eternity, between suffering and bliss, between good and evil. is also an illusion.

HERMANN HESSE

The more in harmony with yourself you are, the more joyful you are and the more faithful you are. Faith is not to disconnect you from reality - it connects you to reality.

PAULO COFLHO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1801: Following a tie in the electoral college, the US House of Representatives elected Thomas Jefferson president.
- 1863: A precursor of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is founded. The "Committee for Relief to the Wounded" was created by a group of citizens in Geneva, Switzerland.
- 1904: Italian composer Giacomo Puccini's Madama Butterfly premiered at La Scala in Milan, and it became one the most frequently performed operas.
- **1913:** The "Armory Show" opens in New York. The art exhibition featured works by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent van Gogh and marked the advent of artistic modernism in the United States.
- **1979:** Vietnam invaded by China. After the Vietnam War, Vietnam bolstered its ties with the Soviet Union rather than with China, and, following a series of anti-Chinese, pro-Soviet manoeuvres by Vietnam, China invaded its southern neighbour this day in 1979.

LOL

I HAVE A DOLLAR

man goes into a bar and Asseats himself on a stool. The bartender looks at him and says, "What'll it be buddy?' The man says, "Set me up with seven whiskey shots and make them doubles." The bartender does this and watches the man slug one down, then the next, then the next, and so on until all seven are gone almost as



quickly as they were served. Staring in disbelief, the bartender asks why he's doing all this drinking "You'd drink them this fast too if you had what I have.' The bartender hastily asks, "What do you have pal? The man quickly replies, "I have a dollar.'



PEOPLE WILL BECOME WARY OF DIGITAL PAYMENTS UNLESS ONLINE FRAUDS ARE STEMMED EFFECTIVELY

etters

are most welcome to contribute letters

requested to send their contact

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

(0)

TO THE EDITOR

columns (between 600-1000

Readers of Orissa Post

(100 words), articles and

words). Contributors are

numbers and full postal

edit@orissapost.com

make payments of various kind of bills viz. Mobile phone bills, landline phone bills, electricity bills, credit card bills etc sitting anywhere anytime through our smart phones. Online shopping is doneand payments thereof made digitally through the smart phones. Funds can also be transferred likewise. To facilitate all this, mobile wallets have emerged as another medium of digital payments. First you have to transfer money from your bank account to mobile wallets for spending from it thereafter. Digital payments can be made even without mobile wallets directly on service provider's app with your debit/credit card or internet banking. It has become very convenient. However, with the proliferation of digital payments, online frauds have also mushroomed scaring people away from the digital.

Recently a family member of mine has been duped by way

dus operandi adopted will be worth narrating for the benefit of stakeholders. An SMS was received purportedly from a reputed mobile wallet company warning that the funds in the wallet will be blocked unless a call was made on a given mobile number for sorting out KYC related issue. The unsuspecting user called that number. The person on the other side, pretending to be the representative of the reputed mobile wallet company asks the caller to download an app 'Quick Support'. My relative not only downloads the app as directed but also tells the code number to the 'representative' of mobile wallet company. By doing so, my relative unknowingly gave remote access of her mobile to the online fraudster. She was further directed to transfer Rs 100 from her bank account to her mobile wallet. Her compliance enabled the fraudster to capture her debit card credentials. Now that

access to my relative's mobile phone for viewing OTPs, two quick debits of Rs 49999 and Rs 49000 rupees happened in her bank account. The OTP SMSes on my relative's phone, which by virtue of remote access the fraudster could also see and apply, alerted my relative. She got a sense of what was happening and switched off her phone immediately and rushed to the bank to get her debit card blocked. Further damage was averted.

Online frauds are cyber crimes in which the victims and perpetrators can be hundreds or even thousands of miles apart. It should not be difficult for agencies and banks to trace the money. After all, money has travelled through the banking channel only. The recipient account and account holder can be identified. There was an SMS, meant to trigger this chain of transactions, which mentioned a mobile number also. SMS and mobile numbers cannot be anonymous.

The writer is a retired banker.

Lapse monitoring

Sir, This refers to "Child marriages go unabated," Orissa Post, February 16. The news is no doubt disturbing and speaks volumes of deficiencies on the part of state administration to eradicate child marriages. I think in order to stop child marriages much stress has to be given on child education, which falls far short of expectations. Besides, the economic condition of parents needs to be drastically improved so that they can provide education to their children. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 has to be strictly enforced in its letter and spirit. The ground reality is that in the absence of proper monitoring, the law remains in statute book. Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

Trade & tariffs

Sir, US President Donald Trump's announcement of reciprocal tariffs has significant implications for India. The policy of reciprocal tariffs means that the US will impose the same level of tariffs on imports from other countries as those countries impose on US exports. The goal is to create a "level playing field" in international trade. India, which has historically imposed high tariffs on US goods, is expected to be significantly affected by this policy. For example, India's weighted average tariff rate on US imports is around 9.5%, compared to the 3% tariff rate that the US imposes on Indian goods. This disparity has made India a prime target for Trump's reciprocal tariff strategy. The sectors most vulnerable to increased US tariffs include agriculture, transportation, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and automobiles. Analysts have warned that these reciprocal tariffs could lead to economic uncertainty and strained trade relations between the two countries. To mitigate the impact, India is considering various measures, such as reducing tariffs on certain products and increasing imports of US defence and energy goods. However, the full extent of the impact will depend on the final details of the tariff policy and how it is implemented. Overall, India's trade relationship with the US faces significant challenges due to the introduction of reciprocal tariffs. The policy's potential to disrupt key sectors and create economic uncertainty underscores the importance of strategic adjustments and diplomatic efforts. Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH





















The Uttar Pradesh government has planted 210 crore saplings in the last 10 years, of which 70 to 80 per cent have survived, the chief minister said, adding electric buses have been given priority over diesel-powered buses and a policy has been framed for this



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, Feb 16: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Sunday said climate change is drving up rivers and urged people to act urgently instead of engaging in a blame game over carbon dioxide emissions. Addressing a conference on

climate change, environment and faith at the Maha Kumbh, he said the Uttar Pradesh government has worked to rejuvenate rivers in the state, which is why the Kumbh is seeing such large crowds.

"CO2 emissions are causing climate change, which is further drying up rivers, the lifelines of Mother Earth," he said.

"People blame each other but don't take responsibility for mitigating climate change. It's time we act collectively and individually urgently," Adityanath added. "Instead of waiting for devastation, we should make the earth green from now on. This is also the message of the Kumbh.'

"We have to consider the factors behind climate change along with faith and take measures to prevent it." the Uttar Pradesh chief minister said at

the conference.

He said the Ganga and Yamuna were not as clean 10 years ago, but his government worked to rejuvenate them.

"Because the river water is clean and arrangements are good, people are coming in large numbers to the Kumbh. Every time, 10,000 to 11,000 cusecs of water are released into the Ganga, ensuring the smooth conduct of the mela.' Aditvanath said.

The chief minister said that to mitigate climate change, the Narendra Modi government banned single-use plastics and provided over 10 crore free LPG connections to reduce household emissions.

The Uttar Pradesh government has planted 210 crore saplings in the last 10 years. of which 70 to 80 per cent have survived, the chief minister said, adding electric buses have been given priority over diesel-powered buses and a policy has been framed for this.

He urged people to participate in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, not to encroach on rivers and to protect wildlife to "protect humanity". Adityanath urged people not to encroach on rivers and to protect wildlife to "protect humanity".

Referring to the rising frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, he said lightning killed 90 people in a single incident near Mirzapur a few years ago. "Early warning systems have been installed, but much more needs to be done," he said.

During his address, Adityanath expressed grief over the death of 18 people in a stampede at the New Delhi Railway station Saturday night and also paid tributes to the deceased. Chandra Bhushan, the pres-

ident and CEO of policy think tank iFOREST, said the planet's average temperature has risen

by 1.5 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era. "Temperatures are rising due to the continuous release of greenhouse gases into the

atmosphere, which will have catastrophic consequences in the coming years," he said. He said science has limits in making people understand the

urgency of stopping climate change, and faith can help bridge that gap. Uttar Pradesh chief secretary Manoj Kumar Singh said

not everybody understands the Paris Agreement, 1.5 degrees Celsius or the 2 degrees Celsius goal. "Religious leaders can connect with the general public

in a way that science cannot." Swami Chidanand Saraswati, the spiritual head of the Rishikesh-based Parmarth Niketan Ashram, said glaciers are melting rapidly due to climate change, while snowfall is decreasing. "If we do not act urgently, the rivers will dry

62 and again in 1879-80. He mentioned having seen not only numerous Buddhist sculptures, large and small, but a large number of votive stupas.'

Alexander Cunningham, who excavated numerous sites in India, including Sarnath and Sanchi, was the first director of ASI.

Speaking to PTI, Sujeet Nayan, the Superintending Archaeologist of the ASI Patna Circle, said, "Yes, we have sought permission from the ASI headquarters to carry out an excavation at the site where Kurkihar village is situated now."

The antiquarian remains of Kurkihar were brought to notice also by Markham Kittoe, a well-known archaeologist, in 1847, Cunningham in 1861-62 and 1879-80, and other scholars, Nayan said.

"The site consists of a vast mound of bricks and remains of a large monastery. The main mound of the Buddhist ruins is around 25 feet high. A proposal in this regard has been recently sent to the ASI (HQ)," Nayan said. According to Markham Kittoe, a well-known archaeolo gist, Kurkihar is an ancient city and Buddhist monastery or vihara. Navan said, adding the main mound at the site con tains Buddhist ruins, including inscriptions with other antiquities and cultural materials.

MONDAY | FEBRUARY 17, 2025 | BHUBANESWAR

"Well-known historian KF Javaswal had described how attention was dramatically drawn to the site in 1930 when a group of about 226 bronze sculptures were accidentally discov ered in a mound located on the western side of the local temple in the area," Nayan said.

"Most of the sculptures, cast in bronze, were then acquired for the Patna Museum and sev eral other museums in different countries," the Superintending Archaeologist said.

