

**Befitting reply**  
Actor-singer Saba Azad reveals that she has developed a "thick skin" against social media trolling  
LEISURE | P2

**Meloni defends Modi**  
Italian PM Giorgia Meloni defends her Indian counterpart as she slams the "double standards" of the global political Left  
INTERNATIONAL | P10

**FPIs withdraw ₹23,710cr**  
Foreign investors pull out over ₹23,710cr from equity markets so far this month, pushing total outflows past ₹1L-crore  
BUSINESS | P11

**Fresh milestone**  
Talismanic batter Virat Kohli becomes the fastest batter to reach 14,000 ODI runs during India-Pak CT match  
SPORTS | P12



**DOMINANCE CONTINUES:** Virat Kohli, left, celebrates his century with Axar Patel after scoring the winning runs during a One Day International (ODI) cricket match of the ICC Champions Trophy between India and Pakistan, at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, in Dubai, UAE, Sunday

## India ride on Virat ton to sweet win over Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Feb 23:** Virat Kohli showcased his penchant to lord over Pakistan in ICC tournaments once more as the batting icon's glittering unbeaten 100 helped India claim an authoritative six-wicket win over their traditional rivals and all but seal a semifinal spot in the Champions Trophy here Sunday.

The victory should be enough for India, who are now on top of Group A with four points, to make the last four. However, Pakistan are staring at early elimination from the eight-team event after their second successive loss.

Chasing a tricky 242, India rode on Kohli's 51st ODI ton, Shreyas Iyer's classy 67-ball 56 and Shubman Gill's brilliant start of 46 off 52 balls to overhaul the target with more than seven overs to spare.

Kohli rebelled against his own modest recent form and a dangerous opposition to peel off a memorable knock that took 111 balls and was punctuated with seven fours.

Pakistan, on the other hand, are on their way out of the tournament of which they are the hosts. Once again, they ran into their old nemesis — Kohli. The 36-year-old had several demons of his own to tame — a lean run,

recurring form of dismissals and struggles against spin.

But he slayed each one of them, in a manner befitting a batter who also became the quickest to 14,000 ODI runs during the course of the knock.

Pakistan might have hoped to hustle him a bit through pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf.

But Kohli drove them on the up with elan or pulled them with audacity as Pakistan's premier pacers transformed into dejected figures after the early high of Afridi casting Rohit Sharma (20 off 15 balls) with a peach of a yorker.

Perhaps, the biggest hope Pakistan harboured against Kohli would have been leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, considering the Indian's recent travails against England's Adil Rashid.

Kohli did have a couple of tough moments against Ahmed but none big enough to put him in distress. He largely dealt with him in singles, cutting down risks. But the Pakistan quicks offered him enough chances to free his arms.

At the other end, Iyer flowed with a variety of shots but a 103 metre six off spinner Salman Agha was the standout hit during his tenure, in which he assisted Kohli to raise 114 runs for the third wicket.

**CHAMPIONS TROPHY**

**IRREGULAR** by MANJUL



**Public promises can wait—first, let's fulfil the real manifesto: the party's wish list!**

**MISTAKEN IDENTITY**

## Man shot dead by bro-in-law

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Feb 23:** A man was accidentally shot dead by his brother-in-law while hunting for wildlife in a jungle in Dhenkanal district late Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Gobind Chandra Nayak, resident of Kalanga Phasigaon village and the owner of a cashew orchard and a farm house at Kalanga Chakundana-li, around 5 km away from his residence. The accused was identified as his brother-in-law Ramesh Nayak of Alusingh village under Rasol police limits in the district.

The incident occurred when Gobind and Ramesh were hunting for wild animals in a jungle abutting the farm house. Gobind and Ramesh had taken different paths in search of prey when Ramesh heard a sound. He mistook it for a barking deer and fired from country-made gun without any warning.

Tragically, the bullets struck Gobind, causing fatal injuries on his chest, abdomen, and right arm. Realising his mistake, Ramesh hid the gun and fled the scene.

Police arrested the accused, Ramesh Nayak, and produced him in the court, SP Abhinav Sonkar said at a presser Sunday.

# Pakistan, Bangladesh resume direct trade

**In a historic first since 1971 separation, the resumption of direct trade between Pakistan and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) in the wake of Sheikh Hasina's ouster from Bangladesh marks a significant shift in South Asian geopolitics. The move comes months after Hasina's political downfall, and the subsequent asylum granted to the deposed Bangladeshi leader by India. This development serves as a wake-up call for India, highlighting its failure of diplomacy and weakening hold in the region. The breakdown of Bangladesh's longstanding ties with India, coupled with the strengthening of Pakistan-Bangladesh relations, underscores the volatility of the political landscape in South Asia. India's inability to maintain influence over Bangladesh and safeguard its strategic interests is seen as a diplomatic setback, revealing vulnerabilities in India's foreign policy and its handling of regional dynamics.**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Feb 23:** Pakistan and Bangladesh have resumed direct trade for the first time since the 1971 separation, with the first government-approved cargo departing from Port Qasim, according to a media report.

The agreement was finalised in early February when Bangladesh agreed to purchase 50,000 tonnes of Pakistani rice through the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP).

"For the first time, a Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) vessel carrying government cargo will dock at a Bangladeshi port, marking a significant milestone in maritime trade relations," The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

East Pakistan separated from Pakistan in 1971 to form the independent state of Bangladesh.

The transportation of the goods marked the first instance of official trade relations being

restored since 1971.

Under a deal finalised in early February, Bangladesh is set to import 50,000 tonnes of rice from Pakistan through the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP). The shipment will be completed in two phases, with the remaining 25,000 tonnes to be dispatched in early March.

The development is seen as a positive step in fostering economic cooperation and re-opening trade channels that remained dormant for decades. The latest trade deal is expected to strengthen economic ties between the two nations and facilitate direct shipping routes.

After Sheikh Hasina's ouster as the prime minister of Bangladesh last year, the bilateral relations witnessed a thaw with high-level exchanges between the two nations, the paper said.

The interim government in Bangladesh extended an olive branch, to which Pakistan responded positively, it said.



**3 YRS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR**

## Largest drone attack on eve of anniversary

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kyiv, Feb 23:** Russia launched more strike drones into Ukraine overnight Saturday than in any other single attack of the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday, one day before the three-year anniversary of Moscow's full-scale invasion.

Writing on social media, Zelenskyy said 267 strike drones had been sent in what he called "the largest attack since Iranian drones began hitting Ukrainian cities and villages."

Ukraine's air force said 138 drones had been shot down over 13 Ukrainian regions, with 119 more lost en route to their targets. Three ballistic missiles had also been fired, the air force said. One person was killed in a missile strike on the city of Kryvyi Rih, according to the head of the Kryvyi Rih military administration.

The attack came as leaders in Kyiv and across Europe are seeking to navigate rapid changes in US foreign policy under President Donald Trump,

who in a matter of days has up-ended years of firm support for Ukraine, leading to fears that he would join with Moscow to force a settlement to the war without involving Ukraine and its European backers.

Trump's engagement with Russian officials and his agreement to reopen diplomatic ties and economic cooperation with Moscow marked a dramatic about-face in US policy which had previously sought to isolate Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, over the war.

Zelenskyy has expressed fears that Trump pushing a quick resolution would result in lost territory for Ukraine and vulnerability to future Russian aggression, though US officials have asserted that the Ukrainian leader would be involved if and when peace talks actually start.

Trump, however, prompted alarm and anger in Ukraine when this week he suggested that Kyiv had started the war, and that Zelenskyy was acting as a "dictator" since the country has not held elections.

## USAID funded 7 projects in FY24: Finance Ministry report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 23:** Amid a raging political controversy over USAID's alleged role in influencing Indian elections, the latest annual report of the Finance Ministry has disclosed that the agency funded seven projects worth USD 750 million in 2023-24.

Currently, seven projects worth a total budget of USD 750 million (approx.) are being implemented by USAID in partnership with Government of India, as per the Finance Ministry annual report for 2023-24.

For the financial year 2023-24, an obligation of a total of USD 97 million (about ₹25 crore) has been made by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) under the seven projects, it said.

The Department of Economic Affairs under the Finance Ministry which is the nodal department for bilateral funding arrangements has also shared the details of projects funded in 2023-24 in the report.

During the year, no funding was made for enhancing voter turnout but to projects related to agriculture & food security programme; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); Renewable Energy; disaster management and health. Besides, it said, funds were committed for Sustainable Forests and Climate Adaptation Programme and Energy Efficiency Technology Commercialisation and Innovation Project.

The United States of America's bilateral development assistance to India started in 1951 and it is mainly administered through USAID. Since its commencement, USAID has provided economic assistance of over USD 17 billion to India in various sectors for over 555 projects.

Political controversy erupted in the country earlier this month after the Elon Musk-led DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) claimed that it had cancelled a USD 21 million grant to India to boost voter turnout.

## Record 6.82L Olive Ridleys throng Rushikulya mouth

PNN & AGENCIES

**Berhampur, Feb 23:** The mouth of the Rushikulya river in Ganjam district has emerged as a major rookery for the endangered Olive Ridley turtles with over 6.82 lakh such marine species assembling for mass nesting, officials said Sunday.

The mass nesting of the turtles in the Rushikulya river mouth commenced February 16.

"Over 6.82 lakh Olive Ridley turtles have laid eggs on the beach so far, surpassing the previous record of the arrival of 6.37 lakh marine species in 2023," Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Sunny Khokkar said.

A total of 6,37,008 turtles laid eggs in eight days of mass nesting from February 23 to March 2 in 2023, while 5.50 lakh turtles had laid eggs in 2022, sources said.

As the mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles is yet to be completed, the number might increase, the DFO said.

Favourable climatic conditions are one of the reasons for a record number of Olive Ridley turtles visiting the beach for mass nesting, experts said.

