



## Malavika's perception

Actor Malavika Mohanan, who is dabbling between multiple film industries, shares her thoughts on working at Pan-India level

LEISURE | P2



## 'Mrityukumbh'

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee asserts that the Mahakumbh has turned into a 'Mrityukumbh' due to incidents of stampede

NATIONAL | P9



## Capitalisation drops

Market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slips below the ₹400 lakh crore-mark Tuesday as relentless foreign fund outflows continue

BUSINESS | P11



## Eves face defeat

An unsuccessful fourth and final quarter sees Indian women's hockey team go down 3-4 to Spain in a thrilling match

SPORTS | P12

## 'Perverted mind': SC raps Allahbadia, saves him from arrest

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 18: The Supreme Court Tuesday protected influencer Ranveer Allahbadia from arrest over his distasteful comments during a YouTube show while severely castigating him for the remarks it described as "showing a perverted mind".

Several FIRs have been filed against Allahbadia AKA BeerBiceps, who had interviewed in his podcast several top politicians and tried to influence elections through his channel, for the comment on parents and sex on comedian Samay Raina's YouTube show "India's Got Latent".

A furious court at the outset berated Allahbadia for his "unacceptable comments" on the show and said, "There is something dirty in his mind which has been vomited on the YouTube show."

"The words you have used will make daughters, sisters, parents and even the society feel ashamed. It shows a perverted mind. If this is not obscenity, what is it? Why should we quash or club the FIRs against you?" asked Justice Surya Kant, who was on the bench along with Justice N Kotiswar Singh.

However, the bench agreed to the submissions of senior advocate Abhinav Chandrachud, representing the influencer, that Allahbadia be protected from arrest keeping in mind the filing of multiple FIRs on the same issue as well as the death threats against him.

"Are you defending the kind of language he has used?" Justice Surya Kant asked Chandrachud, who conceded that he himself was "disgusted".

It directed Allahbadia to deposit his passport at the Thane police station.

The court also called for regulation or maintaining decency in the content of YouTube channels and social media platforms. **MORE P9**

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Let the cartoonist draw. We believe in democracy. Just quietly block the site that publishes my cartoon



MIRACULOUS ESCAPE: An aircraft from Delta Airlines sits upside down on the tarmac at Toronto Pearson International airport. All 80 people on board survived, and those hurt had relatively minor injuries (Report P10) **AP/PTI PHOTO**

## 'Decision disrespectful'

The appointment of the new CEC by the PM-led panel Monday night invited sharp criticism from Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi who said the decision was very 'disrespectful' and 'discourteous' for the PM and Home Minister in view of the fact that the very composition of the selection committee and the process is being challenged in the Supreme Court, and is due to be heard in less than 48 hours. Meanwhile, advocate Prashant Bhusan Tuesday informed the top court that the exclusion of the CJJ from the panel despite a Constitution bench verdict of 2023 was a 'mockery of democracy'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 18: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Tuesday said it is 'disrespectful' and 'discourteous' for the Prime Minister and Home Minister to have made a midnight decision to select the new CEC when the process of selection is being challenged in the Supreme Court.

The government late Monday night appointed Gyanesh Kumar as the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), hours after the meeting of the Prime Minister-led selection committee in which the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha asked the government to defer the meeting in view of the Supreme

Court hearing in the matter. Gandhi also presented a dissent note to the panel, of which Home Minister Amit Shah is also a member.

The Supreme Court Tuesday said it would February 19 take up on 'priority basis' the pleas against the appointments of the CEC and election commissioners (ECs) under the 2023 law.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "During the meeting of the committee to select the next Election Commissioner, I pre-



sented a dissent note to the PM and HM, that stated: The most fundamental aspect of an independent Election Commission free from executive interference is the process of choosing the Election Commissioner and Chief Election Commissioner".

"By violating the SC order and removing the CJJ from the committee, the Modi Government has exacerbated the concerns of hundreds of millions of voters

over the integrity of our electoral process," he said in his post while sharing his dissent note. He said as the LoP, it is his duty to uphold the ideals of BR Ambedkar and the founding leaders of the nation and hold the government to account. "It is both disrespectful and discourteous for the PM and HM to have made a midnight decision to select the new CEC, when the very composition of the committee and the process is being challenged in the Supreme Court and is due to be heard in less than forty-eight hours," he said.

In his dissent note presented before the panel, Gandhi cited the speech of BR Ambedkar while speaking in the Constituent Assembly in June 1949 to discuss the setting up of an independent Election Commission, where he had warned about executive interference in India's democracy and the affairs of the Election Commission.

On Tuesday, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for an NGO, that despite the Constitution bench verdict of 2023 directing selection and appointment of the CEC and ECs through a panel, including the Chief Justice of India, the government excluded the CJJ and made a 'mockery of democracy'.

## Giriraj: Odisha to become silk hub



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Union minister Giriraj Singh Tuesday said his ministry with the help of the Odisha government will develop the state as the silk hub of the country.

Addressing media persons here at the BJP state headquarters, Singh said, at present 132 metric tonnes of silk, including 131 metric tonnes of Tussar silk, is being produced in India.

The Union textiles minister said 29 out of 30 districts of Odisha are involved in silk and handicraft works and there are about 3.5 lakh artisans and handloom weavers in the state.

"After discussing with the chief secretary, we have decided to announce Odisha as a silk state, which means the highest amount of silk will be produced from the state so that India can become the largest silk producer in the world," Singh said. **MORE P4**

## Nepal may stop NOC to Odisha-bound students

PNN & AGENCIES

Kathmandu, Feb 18: The Nepal government Tuesday said that it may stop issuing no objection certificates (NOCs) to students who wish to study in institutes in Odisha if the situation arising from the death of a student at a Bhubaneswar university is not resolved in a "justifiable and legal way".

Prakriti Lamsal, 20, a third-year B Tech (computer science) student at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), allegedly died by suicide at her hostel room Sunday afternoon, leading to unrest on the campus. **KIIT SUICIDE ROW**

Nepal's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in a statement said that it may suspend issuance of no objection certificate (NOC) in the future to students wishing to study in any university or educational institutions in Odisha.

The ministry also appealed to the concerned people, including the guardians and students of the university, for observing patience and said the ministry has formed a help desk to facilitate effective resolution of the problems arising from the incident.

Meanwhile, several MPs raised the issue related to the KIIT incident in the House of Representatives during zero hour Tuesday. Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba has said that the ministry is continuously following up on the death of the student and the situation



that developed thereafter.

"Two senior police officers from Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi have reached the college Tuesday morning to learn about the situation and to ensure safety of Nepalese students," Deuba wrote on X.

"The Foreign Ministry and Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi

are doing needful by keeping coordination with the college administration and the Indian security agency in this regard," she added.

Meanwhile, the Infocopy police Tuesday handed over the body of the student to her father, Sunil Lamsal, after post mortem at AIIMS Bhubaneswar. The police arrested six persons, including three senior administrative officials, in connection with the girl's death and the protests that followed. They got bail from a local court later.

The Odisha government has constituted a fact-finding committee, headed by ACS, Home to determine the circumstances that led to the 20-year-old Nepalese girl's unnatural death in KIIT hostel and what prompted the institute to issue suspension letters to students who were seeking justice. **MORE P3**

## Researchers link gene to origins of spoken language

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Feb 18: Why did humans start speaking? Scientists suggest genetics played a big role - and they say the evolution of this singular ability was key to our survival.

A new study links a particular gene to the ancient origins of spoken language, proposing that a protein variant found only in humans may have helped us communicate in a novel way. Speech allowed us to share information, coordinate activities and pass down knowledge, giving us an edge over extinct cousins like Neanderthals and Denisovans.

The new study is "a good first step to start looking at the specific genes" that may affect speech and language development, said Liza Finestack at the University of Minnesota,



who was not involved with the research. What scientists learn may someday even help people with speech problems.

The genetic variant researchers were looking at was one of a variety of genes "that contributed to the emergence of Homo sapiens as the dominant species, which we are today" said Dr

Robert Darnell, an author of the study published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.

Darnell has been studying the protein - called NOVA1 and known to be crucial to brain development - since the early 1990s. For the latest research, scientists in his lab at New York's Rockefeller University

used CRISPR gene editing to replace the NOVA1 protein found in mice with the exclusively human type to test the real-life effects of the genetic variant. To their surprise, it changed the way the animals vocalised when they called out to each other.

Baby mice with the human variant squeaked differently than normal littermates when their mom came around. Adult male mice with the variant chirped differently than their normal counterparts when they saw a female in heat.

Both are settings where mice are motivated to speak, Darnell said, "and they spoke differently" with the human variant, illustrating its role in speech. This isn't the first time a gene has been linked to speech. In 2001, British scientists said they had discovered the first gene tied to a language and speech disorder.

Called FOXP2, it was referred to as the human language gene. But though FOXP2 is involved in human language, it turned out that the variant in modern humans wasn't unique to us. Later research found it was shared with Neanderthals. The NOVA1 variant in modern humans, on the other hand, is found exclusively in our species, Darnell said.

The presence of a gene variant isn't the only reason people can speak. The ability also depends on things like anatomical features in the human throat and areas of the brain that work together to allow people to speak and understand language.

Darnell hopes the recent work not only helps people better understand their origins but also eventually leads to new ways to treat speech-related problems.

## SHORT TAKES

### ₹270.57cr loan fraud by Gupta Power Infra

New Delhi: State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) Tuesday reported a fraud of ₹270.57 crore by Odisha-based Gupta Power Infrastructure Ltd to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Borrowal fraud of ₹270.57 crore has been reported to the RBI in non-performing asset (NPA) account of Gupta Power Infrastructure Ltd, PNB said in a regulatory filing. The loan was given by Station Square branch of the bank in Bhubaneswar, it said. The bank has already made provisions amounting to ₹270.57 crore, according to prescribed prudential norms. For the December quarter, PNB posted more than two-fold jump in net profit to ₹4,508 crore as against ₹2,223 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

### Double murder over witchcraft suspicion

Baripada: A tribal couple was allegedly axed to death on the suspicion of practising witchcraft in a village in Mayurbhanj district, police said Tuesday. The incident took place Monday night at Kitabeda village in the district. The deceased were identified as Debendra Naik, 70, and his wife Champa Naik, 48. The victims' daughter-in-law and granddaughter, however, narrowly escaped. Police have arrested one person in connection with the killing and registered a murder case, an officer said. **P5**

# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

### ARIES

Just grab any chance you get to demonstrate your expressive abilities, as it will fetch widespread appreciation. Something about your children may make you proud. However, Ganesha says, don't neglect the aged members of your family.

### TAURUS

This day could be full of surprises, mostly unpleasant, fears Ganesha. Nothing is likely to turn out as planned and expected. There will be sharp and sudden twist and turns, unexpected shocks and setbacks all day long. You will, however, with the grace and blessings of the Almighty, manage to stay steady and unruffled, and move ahead. By evening, this phase will pass. No serious damage will be done. Things will be back to normal.

### GEMINI

You will be able to express your thoughts and opinions to the people you come in contact with today. They will also reciprocate and echo your feelings and emotions. This will give you validation and satisfaction. The day should be filled with fun and entertainment overall, says Ganesha.

### CANCER

Your career will reach a decisive moment. You can expect a transfer, promotion or pay hike. Alongside your responsibilities will also increase. A chance of new job is also indicated. You can reject a tempting job offer.