STRICT SECURITY MEASURES AT KEY RAILWAY STATIONS IN UP

up and the next Kumbh will be

held on sand," he warned.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow (UP), Feb 16: Stringent protocols are being enforced at key railway stations in Uttar Pradesh such as Prayagraj, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Kanpur, Lucknow and Mirzapur following the stampede at the New Delhi railway station and the massive crowds measures are "effective"

In Varanasi, Ashok Kumar from the North Eastern Railway said the same protocols are in place at Jhunsi and Rambagh stations, where passengers are held in secure areas until their train arrives.

The security at Varanasi Junction has also been tightened after the Delhi incident.



uation and oversaw measures to improve the station's system.

Joint CP Amit Verma said, 'We are here to ensure the safe ty and convenience of passengers. All necessary measures are being implemented to avoid overcrowding."

Police have been deployed in large numbers, and the station has been equipped with im-

Delhi rly station stampede: Nitish announces ex gratia





BIHAR

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREASURES

ASI Patna seeks excavation at Kurkihar village in Gaya KURKIHAR VILLAGE, SITUATED ABOUT 5 KM NORTHEAST OF WAZIRGANJ AND 27 KM EAST OF GAYA IS BELIEVED TO HAVE ONCE BEEN AN ANCIENT CITY AND THE SITE OF A BUDDHIST MONASTERY



arriving for the Maha Kumbh.

North Central Railway's Shashikant Tripathi told PTI, "We are strictly adhering to the previously established protocols, which were successfully implemented during festivals like Mauni Amavasya and Basant Panchami.'

At Prayagraj Junction, entry is restricted to the city side, and passengers are kept in a 'holding area' until their train arrives. RPF Inspector Shiv Kumar said that crowd control

Station Director Arpit Gupta confirmed that vehicle entry is banned around the station, barriers have been placed at key locations, and security forces monitor the crowd. "CCTV cameras track activity around the clock, and platform changes are communicated at least 90 minutes in advance to prevent stampedes," he said.

Following the Delhi stamheightened security pede, measures have also been implemented at Ayodhya's railway

stations. Separate entry and exit points have been established for pilgrims, and personnel from the GRP and RPF are ensuring safety. Over 300 staff members and 200 CCTV cameras have been deployed to handle the daily influx of around 1.5 lakh passengers.

Ayodhya RPF Inspector Yashwant Singh said that the railway forces are vigilant

and are using CCTV for surveillance. Special trains are running daily to manage the crowd, he added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

region's cultural sequence.

Kurkihar village, situated

about 5 km northeast of Wazir-

ganj and 27 km east of Gaya, is

believed to have once been an

ancient city and the site of a

According to records from

the ASI Patna Circle, accessed

by PTI, "Alexander Cunning-

ham, an officer of the British

Army and an archaeologist,

visited Kurkihar once in 1861

Buddhist monastery

Lucknow Joint Commissioner of Police Amit Verma, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Central Raveena Tyagi and Railway Director Prashant Kumar were seen at the Charbagh railway station, where they took stock of the sit-

proved facilities to ensure that no untoward incident occurs in Lucknow.

In Kanpur, District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh conducted a security review at Kanpur Central, instructing local authorities to ensure stronger safety protocols and prevent platform changes before train arrivals.

While Mirzapur has a relatively lighter crowd, additional precautions are in place to avoid overcrowding.



At least 18 people were killed and more than a dozen injured in the stampede that broke out late Saturday night at the crowded railway station.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Feb 16: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Sunday expressed grief over the deaths in a stampede at New Delhi railway station, and announced ex gratia for the next of kin of the deceased hailing from the eastern state.

At least 18 people were killed and more than a dozen injured in the stampede that broke out late Saturday night at the crowded railway station.

"The CM has expressed condolences over the casualties in the stampede at the New Delhi railway station. He is deeply saddened by the deaths of Bihar natives in the incident, and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the immediate family members of the deceased, and Rs 50,000 for those who are injured," a statement issued by the CMO said.

According to a statement issued by the state Disaster Management Department here Sunday, "A total of eight people from the state died in the stampede that took place at New Delhi railway station Saturday. A maximum of three people from Samastipur died in the incident, followed by two from Nawada and one each from Vaishali, Patna and Buxar districts.'

EMPOWERING WOMEN, ONE MEAL AT A TIME

'DIDI KI RASOI'

'Didi Ki Rasoi' is an initiative which began as a modest canteen in Bihar's Vaishali in 2018 but has now expanded into a network of 216 canteens throughout the state, with the aim to provide hygienic food at places like hospitals, government offices, and other institutions

These canteens are run en-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna/Muzaffarpur, Feb 16: In the crowded corridors of Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH), Poonam Devi, 40, moves with purpose.

Each day, she travels several kilometres from her village near Patna to work in the hospital canteen. But it is not any other canteen, she has its ownership

"I used to work in my fields and earn nothing, but now I bring home money. My husband and in-laws were not happy with my decision to be part of a self-help group and go out of the house but once they saw the inflow of money, things changed," she said, adding that now she earns more than her husband and enjoys an autonomy which she didn't think was possible before.

Poonam is among the 3,952 women involved with 'Didi



Ki Rasoi' (DKR), an initiative which began as a modest cantirely by rural women who are teen in Bihar's Vaishali in part of self-help groups (SHGs) 2018 but has now expanded in Bihar. The DKR initiative is into a network of 216 canteens now actively running across Bithroughout the state, with the har, covering 36 district hospiaim to provide hygienic food tals, 49 sub-division hospitals, at places like hospitals, gov-10 medical colleges and hospiernment offices, and other intals, 30 government offices and stitutions. 91 SC/ST residential schools.

It has generated a total business of Rs 119 crore till now. Vimal Kumar, the block development manager for Didi Ki Rasoi in Patna, explained its distinctive model.

"Here, all didis are the owners and this sense of ownership really helps as it becomes not just a job for people here but a partnership. Not just that, the canteens have also helped curb corruption which was earlier seen in contractor-run canteens," he said.

The Covid-19 pandemic proved to be a testing time for these women when they continued to deliver food to hospitals and guarantine centres to ensure that patients and frontline workers had access to quality meals.

"It was a difficult time but it was also a time we knew we were needed the most. The food had to be of good quality and nutritious that could help patients fight the disease, so we

continued to work," Kanchan Devi, one of the cooks at a canteen in Vaishali, said.

For many, Didi Ki Rasoi has opened doors to not just financial independence but also self-respect. Like Rekha Kumari, 22, who works as a cashier at a canteen in Muzaffarpur's Sadar hospital

Even though her family's financial struggles forced her to leave school after Class 12 and marry young, she was committed to find a way to study and find work.

"I had to revolt against my family to join Didi Ki Rasoi so much so that my husband used to follow me to work because he was suspicious. But once I started bringing home money, they all had to accept my job,' she said.

Now, Rekha is saving money to continue her education and pursue her dream to become a chartered accountant.

Commenting on the incident. Union minister Jitan Ram Manjhi told reporters in Gaya, "The incident which took place at New Delhi railway station last night was very tragic. It happened because of the heavy rush of passengers at the platform. Overall, adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that pilgrims don't face any difficulties.'

The incident took place due to a large number of passen gers attempting to find space inside the trains en route to Prayagraj. The government is giving compensation to the family members of those who died and were injured in the stampede, he added.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, in a post on X, said, "The incident at New Delhi railway station is heart-wrenching. My deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. I pray to God to grant peace to the departed souls and for the speedy recovery of the injured.³

Meanwhile, RJD supremo Lalu Prasad slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre over the incident, and demanded the resignation of the railway minister.

"The stampede episode is very disturbing. It has exposed the inadequate arrangements made by the central government. The railway minister must resign after this incident," Prasad told reporters here.







TN RANKS 3 IN PANCHAYAT **DEVOLUTION INDEX: GOVT**

In the Panchayat Devolution Index (PDI), Tamil Nadu has been ranked third in the overall category and it is in the first place in the functional devolution dimension and it evidences the continuous efforts to empower village panchayats for grassroots democracy and local self governance, the state government said Sunday



panchayat, taluk pancha-

yat, assembly and parlia-

D K SHIVAKUMAR | K'TAKA DEPUTY CM

ment polls. He is our leader

of the day uote

Recent ly, a GBS outbreak was reported in the Khadak wasla dam area (in Pune).

While some linked it to water contamination, others speculated it was caused by chicken consumption. After a detailed review, it has been concluded that there is no need to cull poultry AJIT PAWAR | MAHA DEPUTY CM

The Madhya Pradesh Logistics Policy 2025 will also prove to be important in the direction of the

overall economic development. It will take the state economy to new heights in coming years MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

It was an unfortunate incident. Authorities will take steps to ensure such incidents don't happen in

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

SHORT TAKES

Two labourers from MP killed in blast

Nagpur: Two labourers died and three others were injured in a blast at a firecracker unit in Maharashtra's Nagpur district Sunday, a senior police official said. The explosion took place at 1:30pm at Asian Fireworks under Kalmeshwar police station limits in Katol tehsil, some 50 kilometres from the district headquarters, Nagpur Rural Superintendent of Police Harssh Poddar said, "The two deceased labourers hailed from Seoni and Mandla in Madhya Pradesh. Three persons were injured..." the SP told reporters.

Two students found dead

Sonipat: Two students of Ashoka University here were found dead in separate incidents, police said Sunday. The two incidents occurred Friday night, police said. In

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: Senior's admonition at the workplace does not amount to an "intentional insult" requiring criminal proceedings, the Supreme Court has held.

The top court said allowing criminal charges to be pressed against individuals in such cases may lead to disastrous consequences, crippling the entire disciplinary atmosphere required in the workplace. A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Sandeep Mehta said that mere abuse, discourtesy, rudeness or insolence do not amount

to an intentional insult within the meaning of Section 504 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Section 504 of the IPC deals with intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace. The offence, punishable with jail term of up to two years, has now been replaced with Section 352 under the Bharativa Nvava Sanhita (BNS) effective from July 2024

The top court's judgement came while quashing a 2022 criminal case against the officiating director of the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, who was accused of insulting an assistant profes-

DELHI STAMPEDE



Senior's admonition at workplace not criminal offence: SC

sor. The complainant had al leged that the director scolded and reprimand her in front of other employees for submitting complaints against him to the higher authorities.