"The better climatic condition this year has helped more turtles lay eggs in the Rushikulya river mouth, which is emerging as a major rookery for the turtles," Wildlife Institute of India (WII) Dehradun senior sci-



entist Bivas Pandav said. Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) senior scientist Basudev Tripathy predicts a good number of hatchlings likely to emerge as the mass nesting has taken

place in time in the rookery. ZSI scientists have recaptured over 330 Olive Ridleys so far as these turtles were GPS-tagged in the 2021-23 period, said Anil Mohapatra, another senior

**Over 6.82 lakh Olive Ridley turtles have laid eggs on the beach so far, surpassing the previous record of the arrival of 6.37 lakh marine species in 2023**

SUNNY KHOKKAR | DFO, BERHAMPUR

scientist of the surveyor.

Dibysha Shankar Behera, range officer, Khallikote said the government has put fencing in the new areas as the turtles nested from New Podampeta to Prayagi-around 9-km stretch this time. The fencing is made to protect the eggs from predators.

"We have taken utmost care to protect the eggs, which may hatch after 45 days," he said.

# leisure



## TOM BRADY, IRINA SHAYK REKINDLE THEIR ROMANCE

Tom Brady and Irina Shayk's on-again, off-again romance is back on. As per sources, The Super Bowl champion and the stunning supermodel have quietly rekindled their casual romance more than a year after the pair's fling fizzled out.

## HUDSON REGRETS NOT DOING THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

Kate Hudson says she regrets turning down the lead role of Andy Sachs in the hit comedy drama *The Devil Wears Prada*. Hudson, known for movies like *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* and *Almost Famous*, said she couldn't take up the part due to her busy schedule.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
 You will be torn between work and family as both try to grab your attention. You may reserve the evening for having fun. You crave to become famous and are likely to accomplish your ambition shortly. You have Ganesha's blessings to support you.

**TAURUS**  
 Ganesha is pleased to see that you have a bright day ahead. Your efforts are due to give the results you expect. If you are in a mood to achieve something more than usual, this is the day for it. You are not likely to be disappointed. You will be getting increasingly popular socially as well as professionally, and gaining the trust and support of one and all.

**GEMINI**  
 An auspicious day awaits you. You will pay more attention to your family than to your career or at the work-front. This will mean the resolution of some long pending issues and projects at home. An enjoyable time with your family and children awaits you, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
 The Archer will be quite sharp at work and equally penetrating in matters of the heart. Though you may temporarily lose focus, your mind will bring you back to the real world. You will work at break-neck speed only to be able to spend as much time as possible with your sweetheart.

**LEO**  
 Pack your bags, and don't forget the sunscreen and the shades. Look at the stars today - Ganesha foresees for you a strong prospect of going on a tour. If not an individual backpacking adventure, then an elaborate family holiday, but travel you shall.

**VIRGO**  
 Today, find yourself rummaging through the vast recesses of your inner self. You will make fabulous money to spend on your loved ones. Face up to work pressures by indulging in corporeal pleasures.

**LIBRA**  
 Ganesha says that you need to be more careful in your work field as your enemies or your competitors will try to pull you down today. You will have to be very careful in making business agreements or negotiations regarding give and take in the business.

**SCORPIO**  
 You shall also work like a donkey and yet be smart as hell in what you do today. It is favourable if you engage in household activities - gardening, cooking, cleaning and the likes. Work pressure will be displaced by family pleasure, predicts Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Your ways to deal with your team mates and colleagues will be strict and disciplined. However, your perfect ways at work will leave them awestruck. Your personal equations will be least affected by your stern ways, says Ganesha. Do not let success go to your head.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Impulsiveness, which is not really your trait, will be very evident in whatever work you do today, says Ganesha. Money matters will keep you preoccupied for major part of the day, but ironically, your otherwise methodical approach to everything will go for a toss. You will splurge in the second half of the day, and it will be more than what your means can afford.

**AQUARIUS**  
 You are ambitious, and quite unapologetic about the way you pursue your goals! You will work hard and push your way through if you have to. Not just that, you will see to it that you have all the skills and competency required to make it big. Success is never served on a plate, and you know it, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
 Well begun is half done. With this in mind, you will set out to actively seek the cooperation of your colleagues and the sanction of your seniors to tackle some important projects, says Ganesha. The evening should find you heading out to watch a movie or doing something creative, like painting.

# Saba claps back at trolls

**Mumbai:** Saba Azad and Hrithik Roshan are among the most adored couples in Bollywood, but Saba has often faced online trolling for dating the superstar. However, she has now developed a "thick skin" and remains unaffected by such negativity.

In a conversation with *SCREEN*, Saba shared her perspective on trolling, stating, "As dissatisfaction among people rises, so does this kind of behavior online. If you are happy, you won't create fake accounts to troll others. Why should I care about someone faceless and frustrated with their life?"

Initially, online criticism did bother her. "At first, I wondered why people cared when I was minding my own business. But over time, I realised it's just sad and not worth losing sleep over. I've developed a thick skin for it. I may have turned the other cheek for a long time, but once in a while, I feel that I still have some bite. You can't keep coming at me and expect me to stay mum. I don't care what such people say now," Saba added.

Saba also admitted that she is not very active on social media. "I am quite terrible with social media. I post for three days in a row and then I disappear for a month. In a way, for performing artists, it has become sort of a portfolio. It's a 'can't live with, can't live without' kind of relationship. It is a means to earn a living with brands and ads," she said.

AGENCIES

# Mrunal's fangirl moment

**Mumbai:** Mrunal Thakur recently had a fangirl moment with singer Papon. Revealing the same on her Instagram, the *Sita Ramam* actress dropped a short clip of herself from the car.

Mrunal shared that she met Papon during a flight. She added that she has been grooving on Papon's *Kyon* track from *Barfi*, starring Ranbir Kapoor and Priyanka Chopra.

"Met Papon sir on the plane and I had such a girl moment! I feel so silly for not taking a pic! Only singing this song in my mind! @paponmusic sir you're a Magician", Mrunal penned in the caption.

Prior to this, the actress gave her fans a sneak peek into her shoot diaries. She dropped a short video from the sets of her next on Instagram.

Dressed as a beautiful traditional Maharashtrian bride, she captioned the post, "When you get to know it is the last shot of the day!" However, it is not clear which project she is currently working on.

Going by the reports, Mrunal is busy with her film *Dacoit*, where she will be seen opposite Adivi Sesh. Directed by Shaneil Deo, the movie is believed to share the tale of an angry convict seeking vengeance on his ex-girlfriend who betrayed him.

# Sam's shoutout to co-actors

**Mumbai:** Southern beauty Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently conducted an 'Ask Me Anything' session with her InstaFam. One of the questions asked during the interactive session was about the "Best heroine in the film industry".

To this, Samantha replied, "This is a shoutout to some of the best performances in no particular order. I love these women, I love the work they are doing, I love that they are taking risks, it's not easy, so just huge respect for Parvati in *Ullozhukku*, Nazaria in *Sookshma Darshini*, Sai Pallavi in *Amaran*, Alia Bhatt in *Jigra* and Ananya Panday in *CTRL*, these guys are just amazing, rockstars."

She went on to add, "The cast of *All We Imagine as Light*, Kani, Divya Prabha, amazing performances, looking forward to all the work they will be doing this year. A few days ago, the actress spoke about loving her own company. She took to her Instagram stories, revealing that she has gone for a "Silence sadhna". Dropping a picture of a card, which read "Silence", she wrote, "Three days in silence. No phone. No communication. Just me for company."

She added, "Somehow being alone with ourselves has become one of the scariest things. Would I do it again? A million times, yes. Would I recommend you try it? A million times, yes."



# Aamir on importance of failures

**Mumbai:** Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan says he takes a movie failure hard, often reflecting and feeling depressed for about two weeks.

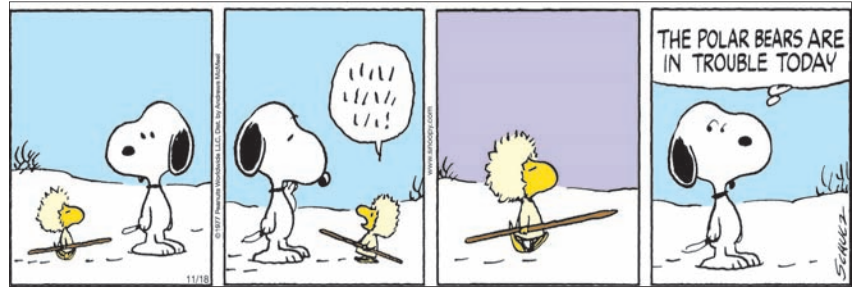
During a recent interview, the actor said he values his failures because they push him to do better work.

"When my films fail, I get depressed. I get emotional and I cry a lot for two to three weeks. Later, I sit with my team and think about what went wrong with the film, we try to understand what the audience said about the film, so that we don't repeat our mistakes. I value my failures. "Once I've been through that process, then I look forward to working on my upcoming films with enthusiasm. One should take positive things from their failures, it teaches you to be better at work," said Khan.

Speaking about the failure of the two movies, the actor said, "I felt very bad. We didn't earn money. I'm an emotional person. I felt *Thugs of Hindostan* was a weak film, we couldn't make what we wanted to. Filmmaking is a difficult film and sometimes we are not able to make films the way we want to. In *Laal Singh Chaddha*, I feel my performance was too high, Tom Hanks did such great work in the original he takes you on a ride, I was not able to do so." Khan added.