### LEO

Your expenses may shoot through the roof if you do not pay careful attention to your finances. You will want to splurge on expensive perfumes and clothing. You will be able to attract those of the opposite sex. You must guard against coming off as a show-off. Be humble and polite to everyone, says Ganesha.

### VIRGO

A mixture of the desirable and undesirable is on the cards today. Sentimental people will tend to think of you as a little immature. However, your sense of humour will be as robust as ever and you will never fall short of jokes. Ganesha advises you to pursue spiritually enriching activities in order to properly channelise your abilities.

### LIBRA

The whole point of being a Libran is that you always have the tendency to be two separate things put together on a pair of scales that somehow balance. Ganesha feels that today, you bring to the scales the stability of being your own master and servant. It's a fine balance to maintain.

### SCORPIO

Despite a secured job and a harmonious home environment, you are still looking for something else. Long-term, financial security keeps bothering you. And your worries are solved to some extent as unexpected monetary gains are on cards today, predicts Ganesha.

### SAGITTARIUS

Your stars are mighty today and plan a pleasant day for you, says Ganesha. You are a thorough professional and garner compliments for this attitude. You also have a knack to sail through all the troubles at work. This approach of yours is sure to win hearts of people and add some names in your friends' list.

### CAPRICORN

You love the people around you unconditionally and such emotions will be more visible now than ever. Today, you will want to keep yourself surrounded with your loved ones, make them happy and have a good time, says Ganesha. Your honesty and sincerity will give depth to your existing relationships.

### AQUARIUS

If you're stuck indoors today, make the most of it. There's always carrom, checkers, chess and partying! Shake yourself a bit, and you'll come up with creative ways to spend a leisurely day. You'll find that either way, life is wonderful, says Ganesha.

### PISCES

You are not by nature ill-tempered or jealous. However, you will need to be on guard against being both, today. Someone may try to sully your image or slander your name today. However, the best way to deal with provocation is not to lose your temper and to continue as usual, for things will take care of themselves soon enough, says Ganesha.



## PARINEETI'S SURPRISING REVELATION

MUMBAI: Actress Parineeti Chopra recently made a surprising revelation about who truly holds a special place in her life.

While her husband and politician Raghav Chadha is undoubtedly important to her, it turns out there's someone else who's captured her heart in a different way. On Tuesday, the Kesari actress reposted a hilarious reel on her Instagram stories showcasing a little girl's over-the-top excitement when her mother brings her pizza. The video, which is accompanied by the caption "When pizza is life," perfectly captures the pure joy and enthusiasm of the child as she sees her favorite meal. Parineeti reposted the clip with the playful caption, "Exclusive footage of me," humorously relating to the girl's excitement. The Ishaqzaade actress, who is currently in Delhi, also posted glimpses from her stay in the national capital.

A few days ago, Parineeti, an avid social media user, had shared a sneak peek into her pre-shoot routine. The actress posted a selfie from her makeup room as she prepared for an upcoming shoot. In the selfie, Parineeti was seen sporting a comfy t-shirt while capturing the moment in her mirror. Along with the image, she wrote, "Chalo Shoot."

MUMBAI: Actress Radhika Apte, known for films like *Pad Man*, *Anhadhun*, welcomed her first child with husband Benedict Taylor in December 2024. While she prefers to keep her personal life private, she recently shared a candid moment about motherhood, which drew flak.

Radhika returned to work soon after giving birth and attended the BAFTAs, sharing glamorous pictures from the event. However, it was her behind-the-scenes post that grabbed attention. Dressed in casual attire, she was seen pumping breast milk with one hand while holding a glass of champagne in the other. She captioned the post humorously: "And now my BAFTAs reality (laughing face emoji). I have to thank Natasha @tashtash07 for making it possible for me to attend the BAFTAs. She scheduled the itinerary around my breast-pumping timings. She not only accompanied me to the washroom to express milk but, more importantly, brought me champagne in the loo."

While many applauded her for shedding light on the struggles of new motherhood, others were quick to criticise her for drinking while pumping. One user wrote, 'Are you kidding...you cannot have alcohol and breastfeed at the same time', another one added, 'It is sad that you are drinking while breastfeeding.'

## Radhika's BAFTA post draws flak



## UTTAR PURUSHA'S NATYA PARIKRAMA - DAY II



Artists of Bhubaneswar-based theatre troupe Uttar Purusha performed the Odia play *Panchanana Upakhyana* on the second evening of a three-day event at Rabindra Mandap, Tuesday. Translated from a Bengali play by Amit Maitra and Sombhu Mitra, it was translated into Odia by Annada Shankar Roy. The comedy was directed by the host troupe's president, Prasanna Mishra. Popular theatre and film actor Choudhury Jayprakash Das was honored with the Asim Basu Samman.

## LEGENDARY MEXICAN SINGER PAQUITA LA DEL BARRIO DIES

Grammy-nominated singer Paquita La Del Barrio, known for empowering songs like *Rata de dos Patas*, has passed away at 77. The cause of death was not disclosed, but her family lauds her as a unique artist, leaving a lasting legacy through her music.



## 'Now is the best time to be an actor'

HYDERABAD: Malavika Mohanan, who has been dabbling between films across multiple film industries with films like *Yudhraa* (Hindi) and *Thangalaan* (Tamil), has showcased how she can effortlessly adapt to different storytelling styles and audiences. Her journey reflects the evolving nature of Indian cinema, where language is no longer a barrier but an opportunity to reach wider audiences.

At a time when South Indian actresses are also bagging some major Bollywood films as well, Malavika has shared her thoughts on

working at a Pan-India level. "I have been fortunate enough to have been surrounded by some lovely people and talents, and I also feel like right now is one of the best times to be an actor, especially a female actor, because my last release was in Hindi, my current projects are in Tamil and Telugu, and I'm about to start one in Malayalam too. I am working with some of the best people in each industry, and I feel like a film will have its audience because of OTT, social media, because of the reach that we have today. If it's a good film, it doesn't matter what language it is, people will end up watching it," the actress said.



## PEANUTS



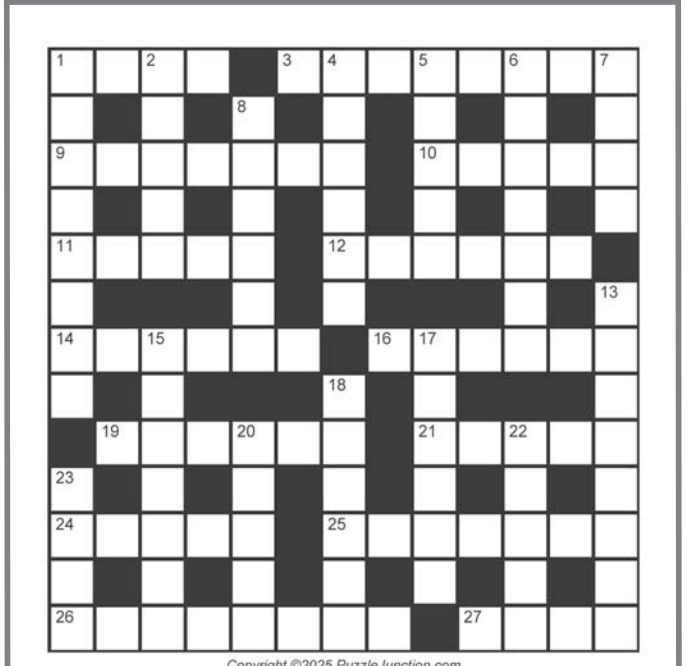
## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY

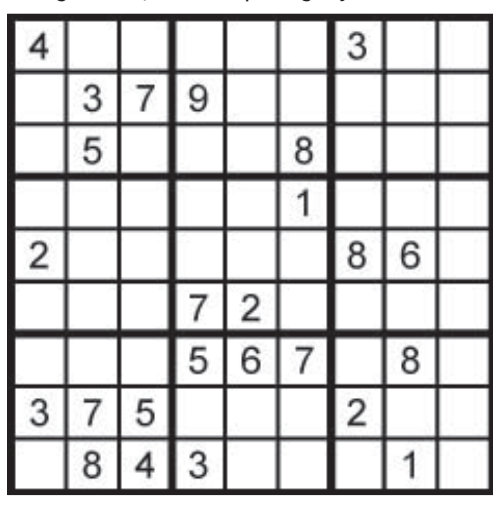


## FUN POST CROSSWORD

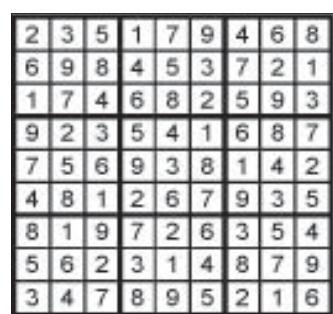


- Across
- 1 Blubbers
  - 3 Large rigid dirigible
  - 9 Rhode Island town
  - 10 African equine
  - 11 Popular song from the past
  - 12 Thin
  - 14 Spreads out
  - 16 2006 Scarlett Johansson flick, *The Black* \_\_\_\_\_
  - 19 Aquatic South American rodent
  - 21 Hilo hello
  - 24 Fussbudget
  - 25 Tableland
  - 26 Indefatigable
  - 27 Make a sweater
- Down
- 1 Carpenter's framework
  - 2 Revealed
  - 4 Alaska native
  - 5 Pie, of sorts
  - 6 Progressive
  - 7 Close
  - 8 Suffering
  - 13 Medieval hurler
  - 15 Wash
  - 17 Hindu incarnation
  - 18 University grounds
  - 20 Palace dweller
  - 22 Bounding main
  - 23 Final notice

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



## SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

**FIRE AT LOK SEVA BHAWAN**

**BHUBANESWAR:** Fire broke out at the Lok Seva Bhawan here Tuesday and engulfed many equipment. The incident was reported from terrace above the Cooperative department of the Lok Seva Bhawan at around 4:35pm. On being informed, two Fire Services teams reached the spot and managed to douse the blaze. Though an electrical short circuit is being blamed for the inferno, the exact cause is yet to be ascertained. Sources said Lok Seva Bhawan witnesses fire incidents almost every year. Many crucial documents were reduced to cinders in a fire that broke out at the Revenue department building October 3, 2023.



# downtown

## MLAs raise KIIT student death in Assembly

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 18:** Legislators cutting across party lines Tuesday expressed grief in the Assembly over the death of a Nepali student on Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University campus here and condemned the alleged mistreatment of several other students from the neighbouring country by the private institute authorities.

The issue was raised during the Zero Hour by BJD member PK Deb who said the girl's suicide and subsequent development brought shame to the state. KIIT was accused of evicting a group of Nepalese students from their hostel, amid tension on the campus following the death of Prakriti Lamsal, a third-year BTech student of the institute.

"The incident has brought down the name of Odisha at

### KIIT mistreated Nepali students: Prakriti's dad

The father of the Nepali student Prakriti Lamsal, whose body was found in her hostel on the KIIT campus here, Tuesday alleged that the private engineering institute "mistreated" undergraduates from the neighbouring country. His comment comes after the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) was accused of evicting a group of Nepali students from their hostel, amid tension on the campus following the death of Prakriti, a third-year BTech student of the institute. Sunil Lamsal, the father of the deceased student, reached here Tuesday morning to receive his daughter's body. The post-mortem was conducted at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar later in the day, an official said. "I have lost my daughter. Many other children are studying here. I learnt from the media that some students were driven out of their hostel. This is not right. This incident should not be repeated. These people go to Nepal and invite students to study here. The institute mistreated them," Lamsal alleged. He, however, reposed faith in the Odisha government and the police to get justice over the death of her daughter.

the international level," Deb claimed. He alleged that the incident was an outcome of the 'worsening law and order situation' under the BJP rule in the state.

Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam also expressed concern over the alleged mistreatment of the students from Nepal. "This is an unfortunate incident and it should not be accepted by anyone," Kadam said.

Congress leader Taraprasad Bahinipati demanded a judicial probe into the incident in which the Nepalese girl was suspected to have died by suicide and several other students from the Himalayan country were allegedly assaulted by KIIT staffers.

He also threatened that he would stage a dharna in the Assembly if the CM did not order a judicial inquiry into the incident.

In a statement, KIIT said it

has always been a home to students from across the world, fostering a culture of inclusivity, respect, and care. "We deeply regret the recent incident and reaffirm our commitment to the safety, dignity, and well-being of all our students, including our dear Nepali students," the institute wrote on X.

BJP MLA Babu Singh demanded the arrest of KIIT founder Achyuta Samanta. "What has happened in KIIT is a shame for Odisha. Therefore, Samanta should be arrested," the BJP leader said. Several other BJP MLAs also came down heavily on the institute over the Nepalese student's death.

Meanwhile, speaking outside the Assembly, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said, "Around 100 Nepali students are presently outside Odisha following the eviction order. A few are in Patna,

while others are travelling to Nepal. The department has ordered the varsity to counsel those students, and bring them back immediately. Besides, an hourly-update from KIIT administration is being reviewed on the return status of Nepali students." He added that any report of hostility towards them would result in punitive action. "None will be spared," the minister said.

Several purported videos of Nepalese students being offered ₹2,000 to ₹2,500 by the KIIT administration made rounds in social media. In one such video, a girl is seen speaking to a KIIT official over phone, "The administration displayed utter insensitivity by evicting me from hostel when I was shivering in high fever. It takes one-two days to reach Nepal. It is impossible to return instantly."

## Candlelight march over Lamsal death

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 18:** Several students of KIIT University here Tuesday evening took out a candlelight rally seeking justice for Nepali student Prakriti Lamsal, who died by suicide recently due to harassment meted out to her by a student from Uttar Pradesh.

A protesting student at KIIT said, "We only want a student body that is independent of the college itself and will protect us...The faculty members of KIIT should be transparent enough to tell us as to why such incidents are happening. Since an international student was treated like this, time will come when we too will be treated like this."

Some students also vandalised the selfie point at the institute's main entrance. Bajrang Dal and CPI-M supporters also staged protests in the city seeking justice for the girl.



Bajrang Dal supporters stage protest in Bhubaneswar

The All India Democratic Students Organisation (AIDSO) Cuttack district committee also staged a protest near College Chhak in Cuttack. Amarendra Nayak of AIDSO said, "Atithi Devo Bhava tradition of India has been damaged due to this incident."

Similarly Students Federation of India (SFI), Odisha co-ordinator Subhranshu Sekhar said that they will take to the streets if action is not taken against the officials who 'assaulted' the students.

## 5 get bail: Students, lawyers slam police

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 18:** Barely a few hours after five persons – two security personnel and three senior KIIT University officials – were arrested by Infocity police in connection with the brutal assault on the varsity students, a local court Tuesday granted them bail, evoking sharp reactions from the student community.

The Infocity police had booked the five under Sections 126(2) (wrongful restraint), 296 (obscene act in public), 115(2) (voluntarily hurting a person) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) – all bailable sections. The court granted them bail against a bail bond of Rs 20,000 each.

This however, did not go down well with the protesting students who claimed the police deliberately booked the accused under bailable sections despite ample evidence against them that they assaulted them mercilessly, the evidence of which is available on the internet.

"The police were acting at the behest of KIIT officials," they alleged.

A third-year BTech

student at the university, who wished not to be named, said, "On Monday morning, five woman constables slammed our hostel door (QC-4), and asked us to pack bags in five minutes, and leave immediately. They were assisted by KIIT staffers. When we requested them to give us some time, they remained adamant. Not only the hostel warden, but also the cops are responsible for the eviction of innocent students. While leaving the campus, the police assaulted us, and forcibly deleted videos that captured their highhandedness."

Meanwhile, senior advocate Chittaranjan Das alleged that the police deliberately applied 'lighter' sections in order to ensure quick bail to the accused. "They should rather have charged them under Sections pertaining to attempt to murder, kidnapping. Moreover, sedition charges should also have been clubbed against them for perpetrating violence against foreign students who are our guests as claimed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said, adding, "it seems the police are on their (university's) payroll."

## OPCC chief launches Sankalp Padayatra

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 18:** Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) chief Bhakta Charan Das launched a 60-km Sankalp Padayatra from Bhubaneswar to Srimandir in Puri, Tuesday.

After arriving at Biju Patnaik International Airport for the first time since being appointed state Congress president, Das received a rousing welcome from party workers and supporters. He was appointed OPCC president February 11.

From the airport, Das, along with senior party leaders and supporters, began the padayatra towards Puri. According to the schedule, he is expected to reach Puri February 20.

"The Sankalp Padayatra is being held to bring change within the Congress and in the state. It has been organised to restore the lost glory of Odisha," Das told reporters.

Former MLA Debashis Patnaik, chairman of the Sankalp Padayatra Committee, said the massive turnout at the airport indicates a strong future for the Congress in the state.

The padayatra passed through Sishu Bhavan,

Rajmahal, Kalpana, and Ravi Talkies Square before reaching Lingipur Square.

After a lunch break at Lingipur, the march resumed towards Pipli, where the participants will spend the night. The following day, the march will reach Teispur. After lunch, they will start again and spend the night in Chandanpur on the way to Puri, he said.

The padayatra will resume from Chandanpur February 20, stopping for lunch at Bata Mangala. In the afternoon, Das will visit Srimandir for having a darshan of the deities. After returning from the 12th century shrine, Das will address the media, Patnaik added.

Since his appointment as OPCC president, Das has taken steps to reunite and strengthen the party's base in the state.

He has urged leaders who were suspended or had left the party to return. Following his appeal, veteran Congress leader and former minister Suresh Kumar Routray has rejoined the party.

The Congress has been out of power in Odisha since 2000. Currently, the party has 14 MLAs and one MP in the state.

## Accurate Data For Informed Policy Decisions

### Let us strengthen the National Statistical System

**Every month National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) releases Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Inflation rate**

#### To Estimate CPI/ Inflation Rate

**Every month NSO enumerators collect retail prices from over 50,000 retail shops across 2295 markets in India**

**CPI's item basket and weights are based on the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) of NSO**

#### Importance of CPI/ Inflation Rate

**One of the key inputs for the Monetary Policy decisions**

**Provides insights on the movement of the retail prices in the country**

**Retailers/Shopkeepers are requested to cooperate with the enumerators of NSO and provide accurate data**

**Identity of the retail shops participating in the survey is kept confidential in all reports/microdata of MoSPI**

**For CPI data of NSO, MoSPI, please visit [cpi.mospi.gov.in](http://cpi.mospi.gov.in), <https://www.mospi.gov.in/>**

[www.mospi.gov.in](http://www.mospi.gov.in)

cbc 39101/13/0006/2425

CHSE XII exams begin

Bhubaneswar: The annual Class XII examinations conducted by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Odisha began across the state Tuesday.

Storm water mgmt plan for Capital city



An agreement between the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation and IIT-Roorkee marks the beginning of a strategic initiative to tackle storm water challenges in the city

need for a futuristic drainage system, stating, “Bhubaneswar is a rapidly growing city, blending heritage with modernisation.

tem but also propose innovative strategies for improving storm water management to prevent frequent waterlogging.

The collaboration aims at designing a comprehensive climate-resilient storm water management system under Vision 2050. The project includes the preparation of a detailed project report (DPR) at an estimated cost of ₹8.04 crore.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: In a significant step towards addressing the growing challenges of urban flooding and waterlogging in the Capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee Tuesday.

The agreement paves the way for the preparation of a comprehensive storm water management plan under Vision 2050, aimed at developing a sustainable and climate-resilient drainage system for the City.

Bhubaneswar has been facing severe waterlogging issues every monsoon, leading to disruption in daily life, especially in low-lying areas.

CBI raid sparks Sethi's protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Senior IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi Tuesday accused the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) of harassment during a search at his official residence in connection with an alleged ₹10 lakh bribery case.

'Weavers' income to be enhanced'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Union Textile Minister Giriraj Singh Tuesday said that his Ministry aims to enhance the income of the handloom weavers from ₹20,000 to ₹25,000 per month.

Odisha as a hub for silk production.

The BJP-ruled state will be asked to select one district for the development of the textile sector with proper market linkage.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, KRUSHNA CHANDRA PADHI, S/o-Late Babana Padhi, resident of Village - Paligaon, P.O. - S. Mahada, P.S. - Birmaharajpur, Dist.- Subarnapur, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.124 dt. 29.01.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as KRISHNA CHANDRA PADHI for all future purposes.

I Arati Roul, 49yrs., W/o-Ajaya Roul, Village-Alarpur, Post- Kotapur, P.S-Dharmasala, Dist-Jajpur, Vide Affidavit No.-75AA-034102 sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Dharmasala Dtd. 15.02.2025 declare that my son's actual name is Prabhujit Roul.

WEATHER BBSR CTC Max Temp 34.1° 32.8° Min Temp 21.0° 20.0° Humidity 85% 81% Rainfall Nil Nil FORECAST Partly cloudy sky

MARKET WATCH INDEX VARIATION SENSEX 75,967.39 29.47 NIFTY 22,945.30 14.20 DOLLAR 87.00 0.03 EURO 91.03 0.20 GOLD ₹85,550 ₹791 SILVER ₹96,064 ₹658

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 18: The Supreme Court Tuesday pulled up several states, including Odisha, and union territories (UTs) for not filing status reports over the implementation of the domestic violence law while allowing them four more weeks subject to the payment of ₹5,000 as costs.

SC pulls up Odisha, others for not filing status reports

to the Supreme Court mediation centre," the bench said. The bench noted Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal and Assam were among the defaulters.

Guv encourages youth to shape India's future



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati stressed the crucial role of youth leadership and empowerment in nation-building during the 5th Kashmiri Youth Exchange Programme (KYEP) held at Raj Bhawan Tuesday.

tives spearheaded by the Central government to empower Kashmiri youth in areas such as skill development, education, employment, sports, and entrepreneurship.

He emphasised that the KYEP symbolises the core values of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat,' reinforcing unity and mutual understanding across regional divides.

LOST

I, Smt. Bishnupriya Nayak (32), W/o Gokulananda Nayak, At- Court Street Digapahandi, P.S.- Digapahandi, Ganjam that my original Regd. Sale Deed vide Doct. No.2658/1998, Dt.18.08.1998 of SRO Digapahandi misplaced while moving from my Shop to Residence on dated 12.02.2025 and searched the same but did not found.

No road connectivity in 8,300 villages: Min

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: As many as 8,300 villages in the state have no road connectivity, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik told the Assembly Tuesday.



recently approved the PMGSY-IV scheme, and a survey to identify unconnected villages is going on in different states, he said.

PROTECTING WOMEN'S DIGNITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT 'Disrespect towards women unacceptable'

State Transport Authority conducts a thorough inspection at Cuttack Netaji Bus Terminal



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 18: Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena has issued a clear directive to the State Transport Authority (STA), emphasising that no bus staff shall discriminate against any passenger, and any disrespect towards women will be strictly dealt with.