The top court said allowing criminal charges to be pressed against individuals in such cases may lead to disastrous consequences, crippling the entire disciplinary atmosphere required in the workplace

It was also alleged that the director failed to provide and maintain adequate PPE kits in the institute, which posed a great risk of spreading infectious diseases such as Covid-19. The apex court said from the bare perusal of the chargesheet and documents relied therein, the allegations

seem to be purely conjectural, and by no stretch of imagination they can be considered sufficient to constitute the ingredients of the offences under Sections 269 (negligent acts that could spread a dangerous disease) and 270 (malicious act of spreading a life-threatening disease) of the IPC.

"Therefore, in our opinion senior's admonition cannot be reasonably attributed to mean an 'intentional insult with the intent to provoke' within the means of Section 504, IPC provided that the admonition relates to the matters inciden tal to the workplace covering discipline and the discharge of duties therein," the bench said

"It is a reasonable expectation on the part of a person who caters to the affairs at the helm that his juniors should attend to their professional duties with utmost sincerity and dedication," the judgment, delivered February 10, said.

Oppn blames govt for gross mismanagement



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said it was extremely shameful and condemnable that the

Narendra Modi government was attempting to "hide the truth" about the deaths AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 16: Opposition parties Sunday squarely blamed the government for "gross mismanagement"

at New Delhi railway station that led to a stampede in which 18 people died and demanded Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw resign taking moral responsibility. Several Opposition parties, including the Congress, the Left, Trinamool Congress and the Rashtriva Janata Dal. accused the government of failing to make elaborate arrangements and "covering up" the actual number of deaths.

said it was extremely shameful and condemnable that the Narendra Modi government was attempting to "hide the truth"

about the deaths. In a post on X, the party said, "The railway minister should resign, apologize to the country." Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said better arrangements should have been made at the station in view of the large number of devotees going to Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh. "This incident once again highlights the failure of the Railways and the insensitivity of the government," he

said in a post on X. Party spokesperson Supriya Shrinate demanded Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's resignation taking moral responsibility for the stampede. If the minister does not resign, he should be sacked for the "mismanagement" at the railway station, she said. Former Railway minister and senior Congress leader Pawan Kumar Bansal said the ultimate responsibility of the tragedy lies with the minister and he cannot escape it. The former Railway minister said the government has "utterly failed" to anticipate the rush of pilgrims and make arrange-

aturday night after some passengers slipped and ell on others while coming lown from a foot overbridg senior railway official said

The stampede occurred

eople were also injured in ne incident at the railway tation which witnessed a urge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj • where the Maha Kumbh is underway -- on platform number 14 and 15 of the station

to cover up the incident. Its Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, citing witnesses, alleged an announcement of platform change for trains was the reason behind the stampede. AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha said the stampede shook all. and called it a glaring example of "gross mismanagement" and lack of crowd control measures. He demanded that those responsible for the stampede be held accountable.

Expressing condolences over the deaths, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi demanded an independent, judicially-monitored speacial investigation team to investigate the tragedy. In a post on X, the Hyderabad Lok Sabha MP also sought an independent inquiry into the systemic failures of the Indian Railways.



An aerial view of boats at Sangam amid the ongoing 'Maha Kumbh Mela' festival, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh ه

Cooperative bank's general manager sent to police custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 16: A court here Sunday remanded Hitesh Mehta, the general manager and head of accounts of the New India Cooperative Bank, and co-accused Dharmesh Paun in police custody till February 21 in a case of alleged misap propriation of ₹122 crore from the bank

The police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) produced Mehta and Paun before a holiday court here. Police told court Mehta has confessed to the crime in front of the Re-

Rana visited north, south India before 26/11: Officials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: Tahawwur Hussain Rana's possible extradition from the US in connection with the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks could provide important leads into his travels in parts of north and south India days before the carnage in 2008, officials have said.

The 64-year-old Rana, a Pakistan-born Canadian national and a close associate of Pakistani-American terrorist and one of the main conspirators David Coleman Headley, is serving supervised detention at **Trump announced** Thursday that his administration has approved Rana's extradition to India, referring to him as "one of the plotters and very evil people of the world"

Arrested by the FBI October 27, 2009, Rana was chargesheeted by the National Investiga tion Agency (NIA) in 2011 under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Section 6(2) of the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. While tracking Headley's footsteps in India, the central security officials had found that Rana had visited Hapur, Delhi Agra, Kochi, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai with his wife Samraz Rana Akhtar between Novem ber 13 and November 21, 2008 Rana had submitted business sponsor letters from 'Immigrant Law Center' and property Tax payment notice from the Cook County as his address proof.

one incident, a 21-year-old student from Bengaluru is suspected to have died after jumping from an upper floor of the hostel building, Station House Officer of Rai police station, Sub-Inspector Kuldeep said over the phone. While police suspects suicide further investigations in the matter are underway, the officer said.

Four killed in road accident

Barabanki (UP): Four people, including a woman, were killed, and six others were injured after the tempo-traveller they were travelling in collided with a bus from behind on the Purvanchal Expresswav in Barabanki district Sunday, police said. The bus, coming from Chhattisgarh and the tempo-traveller, coming from Maharashtra, were both headed to Ayodhya. The deceased have been identified as Deepak, Sunil, Anusuiya and Jaishree, all aged between 35 and 55, and residents of Maharashtra, police said.

Two women killed as fire breaks out

Mumbai: Two women were killed and two other persons suffered from suffocation after a fire broke out in an 11-floor building in Mumbai Sunday morning, a fire official said. The blaze erupted at 6.11 am in Panna Ali Mansion building, located in Masjid Bandar area of south Mumbai, he said. The fire was confined to the electric wiring and installations at a common meter box place and electric wiring in the common passage on the ground floor of the building, the official said.

The BJP leaders, however, sought to defend the government by posting pictures on social media that showed the situation at the New Delhi railway station had turned normal. The stampede occurred Satur-

day night after some passengers slipped and fell on others while coming down from a foot overbridge, a senior railway official said. More than a dozen people were also injured in the incident at the railway station which witnessed a surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj - where the Maha Kumbh is underway -- on platform number 14 and 15 of the station. Congress

ments accordingly. RJD supremo and former Railway minister Lalu Prasad said the stampede episode is very disturbing and it has exposed the inadequate arrangements made by the Central government. "The railway minister must

resign after this incident. It is a complete failure on part of the Railways," he asserted.

The Aam Aadmi Party accused the government of trying

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Baneriee expressed grief over the loss of lives in a stampede at New Delhi railway station and stressed the need for careful planning and management for the safety of people.

TMC Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sagarika Ghose accused the government of "callously playing with the lives of Indian citizens" and called it "tragic beyond words"

The CPI(M), in a post on X, said, "Make the govern-ment accountable." The CPI (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, claimed the stampede at the New Delhi station was triggered by delays in multiple train services during the Maha Kumbh rush and is a "direct indictment of the Central government's callous mismanagement of India's Railways".

serve Bank of India and probe was needed to find out about involvement of more persons The involvement of Mehta in the crime has been established, police said. Paun was in possession of ₹70 crore and his involvement in the crime too has been confirmed, police told court while seeking remand of the duo. As per the police, Devarshi Ghosh, the bank's acting chief executive officer, lodged a complaint against Mehta and others at Dadar police station in central Mumbai on Friday for alleged misappropriation of the bank's funds. Based on the complaint, the police registered a case in the early hours of Saturday, and the probe was transferred to the Economic Offences Wing of Mumbai police. The complainant alleged Mehta and his associates hatched a conspiracy and embezzled ₹122 crore from the safes of the Prabhadevi and Goregaon offices of the bank.

a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles after completing a 14-year sentence in 2023.

US President Donald Trump announced Thursday that his administration has approved Rana's extradition to India, referring to him as "one of the plotters and very evil people of the world." Once extradited, Rana would be the third person to be sent on trial in India in the case after Ajmal Kasab and Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal. In November 2012, Kasab, the lone surviving Pakistan terrorist, was hanged to death in Pune's Yerawada Jail.



Over 29,500 registered drones in India: Official data

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: More than 29,500 drones are registered in India. with the national capital having the maximum number at 4,882, according to official data.

president Mallikarjun Kharge

After the national capital, the highest numbers of registered drones are in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra at 4,588 and 4,132, respectively. The data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) updated till January 29 showed that there were 29,501 registered

Other states that have a high

number of registered drones include Haryana (3,689), Karnataka (2,516), Telangana (1,928), Gujarat (1,338) and Kerala (1,318), as per the data shared by the civil aviation ministry with the Rajya Sabha this week. So far, the regulator has issued 96 Type Certificates to different Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) models or drones, and out of them, 65 models are for agriculture purpose.

Each registered drone is issued a Unique Identification Number (UIN) from the Digital Sky Platform, which is operated by the DGCA. DGCA-autho-



rised Remote Pilot Training Organisations (RPTOs) have issued 22,466 Remote Pilot Certificates (RPCs).

Sharing the data as part of a written reply, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol also said

After the national capital, the highest numbers of registered drones are in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra at 4,588 and 4,132, respectively

The data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) updated till January 29 showed that there were 29,501 registered drones

the central government has taken various steps to increase the usage of drone technology across various sectors. Among other measures, the ministry amended norms in August last year whereby the requirement of passport for the registration

and de-registration/transfer of a drone was scrapped.

Since then, voter ID, ration card or driving licence can be used for registration and de-registration or transfer of drones. There is a drone air space map, which is divided into three zones -- green, yellow and red. There is no need for prior permission to operate drones in the green zone while the Air Traffic Control (ATC) concerned has to approve operations of drones in the yellow zone. For flying drones in the red zone, permission has to be granted by the central government.





drones





nationa



The tragic loss of 18 lives in the Delhi stampede is deeply heartbreaking. This painful incident highlights the importance of careful planning and management, especially when it comes to the safety of citizens MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

11

FIRST-EVER SKYDIVING FESTIVAL **BEGINS IN JAMSHEDPUR**

An eight-day skydiving festival, under the aegis of the Jharkhand Tourism Department, was inaugurated in Jamshedpur Sunday. On the first day, at least nine enthusiasts took part in skydiving from an altitude of 10,000 feet, an official said



of the day

Had a great time in participating in the musical event organised for thalassemia patients by 'NTR

memorial trust' headed by Madam Nara Bhuvaneswari garu. And my wholehearted thanks to Hon. Cm @ ncbn garu and @naralokesh garu for making me a part in this event. My best wishes to @MusicThaman and his team for their entertaining and energetic performance

PAWAN KALYAN ANDHRA DEPUTY CM

Certainly. 100 per cent. I came (was appointed) to fill the time gap. I came for two or three months. But it (appointment of new chief) is getting postponed for several reasons. As soon as possible, a new

G KISHAN REDDY UNION MINISTER

president will come

Recently, 'Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav' was organised to promote the potential of the northeastern states. As many as 150 beneficiaries from Tripura attended it RAJIB BHATTACHARJEE | BJP'S TRIPURA UNIT PRESIDENT





like situation ANI at 12:00 AM The stampede incident happened ANI at 12:30 AM The stampede took 15 lives MOST SHAMELESS MEDIA CHANNEL.