### PEANUTS



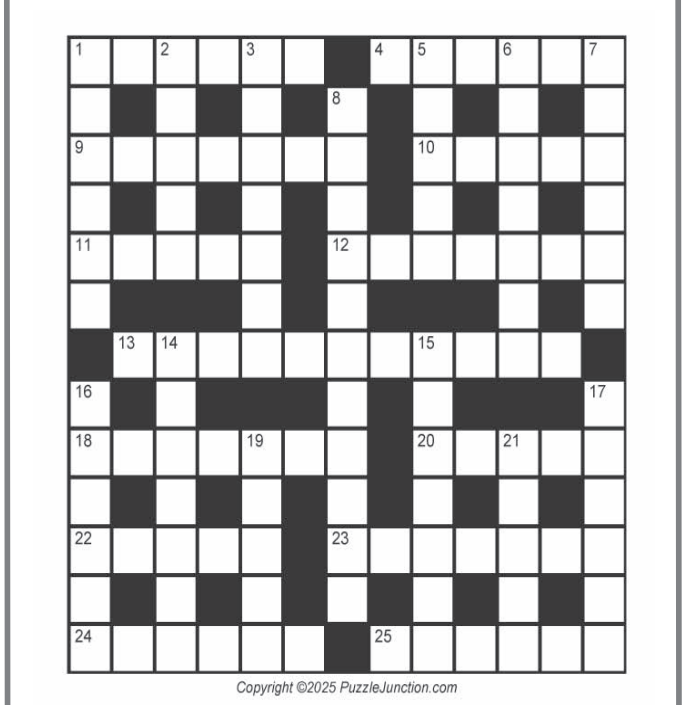
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



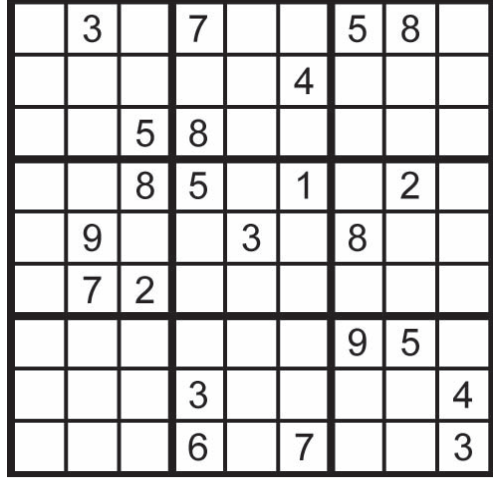
### FUN POST CROSSWORD



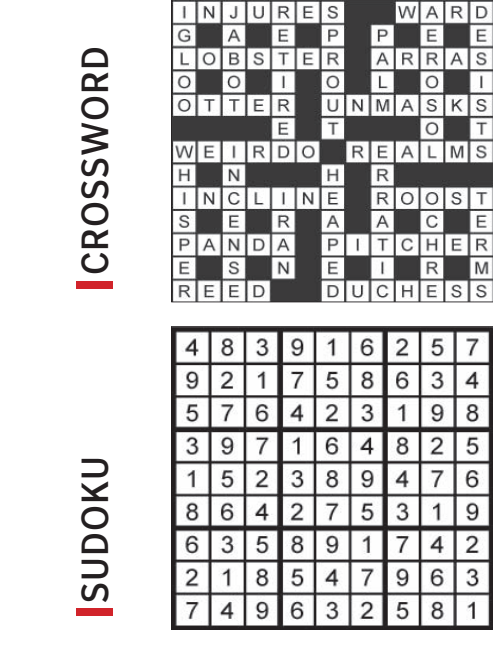
- Across
- 1 Submit
  - 4 Commotion
  - 9 Driving force
  - 10 Pie choice
  - 11 Succinct
  - 12 Violent agitation
  - 13 "Holy smokes!" e.g.
  - 18 Cote d'Ivoire native
  - 20 Euripides drama
  - 22 Female fox
  - 23 Draw in flute
  - 24 Night flight
  - 25 Church instruments
  - 6 Transverse
  - 7 Not married
  - 8 Maudlin
  - 14 Photocopied
  - 15 Satan, for one
  - 16 Tray
  - 17 Long-bodied large-eyed insect
  - 19 Bonbon
  - 21 Video store category
- Down
- 1 Crooked
  - 2 Bay of Naples isle
  - 3 Filled with sadness
  - 5 Certain berth

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## Majhi takes holy dip at Sangam, performs puja

Describing the event as a reflection of India's cultural ethos, the CM that since crores of devotees from across the nation and outside gather here with immense faith, the atmosphere becomes a reflection of the nation's rich cultural heritage



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi visited Prayagraj to join the Mahakumbh, a grand assembly of rituals, and took holy dip at Triveni Sangam Sunday. Speaking to mediapersons there, Majhi said, "It is an extraordinary privilege and a deeply spiritual experience to witness the sacred Mahakumbh at Prayagraj. It's a confluence of faith, tradition, and divinity."

He further said that the holy bath at Triveni Sangam symbolises purification of the soul, uni-

ty of humanity, and the eternal flow of wisdom and devotion. Describing the event as a reflection of our cultural ethos, the CM said that since crores of devotees from across the nation and outside gather here with immense faith, the atmosphere becomes a reflection of India's rich cultural heritage and spiritual ethos. "The spirit of devotion, discipline, and harmony seen during this grand congregation is truly inspiring," he added.

He extended his reverence to this sacred occasion and prayed for the well-being, peace, and

prosperity of all. Expressing his thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for enhancing the spirit of India, he said, "My hearty thanks and gratitude to our beloved Prime Minister for his exceptional outlook and valued vision to continuously heighten the spirit of India from the hamlets to the international level. It's my heavenly pleasure to work under his active guidance and empowered advice."

He also thanked UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his committed excellence to make it a grand success with exemplary success.

CM Majhi spoke to Adityanath over phone and expressed his thanks for the wonderful arrangements at Mahakumbh.

He also thanked UP's Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Satish Sharma, who received him at Prayagraj airport and remained with him throughout his visit to the holy city. Sharma also accompanied Majhi when the latter was performing puja and aarti, as per rituals, at Sangam.

Majhi was accompanied by his wife, Puri MP Sambit Patra and state Advocate General Pitambar Acharya who also took holy dips at "Triveni Sangam".

## Man arrested for chain snatching

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** Capital Police Sunday arrested a 27-year-old man on charges of snatching a gold chain from a woman who was resting outside her residence near Bhuasuni Temple here.

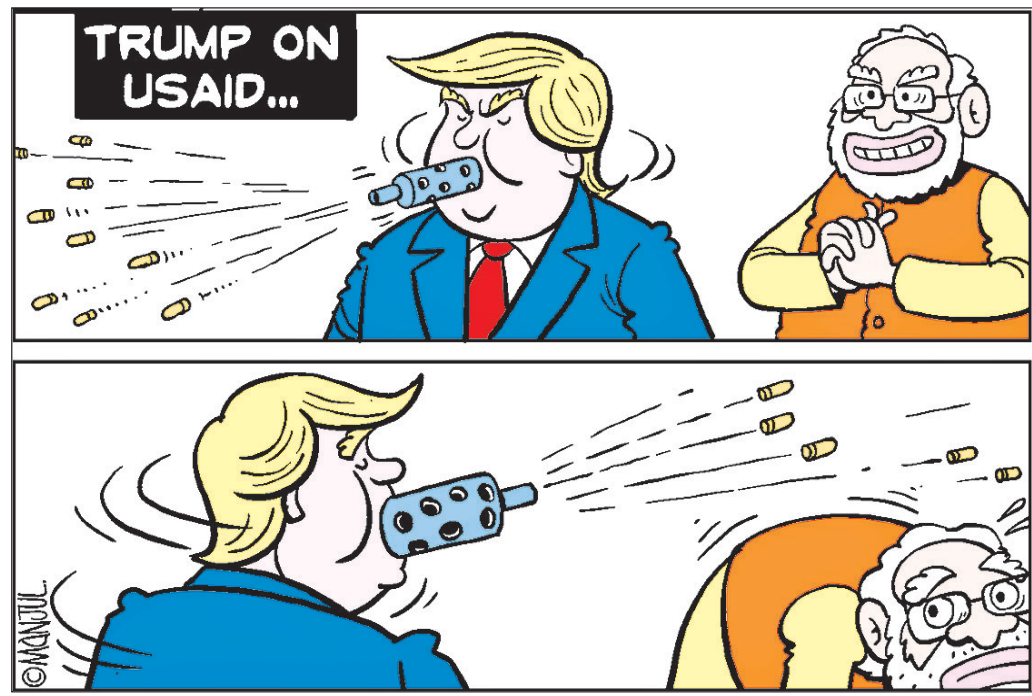
Capital police station IIC Dayanidhi Nayak said the accused has been identified as Sudarshan Swain. "On the basis of a complaint lodged by Sukanti Singh, Sudarshan snatched away the chain of her mother who was resting on a cot outside her home February 22." The police launched a manhunt and nabbed him from Old Town area. Nayak said Sudarshan, a history-sheeter, has been booked under Sections 309 (6) and 3 (5) of BNS, and was produced before a local court Sunday for remand.

## BOOK RELEASE

A book titled 'Convergence in Divergence' authored by Vijaya Sri N Swamy was unveiled at a hotel in Bhubaneswar Sunday. Dignitaries including retired state election commissioner Rabinarayan Senapati and Women's Welfare Commission chairman Namrata Chada were present on the occasion



## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Govt orders action against 'unruly' KIIT employees

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** The state government has asked the authorities of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) to initiate action against the employees involved in the mistreatment of students following the recent suicide by a Nepalese girl in her hostel room, an official said Sunday.

The state government's directive came a day after Nepal Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba spoke to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi over phone.

She insisted that the teachers and staff who misbehaved with Nepalese students should be removed from the college, the official said.

"We have already issued an instruction to KIIT authorities to take prompt action to restore the confidence of Nepalese students who have not returned to the campus so far," a senior official told PTI.

The Nepal government has also expressed concern that their students may be subjected to reprisal if the "unruly" teachers and staff members remain in the institute.