(CNBT) Tuesday. The minister also announced plans to extend similar inspections and awareness campaigns to all bus terminals in the state.

speaking with women passengers to assess their experiences with potential discrimination.

visions in such cases. Today's survey, however, revealed largely satisfactory feedback. Minister Jena expressed his support, stating, "Passenger safety is the STA's responsibility, but when it comes to women's dignity, our government is committed to proactive measures.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-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.

# Saintala residents fret over tardy bridge work

# Couple killed over witchcraft suspicion

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Saintala, Feb 18:** Residents of this block in Bolangir district are facing loads of difficulties due to an inordinate delay in construction of a bridge over Lanth river that is expected to serve as a vital link between two prominent gram panchayats (GPs).



headquarters regularly for official works, the sources added. Likewise, the residents of Saintala, Deng, Karamatala, and Kumbhari GPs also depend on this route to reach Titilagarh.

The block administration had built a temporary road across Lanth river during winter that helped the people of these panchayats to avoid detouring 10 to 12 km. However, when the bridge construction began, the contractor conveniently violated the norm of creating a temporary access route. Repeated requests from the villagers under Deng and Kamarlaga GPs fell on deaf ears of the contractor, who said the government has not provided any guidelines on this, the locals alleged.

Meanwhile, attempts to en-

gage with the workers overseeing the construction work have been unsuccessful, as they are rarely present at the site to address the issue.

Allegations have also come to the fore about use of substandard raw materials in the construction. While the rods have started rusting, sand for the construction is being lifted from below the bridge itself. Likewise, gravels are either being inadequately or improperly used.

Meanwhile, attempts to reach out to Works department SDO Dileswar Majhi over phone went unanswered.

The locals have urged the administration to ensure that the contractor and engineers are present at the site for proper execution of the work and build a temporary road there.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Feb 18:** Despite the enactment of Odisha Prevention of Witch Hunting Act, 2013, sorcery and witchcraft related crimes continue unabated in state. In yet another such shocking incident, a couple of Dungurisahi in Kitabeda village under Bisoil police station of Mayurbhanj district was bludgeoned to death allegedly by one of their relatives, who suspected them of practicing witchcraft that reportedly afflicted his family members' health.

The victims' daughter-in-law and granddaughter, however, narrowly escaped. The deceased were identified as Debendra Naik, 70, and his wife Champa Naik, 48.

According to sources, accused Ajay Naik, 23, suspected that Debendra and his wife were practicing witchcraft, which he believed was causing his father, Surendra Naik,



and infant son to suffer from frequent illnesses. Ajay went to Debendra's house around 8pm Monday and saw the latter watering his field. Following a brief conversation, Ajay suddenly attacked Debendra with the axe, killing him instantly.

Following the murder, Ajay entered the house, where Champa was asleep. He also attacked Champa with the weapon.

Terrified, the couple's daughter-in-law, Sumitra, took her two-and-a-half-year-old daugh-

ter in her lap and fled the house. After spending the night in a nearby village out of fear, Sumitra returned to her village Tuesday morning and informed her brother-in-law, Rabindra Naik, about the incident over phone. Rabindra visited the house and immediately alerted Bisoil police.

Upon receiving the report police officers, along with a forensic team and sniffer dogs reached the spot, collected blood samples and other evidence before sending the bodies to Rairangpur Hospital for post-mortem. A murder case (37/25) was registered.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the murders were driven by superstition, as Ajay strongly believed that his relatives were responsible for his family's health issues. Bisoil police station in-charge Mini Bhoi Rana confirmed the details of the case and stated that further investigation is in progress.

## Man gets 20-yr RI for raping minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Feb 18:** A fast-track POCSO court here Tuesday sentenced a man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and slapped ₹25,000 fine on him after convicting him of raping a minor girl in 2020.

Additional District Judge Rohit Lal Panda also ruled that in default of payment of the penalty, the convict, identified as Nikhel Purti, 35, from Dangakhunti village under Mahulapali police station, has to undergo additional six months of RI. The judge pronounced the order after finding him guilty under Sections 376(3) and 4 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The ruling further said Purti will have to undergo one year of RI under Section 506 of the IPC. All sentences will run concurrently, it said. As per Section 428 of CrPC, the time he has already spent in jail will be deducted from his sentence. According to the case diary, it was in October 23, 2020 evening when the victim, a 16-year-old girl from Mahulapali police limits, was returning home alone from her paternal uncle's residence when Purti intercepted her on a secluded forested path. Threatening to kill her, the convict forcibly took her deep into the forests where he raped her. He also threatened to kill her if she discloses the matter before anyone.

Despite the threats, the survivor narrating the ordeal to her mother. The girl and her mother lodged a complaint at Mahulapali police station, where a case (176/2020) was registered.

## Tusker found dead in Deogarh forest



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Deogarh, Feb 18:** A 12-year-old tusker died after reportedly coming in contact with live wires laid by poachers in Gariapali forest under Kundheigola forest section and Riamal forest range of Deogarh district, late Monday night.

The matter came to the fore when villagers spotted the carcass and alerted forest personnel Tuesday morning. Deogarh forest ranger Niranjana Dharua and forester Tapan Nayak, along with a team, reached the spot and started an investigation. They recovered the carcass from the electric wires.

Initial findings, however,

revealed injuries beneath the elephant's mouth, raising suspicion of either an infection or poisoning through explosive-laced bait.

Later, Rourkela RCCF P Ramaswami, Bhubaneswar JTF members, Deogarh DFO Magar Dhanaji Raosi, ACFs Swadhinata Sahani, Arun Kumar Behera, Riamal ranger Niranjana Dharua also reached the spot and took stock of the situation. The carcass was buried at the spot after veterinarians conducted a post-mortem.

Conservationists have called for a thorough probe by the divisional forest officer (DFO) to bring the truth to light.

## Man beats father to death over money

POST NEWS NETWORK

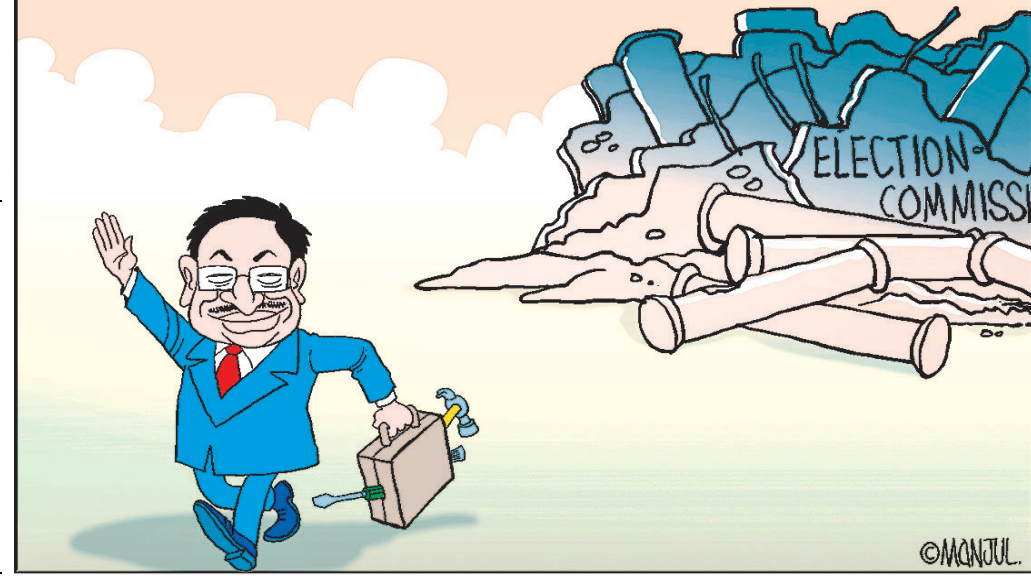
**Basudevpur, Feb 18:** In a shocking incident, a 65-year-old man was beaten to death by his son in Sasamalgheri village under Kasia Marine police station in this block of Bhadrak district after the former refused to give him some money Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Dukhram Mandal and the accused as Baidhar Mandal, 28. According to reports, Dukhram had given some money to Baidhar a few days ago as demanded by the latter. However, the accused son once again demanded more money Monday which was turned down by Dukhram. Finding no other option, Baidhar turned to his mother, who also refused to give him any money.

Frustrated over the denials Baidhar started an argument with his father Tuesday afternoon which further escalated into a major quarrel. Baidhar's anger reached its peak when he attacked Dukhram with a shovel, leaving him severely injured and unconscious. Dukhram was rushed to Basudevpur hospital where he succumbed to the injuries around 2pm Tuesday. As per a written complaint lodged by Anukul Mandal, another son of the deceased, a case (24/25) was registered at Kasia Marine police station.

The police reached the village and started an investigation. "We have nabbed Baidhar from the village and taken him into custody for interrogation," Kasia Marine PS IIC Sabitri Panda said.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Saranghi inaugurates national conference at FMU

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Feb 18:** A three-day National Conference on 'New Horizons of the Indian Knowledge System' was inaugurated in collaboration with the Sanskrit department of Fakir Mohan University (FMU) and its development council.

FMU Vice Chancellor Santosh Kumar Tripathy presided over the meeting which was inaugurated by Balasure MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi. Sarangi delivered an insightful lecture on India's ancient education system, medical science, the relationship between spirituality and science, Indian knowledge

traditions, the preservation of Vedic wisdom, and the status and future of Indian languages. Bhaskar Behera, chairman of PG council and Gopal Prasad Mohapatra of Sanskrit department at Ekamra College, Bhubaneswar attended the event as the chief speaker and a special invited guest.

## New tourist spots to boost tribal economy

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 18:** The official recognition of seven attractive sites in this district as tourism destinations by the state government recently is expected to provide an impetus to the tribal economy of the district blessed with natural environment, forested hills, waterfalls, rivers, gorges, dams, and religious sites—including temples and monasteries.

The expansion of tourism is also expected to benefit the tribal economy. "Most of these tourist spots are located in forested and tribal regions," said Alekh Chandra Patra, a retired field publicity officer.

Beyond these designated sites, Keonjhar is home to numerous other locations with natural beauty and waterfalls. "If these places are also developed, the district can experience economic and social growth while promoting sustainable tourism alongside industries like mining," said Anil Das, a professor of English at Dharanidhar University in Keonjhar.

Earlier, Sanaghagara, Badaghagara, and Khandadhar waterfalls in Banspal block, Kesharikunda on the banks of the Baitarani River in Anandapur block and Dabarchua dam in Patna block.

The Tourism department is optimistic about the growth of the local area and its people due to the much-awaited decision. "This recognition will attract more tourists to the district. Development will take place in a phased manner, based on specific needs. The total number of designated tourist destinations in Keonjhar has now risen to 23. The initiative will contribute to the growth of the local area and its people," said Ramesh Chandra Nayak, assistant director of Tourism Department in Keonjhar.

The state government had recently written to all District Collectors, officially recognising 20 new tourist spots across the state, including the seven in Keonjhar.

**ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନିକା**  
ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆୟୋଜିତ

**ଜାତୀୟସ୍ତରୀୟ ହସ୍ତଚିତ୍ର ମେଳା ୨୦୨୫**

**ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ପଢ଼ିଆ, ଯୁନିଟ୍-୩, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର**

**ଉଦ୍ଘାଟନ**

**ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ପ୍ରଦିପ ବଳ ସାମନ୍ତ**  
ମାନନୀୟ ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ  
ସମବାୟ, ହସ୍ତଚିତ୍ର, ବୟନ ଓ ହସ୍ତଶିଳ୍ପ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ତା.୧୯ ଫେବୃୟାରୀ, ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ଘ.୭.୦୦ମିନିଟ୍ ସମୟରେ

**ତା.୦୧.୦୪.୨୦୨୫ରିଖ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ**  
ଦିବା ୧୧.୩୦ ରୁ ରାତ୍ର ୯.୩୦ ଘଟିକା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ

ଏହି ଉଦ୍ଘାଟନ ଯୋଗ ଦେବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ବିନମ୍ର ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ।

OIPR-31004/13/0080/2425

FOCUS ASIAN POPULATION

# REAPING SILVER DIVIDEND



**Despite increases in life expectancy, it is still common for middle-aged and elderly individuals in Asia to retire even before the mandatory retirement age—in contrast to Western developed countries that have extended or abolished their retirement ages**

economic growth in Asia. The focus should be on enhancing employment, productivity, and innovation capacity across age groups, as well as promoting collaboration among them. To that end, governments should invest in the development of digital knowledge and technical skills for all workers.

Japan, Singapore, and South Korea—among the world's fastest-aging countries—have not resolved every challenge associated with a graying society, but they offer valuable lessons for how to confront this demographic shift. Raising the retirement age and providing flexible employment opportunities encourage older individuals to remain in the workforce, which is essential for mitigating labor shortages and ensuring fiscal stability. But policymakers must avoid rushed measures that distort the labor supply and inflate pension and health-care costs. More deliberate reforms to balance contributions and benefits—such as introducing the “macroeconomic slide,” an automatic adjustment mechanism, in pension systems—can strengthen social safety nets.

Asian countries must act more decisively and swiftly to address population aging in ways that promote overall well-being. Extending working lives while enhancing seniors' productivity through targeted skills training would help sustain economic growth and maintain the fiscal soundness of social-security systems. By adopting policies that promote healthy, productive aging, countries can transform the challenges of a maturing society into opportunities for lasting prosperity, social cohesion, and greater happiness for individuals and communities alike.

The writer, a Professor of Economics at Korea University, is a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank and a former senior adviser for international economic affairs to the president of South Korea.

© PROJECT SYNDICATE

Population aging is rapidly becoming one of Asia's most daunting challenges. In 2023, 14% of the region's population was aged 60 or above, and that share is projected to swell to 25% by 2050. The proportion of the over-60 population in Japan is already 35.6% and will likely reach 43% by mid-century, while in China it is set to double, to 40%, by then. Though these countries have been graying for some time, even relatively younger ones across Asia are now experiencing sharp demographic shifts.

These trends can have significant economic consequences, from a shrinking labour force and rising pension and health-care costs to a greater risk of elderly poverty and income inequality. To head off these problems, Asian governments must develop integrated policies that encourage older individuals to stay in the workforce, boost their productivity and well-being, and safeguard the financial stability of pension and health-care systems. By harnessing the full potential of elderly workers, these countries can tap an often underutilized resource to sustain economic prosperity.

Increasing seniors' labour-market participation rate can help mitigate the effects of a shrinking workforce while slowing the rise of public expenditures. To be sure, many older adults in Asia are already working: 26% of people aged 65 and older in Japan, and 38% in South Korea, were employed in 2023—among the highest rates in the OECD. Nevertheless, despite increases in life expectancy, it is still common for middle-aged and elderly individuals in Asia to retire even before the mandatory retirement age—in contrast to Western developed countries that have extended or abolished their retirement ages.

Concerns that older workers are not as productive as their younger counterparts are overblown. While some studies link aging to physical and cognitive declines, others show that it

does not necessarily diminish productivity. Although older individuals may find it challenging to adapt to fast-evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence, they can stay productive by cultivating their human capital, whether through formal education or continuous learning.

My research on Korean workers reveals that acquiring skills in information and communications technologies and participating in job-related training significantly boost the productivity of older employees, especially those who have a university degree or work in skill-intensive industries. This implies that creating lifelong learning opportunities could help offset the productivity drop often associated with aging.

Remaining fit and healthy—a core component of human capital—also influences older people's employment prospects, underscoring the importance of high-quality public health care. Universal coverage should address seniors' diverse health needs, as an Asian Development Bank report recently emphasized. Employment itself has various health benefits. While retirement can alleviate job-related stress and free up time for healthy activities, it has been shown to increase the risk of being diagnosed with a chron-

ic condition, severe cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Retirees also have less incentive to invest in their health and can experience social isolation and depression. As The Economist notes, there is meaning in being useful, and even modest amounts of excitement in the workplace can act as an “anti-aging serum.”

By promoting healthier aging through measures to extend workforce participation, increase social engagement, and improve health-care systems, Asia's policymakers could create a “silver demographic dividend” that helps to sustain the region's economic dynamism. Of course, the link between population aging and economic growth is complex: some research suggests aging may reduce productivity, while other studies highlight positive outcomes when the appropriate technologies and frameworks are in place. The extent to which older workers bolster productivity may well depend on factors such as the implementation of elder-friendly innovations, including AI.

Fully realizing the potential of older workers requires increasing their employment rate, but not at the expense of younger employees who may be more productive. Keeping seniors in the workplace is not enough to drive long-term



Lee Jong-Wha

**CONCERNS THAT OLDER WORKERS ARE NOT AS PRODUCTIVE AS THEIR YOUNGER COUNTERPARTS ARE OVERBLOWN**

IN JEST THIS

## Be aware of heat exposure - Not just your own

Heat transference, as you may have learned in school, is the movement of thermal energy from one object to another through conduction, convection, or radiation. As it turns out, there's another way that heat can be transferred from one object to another: food delivery services.



Melvin Durai

**MANY DELIVERY RIDERS DO NOT HAVE ADEQUATE HEALTH COVERAGE, YET THEY'RE OFTEN AT RISK FOR HEAT EXHAUSTION AND OTHER WEATHER-RELATED CONDITIONS**

When a food delivery person brings a bowl of hot soup to you, they are transferring heat from the restaurant to your belly. But that's not exactly what I'm referring to. I'm focused on what happens on extremely hot days when you decide to stay inside your cool home. You open a food delivery app and transfer your heat exposure to the delivery person.

Not many people think about this, of course, but a recent study in the journal Nature Cities underscores this transfer of heat exposure from consumers to delivery riders. The researchers, based in China and the UK, analyzed food

delivery service data across 100 Chinese cities from 2017 to 2023 and found that lunchtime orders increased by almost 13 percent when the temperature rose from 20°C to 35°C. The lunch orders shot up by 21 percent when the temperature hit 40°C. People didn't feel like cooking at home, nor did they want to get cooked in the sun.

It isn't surprising that the heat prompts people to use food delivery services. Those with money can always get other people to do unpleasant work, whether it's driving in sweltering heat to pick up food or slogging in torrid weather to harvest crops. But it's still important to think about the conditions you're exposing other people to when you opt for convenience.

Many delivery drivers (and riders) around the world do not have adequate health coverage, yet they're often at risk for heat exhaustion and other weather-related conditions. Just imagine how you'd feel

if you received a call informing you that your delivery rider fainted on the way to your place.

**You: “Oh no! Is he all right?”**

Delivery service manager: “Yes, he'll be fine, but he has to spend the night in a hospital getting IV fluid treatment for dehydration.”

You: “Thank you for letting me know. Please update me on his status. And can you also update me on the status of my food?”

When extreme weather poses risks to delivery riders, it's up to food delivery companies to protect their workers. They need to ensure that the workers aren't being overly stressed, having to make too many deliveries in too short a time. Let the consumers wait a few extra minutes in their air-conditioned or fan-cooled homes, if need be.

During a heat wave in Delhi last year, Swiggy and Zomato told the publication Rest of World that they had set up

hundreds of rest areas, where delivery workers could take a break, use a washroom and drink water and other beverages. Zomato said it planned to distribute 500,000 packs of refreshments, juices, and glucose at these rest areas.

**Consumers themselves can help in a number of ways. Here are just three of them:**

1. If it's a particularly hot day, consider giving the delivery rider a particularly good tip.
2. Offer the delivery rider a glass of cold water or other refreshment. If you do not want to make contact, just leave it outside your front door with a note that says, “Thank you for taking the heat for me.”
3. Don't make a delivery rider climb several flights of stairs to your doorstep. If there's no lift in your building, please give yourself a lift to the restaurant. (You may also walk down the stairs and pick up your food.)

WISDOM CORNER

**“We always question the bonafides of the man who tells us unpleasant facts.”**

RK NARAYAN

**“Happiness always looks small while you hold it in your hands, but let it go, and you learn at once how big and precious it is.”**

MAXIM GORKY

**“Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts.”**

CHARLES DICKENS

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1872:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City opened to the public, and it later became one of the foremost museums in the world.

■ **1902:** Ansel Adams, the most important landscape photographer of the 20th century, was born in San Francisco.

■ **1909:** Italian author Filippo Tommaso Marinetti coined the term Futurism in the Parisian newspaper Le Figaro.

■ **1929:** The U.S. Congress formally accepted the deeds of cession of eastern Samoa, forming American Samoa.

■ **1945:** During the final phases of World War II, U.S. Marines invaded Iwo Jima so as to wrest control of the strategically important island from the Japanese, who put up fierce resistance in the ensuing battle.

■ **1986:** The Soviet Union launched the core module of the space station Mir.

LOL

HEARING TEST

One day, a man went to the doctor and said, “Doc, I think my wife is losing her hearing.” The doctor replied, “I can help with that. Let's do a test. Stand 15 feet away from her and ask a question. If she doesn't answer, move closer and try again until she responds.” The man went home and saw his wife cooking. He stood 15 feet away and asked, “What's for dinner?”

No response. He moved to 10 feet and asked again, “What's for dinner?” Still no response. He moved to 5 feet and asked, “What's for dinner?” She turned around and said, “For the third time, we're having spaghetti!”



## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Dip in the Ganges

Sir, The Ganges River holds immense religious importance, attracting millions of devotees who take a holy dip in its waters, especially during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela. Recent reports from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) have raised alarming concerns about the presence of fecal coliform bacteria in the river at Prayagraj. This bacterial contamination, primarily caused by sewage discharge, poses serious health risks. The fecal coliform affects water quality and presents dangers to human health. Devotees need to have routine health check-ups after taking a holy dip.

**CK Subramaniam,**  
NAVI MUMBAI

### Ukraine uncertainty

Sir, The recent news about US President Donald Trump's strategy for Ukraine is alarming. Is isolating Kyiv in peace negotiations a strategic blunder? The willingness of the US administration to engage directly with Russia, while leaving out Ukraine, might undermine the sovereignty of a besieged nation. How will European allies react to this change? As divisions run deep, will they hold their ground against Russian aggression or expose themselves to further marginalization? These are questions that need urgent attention as the drama unfolds.

**Anshu Bharti,** BEGUSARAI

### Undesired numbers

Sir, The present government has been a foremost critic of corrupt practices in the country. Over ten years of governance, the government has taken stringent measures to curb corruption in public offices. However, India's recent standing at 96th position in the Corruption Perception Index tells a different story. To put things into perspective, India is still grappling with corruption, and all these measures that the government has taken over the years have turned out to be futile. It has dropped 20 places from 76th in 2015 to 96th in 2024. Big talks look good when you have data to prove them, but it seems the present government has no positive data to prove that they have won the war against corruption; instead, they have managed to worsen it further.