@Amockx2022

SHORT TAKES

Omani capital here to attend the 8th Indian Ocean Conference, also met foreign ministers of several other nations, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Brunei on

and regional cooperation badralbusaidi of Oman this morning. Appreciate his personal efforts in successfully hosting the 8th Indian Ocean Conference," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Held wide-ranging discussions on our cooperation in trade, investment and energy security." he said.

The two leaders jointly released the logo celebrating the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic relations. They also iointly released a book titled 'Mandvi to Muscat: Indian Community and the Shared History of India and Oman'. Later, Jaishankar also met his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, "Good to meet FM @ araghchi of Iran this afternoon. Spoke about our bilateral ties and developments in the region," he said in a post on X.

Jaishankar also held "warm' talks with Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Foreign Minister of Brunei. "A warm conversation with Brunei FM Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof this morning. Followed up on PM @narendramodi's September 2024 Brunei visit outcomes. Appreciate his insights on the region and support for India-ASEAN partnership," he said in a post on X. Jaishankar met his Bhutanese counterpart D N Dhungyel and held talks about strengthening the bilateral partnership.

"A pleasure talking with @ FMBhutan D. N. Dhungyel in Muscat today. Our discussion focused on advancing our bilateral and regional cooperation. Underlined the dynamism of our unique and time-tested partnership," he posted on X.

ka's former president Ranil Wickremesinghe on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Conference. At the conference, Jaishankar called the Indian Ocean a "global lifeline" and urged countries in the region to look out for each other, supplement their strengths and coordinate their policies to fulfil its development, connectivity, maritime and security aspirations.

The conference was hosted by Oman, which is home to a sizeable Indian community totalling approximately 664,783 individuals as of August 2024 according to the Government of Oman. Jaishankar met Bangladesh interim government's Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain. The "convertion was focused on our bilateral relationship, as also on BIMSTEC,' he posted on X.

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIM-STEC) is an organisation to promote economic growth and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region. The member states are India, Bangladesh. Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Jaishankar also met Nepal foreign affairs minister Arzu Rana Deuba and "had a useful review of our bilateral cooperation".

Oman, India strengthen ties Jaishankar, who is in the The minister also met Sri Lanka's former president Raniil Yamuna cleaning



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BJP's

February

8 promised

to make ev-

tory

New Delhi, Feb 16: Days ahead of the formation of BJP government in Delhi, the cleaning of Yamuna started on Sunday based on a four-pronged strategy to free the river from heavy pollution in three years. Raj Niwas officials said that the work on cleaning the Yamuna has begun with trash skimmers, weed harvesters and a dredger. Prime Minister

Minister Narendra Mo-Narendra Modi di during the during the BJP's victory celebration at party vicceleheadquarters February 8 bration at romised to make every effort for party head**pollution-free Yamuna** quarters on

Prime Minister Narendra lodi promised to make every effort for pollution-free ery effort for Yamuna

pollution-free Yamuna. Delhi Lieutenant Gover-

nor V K Saxena on Saturday met the chief secretary and additional chief secretary (irrigation and flood control) and directed them for taking up Yamuna cleaning work, the officials said. A fourpronged strategy has been put in place to clean the Yamuna. It involves removing trash and silt from the river stream and simultaneous cleaning operations in Najafgarh drain, supplementary drain and other major drains, they said.

Further, the strategy involves daily monitoring of capacity and output of the existing sewage treatment plants, and a time-bound construction of new STPs and decentralised STPs to meet the actual shortMGD of sewer. "Execution of this ambitious plan that targets cleaning the river in about three years, will require seamless coordination between various agencies and departments including Mu-

fall of treating about 400

nicipal Corporation of Delhi Delhi Jal Board, I&FC, envi ronment department, public works department and Delhi Development Authority," said an official at the LG office. "Monitoring of these

works will be done in a weekly basis at the highest level. Besides, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has been directed to keep strict vigil on discharge of untreated effluent into the drains by

industrial units." he said Earlier, an extensive project for Yamuna rejuvenation was taken up in mission mode in January 2023 under the National Green Tribunal (NGT) mandated high-level

committee chaired by the LG. The committee, however, after five meetings stopped functioning as the then AAP government in Delhi ap proached the Supreme Court challenging its formation. The top court stayed the NGT order for formation of the committee July 10, 2023. For a brief period when the committee was in existence, the chemical oxyger demand (COD) and biological oxygen demand (BOD) had started improving slightly on

a month-on-month basis.

in J&K's Poonch

They said an Indian Army

sector. They said soldiers retaliated and the exchange of fire lasted

brief period.

age on the Indian side. the officials said. They said it was not immediately clear whether the Pakistan army was behind the firing, or it was terrorists hiding in the forests and waiting for an opportunity to sneak in. There were a few cross-border incidents last week, including an IED explosion that killed two army personnel including a captain. Two other soldiers were injured in cross-border firing in violation of ceasefire. Indian troops retaliated befittingly, inflicting "heavy casualties" on the Pakistani side The ceasefire violation along the borders in J&K have become few and far between since India and Pakistan renewed the ceasefire agreement February 25, 2021.



Delhi Police personnel march past during their Raising Day Parade, in New Delhi

Manipur MLAs receive 'fake' calls India, Japan to hold joint military exercise

JDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, security officials said.

for a very

There was no dam·

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 16: A brief exchange of fire took place along the Line of Control (LoC) in the

the sidelines of the event

and discussed issues

related to bilateral ties

Muscat, Feb 16: External Af-

fairs Minister S Jaishankar

Sunday held wide-ranging

discussions with his Omani

counterpart Badr Albusaidi

on bilateral cooperation in

trade, investment and energy

Jaishankar, who is in the

Omani capital here to attend

the 8th Indian Ocean Confer-

ence, also met foreign minis-

ters of several other nations, in-

cluding Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri

Lanka, Maldives, and Brunei on

the sidelines of the event and dis-

cussed issues related to bilateral

"Delighted to meet FM @

ties and regional cooperation.

Brief exchange

of fire along LoC

AGENCIES

security.

post came under fire from a forested area across the LoC around 11.30 am in Gulpur



gal consequences." the official

leacner jumps to death from Atal Setu

Mumbai: A 50-year-old school teacher, who was allegedly being troubled over a loan. jumped to his death from the Atal Setu, the country's longest sea bridge between south Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. an official said Sunday. The man, a resident of Alibag in Maharashtra's Raigad district. died by suicide near Ulwe, close to the Nhava Sheva end of the sea bridge, Friday morning, the official said.

MP: 2 held in kidnapping case

Morena (MP): Police have arrested two persons accused of kidnapping a businessman's six-vear-old son in Gwalior after a brief gunfight in Madhva Pradesh's Morena district, an official said Sunday. The duo have told the police that they carried out the abduction for a ransom of ₹1 crore, the official said. Two motorcycle-borne men kidnapped the child after throwing chilli powder into his mother's eyes in the Morar area of neighbouring Gwalior Thursday morning.

Elephant found dead

Medininagar (Jharkhand):

An elephant was found dead in Jharkhand's Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR) Sunday, an official said. The forest department suspects that the jumbo was killed in a fight with another elephant Saturday night in the Garu forest division of PTR. PTR deputy director Kumar Ashish said that blood stains were found at the incident site and a tree near the site was also found uprooted.

Imphal, Feb 16: The Manipur Police undertook an investigation and legal action as well after fraudulent telephone calls were received by some MLAs attempting to influence and mislead the legislators by exploiting the ongoing political situation in the state, officials said Sunday.

A senior police official said that the Manipur Police have received complaints about fraudulent calls from unknown persons attempting to influence and mislead MLAs of the state by exploiting the present political situation in the state. "An FIR has been registered

in Imphal police station Saturday and necessary legal action is underway. It is hereby warned that those involved in such fraudulent activities would face strict and strong letold the media.

He said that an intensive investigation is underway in full swing. Manipur Chief Secretary Prashant Kumar Singh last week in an appeal said that the government urges all citizens to remain calm and not fall prey to unverified news, rumours, or misinformation that may cause unnecessary panic or disrupt peace and harmony in the state.

In recent times, misleading information has been circulated through various channels, causing confusion and unrest. It has also come to the notice of the government that certain unscrupulous individuals and groups may deliberately attempt to incite unrest, disrupt harmony, and spread fear among the public using false information, inflammatory content, or fabricated narratives, Singh said.

New Delhi, Feb 16: The sixth edition of Joint Military Exercise Dharma Guardian, between India and Japan, is scheduled at Mount Fuji, Japan from February 25 to March 9, the Indian Army said Sunday.

The exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the two forces while undertaking ioint urban warfare and counter-terrorism operations under UN mandate, said the Additional Directorate General of Public Information, IHQ of MoD (Armv) in a social media post.

'Building on the momentum of the Chief of the Army Staff's (COAS) successful visit to Japan from October 14 to 17, 2024, Exercise Dharma Guardian 2025 will further strengthen the bilateral de-



fence cooperation between India and Japan," it said.

Earlier February 11, special forces of India and Egypt commenced the 'Cyclone III' exercise at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan. An official said that the exercise would conclude February 23.

"Exercise 'Cycolone' is an annual event conducted alternatively in India and Egypt. The last edition of the same exercise was conducted in Egypt in January 2024," said the official.

The Indian contingent com prising 25 personnel is represented by troops from two Spe cial Forces Battalions. Egypt contingent also comprising 25 personnel will be represented by the Special Forces Group and Task Force of Egyptian Special Forces.