Out of the nearly 1,000 Nepalese students of KIIT, only a few could return to the campus responding to the assurance of the state government and apology by the institute authorities.

"The students, including girls, who have undergone a harrowing experience Monday (February 17) for being forcibly evicted from hostels, dropped at a railway station far away from Bhubaneswar without having tickets to return, are yet to recover from the fear," said one of the Nepalese students.

The police after examining CCTV footage have arrested 10

employees of KIIT, including some director-level officials, security guards and others on charges of assaulting the students.

According to a release issued by KIIT February 18, two security staffers were terminated from service while two senior hostel officials and one senior administrative officer of the International Relations Office (IRO) were suspended pending inquiry.

KIIT authorities have also tendered an apology for some of its staff making some disparaging comments and the distress caused to the students.

## Will take steps to stop floodlight gaffe: New OCA president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** Newly elected president of Odisha Cricket Association (OCA), Pankaj Lochan Mohanty, Sunday said that the association would take steps to stop repetition of incidents like floodlight malfunction during the India-England ODI at Barabati Stadium February 9. He said this in a reply to the show-cause no-

tice issued by the state government to OCA. The second ODI between the two countries was disrupted for around 30 minutes as floodlights in one of the towers were not functioning. Embarrassed over the issue, the state government on February 10 issued a show cause notice to the OCA seeking a reply within 10 days.

Speaking to mediapersons in Cuttack, the newly elect-



ed president of OCA, Pankaj Lochan Mohanty, said, "We have submitted our reply to the state government. To ensure that such an incident does not happen again during such important matches, we have decided to deploy two

generator sets to supply power to each floodlight." His predecessor Sanjay Behera had told reporters earlier that the backup generators could not reach the floodlight tower immediately because the players' bus was parked near it. "The driver was not in the bus and he was called up and asked to remove the vehicle after which the generators could reach the tower and the power was restored,"

Behera had said. Mohanty said that after that ODI, another important match was held till 1.30 am and there was no disturbance. "The BCCI has not sought any report in this matter," the new OCA chief said. Mohanty took charge as OCA president after he was elected unopposed for the post. Earlier, he had served as the president of the OCA from 2019 to 2022.

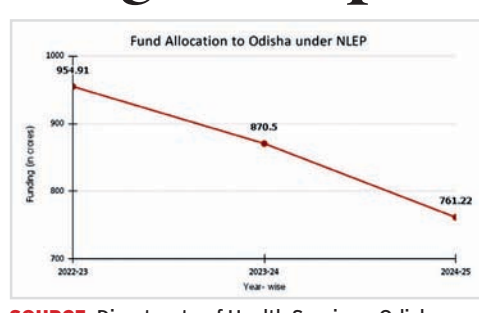
**Shaadi, Utsav ya Tyohar... Lijjat Papad Ho Harbar...**

Karram Kurram... Kurram Kurram... Karram...

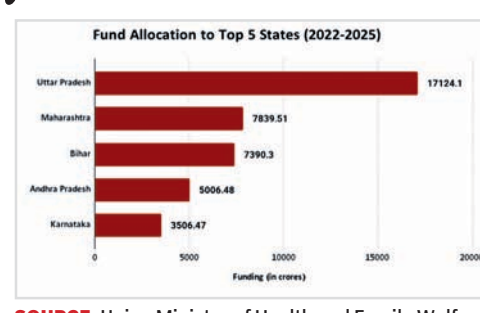
**Lijjat PAPAD**

Website : [www.lijjat.com](http://www.lijjat.com) Email : [enquiry@lijjat.com](mailto:enquiry@lijjat.com)

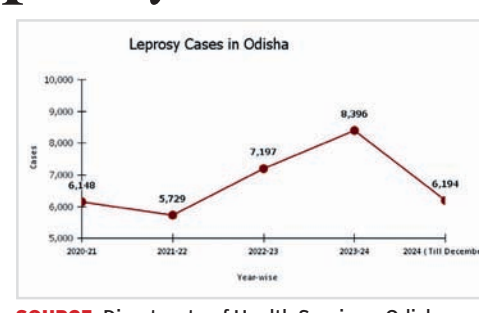
## Surge in leprosy cases due to apathy, fund cut



SOURCE: Directorate of Health Services, Odisha



SOURCE: Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare



SOURCE: Directorate of Health Services, Odisha

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** At a time when the Centre has set an ambitious target of eliminating leprosy from India - "Leprosy-Mukt Bharat" - by 2027, the disease is showing no sign of subsiding in Odisha which has recorded 8,396 cases in 2023-24 as compared to 6,148 in 2020-21. Making things worse, funding from the Union government has declined between 2022-23 and 2024-25, thereby making the fight against the chronic bacterial disease weaker.

According to reports, National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP), under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), has set an ambitious goal of achieving Leprosy-Mukt Bharat by 2027. However, Odisha has been reporting a prevalence rate (PR) of more than 1 case per 10,000 people for the last five years. In western Odisha, the crisis is even worse, with some districts consistently logging PR of 3 to 5 per 10,000.

Year-wise leprosy cases in Odisha reflect an alarming trend. While in 2020-21, the state reported 6,148 cases, the figures saw a minor dip to 5,729 in 2021-22. But it again surged to 7,197 in 2022-23, and 8,396 in 2023-24. Recorded cases till December 2024 stood at 6,194. Experts, however, are of the view that the entire-year's figures (2024-25) would surpass the records of previous years.

Apart from public health con-

cerns, Odisha's rising leprosy burden is an economic risk. The state's female labour force participation rate (LFPR) stands at 49.4 per cent—above the national average of 42 per cent. With women comprising 41.6 per cent of leprosy cases in 2023-24, the highest ever; this may potentially disrupt the economic activity in the state. Since the industries, services, and informal labour sectors are dependent on participation of female workers, the surge may impact the workforce productivity, the experts added.

Meanwhile, Odisha continues to be an exception in India's fight against leprosy. According to NLEP data, nearly 90 per cent of districts across 28 states have achieved zero-case status, but over two-third of Odisha districts are yet to achieve this.

**A family's battle with leprosy**

Sajani Mohanty, 67, an inmate at Ramakrushna Leprosy Colony near Kharvel Nagar here, narrated how the disease shattered the happiness of her family. Recalling her childhood days, Sajani said her parents abandoned her at Berhampur bus station upon discovering her condition when she was barely five. Later, a childless Brahmin couple embraced her, but this too was short-lived.

"One day, they asked me to clean a fish. But the bones got stuck in my hands, and I didn't even feel them because of nerve damage. That's when they realised I had leprosy. Soon after, I

was abandoned," she revealed, showing the bruises and burnt wounds, scattered all over her claw hands- an apparent sign of her encounters with hot objects, which she could not feel due to lack of nerve sensation.

She was then moved to a shelter home where she met her husband-another leprosy victim. Later, the couple shifted to Capital City, with fresh hopes for a new beginning.

Her husband Narayan Mohanty then worked as a daily wagger near Bhima Tangi area. While normalcy made a comeback in the couple's life, one fine day, Narayan complained of intense chest pain following a strenuous physical activity.

"We had no money for treatment, so we took him to a local community health centre. But within a few days, we ran out of cash. I was forced to beg on the streets to make ends meet for my family. He died a few months later," she said, while controlling her tears, and recalled how she and her children survived on torani (rice water) for several months.

Sajani's daughter, Sanghamitra Mohanty, mother of an eight-year-old, said she dropped out of graduation due to financial constraints. "I have enrolled myself in a distance learning programme, and I hope I will complete my graduation this time," she added.

**State apathy & drug crunch**

A senior district public health officer, requesting anonymity,

said the state administration has turned a blind eye to the rising leprosy cases. "I have raised concerns at several meetings about the acute shortage of Rifampicin, a drug for leprosy, but the health secretary is all words, and no action. Meetings end with assurances only," he said.

As per government norms, a chief district medical officer (CDMO) can issue urgent tenders for immediate procurement of medicines. However, the official claimed, there have been no serious bidders, leaving leprosy patients without access to life-saving drugs.

"If cases don't decline soon, I won't be surprised if the Union Government increases the PR benchmark to 1 case per 20,000 to make the crisis look less severe," he remarked.

**Fund cut amid rising cases**

YEARS	FUND UNDER NLEP
2022-23	₹954.91 crore
2023-24	₹870.5 crore
2024-25	₹761.22 crore

This is a matter of grave concern, that when the state is registering a rise in cases, fund from the Centre under NLEP has been declining. Such rapid reduction in funds has weakened Odisha's fight against leprosy, even when it remained in the list of top five states in India, with the highest number of leprosy cases.

**LIC's Bima Sakhi**

**MAHILA CAREER AGENT**

**LIC** **COME, GROW WITH LIC**

- Stipendary scheme for three years
- Minimum Educational Qualification: 10th Pass to any higher qualification
- Minimum Age Completed : 18 Years as on date of application
- Agency continues during the stipendary period and thereafter with commission earnings, as per the norms of the scheme
- LIC also presents its Agents with career opportunities, subject to conditions
- Stipendary scheme based on achievement of specified norms

**SWAWLAMI NARI, KHUSHALI HAMARI**

For application, contact nearest LIC branch office or visit [www.licindia.in](http://www.licindia.in)

Follow us : [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [s](#) LIC India Forever | IRDAI Regn No.: 512

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS / FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

# Foundation stone laid for MAS apparel park in state

The unit to focus on producing value-added apparel products and will cater to both local and international markets



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** MAS Holdings, a leading apparel manufacturer from South Asia Sunday said the company laid the foundation stone to commence construction for its apparel park at Bhuinpur in Khurda district.

The ground-breaking ceremony was attended by senior officials of the Odisha government and MAS Holdings.

In a statement, the company said it expected to commence apparel production in 2026 at

the first planned facility at the site.