**Noopur Baruah,** TEZPUR





Nothing can be more ironical than Modi Sarkar's FM saying that our Economy is delivering Good Returns

BUS FALLS INTO DRAIN IN PUNJAB, FIVE DEAD

At least five passengers were killed and over two dozen injured after a private bus fell into a drain in Punjab's Faridkot district Tuesday, officials said.



of the day uote

We will end this (illegal layout) by giving B-Khata once and for all. This is only one-time measure. You have been given only three months. Conduct a campaign and complete it within this time

An estimated ₹22,812 crore was stolen by cybercriminals in the country last year, posing a threat to both the economy and citizens

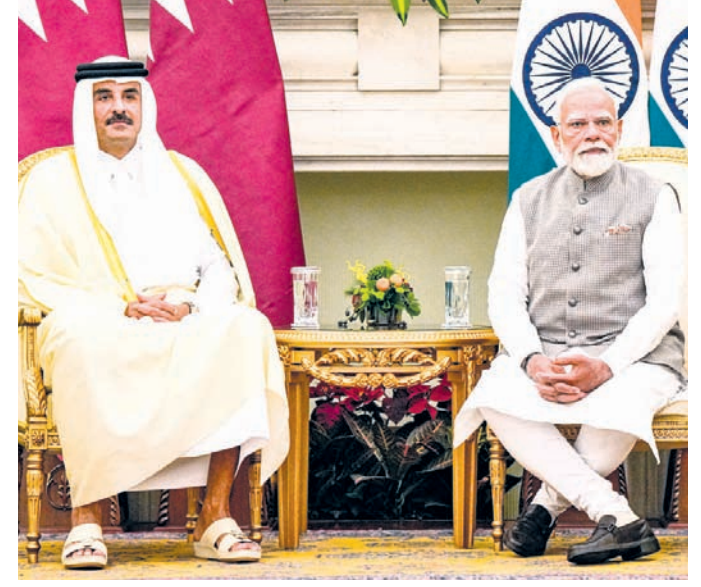
There is no need for any controversy over it. It is a closed chapter. That is the Congress' view

PM, Amir of Qatar hold talks

India, Qatar have deep-rooted historical ties of friendship, trust and mutual respect. In recent years, the ties between the two countries, including in the areas of trade, investment, energy, technology, culture and people-to-people relations, have continued to strengthen, the MEA earlier said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday held wide-ranging talks with Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani as the two leaders decided to elevate India-Qatar relations to a "strategic partnership" with focus on trade, investments, technology, energy and people-to-people ties, further cementing the "deep and traditional relationship" between the two countries.



of Prime Minister Modi and the Amir of Qatar here. "India-Qatar, further cementing the deep & traditional relationship. PM @narendramodi & HH Sheikh @TamimbinHamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar held wide-ranging talks at Hyderabad House today. Both leaders decided to elevate India-Qatar relations to a Strategic Partnership with focus on trade, energy, investments, innovation, technology, food security, culture & people-to-people ties. They also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.

India, Qatar Tuesday agreed to double bilateral trade to \$28 billion over the next five years and announced elevation of their relationship to the level of strategic partnership

The two sides also signed two agreements - one on establishing strategic partnership and another on Revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and signed five memoranda of understanding to strengthen economic partnership

with a warm handshake and hug, displaying the bonhomie between the two leaders.

The Amir of Qatar will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including ministers, senior officials and business leaders, the MEA earlier said.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar had called on the Amir of Qatar, hours after his arrival in Delhi, and said he was confident that the visiting leader's talks with Prime Minister Modi Tuesday will "deepen our close bonds of friendship".

During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Doha last year, technology, investment, energy, trade, all aspects were discussed at length with a view to look at them, assess them from a strategic perspective, the then foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra had told reporters in February 2024.

The MEA Saturday said the Indian community residing in Qatar forms the largest expatriate group in that country and is "appreciated for its positive contribution in the progress and development of Qatar".

Prez grants prosecution sanction against AAP leader Satyendar Jain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: President Droupadi Murmu has granted the sanction to prosecute AAP leader and former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain in a money-laundering case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate, sources said Tuesday.

The sanction against the 60-year-old former Delhi health minister was sought under section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. The Ministry of Home Affairs had requested the President for providing sanction to prosecute Jain on the basis of an Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation and the presence of "adequate proof", sources said.

Section 218 of the BNS governs the prosecution of public servants and judges. It outlines the procedure for bringing charges against the accused for alleged offenses committed while performing his or her official duties. The ED is now expected to file a fresh supplementary chargesheet informing the court about the approval of the prosecution sanction of the President, sources said.

The federal agency booked Jain in a money-laundering case linked to alleged hawala dealings, and arrested him in May 2022. Jain held the health, power and a few other portfolios when he was taken into ED custody. He is currently out on bail and has been chargesheeted by the ED.

The money-laundering case stems from an August 2017 FIR filed against Jain and others by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on charges of alleged possession of disproportionate assets. The CBI filed a chargesheet in December 2018,



- The federal agency booked Jain in a money-laundering case linked to alleged hawala dealings, and arrested him in May 2022
Jain held the health, power and a few other portfolios when he was taken into ED custody
Satyendar is currently out on bail and has been chargesheeted by the ED

stating that the alleged disproportionate assets were to the tune of ₹1.47 crore, about 217 per cent more than Jain's known sources of income during 2015-17. The ED had earlier said its probe found that "during 2015-16, Satyendar Jain was a public servant and four companies (beneficially owned and controlled by him) received accommodation entries (hawala) to the tune of ₹4.81 crore from shell (bogus) companies against cash transferred to Kolkata-based entry operators through the hawala route".

"These amounts were utilised for direct purchase of agricultural land or for the repayment of loan taken for purchase of agricultural land in and around Delhi," the agency had said. Former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal had earlier defended Jain, saying he was as a "hard-core honest and patriot" person who was being framed in a "false case".

SHORT TAKES

Seven killed as dumper truck crashes into van

Bhind (MP): Seven persons, among them four women, were killed and 18 others injured after a dumper truck hit a stationary loading van in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district Tuesday morning, officials said. The accident occurred around 5 am near Jawaharpura village when a group of people was returning from a wedding, Bhind district Superintendent of Police (SP) Asit Yadav said. He said some of the victims were sitting in the van, and others were standing on the road when a speeding dumper truck dashed into them and their vehicle.

Haryana to get new CS

Chandigarh: In a span of just over three months, Haryana will get a new chief secretary after incumbent Vivek Joshi was appointed as an election commissioner. Joshi is a 1989-batch Haryana-cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. Under repatriation from Government of India October 31, 2024 Joshi was posted as Chief Secretary to the Haryana Government, upon his joining in the Haryana cadre. He had then replaced the incumbent chief secretary, T V S Prasad, a 1988-batch IAS officer who superannuated from the post October 31.

PM Modi meets Rishi Sunak

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met former British prime minister Rishi Sunak Tuesday and praised him as a "great friend of India". He said on X, "It was a delight to meet former UK PM, Mr. Rishi Sunak and his family! We had a wonderful conversation on many subjects. Mr. Sunak is a great friend of India and is passionate about even stronger India-UK ties." Sunak was accompanied by his mother-in-law Sudha Murty, an author and Rajya Sabha MP, and other family members. Earlier in the day, Sunak and his family had visited Parliament House in New Delhi.

Kerala: ED searches in fake CSR fund 'scam'

Kochi/New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Tuesday conducted searches at multiple locations in Kerala in connection with the alleged fake CSR fund scam, in which fraudsters duped many people of their funds by falsely promising to offer laptops, two-wheelers and home appliances at half the price. Official sources said the entities, trusts and individuals who have "received" money from Anandu Krishnan, the prime suspect in the case, are being searched to trace the "proceeds of crime" collected from poor people.

SNIPPETS

AgustaWestland case: SC grants bail to Christian Michel James

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday granted bail to alleged middleman Christian Michel James in the purported ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland case being probed by the CBI. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta observed James was in custody for the past six years while the investigation in the matter was still underway. James, however, cannot walk out of jail as he faces a related money laundering case and his bail plea is pending in the Delhi High Court.

Sarpanch murder case: Sule slams Maha govt

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: MP Supriya Sule Tuesday attacked the Maharashtra government for its failure to arrest an absconding accused in the Massajra village sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh murder case, despite two months having passed since the incident. Speaking to reporters in Beed district after meeting Deshmukh's family, Sule said she had raised the matter with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who had assured her that he would look into the murder case. She added that she would meet Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to press for justice for Deshmukh's family. Santosh Deshmukh was abducted, tortured, and murdered December 9, 2024, allegedly for attempting to stop an extortion bid targeting an energy company in Beed.

MP HC allows 'trial run' of Union Carbide waste disposal

Jabalpur: The Madhya Pradesh High Court Tuesday allowed the state government to carry out a trial run of the disposal of 40-year-old chemical waste from the defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal in Pithampur area of Dhar district. The incineration at a disposal plant inside the industrial area of Pithampur will be carried out in three phases from February 27. Advocate General Prashant Singh told reporters here after a court hearing. The government Tuesday filed a compliance report, sought by the high court in January, about the steps it had taken for creating public awareness about the waste disposal process, he said.

Mumbai-bound trains receive bomb threats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ballia (UP), Feb 18: Two Mumbai-bound express trains received bomb threats Tuesday, prompting authorities to halt the trains at two different stations in Uttar Pradesh for search, officials said.

Nothing suspicious was found in either of the trains, they said, adding that the trains left for their destinations after a three-hour-long search operation. According to Government Railway Police (GRP) officials, information about the presence of bombs in the Kamayani Express from Ballia to Mumbai's Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, and the Dadar Express from Gorakhpur to Mumbai was received at around 10.30 am through social media. The authorities took the threat seriously and launched search operations, GRP media in-charge Shyam Babu, posted at the Additional Director General's office, told PTI.



Members of the Indian Youth Congress stage a protest demanding the resignation of Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw New Delhi Railway station stampede where over 18 people died in New Delhi

5bn globally lack access to medical oxygen: Lancet

The report by the Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security is the world's first estimate of how unequally medical oxygen is distributed, gaps in coverage of patients in need, along with costs required to bridge these gaps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Five billion people or nearly two-third of the world's population lack access to medical oxygen, with highest inequities in low- and middle-income countries, estimated a new Lancet Commission report. The report by the Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security is the world's first estimate of how unequally medical oxygen is distributed, gaps in coverage of patients in need, along with costs required to

bridge these gaps. Medical oxygen is essential in a healthcare system for treating patients, including those of surgery, asthma, trauma and maternal and child care.

It is also critical to a country's pandemic preparedness by helping prevent a repeat of the COVID-19 oxygen shortages and the mass fatalities that resulted, said an international team of researchers, including those from the University of Melbourne, Australia. In this study, the researchers said that 82 per cent of



patients worldwide requiring medical oxygen live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and nearly 70 per cent concentrated in south and east Asia, the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa. The patients include those with acute medical and surgical conditions, and long-term

coverage.

The gaps are even higher in regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa (91 per cent) and South Asia (78 per cent), the authors said. In a case study accompanying the report, the authors described the scenario of medical oxygen in India, especially as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. "The pandemic had a catastrophic effect not just because of the rates of contagion and the virulence of the disease but also because of the drastic scarcity in life-saving resources such as medical oxygen," the team from One Health Trust, India, wrote. They added that with hospitals largely relying on third-party vendors for meeting their oxygen demand pre-COVID-19, the surge in demand during the pandemic led to black-marketing and hoarding.