Young advocates must volunteer to assist poor litigants: SC

Expressing appreciation for a young advocate who rendered legal aid to a party-in-person, a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma said lawyers should render best legal assistance to the litigant without any expectation in return for their professional services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: Young advocates must volunteer to assist the litigants who cannot engage the services of a counsel due to lack of means or awareness, the Supreme Court has said.

Expressing appreciation for a young advocate who rendered legal aid to a party-in-person, a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma said lawyers should render best legal assistance to the litigant without any expectation in return for their professional

services. "Young advocates joining the bar must volunteer to assist the litigants who cannot engage the

services of a counsel due to lack of means or awareness whenever an opportunity presents itself. Moreover, they should render the best legal assistance to the litigant without any expectation in return for their professional services"

"By these gestures of volunteering to represent indigent litigants, advocates can collectively make a statement to the society at large that the legal profession stands for the right to have access to justice and equality before

law, not just in theory but in practice too," the bench said. The top court said such ef-

forts of advocates, though in an individual capacity but acting



towards a common objective of bringing an amicable quietus to the litigation, would send out a message that counsels are not hinderances in the process of parties reaching a mutually agreeable settlement, particularly in labour and matrimonial matters.

"They can also effectively play their parts in helping the parties end their disputes, and add positively to the alternate dispute mechanisms like mediation and conciliation."

'These are opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the society, and as a

result the legal profession as a whole would gain the goodwill of the society in general and indigent litigants in particular,"the bench said. Referring to the case, the bench said the counsel, advocate Sanchar Anand, appeared 14 times before this court to represent the petitioner in two years. The petitioner, admittedly being a man of limited means, has not been able to pay a penny to the counsel for his services, it said. "The counsel is not even an advocate on the panel of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee, so as to receive some reasonable remuneration for his time and expenses. Yet, the counsel ded-

icatedly appeared before this court during these two years to not just represent the petition er, but also to assist this court in reaching a just and proper conclusion to this case," the bench said.

The apex court said access to justice before the highest court of the country is not bound by the shackles of lack of financial resources. The bench said persons from all classes, etc., who wish to approach this court with their grievance, must be provided with necessary assistance by the responsible members of the bar, without increase ing the cost of litigation for the party or unnecessarily delaying the process.















We're banning foreign purchases of established dwellings from April 1, 2025, until March 31 2027 JIM CHALMERS TREASURER, AUSTRALIA

BRAZIL TO HOST NEXT BRICS SUMMIT

The Brazilian government announced Saturday that the next BRICS summit will take place in Rio de Janeiro July 6-7. Brazil will chair the bloc of developing economies through 2025 and said it will focus on promoting global governance reform and cooperation among Global South countries



of the day

The first phase is the pre-negotiation, and this is a moment when we need to rearm Ukraine and put

maximum pressure on Russia, which means sanctions, which means frozen assets, so that Ukraine begins these negotiations from a position of strength ALEXANDER STUBB PRESIDENT, FINLAND

We will continue to raise release of Alaa Abd el-Fattah, a British-Egyptian dual national who has who has spent

more than five years in an Egyptian prison, accused of "spreading false news" on social media, at the highest levels of the Egyptian government and press for his release KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

President Trump is touring a new Boeing plane to checkout the new hardware/ technology. This highlights the project's failure to deliver a new Air Force One on time as promised

STEVEN CHEUNG | WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

SHORT TAKES

Rubio kicks off Mideast trip

Jerusalem: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio Sunday fully endorsed Israel's war aims in the Gaza Strip, saying Hamas "must be eradicated" and throwing the future of the shaky ceasefire into further doubt. Rubio met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem at the start of a regional tour, where he is likely to face pushback from Arab leaders over President Donald Trump's proposal to transfer the Palestinian population out of the Gaza Strip and redevelop it under US ownership. Netanyahu has welcomed the plan, and said he and Trump have a "common strategy" for Gaza's future. Echoing Trump, he said "the gates of hell would be open" if Hamas does not release dozens of remaining hostages abducted



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bukavu (Congo), Feb 16: Rwanda-backed rebels reached the centre of east Congo's second largest city, Bukavu, Sunday morning and took control of the South Kivu province administrative office after little resistance from government forces, many of whom fled the rebels' advance.

Associated Press journalists witnessed scores of residents cheering on the M23 rebels in central Bukayu Sunday morning as they walked and drove around the city centre after a dayslong march from the region's major city of Goma 63 miles (101 kilometres) away, which they captured late last

month Several parts of the city, however, remained deserted with residents indoors.

The M23 rebels are the most prominent of more than 100 armed groups vying for control of Congo's mineral-rich east, and are supported by some 4,000 troops from neighbouring Rwanda, according to the UN.

It was not clear if the rebels had taken decisive control of the city of about 1.3 million people. Their presence in central Bukavu is an unprecedented expansion of the rebels' reach in their yearslong fighting with

NO MAJOR CLASHES REPORTED AS REBELS CLOSED IN RAPID OFFENSIVE HAS FANNED

ARE IN CENTRAL BUKAVU

FFARS OF A WIDER WAR

Congolese forces. Unlike in 2012 when they only seized Goma in the fighting connected to ethnic

tension, analysts have said the rebels this time are eyeing political power. Many Congolese soldiers were seen Saturday fleeing the rebels' advance into Bukavu

alongside thousands of civilians amid widespread looting and panic. Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi held a security meeting in the faraway capital of Kinshasa, where officials noted that Bukayu was "briefly" invaded by M23 but remains under the control of the Congolese army and allies from local militia, the presidency said on X.

There were no signs of fighting or of Congolese forces in most parts of Bukayu Sunday Tshisekedi has warned of the risk of a regional expansion of the conflict. Congo's forces are being supported in Bukavu by troops from Burundi and in Goma by troops from South

Africa

Congo crisis: M23 insurgents advance attacks in India: UN

According to the 35th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, these terror groups and affiliates remained resilient and adaptable to external counter-terrorism pressure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, Feb 16: Terror group Islamic State was unable to mount large-scale attacks in India but its handlers tried to incite lone-actor attacks through supporters based in the country, a UN report has said.

According to the 35th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, these terror groups and affiliates remained resilient and adaptable to external counter-terrorism pressure.

Aided by less centralised organisational structures, the threat they posed remained undiminished.

ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is a terrorist group that aims to establish a caliphate in West Asia. It's also known as the Islamic State and Da'esh.

"ISIL (Da'esh) was unable to mount large-scale attacks in India. However, its handlers tried to incite lone-actor attacks through India-based supporters. The pro-ISIL (Da'esh) Al-Jauhar Media continued to spread anti-India propaganda



through its publication Serat ul-Haq," the report said.

The report also added that with over two dozen terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan, UN member states as sessed the security threat emanating from the country as a continuing driver of instability in the region and beyond.

"Despite the loss of territory and attrition among senior and mid-tier leadership figures, the presence of terrorist organisations in Afghanistan posed a serious challenge to the stability of the country, as well as to the security of Central Asian and other neighbouring States," it said.

Separately, the 20th report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security said that the severity of the threat posed by Da'esh remains concerning.

Despite steady progress by member states and international partners in targeting Da'esh leadership and financial operations, the group continues to demonstrate resilience and adapt its modus operandi, the Secretary General's report said.

"The situation in Afghani stan remains concerning, with ISIL-K (Islamic State - Kho-

ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is a terrorist group that aims to establish a caliphate in West Asia and also known as the Islamic State and Da'esh

rasan Province) continuing to represent a threat not only to the country but also to the region and beyond." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his report.

"I continue to call upon all Member States to unite to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a hotbed of terrorist activities affecting other countries," Guterres said.

The report by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team further said that notwithstanding the measures taken by the Taliban to counter ISIL-K, the group represented the most serious threat to the de facto authorities, ethnic and religious minorities, the United Nations, foreign nationals and international representatives in Afghanistan.

Israel receives heavy bombs cleared by US

REUTERS

Jerusalem, Feb 16: Israel has received a shipment of heavy MK-84 bombs from the United States, after US President Donald Trump lifted a block imposed on the export of the munitions by the administration of predecessor Joe Biden, the defence ministry said Sunday.

The MK-84 is an unguided 2,000 pound bomb, which can rip through thick concrete and metal, creating a wide blast radius.

The Biden administration declined to clear them for export to Israel out of concern about the impact on densely populated areas of the Gaza Strip.

The Biden administra tion sent thousands of 2,000-pound bombs to Israel after the Oct 7, 2023 attack by Palestinian Hamas militants from Gaza but later held up one of the shipments. The hold was lifted by Trump last month.

"The munitions shipment that arrived in Israel to night, released by the Trump Administration, represents a significant asset for the Air Force and the IDF and serves as further evidence of the strong alliance between Is rael and the United States, Defence Minister Israel Katz said late Saturday.

The shipment arrived after days of concern about whether a fragile ceasefire in Gaza agreed last month would hold, after both sides accused each other of violating the terms of the deal to halt fighting to allow the exchange of hostages held in Gaza for Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli iails.

Washington has announced assistance for Israel worth billions of dollars since the war began.

AUSTRIA STABBING ATTACK

Suspect swore allegiance to 'Islamic terror motive'

REUTERS

Villach, Austria, Feb 16: The Svrian asylum seeker suspectger at an Islamist attacker who randomly stabbed innocent

people here in this town."

Karner also said officials



in its Oct 7. 2023. at ack that triggered the war.

16 dead, 45 injured in 2 road accidents

Islamabad: Sixteen people were killed and 45 others injured in two separate road accidents in Pakistan's Sindh province, according to police. In the first accident, five people were killed and 10 others were injured when the van they were travelling in collided with a trailer near Qazi Ahmed town of Sindh's Shaheed Benazirabad District Saturday. In another accident, 11 people were killed and 35 others injured in a road accident near Ranipur, Khairpur district in the province. The accident occurred when a bus from Burewala collided with a rickshaw on the National Highway.

ed of carrying out a deadly stabbing rampage in the Austrian town of Villach had sworn allegiance to Islamic State and was radicalised online, authorities said Sunday

A 14-year-old boy was killed in Saturday afternoon's attack in the centre of Villach and five other people were wounded, three of whom are in intensive care.