The unit will focus on producing value-added apparel products and will cater to both local and international markets, the statement said.

Over the next several years, the company intends to develop this 60-acre land into a holistic apparel park, it said. MAS also has apparel parks in Sri Lanka.

The project aims to attract partners from the apparel industry to operate in the same location, creating an integrat-

ed supply chain for brands to leverage, offering speed and cost advantages, the company said.

As per the project proposal, over 10 years, along with its partners, MAS Holdings will work towards creating 10,000 employment opportunities and draw in investments of over USD 140 million cumulatively.

Chief executive officer of MAS India, Malik Ahamadeen, said, "We are happy to partner with the Odisha government as we take this important step in creating a strong apparel ecosystem in the region."

"While strengthening the textile sector, we look forward to creating employment opportunities and contributing to the region's wider economic growth and long-term development," he added.

Suren Fernando, group chief executive officer of MAS Holdings, said India has long been an integral part of the company's operations.

"With 25 years of experience operating in India, we recognise the immense potential of the country's manufacturing landscape, both for the global supply chain and the rapidly growing domestic retail sector," Fernando said.



DECKED UP: Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar, Sunday lights up ahead of Maha Shivaratri festival

PICT BIKASH NAYAK

# Day 2 draws huge crowd, high sales for SHGs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** The second day of Subhadra Shakti Mela 2025 witnessed an overwhelming turnout here at Janata Maidan, with visitors flocking to explore a diverse range of products and live demonstrations by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Producer Groups (PGs) from across the state.

A major attraction of the event was the live demonstration stalls, where artisans showcased traditional craftsmanship. Bampada Jaukandhei SHG from Balasore displayed the intricate process of making lac products, while Sri Jagannatha PG from Keonjhar demonstrated the art of Papier Mâché.

Other highlights included wooden craftwork by Maa Baibhava Laxmi SHG from Nuapada, golden grass product-making by Satyanasi PG

## SUBHADRA SHAKTI MELA



from Kendrapara, Sabai craft by Swayang Sahayak Dal from Mayurbhanj, and terracotta pottery by Kulibahal Terracotta PG.

With over 300 stalls, the mela offered a wide selection of products, including handicrafts, handlooms, organic produce, and home essentials. Traditional crafts such as

Dhokra art, Sabai grass products, and Kotpad textiles drew significant appreciation, while the handloom section, featuring Sambalpur, Kotpad, and Bomkai sarees, recorded brisk sales. Health-conscious visitors showed keen interest in millet-based snacks and organic spices.

The SHG-run food stalls re-

mained a crowd favorite, serving millet-based delicacies that highlighted Odisha's rich culinary heritage while promoting sustainable eating habits.

The economic impact of the mela was evident, with SHG entrepreneurs generating over ₹15 lakh in sales on the first day alone.

As the evening set in, cultural performances added to the festive atmosphere. Students from Satyabadi Sangeet Mahavidyalaya mesmerised audiences with an Odissi dance performance, celebrating Odisha's artistic heritage.

The day concluded with a soulful melody night featuring singers Sashank Sekhar and Lipsa Mohapatra, leaving the audience captivated.

With the excitement building, visitors are encouraged to explore the upcoming events at Subhadra Shakti Mela 2025, celebrating women's entrepreneurship and empowerment.

# Thunderstorms, gusty winds likely today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday predicted thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds (40-50 kmph) across the state February 24.

According to the IMD, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds, accompanied by hail, are expected to impact several districts, includ-

ing Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bhadrak, and Balasore.

The IMD has issued an orange warning for these areas, forecasting thunderstorm activity with winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph. The agency also issued a yellow warning for districts such as Angul, Dhenkanal, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Gajapati, and Ganjam, where gusty winds of

30-40 kmph are likely.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at a few places in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bhadrak, Balasore, and sporadically in Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, and Gajapati. Dry weather is likely to prevail in the remaining districts.

# Scientists urge free access to X's data

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 23:** Researchers are urging free access to social media platform X's data for academic analysis, which they say is crucial for studying political engagement trends.

A research team from Saarland University, Germany, had its work halted when X's owner, Elon Musk, blocked free access to the platform's data in June 2023. The team was examining whether Usha Padhee reviewed bus operations by the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) and Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) here recently.

Key points discussed in the meeting include strengthening regulatory frameworks to ensure strict compliance with safety standards, routine ve-

# Cong to replicate south Odisha winning strategy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** The Congress party has decided to replicate its strategy adopted to win 10 Assembly seats and one Lok Sabha constituency in southern Odisha in the remaining parts of the state, a senior party leader said here Sunday.

The party took this decision during the internal meeting held after the appointment of new AICC in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu and state Congress president Bhakta Charan Das.

The researchers called for legislation to restore academic access to social media data.

**The Congress party won 14 Assembly seats and Koraput Lok Sabha constituency in 2024 elections, of which 10 MLAs and the MP segment come under southern part of the state**

the state, which is treated as traditional Congress stronghold in Odisha.

Speaking to mediapersons, Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka said, "Our effort will be to elect more and more MLAs from different parts of Odisha during next assembly polls

like we have done from southern Odisha."

"I believe that Congress would strengthen at grassroots level under the leadership of the new state president and AICC in-charge and we will be in a very good position to form a government in Odisha in 2029," the MP asserted.

Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam claimed that his party would do even better in the southern Odisha region in the next assembly election and the model will be replicated in other regions of the state.

The party would raise different public issues inside and outside the House and fight for their rights, he said.

# 'One Day for Village' launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** In a bid to foster environmental awareness and strengthen community engagement, nature lover and social activist Trilochan Sahoo launched the 'One Day for Village' programme at Vivekananda Shiksha Kendra in Fakirpur, Keonjhar. The initiative encourages individuals, particularly students, to dedicate one day—be it annually, monthly, or weekly—to contribute to their villages' development.

Sahoo, the visionary behind the programme, explained its significance, urging people to reconnect with their roots and actively participate in initiatives that benefit their native places. He emphasised that villages form the backbone of the nation and that small contributions from individuals can bring meaningful change. The event saw the partici-

pation of several dignitaries. Principal Manikamala Rath welcomed the guests and introduced the objective of the programme. Renowned social reformer Saroj Kumar Sahu, the chief speaker, highlighted the crucial role of villages in societal development. He stressed that collective efforts in rural areas could lead to sustainable progress.

Presiding over the event, environmentalist Bailochana Sutar underscored the importance of afforestation and environmental conservation in today's world. He urged attendees to take responsibility for planting and protecting trees, which are essential for ecological balance and human survival.

Educationalist Purna Chandra Mallick spoke about the pivotal role of students in shaping society, emphasising the need for young minds to be actively involved in social causes.

# OPCC chief Das undergoes surgery



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** Newly appointed Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Bhakta Charan Das has undergone successful surgery for a hand injury sustained during the recent Sankalpa Padayatra. The Odisha Congress confirmed the news on social media, stating, "Senior leader and PCC President @BHAKTACHARANDAS Ji's surgery was successful. We wish him a speedy recovery."

The 66-year-old leader was injured in a crowd of enthusiastic party workers during the Padayatra, which started in Bhubaneswar and concluded in Puri, just before he officially took charge of the party office. The Sankalpa Padayatra aims to reconnect with former party members and strengthen the Congress at the grassroots level. Party workers and supporters have extended their best wishes for Das's quick recovery.

# Govt holds review meet on bus safety, efficiency

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** In a strategic move to enhance safety and efficiency of public transportation in the state, Commerce and Transport department principal secretary Usha Padhee reviewed bus operations by the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) and Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) here recently.

Key points discussed in the meeting include strengthening regulatory frameworks to ensure strict compliance with safety standards, routine ve-

hicle inspections, adherence to traffic norms and stringent monitoring of driver conduct.

Padhee also emphasised the need for continuous training programmes for drivers and staff to enhance their skills in safe driving practices, emergency response, and customer service including first-aid training.

She encouraged the integration of advanced technologies such as GPS tracking, real-time monitoring systems, and digital ticketing solutions to improve operational efficiency and passenger safety.

Padhee highlighted the im-



portance of a holistic approach, stating, "Ensuring the safety of passengers is our utmost priority. By focusing on enforcement, capacity building, and the adop-

tion of modern technology, we aim to provide safe, reliable, and efficient public transportation services in Odisha."

The review also explored

**AI and data analytics may optimise bus routes, while a mobile app, CCTV cameras, and speed monitors enhance security and efficiency**

opportunities for collaborative initiatives between OSRTC and CRUT to share best practices and optimise resource utilisation.

Padhee directed the officials to expedite the implementation of the recommended measures and

conduct periodic evaluations to assess their effectiveness.

Officials are also considering using AI and data analytics to optimise bus routes and reduce congestion. A mobile app that tracks buses and provides real-time updates is also under review, along with the introduction of CCTV cameras and speed limit monitors for added security.

The review meeting was attended by OSRTC CMD Diptesh Pattanaik, Transport Commissioner Amitav Thakur, CRUT MD N Thirumala Nayak, department senior officials and stakeholders.

**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.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	33.3°	31.4°
Min Temp	22.6°	21.5°
Humidity	87%	92%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
<b>FORECAST</b>		
Partly Cloudy Sky		

# Similipal tiger population likely to exceed 60 by 2030



At present, out of the 30 tigers in the state, 27 are found in Similipal, including 14 females, 13 males (and 12 cubs)

(and 12 cubs). The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has recognised Similipal as a crucial region for tiger breeding, and conservation efforts are accelerating. Recently, a melanistic tiger was spotted roaming in the Talabandh Range of the North Division of the tiger reserve. The big cat reportedly preyed on more than 10 cattle in four different locations, creating panic among people in nearby villages, including the Nedam area under the Sorishapal Panchayat.