Desperate requests for medical oxygen were also raised on social media and in exceptional cases, the court intervened by issuing orders against supplying agencies and the government for replenishing oxygen supplies, the authors said.

The commission report also suggested recommendations for how governments, industry, global health agencies, academic institutions and civil society can work together to strengthen health systems in providing access to medical oxygen. The authors added that medical oxygen is a highly cost-effective investment to advance global public health that will accelerate the world's progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals for health by 2030, but also help countries prepare for the next pandemic.



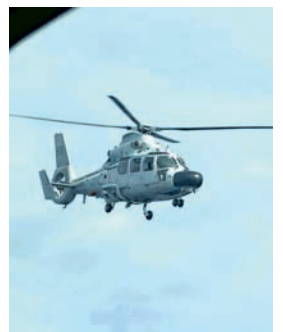


# international



**This is a major step forward in securing a bright, long-term future for steel in South Wales, following the improved deal for Port Talbot's transition we agreed with Tata Steel and the next phase of our Plan for Steel -- unveiled last week**  
JONATHAN REYNOLDS | BUSINESS AND TRADE SECRETARY, UK

**PHILIPPINE SLAMS 'DANGEROUS' CHINA HELICOPTER MANOEUVRES**  
A Chinese navy helicopter flew within 10 feet (3 metres) of a Philippine patrol plane Tuesday in a disputed area of the South China Sea, prompting the Filipino pilot to warn by radio, "You are flying too close, you are very dangerous"



**of the day** **quote**

## UN decries 'summary executions' of children by M23

**The UN rights office warned that the situation in eastern DRC was 'deteriorating sharply, resulting in serious human rights violations and abuses'**

ment Tuesday that his office "confirmed cases of summary execution of children by M23 after they entered the city of Bukavu last week. We are also aware that children were in possession of weapons".



**CONGO CRISIS**

He provided no details or did not refer to specific events, but UN agencies have previously accused both Congolese government forces and the rebels of recruiting children. The United Nations Human Rights Council earlier this month launched a commission that will investigate atrocities, including rapes and killings akin to "summary executions" committed by both sides since the beginning of the year. The UN rights office warned that the situation in eastern DRC was 'deteriorating sharply, resulting in serious human rights viola-

Associated Press. The M23 is the most prominent of more than 100 armed groups vying for control of eastern Congo's trillions of dollars in mineral wealth that's critical for much of the world's technology. The rebels are supported by about 4,000 troops from neighbouring Rwanda, according to UN experts. Rwanda accuses Congo of enlisting Hutu fighters responsible for the 1994 genocide of minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus. M23 says it's fighting to protect Tutsis and Congolese of Rwandan origin from discrimination and wants to transform Congo from a failed into a modern state — though critics say it's a pretext for Rwanda's involvement.

## Hamas to free 6 living hostages, hand over 4 bodies

**Cairo, Feb 18:** A top Hamas leader says the militant group will release six living Israeli hostages Saturday and the bodies of four others Thursday, a surprise increase that apparently comes in return for Israel allowing mobile homes and construction equipment into the devastated Gaza Strip.

The six are the last living hostages set to be freed under the ceasefire's first phase. The warring sides have yet to negotiate the second and more difficult phase, in which Hamas says it will release dozens more hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya, in prerecorded remarks, said the "Bibas family" would be included in the handover of four bodies, apparently referring to Shiri Bibas and her two young sons, Ariel and Kfir, who for many Israelis embody the captives' plight. Israel has not confirmed their deaths, and the prime minister's office urged the public not to distribute "photos, names and rumours". Israel has said it was gravely concerned about the Bibas family, while Hamas said they were killed in an Israeli airstrike early in the war. Yarden Bibas, the husband and father, was kidnapped separately and released this month. Kfir, who was 9 months old at the time, was the youngest hostage taken in Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. A video of the abduction showed Shiri swaddling her redheaded boys in a blanket and being whisked away by armed men.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had agreed to allow long-requested mobile homes and construction equipment into Gaza as part of efforts to accelerate the hostages' release.



I was told that the preparations for talks with North Korea are well underway. Given President Trump's bold approach to making deals, I think we may start to see something concrete within this year  
**CHUNG DONG-YOUNG | DEMOCRATIC PARTY REP, SOUTH KOREA**



The unidentified Taliban senior officials were invited by grant-making organization Nippon Zaidan and were also set to talk with Japanese Foreign Ministry officials  
**YOSHIMASA HAYASHI | CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY, JAPAN**



I recognise the immense responsibility I hold as governor and the constitutional powers granted to this office  
**KATHY HOCHUL | GOVERNOR, NEW YORK**



**Dakar (Senegal), Feb 18:** The UN human rights chief accused Rwanda-backed rebels who seized a second major city in eastern Congo of killing children and attacking hospitals and warehouses storing humanitarian aid. Volker Türk said in a state-

### UKRAINE PEACE TALKS

# Russia hardens demands

**Riyadh, Feb 18:** The United States and Russia said Tuesday they had agreed to press ahead with efforts to end the war in Ukraine after holding talks in the Saudi capital at which Kyiv was not represented.



- US says both countries will name high-level teams
- Rubio says Russians ready to engage, no one will be sidelined
- Russia demands NATO cancel 2008 promise of Ukraine membership
- Russia objects to stationing of NATO-member forces in Ukraine
- Ukraine not at the talks, rejects deals without its consent

The 4-1/2-hour meeting in Riyadh marked a crucial moment - the first time that US and Russian officials have sat down together to discuss ways to halt the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two. Ukraine says it will not accept any deal imposed on it without its consent.

discussion of territory and there's going to be discussion of security guarantees," he said. Addressing Ukrainian and European concerns, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said no one was being sidelined, the European Union needed to be involved at some point, and any solution must be acceptable to all parties. But even while the meeting in the Saudi capital was under way, Russia hardened its demands.

Even before the talks took place, the new administration of President Donald Trump was accused by some European politicians of handing free concessions to Moscow last week by ruling out NATO membership for Ukraine and saying it was an illusion for Kyiv to believe it could win back the 20% of its territory now under Russian control.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters in Moscow it was "not enough" for NATO not to admit Ukraine as a member. She said the alliance must go further by disavowing a promise it made at a summit in Bucharest in 2008 that Kyiv would join at a future, unspecified date.

"Otherwise, this problem will continue to poison the atmosphere on the European continent," she said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has consistently demanded NATO membership as the only way to guarantee Kyiv's sovereignty and independence from its nuclear-armed neighbour.

US national security adviser Mike Waltz told reporters in Riyadh that the war must come to a permanent end, and this would involve negotiations over territory.

"Just a practical reality is that there is going to be some

### SHORT TAKES

#### 4 paramilitary personnel killed

**Peshawar:** Four paramilitary personnel were killed and five others injured when unknown militants attacked their squad in Pakistan's violence-hit Kurram, where an aid convoy was also targeted. According to security officials, the militants ambushed the paramilitary Kurram Militia squad in Lower Kurram's Ochit area late Monday, where an aid convoy carrying essential supplies was ambushed earlier in the day. The injured and dead were shifted to a hospital, where the condition of one injured was stated to be critical.

#### Costa Rica to serve as a bridge

**San Jose:** Costa Rica has agreed to serve as a "bridge" to repatriate illegal immigrants in the US, including from India and Central Asia, according to an official release Tuesday. The first group of 200 migrants will arrive at the Juan Santamaria International Airport on a commercial flight Wednesday, according to a statement by Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves Robles' office. "The Government of Costa Rica agreed to collaborate with the United States in the repatriation of 200 illegal immigrants to their country. These are people originating from countries in central Asia and India," said the statement.

#### Ugandan forces enter eastern Congolese city

**Kampala:** Ugandan troops have entered the eastern Congolese city of Bunia to help local forces stop deadly violence by armed groups, a military spokesman said Tuesday. A meeting Monday between Ugandan forces and Congolese troops in Bunia, the capital of Ituri province, agreed on a joint deployment in the city, said Maj Gen Felix Kulayigye, spokesman for the Ugandan military. Ugandan forces now control Bunia together with Congolese forces, he said, asserting that the action was provoked by crimes, including killings, along ethnic lines by armed groups.

#### Ex-Lankan prez's son indicted in legal action

**Colombo:** Namal Rajapaksa, the eldest son of former president and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, was Tuesday indicted and released on bail by the High Court here for an alleged misappropriation out of an Indian investment prior to 2015. Leader of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), Namal Rajapaksa is the only member of the Rajapaksa family now a serving member of parliament.



Timo Arp, a butcher from Jagel, uses a chainsaw to cut up a sperm whale carcass lying on the beach in Hoernum, Germany, Tuesday  
PTI PHOTO

# S Korean actor's death at 24 sparks debate on social media culture

**Kim's career faltered after a 2022 drunk driving incident, with harsh online criticism and media scrutiny, especially targeting her as a woman**

**Seoul, South Korea, Feb 18:** South Korean actor Kim Saeron's death this week has triggered an outpouring of grief and calls for changes to the way the country's celebrities are treated in the public arena and on social media, which critics say can foster a culture

of harassment. The 24-year-old, who began her career as a child actor and earned acclaim for her roles in several domestic films, including the 2010 crime noir "The Man from Nowhere," was found dead by a friend at her home in the country's capital, Seoul, Sunday. The National Police Agency has said that officers are not suspecting foul play and that Kim left no note. Once among the brightest stars on South Korea's vibrant movie and television scene, Kim struggled to find work after a 2022 drunk driving incident, for which she was later fined in court. Online posts in South Korea are notoriously harsh toward celebrities who make missteps, especially women, and

**F**ollowing Kim's death, several of the country's major newspapers Tuesday published editorials and opinion pieces lambasting the toxic online comments about the actor

Kim faced constant negative coverage from news organizations that capitalized on public sentiment. Newspapers and websites criticized her whenever she was seen partying with friends,



or when she complained about her lack of work and nasty comments on social media. She was even criticized for smiling while filming an independent movie last year. Following Kim's death,

several of the country's major newspapers Tuesday published editorials and opinion pieces lambasting the toxic online comments about the actor. Some invoked the 2019 deaths of K-Pop singers Seol-ri and Goo Hara and the 2023 death of "Squid Games" actor Lee Sun-kyun while calling for a change in the "harsh, zero-tolerance" culture toward celebrities. The Hankook Ilbo newspaper said the country's media outlets were part of the problem, lamenting that some outlets continued to exploit Kim for clicks even after her death, using provocative headlines that highlighted her past struggles. The watchdog Citizens' Coalition for Democratic Media

# Pak parl passes resolution over plebiscite in Kashmir

**Islamabad, Feb 18:** Pakistan's parliament Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution urging India to implement the UN Security Council resolutions to allow Kashmiris to exercise their democratic right to determine their future through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices. Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam moved the resolution that reaffirmed Pakistan's "unwavering moral, political and diplomatic support" for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, according to Radio Pakistan. This is, however, not the first time that such a resolution has been passed in support of the Kashmiris. But the reason for Tuesday's resolution is not yet clear. "The resolution paid glow-

ing tributes to the valiant Kashmiris and their sacrifices; called on India to improve the human rights situation in the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK); release detained Kashmiri leaders, and revoke all oppressive laws," it said. The already scarred India-Pakistan bilateral ties further nosedived after India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, revoking the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating it into two Union Territories August 5, 2019.