Interior Minister Gerhard Karner told a press conference in Villach that the 23-year-old Syrian man, who was arrested seven minutes after the first call to the police, had been rapidly radicalised on the internet and that the Islamic State (IS) flag had been found in his apartment. Karner, a conservative, told

reporters there was sadness and sympathy for the victims, then added, "But in these moments there's also understandably often anger and rage. Anshould have greater powers to screen asylum seekers and there would have to be "mass checks without cause in many areas" since the suspect had not attracted the authorities attention. Police said the man who is being charged with mur der and attempted murder, had recorded himself swearing an oath of allegiance to IS.

More harm would have been done had it not been for another Svrian, a food delivery driver who saw the attacker and drove into him with his vehicle to stop him, authorities said.

IS has not claimed responsibility for the attack so far. How ever, the media section of IS's Afghan branch, Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K), recently circulated a post by IS calling for lone wolf attacks in Ameri ca and Europe following a New Year attack in New Orleans.

Protesters demanding the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, in Tel Aviv, Israel

Scientists race to discover depth of ocean damage sparked by LA blaze Gold mine collapse

Bamako (Mali): A gold mine collapsed in eastern Mali, killing dozens of people and injuring many more, according to Malian television and officials in the Kenieba district where the accident occurred. It is the second major accident this year in the French-speaking West African country, which is one of Africa's top three gold producers. Late Saturday, Malian television announced the collapse of the site at Bilali Koto in the commune of Dabia, with a provisional death toll of 42 and many injured. The prefect of Kenieba, who represents the government in the locality, confirmed the incident. "The death toll of 42 should be definitive," Mohamed Dicko told

kills 42 in Mali

Waves during high tide lapped onto charred homes, pulling debris and potentially toxic ash into the ocean as they receded

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Los Angeles, Feb 16: On a recent Sunday, Tracy Quinn drove down the Pacific Coast Highway to assess damage wrought upon the coastline by the Palisades Fire.

The water line was darkened by ash. Burnt remnants of washing machines and drvers and metal appliances were strewn

about the shoreline. Sludge carpeted the water's edge. Waves during high tide lapped onto charred homes, pulling debris and potentially toxic ash into the ocean as they receded.

"It was just heartbreaking," said Quinn, president and CEO of the environmental group Heal the Bay, whose team has reported ash and debris some 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of the Palisades burn area west of Los Angeles.

As crews work to remove potentially hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous materials from the Los Angeles wildfires, researchers and officials are trying to understand how the fires on land have impacted the sea. The Palisades and Eaton fires scorched thousands



of homes, businesses, cars and electronics, turning everyday items into hazardous ash made of pesticides, asbestos, plastics, lead, heavy metals and more. Since much of it could end up in the Pacific Ocean, there are concerns and many unknowns about how the fires could affect life under the sea.

We haven't seen a concentration of homes and buildings burned so close to the water. Quinn said.

Reports are already showing that there was a lot of lead and asbestos in the ash. This is really bad for people so its probably also very bad for the marine organisms

TRACY QUINN | PRESIDENT AND CEO, HEAL THE BAY

Fire debris and potentially toxic ash could make the water unsafe for surfers and swimmers, especially after rainfall that can transport chemicals, trash and other hazards into the sea. Longer term. scientists worry if and how charred urban contaminants will affect the food supply.

The atmospheric river and mudslides that pummeled the Los Angeles region last week exacerbated some of those fears.

When the fires broke out in January, one of Mara Dias' first concerns was ocean water contamination. Strong winds were carrying smoke and ash far be yond the blazes before settling at sea, said the water quality manager for the Surfrider Foundation, an environmental nonprofit.

Scientists on board a research vessel during the fires detected ash and waste on the water as far as 100 miles (161 kilometers) offshore, said marine ecologist Julie Dinasquet with the University of California, San Diego's Scripps Institu tion of Oceanography. Things like twigs and shard. They de scribed the smell as electronics burning, she recalled, "not like a nice campfire.'













The rise of remote IT work has notably expanded opportunities for professionals in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. This shift provides earning

potential and promotes inclusive growth ATUL SONEJA | CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, TECH MAHINDRA

We remain consistent in our commitment towards invest-

ing behind the premium and EV portfolio and improved customer service in store with Hero 2.0 and Premia and online with investments behind digital and technology VIVEK ANAND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, HERO MOTOCOR

The progress we are making in other engagements with Europe, and the

progress we will soon make with the US as we proceed to finalize a trade deal by fall of this year, are all reflective of India's growing relevance at the global stage

PIYUSH GOYAL COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

BoM gets RBI nod for GIFT City branch

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) Sunday said it has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India to set up an International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Banking Unit at GIFT City. The branch will function as Bank of Maharashtra's first international branch carrying out offshore banking operations from India. Speaking on the development, BoM MD & CEO Nidhu Saxena said," This is a significant opportunity for our bank as we continue to expand our operations across geographies. The opening of IBU in GIFT City will be vet another milestone in the bank's growth story." This development will help expand international banking business and also enable the bank provide specialised banking services to its customers, he added. Aligned with the government's vision of making India an international financial hub, the GIFT City, located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat is India's first IFSC, aimed at revolutionizing India's financial ecosystem by providing world-class banking services locally and reducing reliance on offshore financial hubs, BoM said in a statement.

FPI outflows near ₹1L-cr this year

Exodus of foreign investors from equities continues driven by global

tensions after the US imposed tariffs on imports

New Delhi, Feb 16: The ex-

AGENCIES

odus of FPIs from the Indian equity markets continues as they pulled out ₹21,272 crore in the first two weeks of this month, driven by global tensions after the US imposed tariffs on imports.

This came following a net outflow of ₹78,027 crore in January. With these, the total outflow by FPIs has reached ₹99,299 crore -- near ₹1 lakh crore -- in 2025 so far, data with

the depositories showed. Going forward, VK Vijay akumar. Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, believes that reversal of FPI strategy will happen when the dollar index moves down.

According to the data, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth ₹21,272 crore from Indian equities so far this month (till Februarv 14).

Market concerns heightened as US President Donald Trump imposed new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports and announced plans for reciprocal tariffs on several countries. Hi-

manshu Srivastava, Associate Director-Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

These developments reignited fears of a potential global trade war, prompting FPIs to re-evaluate their exposure to emerging markets, including India, he added. Also, Vipul Bhowar, Senior

Director - Listed Investments, Waterfield Advisors, said. "shifts in global policies, especially those emerging from the US, are invoking a sense of uncertainty among FPIs, which in turn is reshaping

their investment strategies in dynamic markets like India". On the domestic front, lack luster corporate earnings and persistent depreciation of the Indian rupee, which breached multi-year lows, further di-

minished the appeal of Indian assets, Srivastava said.

EB SO FAR

THIS CAME

Contrast in debt market

On the other hand, FPIs were buyers in the debt market during the period. They put in ₹1,296 crore into debt general limit and ₹206 crore in debt voluntary retention route.

The overall trend indicates a cautious approach by foreign investors, who scaled back investments in Indian equities significantly in 2024, with net inflows of just ₹427 crore.

This contrasts sharply with the extraordinary ₹1.71 lakh crore net inflows in 2023, driven by optimism over India's strong economic fundamentals. In comparison, 2022 saw a net outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore amid aggressive rate hikes by global central banks.

tumbles ₹2 lakh cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: The combined market valuation of eight of the 10 most valued domestic firms eroded by ₹2 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit in line with a bearish trend in the broader stock market.

Equity indices Sensex and Nifty extended their downward trend to the eighth day in a row on Friday. In the past eight trad ing days, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent.

While Reliance Industries Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and ITC faced a combined erosion of ₹2.03.952.65 crore in their valuation. Bharti Airtel and ICIC Bank emerged as the gainers.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries tanked ₹67.526.54 crore to ₹16.46.822.12 crore. The valuation of TCS tumbled ₹34,950.72 crore to ₹14,22,903.37 crore.

HDFC Bank's mcap eroded by ₹28,382.23 crore to ₹12,96,708.35 crore and that of ITC plunged ₹25,429.75 crore to ₹5,13,699.85 crore. The mcap of Infosys dropped ₹19,287.32 crore to ₹7,70,786.76 crore and that of State Bank of India declined ₹13,431.55 crore to ₹6.44.357.57 crore.

The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever diminished by ₹10,714.14 crore to ₹5,44,647 crore and that of Bajaj Finance dipped ₹4,230.4 crore to ₹5,20,082.42 crore. In the top-10 chart, Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Uni-

lever, Bajaj Finance and ITC.

Gold up 11% in 2025, may remain bullish

There are talks around about tariff on gold which also has sparked a rush for the physical metal in London, Switzerland and Asia to ship to the US ahead of any new levy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 16: Gold is 11 per cent up so far in 2025, outperforming equities and bitcoins, according to industry reports, which project that the bullion is heading towards \$3,000 per ounce and is likely to cross \$3,080 in Q1 this year.

With the increased US trade tariffs there's a lot of uncertainty surrounding the US trade policy. These have increased the demand for safe haven asset, said Ventura Securities.

Spot gold hit a record high of \$2,943 and Comex gold \$2,968 an ounce. "Gold keeps trading at record

highs on the back of increasing demand by central banks for their reserves to maintain an expected surge in fiscal deficits which could raise inflation manifold and probably a recessionary fear across the globe," said the brokerage in a note.

Central banks acquired 1.045 tonnes of gold in 2024, marking the third consecutive year of purchases surpassing 1,000 tonnes. Over the last 3 years, central banks bought more gold than in 6 years before 2022



"The recent strength stems from a mix of higher tariff safe haven demand, geopolitical uncertainties, inflation concerns central bank policies besides continued strong demand from both central banks and retail investors," the report mentioned.

All this, despite strength in bond yield and a strong dollar with US data indicating a solid US economy.

However, gold presently is pressured due to the strength in Treasury vields and Dollar bias after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has been cautious and flagged no hurry to cut interest rates.

Bigger gains in gold are re stricted due to strength in USE and interest rates are still ele vated. Since US importers are facing inflation due to tariffs the FED has less impetus to cut interest rates. High interest rates present more pressure for non-vielding assets like gold.