Tiger census data from the NTCA shows a steady rise in numbers. In 2014, only four tigers were recorded in the reserve, including three females and one melanistic tiger. By 2018, the count increased to eight, and in 2022, it doubled to 16. The latest 2024 survey by the state government recorded 27 tigers. Forest officials said if the present trend continues, their numbers will reach 40 by 2026, and potentially 60-70 by 2030.

Dr Prakash Chand Gogineni, Regional Chief Wildlife Warden and Field Director STR, explained that the two tiger reserve projects (north

and south divisions) in the park cover a total of 1,200 square kilometres. "Each 100 sq km can accommodate about five tigers. Therefore, we estimate at least 60 tigers can be accommodated within the reserve," he said.

While the increase in tiger population has come as a positive development, it has also led to more instances of human-wildlife conflicts. In 2018, no incidents of cattle predation had been reported. But of late, over hundred of such cases have been reported.

Experts said that the tigers are expanding their territory between the core and buffer zones in search of suitable habitats and prey. Conservation measures such as maintaining a peaceful and undisturbed environment, ensuring sufficient prey availability, and preventing poaching are essential for sustaining this growth, they added.

To curb poaching activities, 150 AI-powered cameras have been installed in the park, and intensive patrolling initiated. Wildlife experts believe cattle predation a sign of a growing tiger population.

Bhanu Mitra Acharya, an independent director at the Odisha State Forest Development Corporation, noted that elderly tigers, unable to hunt efficiently, often target domestic animals. He cautioned against retaliatory poisoning by villagers, which had been a concern in the past.

The increase in Similipal's tiger population is a significant achievement for Odisha. However, ensuring long-term conservation requires continued vigilance, habitat protection, and proactive measures to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, said Acharya.



SAVE THE RIVER: Members of Rajiv Gandhi Panchayatiraj Sangathan take a pledge to save the Jeera river on Bargarh outskirts during a protest to save the natural water body from pollution and encroachment Sunday

# Plea to Prez over tribal status for Jhodias

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Feb 23: A delegation of Jhodia and Lanjia Saura communities met President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi recently, and submitted memorandum to her demanding allotment of tribal status to Jhodia community and inclusion of Lanjia Saura dialect in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

The delegation, led by Koraput MP Saptagiri Shankar Ulaka and Gunupur MLA Satyajit Gomango, submitted the memorandum to the President over fulfillment of their longstanding demands, Friday.

Ulaka said the President assured the delegation of taking steps to fulfill the demands. She also sought to know the initia-



tives made by the state governments at various points of time in this regard.

Earlier, a signature campaign was undertaken over the demands by Ulaka in which over 10,000 signatures were collected from Koraput, Kalahandi and Rayagada districts. More over, 5,000 signatures had also been collected from Tripura.

Notably, the Jhodia community in Koraput, Kalahandi,

and Rayagada districts previously enjoyed equal status like the Paraja tribe, and classified under the Scheduled Tribes until 1997. However, they were later excluded from the tribal list and reclassified as a general category. Their demand for re-allocation of tribal status has not been met with despite repeated appeals to the governor, chief minister, and both state and Central govern-

ments. Additionally, Saura language, spoken by more than 500,000 tribal people across Odisha and neighboring states, has a rich heritage and a unique script called Saura Sompeng. However, it has not been included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The petition highlights that the language has been denied official recognition, government support, and preservation initiatives.

During the submission of the petition, representatives including Ramprasad Gomanango, Ketan Sabar, Dinamasi Gomango, Oirumpi Sabar from the Saura community, and Neelakantha Jhodia, Sanducharan Majhi, and Dudheshwar Jhodia from the Jhodia community were present.

# Police hunt for man accused of raping minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, Feb 23: Police have launched a hunt for a man allegedly involved in the rape of a 16-year-old girl at Rajpur village under this police limits in Balasore district, officials said Sunday.

The police registered a case (105/25) late Friday after father of the girl filed a complaint alleging that a man, believed to be around 21 years old, forcibly took his daughter to a secluded place and raped her. The girl was on her way back home. Hearing the girl's cries, some locals rescued her while the accused fled the spot, he alleged.

He said in the complaint that the accused, who hails from Chakhari village under Shikharpur Panchayat, had been monitoring his daughter's movement for a long time by sitting at a garage close to his house in Rajpur village.

Meanwhile, sources said the accused and the garage mechanic are presently absconding. Moreover, two more persons are also suspected to be involved in the crime.

SDPO Dillip Kumar Sahu said that the police have registered a case and investigations are on to trace the suspect/s.

# Sundargarh student wins int'l award

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Feb 23: 13-year-old Swarit Upadhaya set another milestone in the international arena, recently.

The extraordinarily talented student from Riverstone International School in Sundargarh has brought glory to the district, and the state, by clinching the first position in 'education' category at the Global Kids Achiever Contest. The competition was organised by globally-acclaimed Dream Catcher International Group.

To celebrate Swarit's success, a special felicitation ceremony was held at the school premises Sunday. Joining the event as Chief Guest, Sundargarh MLA Jagesh Kumar Singh praised Swarit's accomplishments, calling him an inspiration to other students.

Assistant District Education Officer Sarangadhar Bariha remarked that Swarit's success would encourage students across the district to engage in extracurricular activities beyond textbooks.

Riverstone International School Director Roshan Patel stated that school life shapes students' personalities, and Swarit is a prime example of this transformation.

It is worth mentioning that in the international contest, Swarit



presented an innovative science project on circular bio-economy. He was pitched against more than 11,000 participants worldwide in the live competition.

Sources said, Swarit's outstanding project, precise responses to judges' questions, and compelling oratory skills earned him the prestigious accolade.

Swarit has excelled in several state and national-level speech and quiz competitions, and has earned a place in the India Book of Records. He is the only son of Digambar Upadhaya and Anupama Upadhaya from Jhurimal village. For the past five years, he has consistently demonstrated excellence in online and offline

quiz contests, speech competitions, essay writing contests, and innovation project presentations.

With a deep interest in forests, environment, and wildlife since childhood, Swarit secured first and third place in two different categories at a state-level quiz competition organized by the Odisha government's Forest and Environment Department early this year.

The program was hosted by Pratibha Naik from HelloKids, while Vedhyas Dhurua managed the stage. Swarit continues to receive congratulations from various fields for his outstanding achievement.

# 894 ineligible old age pensioners found in Jajpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jajpur, Feb 23: Altogether 894 ineligible people have fraudulently received benefits under an old-age pension scheme in Jajpur district and have been asked to return the money, officials said Sunday. These people have availed of the financial benefit under the old-age pension scheme by allegedly producing fake documents, they said.

The fraud came to the fore at Binjharpur block of Jajpur

district, following which the officials swung into action.

"We inquired about an allegation from the block that ineligible people were receiving old age pensions by producing fake documents. During the probe, we detected 894 fake beneficiaries in at least 29 gram panchayats, who were taking old age pension fraudulently by producing fake documents from September 2023 to September 2024. Hence, we have sent notices to them to refund all old-age pension money they

had received," Binjharpur BDO Hitanshu Samal said.

The BDO said officials visited the residences of the ineligible people and served notices to them. If they fail to refund the money that they had taken fraudulently, the administration will take legal action against them, he said.

Last year, the complaint was lodged with former BDO Dibyendu Kumar Das that an irregularity took place as several ineligible beneficiaries took old age pension fraudulently.

# 63-year-old man sentenced to 25 years in jail for raping teen



AGENCIES

Baripada, Feb 23: A 63-year-old man was sentenced to 25 years of rigorous imprisonment by a special POCSO court in Mayurbhanj district for raping a girl.

Delivering the verdict Saturday, special judge Pratima Patro also imposed a fine of ₹50,000 on

the convict.

The 14-year-old girl was raped several times by the convict in 2022, and he had even threatened to kill her. Special Public Prosecutor Abhina Kumar Pattnaik said. The accused was convicted on the basis of the statement of the victim, 18 witnesses and her medical report, he said.

The court also made a recommendation to the District Legal Services Authority to pay ₹7 lakh compensation to the survivor.

The rape case was registered at the Baisinga police station July 27, 2022.

# Preparation of 'aakhu badi' in final leg ahead of rush

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Feb 23: Sun-dried lentil dumpling, known locally as 'badi', holds a special place in traditional Odia cuisine, especially in western Odisha where it is known for its unique taste.

The region boasts of several varieties of badi, including aakhu (sugarcane) badi, kakharu (pumpkin) badi, bhaja (fried) badi, jhudunga (long beans) badi, phula (flower) badi, lia (fried paddy) badi, muga (green gram) badi, cutting badi, and china badam (groundnut) badi.

Among these, aakhu badi is particularly popular in Kala-



handi. Its preparation begins with cutting sugarcane into pieces, which are then peeled and mixed with fermented black gram dough. Once

shaped, it is left to dry under the sun for several days before it is ready for use. The demand for aakhu badi remains high in the district, where it is an inte-

gral part of the diet in almost every household.

Currently, homemakers in the rural as well as urban pockets of Kalahandi district are in the final stages of preparing aakhu badi, typically made between December and February, in anticipation of the usual high demand for the seasonal delicacy during the summer months ahead. Women play a key role in its production.

According to homemakers Gmani Hati and Mamata Tripathy from Dharmagarh and Bhawanipatna respectively, badi is more than just an everyday food item—it carries cultural significance too. Traditionally, badi plays a vital

role in weddings, as brides take packets of it to their in-laws' homes as part of their dowry. Folklore describes 'white badi' as a symbol of peace and prosperity. Many believe that including badi in the dowry brings harmony to the household and the newly-wed couple.

Furthermore, in Odia culture, a new mother is often given badi curry as her first meal after childbirth. It is believed that since the infant consumes nutrients from the mother's milk, avoiding oil and spices in her diet helps protect the newborn from potential digestive issues.

Badi remains an indispensable element of Odia cuisine,

carrying deep-rooted traditions that continue to thrive across generations.