**the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, according to Radio Pakistan. This is, however, not the first time that such a resolution has been passed in support of the Kashmiris. But the reason for Tuesday's resolution is not yet clear.**





“We have modernised our investment ecosystem...we invite Indian investors and entrepreneurs to explore the true potential of Qatar's economy...We are ready to take steps to fast track negotiations for a new bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement”

FAISAL BIN THANI BIN FAISAL AL THANI | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER, QATAR

## DTDC LAUNCHES DIVA 2.0

Express logistics services firm DTDC Express Tuesday announced the launch of conversational GenAI, DIVA 2.0, a first-of-its-kind technology in the domestic logistics industry to provide intelligent customer support. The latest technological tool is already live on the company's mobile app MyDTDC and its website, DTDC Express said



## of the day note

Over the last month, demand from long-term investors has been weak, resulting in widening of spreads in the long-term corporate bond segment

KETAN PARIKH | HEAD OF FIXED INCOME, ICICI PRUDENTIAL LIFE INSURANCE

The government has way more rice than needed, so there's no issue with supply. Given that, they should allow exports of 100% broken rice

BY KRISHNA RAO | PRESIDENT, RICE EXPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

It is the demand of trade and industry that the ITC of input and services used for construction of warehouses and building for the purpose of leasing out at least should be allowed and for 'own use' may be blocked

VIVEK JALAN | PARTNER, TAX CONNECT ADVISORY

## SHORT TAKES

### InCred acquires Arrow Capital

Dubai: India's diversified financial services firm InCred Group has announced the acquisition of Arrow Capital (DIFC) Limited, a leading boutique financial services firm based in Dubai. Arrow Capital, founded in 2016 and regulated by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA), has established itself as a trusted advisor to ultra-high net worth individuals, families, trusts, and corporate entities worldwide. This move marks a significant expansion of InCred's global capabilities across wealth management, investment banking, and asset management, while strengthening its presence in the Middle East and Africa. Following the acquisition, InCred Global Wealth, with offices in Dubai, Singapore, and London, will manage assets exceeding \$2 billion.

### NTPC pays interim dividend of ₹2,424cr

New Delhi: State-owned NTPC Tuesday said it has paid an additional ₹2,424 crore of interim dividend to its shareholders in the financial year ending March 2025. This is in addition to the first interim dividend of ₹2,424 crore paid in November 2024. NTPC said in a statement. The ₹2,424 crore dividend paid on February 18 is 25 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of the company. The total dividend paid by the company during the ongoing fiscal has reached ₹8,000 crore, which includes the final dividend of ₹3,152 crore for the financial year 2023-24 paid in September 2024.

### IOB celebrates 89th foundation day

Chennai: Public sector Indian Overseas Bank has launched Aadhaar-OTP based account opening and API banking facilities coinciding with its 89th Foundation Day Celebrations, a top initiative said Tuesday. The initiatives were designed to offer simplified banking services to both individual and corporate customers. The city-headquartered bank has introduced an Aadhaar OTP based account opening facility, enabling customers to open a savings account effortlessly through the bank website.

## INDICES BLEED

# BSE-listed firms' mcap slips below ₹400L-crore

Uninterrupted foreign fund outflows and lower-than-expected corporate earnings continue to hit investors' sentiment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slipped below the ₹400 lakh crore-mark Tuesday as relentless foreign fund outflows and lower-than-expected corporate earnings continued to dent investors' sentiment.

After a day's breather, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex ended 29.47 points or 0.04 per cent lower at 75,967.39. Intra-day, the Sensex dropped 465.85 points or 0.61 per cent to 75,531.01.

On Tuesday, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by ₹2,01,032.5 crore to ₹3,98,31,067.30 crore (\$4.58 trillion). The market cap of BSE-listed companies had gone past the coveted ₹400 lakh crore mark in April last year.

From its all-time high level of 85,978.25 hit September 27, last year, the BSE benchmark has tanked 10,010.86 points or 11.64%



Markets ended a tad lower in a sluggish trading session as caution prevailed amongst the investors amid rising foreign fund outflows and falling rupee

PRASHANTH TAPSE | SENIOR VP (RESEARCH), MEHTA EQUITIES

### IPO-bound NSE's valuation jumps 200% to ₹ 4.7L-cr

Mumbai: The IPO-bound NSE's valuation jumped 201 per cent in 2024 to ₹4.7 lakh crore, a report said Tuesday. The largest India equity bourse, which is reported to have restarted its listing process by applying for a no-objection from markets regulator Sebi, is already the 10th-most valuable private company in the country, as per the 2024 Burgundy Private Huron India 500 list of listed as well as unlisted companies. The valuation was pegged at ₹3.12 lakh crore, as per a September 2024 report. Another media report said the company, which also runs the world's largest derivatives exchange, aims to sell 10 per cent of holding in the IPO.

## Reliance to enter RE manufacturing space

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra) is entering into the renewable energy (RE) equipment manufacturing space to increase its business portfolio, industry sources said.

The Reliance Group company has already appointed Ivan Saha as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Renewable Manufacturing, and Mushtaque Hussain as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Battery Manufacturing, they said.

"RInfra is making strategic entry into the renewable energy manufacturing industry," sources said.

The company would set up an integrated solar manufacturing unit with the objective to boost the production of solar panels and components in India, promoting self-sufficiency in clean energy.

## US emerges 5th top oil supplier to India

The purchase of Russian oil by India may fall in coming months as refiners would buy Russian oil only if it is supplied by companies and ships that have not been sanctioned by the US

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 18: India's oil imports from the United States rose sharply in January from December, turning Washington as the fifth largest oil supplier to New Delhi, data obtained from trade sources show.

India shipped in 218,400 barrels per day of oil from the US compared to 70,600 bpd in December, the data showed.

Refiners in India, the world's third biggest oil importer and



consumer, are bracing for higher imports of energy from Washington, as New Delhi looks to boost its energy purchases from the US to \$25 billion from \$15 billion last year.

India's imports from its top oil supplier Russia rose 4.3% last month to 1.58 million barrels per day, per data.

The purchase of Russian oil by India is likely to fall in the coming months as refiners would buy Russian oil only if it is supplied by companies and ships that have not been sanctioned by the United States. Widened sanctions on Moscow by Western countries including the United States have

## Tesla fast-tracks India entry plans

The US electric carmaker starts recruitment in India after Musk-Modi meet

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 18: Elon Musk's Tesla is looking to hire senior staff in India, job advertisements posted this week showed, signalling progress in the electric vehicle maker's plans to enter the world's third-biggest auto market.

The postings come less than a week after Musk's meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington.

Tesla has for years planned an India market entry and even setting up of local manufacturing. Some executives were hired around 2022, though some top-level people quit the company after Tesla put its India plans on hold back then.

With the automaker again scouting for showroom space in India since late last year, it has now listed 13 jobs on its website, opens new tab and social media platform LinkedIn, opens new tab for various customer-facing and back-end roles based in Mumbai, India's financial capital.

Among them is a "store manager" role responsible for overseeing and driving sales at the location, one job listing showed, a sign that Tesla is looking to open a showroom in the city. Delivery operations and customer support specialists are also being sought, the ads showed.

The listings come just after Modi met Musk in the United States last week, and discussed issues including space, mobility, technology, and innovation.

Musk has long criticised India for having high import



Tesla has for years planned an India market entry and even setting up of local manufacturing. Some executives were hired around 2022, though some top-level people quit the company after Tesla put its India plans on hold back then

tariffs of around 100% on EVs, and his company has repeatedly lobbied to relax them. The move, however, has faced opposition from local automakers who think Tesla's entry can hit their EV plans.

Last year, Musk was set to meet Modi during a trip to India where he was expected to announce a potential \$2 billion-\$3 billion investment, but the visit was called off after Tesla decided to lay off 10% of its global workforce amid declining sales.

In November, Reuters reported that Tesla was also scouting for showroom space in the country's capital city of New Delhi, and was in early stage talks with real estate developer DLF to help secure a location.

## Unemployment rate dips marginally in Q3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The rate of unemployment among people aged 15 years and above in urban areas dropped marginally to 6.4 per cent in the October-December quarter of the current fiscal, according to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO).

Joblessness, or unemployment rate, is defined as the percentage of unemployed people in the labour force. The unemployment rate in the December quarter of FY24 was 6.5 per cent. However, the rate stayed flat when compared sequentially.

In the preceding July-September quarter of FY25, the rate of unemployment for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas was at the same level of 6.4 per cent, the 25th Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed.

## Adani Foundation pledges education temples across India

Ahmedabad: The Adani Foundation has collaborated with GEMS Education, a global leader in private K-12 education, to establish temples of education across the country. With an initial donation of ₹2,000 crore from the Adani family, the partnership will prioritise making world-class education and learning infrastructure affordable to people from all strata of society. The foundation is the CSR arm of the Adani Group - India's largest infrastructure portfolio.



The partnership will also give rise to best-in-class research institutions focused on developing teaching competencies supported by innovation and capability development. The first 'Adani GEMS School of Excellence' will come up in Lucknow in the academic year 2025-26. Over the next three years, at least 20 such schools in the K-12 segment will be rolled out across India's primary metropolitan cities and, subsequently, also in Tier II to IV cities. In these schools, 30% seats in CBSE curriculum will be free for under-served and deserving children. "This initiative reflects our commitment to making world-class education affordable and widely accessible," said Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group. "By adopting global best practices and innovative digital learning through our partnership with GEMS Education, we aim to equip the next generation of change-makers to become socially responsible leaders in India." "Our vision has always been to make quality education accessible to every learner, regardless of their socioeconomic background," said Sunny Varkey, Founder & Chairman of GEMS Education.

## Dubai's Sobha Realty enters cricket world

The international luxury developer becomes global partner for ICC Men's event, starting with Champions Trophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Dubai-based Sobha Realty Tuesday said it has become a global partner for the International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's event.

In a statement, Sobha Realty, which is part of Sobha Group, said the partnership spans various in-stadia, broadcast and digital rights, starting with the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, which begins February 19.

"Sobha Realty has become a Global Partner for ICC Men's events," the company said, adding that the partnership will draw synergies with the moments of brilliance that are synonymous with ICC pinnacle events.

Spanning a visible presence in-stadia and with further



touchpoints across broadcast and digital channels, ICC and Sobha Realty will develop content that celebrates the 'Art of The Detail' and the outstanding moments of precision that define elite-level cricket," the statement said.

ICC Chair Jay Shah said: "We are delighted to welcome Sobha Realty as a Global Partner in the ICC's Commercial Partner Programme, aligning with some of the most iconic events in the cricketing calendar."

The partnership with the ICC reflects our shared commitment to delivering exceptional experiences to a worldwide audience while reinforcing our presence on the international stage

RAVI MENON | CHAIRMAN, SOBHA GROUP

representing 108 members, the ICC governs and administers the game and is responsible for the staging of major international tournaments including the ICC World Test Championship Final, ICC Men's and Women's Cricket World Cups, T20 World Cups, Champions Trophy as well as all associated qualifying events.

Sobha Realty is an international luxury developer committed to redefining the art of living through sustainable communities. Established in 1976 as an interior decoration firm in Oman by PNC Menon, the company has grown its presence with developments and investments in the UAE, Oman, and India. In India, Sobha Group has a listed real estate company named Sobha Ltd, which is headquartered in Bangalore.