Gold will continue to have volatility and so far as "uncertainty" prevails, its likely to remain bullish, the report mentioned.

largest music record labels

which releases about 2,000

sound records or songs annu

ally, while Saregama, more

than 100 years old, owns a rep-

ertoire of famed Indian singers

such as Mohammed Rafi and

Lata Mangeshkar.

Bollywood music labels dare OpenAI Dharavi redevelopment survey crosses 50K mark Indian companies' latest action comes after

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 16: The Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) notched up a major milestone recently by completing over 50,000 door-to-door surveys which is the highest in Mumbai Slum Rehabilitation Authoritv's (SRA) history.

Germany's GEMA, which represents composers, lyricists and publishers, said in November it had sued OpenAI for ChatGPT's alleged unlicensed reproduction of song lyrics with which "the system has obviously been trained"

REUTERS

COPYRIGHT LAWSUIT

AI giant faces legal action in India on copyright issues OpenAI counts India as

second biggest market

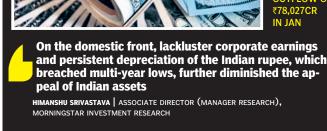
Music labels latest to oppose OpenAI in India after media

OpenAI says its models

group says it also represents global names such as Sony Music and Warner Music.

On its website, the IMI





📕 Aviva's India arm hit with \$7.5mn fine

New Delhi: Indian authorities have ordered British insurer Aviva's local unit to pay \$7.5 million in back taxes and penalties after an investigation found it created fake invoices to pay illegal commissions and claimed incorrect tax credits, an order shows. The tax demand is significant for Aviva's India business, which recorded a profit after tax of only \$10 million in the 2023-24 financial year. Aviva also faces stiff competition from rivals in India's insurance market. To grow its business, Aviva India paid about \$26 million between 2017 and 2023 to vendors who purportedly provided marketing services. but they were only a front to give Aviva's agents excess commissions beyond regulatory limits, Indian tax authorities alleged in an August 3 notice Reuters reported last year. Using the clandestine system of fake invoices and cash payments, Aviva incorrectly claimed tax credits and evaded \$5.2 million in taxes, authorities had alleged.

This is a record milestone for Mumbai SRA. This progress is a big boost for the survey teams and Dharavi residents, who are eager for the redevelopment to move forward. Their active participation shows their commitment to Asia's largest slum rehabilitation survey," a DRP official said.

The survey is essential to decide on those eligible for rehabilitation under the Dharavi redevelopment project. Teams are working to com-

plete this extensive survey. The DRP CEO, SVR Srinivas, recently urged all Dharavikars to participate in the survey so that no one is left out of the housing plan. As per the lat-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



est survey figures, numbering has been completed for 85,000 tenements, while over 50,000 tenements have undergone door-to-door surveys.

The Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) is India's largest slum rehabilitation initiative. Home to nearly one million people, it aims to transform Asia's biggest slum into a modern ur-

ban hub. Around 1.5 lakh tenements will be rehabilitated, ensuring better housing, infrastructure, and economic opportunities while preserving the dignity of Dharavi's people.

New Delhi, Feb 16: A group of India's top Bollywood music labels, from T-Series to Saregama and Sonv. is seeking to join a copyright lawsuit against OpenAI in New Delhi, highlighting worries about improper use of recordings to train AI models, legal documents show.

Microsoft-backed OpenAI's legal challenges are mounting globally and in India, its second biggest market by users. But the company says it follows fair-use principles in employing publicly available data to build its AI models. On Friday, the Indian Music trained on publicly available content

(G) OpenAl

Industry (IMI) group, T-Series and Saregama India asked a New Delhi court to hear concerns about "unauthorised use of sound recordings" in training AI models that breaches their copyright.

The companies' contentions in the lawsuit "are crucial for the entire music industry in India, and even worldwide," they said in their filing, which is not public but was reviewed by Reuters.

OpenAI and the music labels did not respond to requests for comments Friday.

The music labels want to join a lawsuit launched last year by Indian news agency ANI that accused OpenAI's ChatGPT application of using its content without permission

to train AI models. Since then, book publishers and media groups, some backed by billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, have banded together to oppose the company in the New Delhi court.

Bollywood and Hindi pop music are big business in India. T-Series is one of India's

In India, the music labels are "concerned OpenAI and other AI systems can extract lyrics music compositions and sound recordings from the internet, said an industry source who spoke on condition of anonymi ty as the matter is in court.

OpenAI, which is grappling with new challenges from Chi nese startup DeepSeek's breakthrough in cheap AI computing. opposed the ANI lawsuit on the grounds that Indian courts lack jurisdiction, as the company is US-based, with servers abroad.

The next hearing in the law suit, which is seen as shaping the future of how AI models use copyright content in India, is set for February 21.

INDIA HAS OVERTAKEN CHINA AS THE BIGGEST DESTINATION OF JAPANESE FDI, AS PER JAPAN EXTERNAL TRADE ORGANIZATION India is poised to 2000 to 2024, Japan has mainattract a significant portion of the capital

tained its position as a premier source of foreign capital for India, channelling approximately \$44 billion into the Indian economv over two decades. Among nations investing in

India, Japan holds the fifth po sition in terms of cumulative FDI inflows, he said.

India ranks No 1, significantly ahead of other countries in the JBIC Report on Overseas Business Operations by Japanese Companies -- indicating a shift away from being seen as a "promising" market to one with concrete business prospects.

Shetty said M&A deals are also rising as Japanese compa nies see merits in acquisitions to scale up operations.

Over the past 10 years, over 200 inbound deals have taken place (20+ deals a year between the Japan-India corridor).

emerging as a key destina-New Delhi, Feb 16: Post the tion. While some companies Covid-19 pandemic, Japanese returned to Japan, others are companies are eyeing India as looking at India not just as a a base as they adopt the 'China manufacturing hub, but as a Plus One' strategy to diversify gateway to high-growth markets like the Middle East and Africa," Deloitte Japan CEO Kenichi Kimura said. The Japanese government

chain strategies, with India

has actively supported this shift by allocating substantial funds to encourage companies to relocate production either domestically or to Southeast Asia. Japanese corporations are forming strategic partnerships and expanding operations in India to tap into its large domestic market and

Deloitte South Asia CEO Romal Shetty said the 'China Plus One' strategy has prompted Japanese companies to explore

and invest in India, aiming to

diversify their supply chains and leverage the country's economic potential.

"India has overtaken China as the biggest destination of Japanese FDI," he said, quoting data from Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

Foreign direct investment (FDI) Balance of Payments Basis from Japan to China has declined significantly, from \$13 billion in 2012 to around \$3 bil-



Japanese firms eye India as part of 'China Plus One' strategy

anese FDI, reaching \$6 billion in 2023 marking the first time India has overtaken China in FDI inflows from Japan. Japanese investment in

being redirected from China -- a potential 'Wall of Capital' that could reshape While the region's Japanese businesses have yet investment to fully tap into this polandscape tential, we see India as not just a market, but a critical ASEAN supply chain hub that can tions has also drive regional and global been tapering success a off, as these mar-

KENICHI KIMURA CEO, DELOITTE JAP absorbed substan-

tial capital from Japanese corporations over the vears

Throughout the period from



na-

kets have already



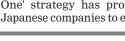
their manufacturing and supply chains to reduce dependence on China, experts from Deloitte said. The strategy involves establishing production facilities in alternative countries, with India emerging as a significant beneficiary. While the sheer scale of In-

dia's domestic market is a major draw, what makes the country even more compelling is its well-established business and talent networks across these regions.

panies have been actively exploring China-plus supply

"Post-Covid, Japanese com-

competitive labour costs.









PORTS



FIH Pro League

Men seal solid win



Indian men celebrate after scoring a goal against Spain in FIH Pro League at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar

Indian men's team beats Spain 2-0, a day after disappointing loss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: The Indian men's hockey team made a brilliant comeback to down Spain 2-0 in a return leg match of the FIH Pro League here Sunday.

India lost to Spain 1-3 in the first match of the leg Saturday despite taking the lead through Sukhjeet Singh's goal.

On Sunday, however, it was a completely different looking Indian side as it dominated

for most part of the match and scored two field goals through Mandeep Singh (32nd minute) and Dilpreet Singh (39th) to pocket full three points. India will next play Germany

here Tuesday. It was India who enjoyed the

better share of ball possession and created more chances in the first two quarters but failed to capitalise those into goals. India had the first chance in the fifth minute when Mandeep got a golden opportunity inside the circle, but the Spanish keeper Rafael Rivilla made a solid save to

deny the Indian striker Seconds from the end of the

first quarter, India earned backto-back penalty corners, but Jugraj Singh faltered. India custodian Krishan Bahadur Pathak made a fine save to deny Spain their first shot on goal in the 14th minute. India dominated possession and pressed hard in the first two

quarters, but failed to breach a resolute Spanish defence as both the teams failed to break the deadlock in the first half. Two minutes after the change of ends, India secured another penalty corner but Spanish goalkeeper Revilla made double save to denv Jugrai.

But from the resultant free hit, Mandeep neatly deflected in

Dilpreet's pass from close range to hand India the lead

scored his 32nd goal for India with a brilliant deflection after being set up by Mandeep and Gurjant Singh. In the 43rd minute. Spain earned a penalty corner but their dragflicker Pepe Cunill missed the target. India also got a penalty corner soon but Jugraj misfired again.

Trailing by two goals, Spain pressed on the accelerator, earning a couple of penalty corners in the final quarter but the Indian defence stood tall in the absence of skipper Harmanpreet Singh, who was rested for the game.

EVES SUFFER FIRST DEFEAT

Indian women lose 1-2 in shoot-out against England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 16: The Indian women's hockey team fought back twice before going down 1-2 in shoot-out against England after both the teams finished 2-2 in regulation time in their FIH Pro League match here Sunday.