Badi is also a preserved food. In earlier times, dried leafy vegetables were stored for months, and later soaked in water before being cooked again. Similarly, badi can be preserved for years. As a result, it serves as a substitute when vegetables become expensive or scarce.

It is widely believed that households that store badi are blessed with the presence of Goddess Lakshmi, said young researcher Manas Munda. While modern food systems have reduced the demand for badi, its legacy remains intact.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender No. 57-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25  
NAME OF WORK : EXECUTION OF OHE MODIFICATION WORK IN CONNECTION WITH CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED ROAD OVER BRIDGE (ROB) IN LIEU OF LEVEL CROSSING NO. 169 AT KM. 383/15-17 IN BETWEEN DHANMANDAL - BYREE STATION ON HOWRAH - VISAKHAPATNAM MAIN LINE UNDER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY.  
Advised Value (₹) : 9,03,720.75, EMD (₹) : 18,100.00, Period of Completion : 180 Days.  
Bidding Start Date : 26.02.2025, Date and Time of Closing of Tender : At 1300 Hrs. of 12.03.2025.  
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Complete details and Tender documents will be available at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>  
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Khurda Road

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
E-Tender Notice No. ST-SBP-TENDER-2025-06, Dt. 18.02.2025  
NAME OF WORK : OUTSOURCING OF MANPOWER FOR ASSISTING IN MAINTENANCE OF TELECOM GEARS OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION FOR A PERIOD OF 02 YEARS.  
Tender Value in (₹) : 2,79,78,308.50, EMD (₹) : 2,89,900.00, Cost of Tender Document (₹) : 11,800.00  
Date and time of closing of Tender: At 1100 Hrs. of 12.03.2025  
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : <https://www.ireps.gov.in>  
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.  
Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) / Sambalpur

FOCUS CLIMATE CHANGE

# MELTDOWN IN HIMALAYAS



**The Hindu Kush Himalayas – the largest store of ice after Antarctica and the Arctic – are warming three times faster than the global average. Development institutions must take urgent action to avert the disastrous effects of accelerating glacial melt, which would devastate local economies and fuel instability worldwide**

Lastly, the international community must advance the equitable use of shared glacial resources through cooperation and diplomacy. This would help defuse potential tensions and promote sustainable development, ensuring that the region's glaciers serve as a force for peace rather than conflict.

The Asian Development Bank (of which I am president) has taken steps to meet some of these goals. Together with the Green Climate Fund and country partners, ADB recently launched the Glaciers to Farms programme, which will mobilise \$3.5 billion to strengthen climate resilience in agriculture in Central and West Asia. Meanwhile, its Building Adaptation and Resilience in the Hindu Kush Himalayas-Bhutan and Nepal initiative is helping plan and design climate-resilient infrastructure and services. And ADB is also piloting new financing instruments, such as eco-compensation mechanisms, carbon markets and water trading, and sustainability-linked bonds.

When UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) launched the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation last month, WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said that it should serve as "a wake-up call to the world." The global community must do everything in its power – from building climate resilience to accelerating the green transition and promoting regional cooperation – to ensure a sustainable future for the billions of people who depend on glaciers and their related ecosystems. Failure to act now would have catastrophic consequences for us all.

*The writer is the President of the Asian Development Bank.*  
©PROJECT SYNDICATE

The United Nations has declared 2025 to be the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, making it a fitting moment to confront the stark reality that the world's ice sheets are melting. Climate change is accelerating this trend, particularly in the Hindu Kush Himalayas – a region known as the Earth's Third Pole because it contains the largest volume of ice outside of the Arctic and Antarctica.

This mountain range, which stretches across 3,500 kilometers and spans eight countries, from Afghanistan to Myanmar, is warming roughly three times faster than the global average. If temperatures rise by 3° Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century, up to 75 per cent of the region's glaciers will melt, reducing water availability, undermining food and energy security, and exacerbating biodiversity loss.

Glacial melt thus threatens irreversible damage to nearby communities and local economies. But it would also fuel instability around the globe by increasing migration, disrupting trade, and causing food prices to rise.

The 2021 flood disaster in Nepal's Melamchi River offers a glimpse of what is to come. Unusually heavy monsoon rains, coupled with excessive snowmelt, triggered a debris flow that wiped out thousands of hectares of agricultural land and destroyed critical infrastructure, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without access to water.

As the glaciers retreat, there will be too little water – a problem that is projected to afflict the Hindu Kush Himalayas by 2050. Dwindling river flows would make it more difficult to irrigate crops in an area that produces around one-third of the world's rice and one-quarter of its wheat. Water-supply

and sanitation systems will become difficult to maintain, adding to the one billion people who already lack access to basic sanitation in the region. Food insecurity will almost surely worsen as well, while communities and even entire industries will likely need to migrate in search of fresh water. Asia's poorest and most vulnerable populations will be hit the hardest.

The world must take urgent action to avert the disastrous effects of accelerating glacial melt in this region. That means deepening our knowledge by investing in multi-hazard risk assessment, because the extent of the damage will largely depend on whether global temperatures rise by 1.5°, 1.8°, 2°, or 3°C. We must also strengthen integrated river-basin management by enhancing data collection, facilitating knowledge sharing, optimising water manage-

ment, and coordinating among people and communities living upstream and downstream.

Ensuring that new and existing infrastructure is climate-resilient is essential for maintaining access to safe drinking water and energy security, as well as sanitation, irrigation, and transport systems. It is equally important to protect ecosystems and promote nature-based solutions such as afforestation, reforestation, wetland preservation, and flood-plain restoration.

Every component of this strategy requires more financing. Development institutions must continue to scale up investment in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, and to work together to recast this glacial region and its river basins as a global public good, especially given their importance for agricultural and industrial activities.



Masatsugu Asakawa

**AS THE GLACIERS RETREAT, THERE WILL BE TOO LITTLE WATER – A PROBLEM THAT IS PROJECTED TO AFFLICT THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAS BY 2050**

## Three Years On

24 February marks the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Kremlin's strategy for a swift victory has faltered badly, leading to a protracted conflict where neither side has achieved significant advances on the battlefield. The initial goals of Russia's invasion were to quickly capture Kyiv and seize control of the eastern half of Ukraine. However, Ukrainian forces successfully halted the Russian advance towards the capital, pushed them out of the north, and later executed effective counter offensives in the east and south. In 2023, Ukraine attempted additional counter offensives, but faced challenges due to equipment shortages and robust Russian defensive positions. By 2024, the conflict had evolved into a war of attrition.

Throughout the war, Ukraine has fiercely resisted its larger and more powerful neighbour, but the situation now seems to be deteriorating significantly. Kyiv's relationship with the United States, its primary military supporter since the onset of the war in 2022, has sharply declined in the wake of Donald Trump's return to the White House. At present, the chances of receiving additional US military assistance appear bleak, and the possibility of a disadvantageous peace agreement—one that could compel Ukraine to cede territory to Russia—is becoming more likely.

Tensions escalated recently when US officials resumed discussions with their Russian counterparts, leaving Ukraine out of initial talks aimed at establishing peace. This development further strained the already fraught relationship between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who last week accused the US president of "living in a Russian disinformation bubble." Hitting back, Trump described the Ukrainian president as a "dictator without elections" and warned him that he'd "better move fast" to negotiate an end to the war or risk not having a nation to lead.

Ukraine faces a potentially bleak outcome in the ongoing war, marked by significant loss of life and extensive damage estimated at up to \$500 billion over three arduous years. With a military force of approximately 900,000 personnel compared to Russia's 1.3 million, Ukraine has encountered challenges related to manpower. Since 2022, Ukraine has remained heavily reliant on Western weapons and munitions. The Trump administration has not pursued additional congressional funding for military support to Kyiv, raising concerns that the flow of US weapons may eventually halt, as occurred when funding expired in late 2023, adversely affecting Ukraine's efforts.

Meanwhile, European governments, concerned about their limited involvement in discussions between high-ranking US and Russian officials, are taking steps to bolster support for Zelenskyy while also working to maintain strong transatlantic relations. On 21 February, European Union Defence Commissioner Andrius Kubilius, the bloc's top defence official, announced that the EU intends to deliver a significant message of support to Ukraine through a new aid package, coinciding with the third anniversary of the war.

Russia seems to be relishing the discord between the US and Ukraine. While it has long portrayed the US as its primary adversary, the Kremlin has notably shifted its rhetoric and public stance towards Washington ever since Trump took office. Trump and his team are cosying up to Russian President Vladimir Putin in a bid to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine. In the process, they are also willing to forego the decades-old transatlantic alliance with Europe. What the Trump administration doesn't realise is that if Russia emerges victorious, whether through military success or a shoddy peace deal with Washington, it will become an even greater threat to Europe and ultimately, most likely, also hurt American interests. Trump, like many Americans, thinks the oceans on both sides protect mainland America. Poor in history, they forget Pearl Harbor.



He who chooses the infinite has been chosen by the infinite.  
SRI AUROBINDO

## WISDOM CORNER

**It's very important that we re-learn the art of resting and relaxing. Not only does it help prevent the onset of many illnesses that develop through chronic tension and worrying; it allows us to clear our minds, focus, and find creative solutions to problems.**

THICH NHAT HANH

**Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better take things as they come along with patience and equanimity.**

CARL JUNG

**One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.**

DALE CARNEGIE

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1848:** The anti-monarchical Revolutions of 1848 reached France, the one nation where the insurgency was successful.
- 1868:** US President Andrew Johnson impeached. On this day in 1868, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 126-47 to impeach President Andrew Johnson, whose lenient Reconstruction policies regarding the South after the Civil War angered Radical Republicans in Congress.
- 1920:** The German Nazi party is founded. Adolf Hitler became the party's leader in 1921.
- 1942:** The Voice of America made its first broadcast, in German, to counter the propaganda of Nazi leaders.
- 1955:** American businessman Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple Inc. and a charismatic pioneer of the personal computer era, was born.
- 1976:** The regime of Fidel Castro adopted the constitution of Cuba, which mandated the operation of only one political party—the Communist Party of Cuba.
- 1991:** US ground operations began in the Persian Gulf War, more than a month after an air war was launched against Iraq to free Iraqi-occupied Kuwait.