Paige Gillot (40th minute) and Tessa Howard (56th) scored from two penalty corners for England in the regulation timer, while India's goals came from Navneet Kaur (53rd) and Rutuia Dadoso Pisal (57th) Kaur scored off a penalty stroke while Rutuja struck a field goal. In the shoot-out, only Navneet scored for India while the likes of skipper Salima Tete,

Sunelita Toppo and Lalremsiami faltered. For England, Lily Walker

and skipper Sophie Hamilton were on target in the shoot-out. The win gave England a bo-

nus point. India had earlier de

feated England 3-2 in the first leg here Saturday. The Indian women will next

play Spain here Tuesday. England started on an aggressive note, dominating the early exchanges. They enjoyed the ball possession in the first quarter and secured the first penalty corner of the match in the ninth minute but failed to get past experienced Savita Punia in front of Indian goal.

England continued their domination and secured the second penalty corner in the 11th minute but once again failed to breach the Indian defence. Kaur was by far the best player for India upfront, creating chances for her side with quick incisive runs

Kaur secured India's first penalty corner in the 16th minute, which resulted in another set piece but England goalkeeper denied Manisha Chauhan from the second attempt.

In the 21st minute, Kaur was once again denied by the English keeper from close range. A minute later, India

earned another penalty corner, but Deepika's flick went

wide as both the teams failed to break the deadlock in the first half.

After the change of ends, England had the first chance in the form of another penalty corner in the 38th minute and another two minutes later, which eventually broke the deadlock.

Gillot neatly deflected in a perfect slap shot from skipper Sophie Hamilton to hand England the 1-0 lead.

In the 53rd minute, India secured a penalty stroke for a stick tackle, and Kaur made no mistake from the spot.

Three minutes later, India goalkeeper Savita made a brilliant saved with her extended left leg from a set piece.

But minutes later, England secured another penalty corner and Howard deflected in Hamilton's slap hit.

Soon after the goal, India withdrew goalkeeper Savita for an extra field player and Rutuja scored a brilliant debut goal from Sunelita's pass to draw parity. Seconds from the final hooter, England secured another penalty corner but India defended stoutly to take the match into the shoot-out.



India and England women hockey players in action during FIH Pro League match at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar PIC CREDIT: BIKASH NAYAR

SHORT TAKES **Aditi Ashok** disappoints

Riyadh: Aditi Ashok played a disappointing round of 3-over 75 and slipped to tied-53rd at the Saudi Ladies International here Sunday. Aditi with rounds of 69-72-75 totalled even par 216 for three days. This was her first event of 2025 on the Ladies European Tour. It was a tough day with two birdies, three bogeys and a double bogev in the 75 at the Par-72 Rivadh Golf Club. The other three Indians, Pranavi Urs, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik had missed the cut earlier on. Thailand's Jeeno Thitikul secured her fifth Ladies



recovers after freak hit by Hardik shot



DOPING BAN Top players slam Sinner's WADA deal

Sinner and the World Anti-Doping Agency settled on the suspension that means he can play again from May 5, will not lose his No 1 ranking, will not miss any Grand Slams, and will not lose titles or prize money he

earned after testing positive for a banned anabolic steroid last March



champion Stan Wawrinka wrote on X, "I don't believe in

a clean sport anymore ...' "Fairness in tennis does not

the Australian Open, to miss three months of the tour and therefore to be eligible to play at Roland Garros, the timing couldn't have been any better for Sinner, but I still think it leaves a pretty sour taste for the sport."

The Professional Tennis Players Association, founded by Novak Djokovic and Vasek Pospisil, also weighed in on X, posting a statement criticizing the parties involved in the decision-making process

IPL FIXTURE

KKR vs RCB clash to kick off season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 16: The BCCI Sunday unveiled a 74-match schedule for the 18th Indian Premier League that will be held across 13 venues, starting March 22 with three franchises playing at least a couple of their home games at their designated second bases.

The event will kick off with a clash between Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Eden Gardens March 22 and culminate at the same venue May 25 in a schedule that did not offer any surprises A schedule features 12 dou ble-headers. The games will be held over 65 days across 13 ven ues, with Dharamsala, Guwaha ti, and Visakhapatnam hosting a couple of IPL fixtures each. As has been the norm. Dha ramsala will serve as Punjab Kings' second home venue alongside Mullanpur (New Chandigarh), while Rajasthan Royals will make Guwahati their base in addition to Jaipur

PIC CREDIT - BIKASH NAYAH Seven minutes later, Dilpreet

European Tour (LET) title after storming to a four-stroke victory

Jacquet's impressive streak continues

New Delhi: Frenchman Kyrian Jacquet continued his impressive run in India, adding the Delhi Open singles title to his trophy cabinet Sunday, just days after claiming the Chennai Open crown. Unseeded Jacquet beat second seed Billy Harris of Britain 6-4. 6-2 in the final at the DLTA Complex Centre Court to win the title. Building on the momentum of his triumph over top seed Vit Kopriva in the semi-final, world number 204 Jacquet broke World No 116 Harris at the first time of asking to take a 3-0 lead.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 16: A focussed Mohammed Shami spent considerable time with bowling coach Morne Morkel as a full-strength Indian team started its training in earnest ahead of its Champions Trophy opener against Bangladesh at the picturesque ICC Academy practice ground here Sunday.

With the new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) strictly in place, there was no question of an optional session and right from skipper Rohit Sharma to the voungest Harshit Rana. the entire squad was present where Shami's routines were interesting.

ternational comeback against England in both T20Is and ODIs, the stretchable knee caps did not go unnoticed as he first tried to get a feel of the conditions by bowling a few deliveries with a short run-up

Having recently made his in-

He looked gingerly in his initial strides even as others engaged in their physical drills, while a few others engaged in some fun and games activity aimed at improving anticipation and decision-making.

Before the batters entered the nets, Shami was trying to adjust his length and walked up towards the batter's end in the net with bowling Coach Morne Morkel in tow.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 16: Top-ranked Jannik Sinner accepting a three-month doping ban deal was slammed by his fellow tennis professionals Saturday. Sinner and the World Anti-Doping Agency settled on the suspension that means he can play again from May 5, will not lose his No 1 ranking, will not miss any Grand Slams, and will not lose titles or prize money he earned after testing positive for a banned anabolic steroid last March.

Three-time Grand Slam

exist," Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios said on X.

'Obviously Sinner's team have done everything in their power to just go ahead and take a 3 month ban, no titles lost, no prize money lost. Guilty or not, Sad day for tennis."

World No 8 Daniil Medvedev, speaking after losing in the Open 13 semifinals in Marseille, said, "I hope everyone can discuss with WADA and defend themselves like Jannik Sinner from now on.'

Former British No 1 Tim Henman told Sky Sport, "When I read the statement this morning it just seems a little bit too convenient."

"Obviously having just won

The ATP, WTA, Grand Slams WADA and International Tennis Integrity Agency.

"The system' is not a system. It's a club. Supposed caseby-case discretion is, in fact. merely cover for tailored deals, unfair treatment, and inconsistent rulings. It's not just the different results for different players. It's the lack of transparency. The lack of process. The lack of consistency. The lack of credibility in the alphabet soup of agencies charged with regulating our sports and

athletes," the PTPA wrote. It accused the agencies of unacceptable bias "for all athletes and shows a deep disrespect for every sport and its fans.

Delhi Capitals will have Vi sakhapatnam as their second home venue and will start their league campaign there March 24 against Lucknow Super Giants. Guwahati and Visakhapa tnam will host two matches each, while Dharamsala will stage three matches.

The first double-header of the season will be held March 23 in which Sunrisers Hyderabad will face Rajasthan Royals in an afternoon game in Hyderabad followed by a contest between Chennai Super Kings and Mum bai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai.

The playoffs will be staged in Hyderabad and Kolkata after the league stage. Hyderabad will host Qualifier 1 and the Elimina tor May 20 and May 21, respectively, with the action shifting to Kolkata for Qualifier 2 May 23. The IPL will continue with its two-group structure after the 2022 expansion to a 10-team format. Kolkata Knight Riders, Roval Challengers Bangalore Rajasthan Royals, Chennai Super Kings, and Punjab Kings are in one group, while Sunrisers Hyderabad, Delhi Capitals, Gu jarat Titans, Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants are in the other.

Sports Min pitches for cycles National Men's Kabaddi PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Mumbai, Feb 16: Union Sports

Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Sunday urged the youngsters of the country to use cycles as a commuting option whenever possible to remain healthy and promote a better environment.

Mandaviya led Fit India Movement's flagship programme, Sundays on Cycle, here this morning with an aim to create awareness among the masses to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle through cycling, while also promoting a solution for pollution

The ride was flagged off from the Gateway of India with more than 500 cyclists constituting wellness experts, various cycle clubs and individual fitness enthusiasts joining from across the country.

Besides riding for good health, the message of this week's Sundays on Cycle was



I urge everyone, especially younger people, to use cycles to commute whenever possible. This will not only make them healthy; it will improve the overall health of our environment

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA SPORTS MINISTER, INDIA

#FightObesity.

The cycling event was also held simultaneously at the Dhyanchand National Stadium in New Delhi with over 170 riders including Shivani Pawar, bronze medallist at 2024 Senior Asian Wrestling Championship

and 2025 National Games gold medallist, joining along among others

The Sundays on Cycle initiative was started December 17 last year and has already been hosted in over 3500 locations across India.

Championship from Feb 20

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 16: The 71st Senior National Kabaddi Championship-2025 in men's category will be organised from February 20 to 23 at Indoor Stadium in Cuttack by the Odisha Kabaddi Association and with the support of Sports Department, Govt of Odisha.

The press meet was conducted Sunday at Barabati kabaddi complex, presided over by Sharat Sahu, President of Odisha Kabaddi Association, Chairman Ravishankar Pratihari, Acting President of kabaddi Association Debendra Sahu, General Secretary Ajay Behera, Vice President Pruthiraj Pattnaik, Director of Ruchi Masala Arbind Sahoo, Joint secretary Jayashree sahu, Senior



Actor and Brand Ambassador of Kabaddi tournament, Sritam Das, International Kabaddi Plaver and Odisha Kabaddi Team Coach Bhim Barda, Odisha Olympic Association secretary Abhijit Pal, Kabaddi Association senior members Gyan Ranjan Parida. Mohammad Sahid Jabaar. Prashant Jena and this year's

event committee head Ullash Chandra Behura, member Satyabrat Mishra were also present.

For the first time, this Kabaddi Mahakumbah is being organized in Odisha under the direction of Kabaddi Federation of India under which 30 states and 4 divisional teams will participate in this competition.

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