## LOL THE TOUGH RODENT

Three rats are sitting at the bar talking and bragging about their bravery and toughness. The first says, "I'm so tough, once I ate a whole bagful of rat poison!" The second one says, "Well I'm so

tough, once I was caught in a rat trap and I bit it apart!" Then the third rat gets up and says, "Later guys, I'm off home to harass the cat."



## SPECTRUM TRADE

# Decoupling from superpower economies

India must proactively safeguard its interests in the face of potential US tariff actions by pursuing a dual strategy—reducing economic dependence on the US while pushing for its exit from the WTO. This shift could position India as a leader in the Global South's decoupling from superpower economies, requiring a bold new vision and an aggressive expansion of trade networks.



Shivaji Sarkar

**IF TRUMP HAS HIS WAY, HE WOULD BULLDOZE THE DOMESTIC ECONOMIES OF MANY COUNTRIES FOR BOOSTING PROFITS OF US BUSINESSES**

The US is the 2nd largest goods exporter in the world, behind only China. The US goods exports to the world totaled \$2.1 trillion in 2022, up 17.5% (\$307.3 billion) from 2021. It's 8.5% of the world's total exports. It is the world's largest economy by nominal GDP and second largest by purchasing power parity (PPP). The US accounted for 26% of the global economy in 2023 in nominal terms, and about 15.5% in PPP terms.

In this scenario, keeping off the US may not be easy. It is extremely challenging for any developing nation to overlook the US even if President Donald Trump blatantly speaks of imposing of "reciprocal" tariff. It means unilaterally the US

would impose high tariff and there is no scope for protest. Diplomatically it may be interpreted as intimidation.

If Trump has his way, he would bulldoze the domestic economies of many countries for boosting profits of US businesses. There is time till April 1 when Trump's new tax proposal and reciprocity formula would be made public. India as a sovereign nation need not follow every diktat but it also has to mull. It can't take a step that might flare up.

Regarding trade deficits, the US consistently records deficits with several key trading partners. The largest deficit is with China, which was about \$279 billion in 2023. Mexico follows with a deficit of \$152 billion, primarily due to automotive parts and vehicles. Vietnam also emerged as a significant contributor to US trade deficit, with figures around \$104 billion.

In 2024, the US had a trade deficit of \$45.7 billion with India, which was a 5.4% increase from 2023. In 2024, the US exported \$41.8 billion worth of goods to India, which was a 3.4% increase from 2023. The US imported \$87.4 billion

worth of goods from India, which was a 4.5% increase from 2023. From April to December 2024, the US had a merchandise trade deficit of \$210.77 billion. In 2023, the US exported \$36.33 billion in services to India. This was a trade surplus of \$6.47 billion for the US, as India imported \$29.86 billion in services during the same year. In 2024, the US exported an estimated \$32.66 billion worth of services to India in December, and \$251.94 billion in the period from April to November.

The US exports to India include machinery, nuclear reactors, and boilers: \$3.29 billion, aircraft and spacecraft: \$3 billion, electrical and electronic equipment: \$2.21 billion, optical, photo, technical, and medical apparatus: \$1.99 billion.

The US has been pressuring India even during the Joe Biden regime. In November 2024, India's top imports from the US included petroleum, pearls, precious stones, coal, and electric machinery, mostly items that are available closer home at competitive prices. India is made to compromise to enhance US interests.

The US has a surplus of services, meaning it exports more services than it imports globally. The US trade-to-GDP ratio was 27% in 2022, which is lower than the global average of 63%. This means that compared to the average of all countries, the US has a smaller proportion of its economy tied to international trade. A lower trade-to-GDP ratio is interpreted as the US economy is more self-sufficient and relies less on imports and exports for its economic growth compared to other countries on average.

India must recalibrate its approach, positioning itself as an economy grappling with multiple challenges and seeking global support. At the same time, it should push for WTO reforms, particularly revisiting the special and differential treatment clause to ensure fairer global trade. India must reclaim its leadership among developing nations, exposing the widening gap between the global rich and poor. It should also boldly assert that the US, with its trade surpluses, has a greater responsibility to extend concessions rather than demand them.

INFA

## 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)



## Commitment & action

Sir, Tuberculosis (TB) remains one of the deadliest infectious diseases, claiming 1.25 million lives globally in 2023. With 10.8 million cases worldwide and half concentrated in just eight countries, including India, targeted efforts are crucial. India, aiming to eliminate TB by 2025, has launched initiatives like Nikshay Poshan Yojana and Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan to provide financial and nutritional aid. The 100-Day TB Elimination Campaign, launched in December 2024, focuses on early detection, community engagement, and treatment, accelerating efforts to combat TB effectively. The Global TB Report 2024 highlights India's progress, with treatment coverage rising to 89% and cases declining by 17.7% since 2015, supported by increased funding, AI-enabled diagnostics, and advanced drug regimens. Global efforts, led by WHO's "Find. Treat. All." initiative, emphasize collaboration for better diagnostics, vaccines, and treatments. India's strategy includes expanding decentralized TB care, strengthening nutrition support, leveraging digital health, and engaging the private sector to enhance screening and treatment. With focused efforts on awareness, early diagnosis, and healthcare strengthening, a TB-free future is achievable.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

## Ambitious India

Sir, That India is all set to express its interest in hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games is good news. Having hosted the games in 2010 in New Delhi, India is quite familiar with the nitty-gritty of conducting such huge events. Besides, apart from 1951, India has also staged the prestigious Asian Games in 1982. As far as the organisation of the games is concerned, despite massive criticism regarding the sluggish pace of work and accusations of corruption, the 2010 games was generally praised for a sporting extravaganza conducted well. Further, India is nursing a high ambition to host the 2036 Olympics and a letter of intent has already been sent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in this regard. If the Olympics is awarded to India, can the country pull it off? This remains the moot question.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

## Women entrepreneurs empower rural Bihar

### HOMEMAKERS TO CHANGEMAKERS



**Muzaffarpur (Bihar), Feb 23:** In the heart of rural Bihar, where groundwater depletion, extreme heat and erratic weather have caused havoc for farmers, a quiet transformation is underway.

A group of women, once confined to their homes despite their education, have emerged as agri-entrepreneurs, transforming not only their own lives but also helping their communities adapt to the growing threats of climate change.

Each agri-entrepreneur (AE) works with at least 150-200 small and marginal farmers, who are hit the most by these worsening climate challenges. They provide solutions to farmers on irrigation, provide climate-resilient seeds, help out with crop diversification, and act as a helpdesk for digital work—essentially a one-stop centre for all problems they may encounter.

Their remuneration is proportional to the range of services they provide farmers within a panchayat.

Soni Kumari from Hajipur, for instance, began her journey as an agri-entrepreneur last year by registering a farmer for a farmer card. She then prepared a detailed business proposal based on the farmer's profile—his social indicators, finances and cropping patterns.

She then entered the farmer's requirements into a Management Information System, creating a database of her customers to understand demand and create a business plan for her enterprise.

Once a homemaker, Soni who is a science graduate said she never imagined she would one day be at the forefront of promoting sustainable farming

practices.

"I opened a shop with a micro-financing loan, where I stock everything from climate-resilient seeds to organic manure and fertilisers. We even have a drone for irrigation," Soni said.

The drone technology Soni uses has been a game-changer for her, she added.

It sprays water evenly across fields, ensuring efficient water use and reducing labour costs. "We can irrigate one acre of land in just 5-7 minutes at ₹300-500. Without the drone, this task would take 3-4 hours and labour costs would have been much higher," she said.

But drones are a big investment for the community as the battery lasts only 10-15 minutes per charge and replacing a battery would cost around ₹ 90,000, she added.

Soni's journey is part of a larger movement supported by JEEVIKA, a state-level women's socioeconomic empowerment programme, that provided her with the initial training. So far, 5,178 AEs are providing services to more than 8 lakh farmers and covering 2,21,000 acres of land, according to official data.

They provide seeds, pesticides, fertilisers, farm equipment and offer services on nursery management, collective marketing and digital banking. The overall profit generated by the AEs to date is ₹1.54 crore, said Abhishek Kumar, Programme Officer for Women's Economic Empowerment at Project Concern International India. Kumar who works closely with them said they serve a key function in spreading awareness about climate-resilient farming techniques.

Chanchal Devi from Mushari, for instance, encourages farmers to grow water-efficient crops like palak, lal saag and cucumber.

"Given the water shortage, we need crops that thrive with less water. I also teach farmers how to grow multiple crops together, like planting creepers alongside soil-intensive plants to save water and resources," Chanchal said.

Sarita Kumari, a farmer who buys seeds and fertilisers from Chanchal's shop, explained that uncertain weather conditions have made farming a very unpredictable business so the presence of agri-entrepreneurs helps.

"We earlier had to travel to the nearest town to buy seeds and there also we would get traditional seeds, not the climate-resilient ones. So it definitely helps. We have not used the drone irrigation a lot but it is becoming popular here," the farmer said. Most agri-entrepreneurs source their seeds from Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University in Samastipur in Bihar.

By diversifying crops and adopting water-saving techniques, farmers can reduce their vulnerability to climate shocks, said Avantika, a member of Syngenta Foundation India, which works with the women entrepreneurs.

To help farmers cope with the economic impacts of climate change, the women are also promoting the planting of high-value cash crops, she said.

Crops such as capsicum, cauliflower, broccoli, and chillies are grown using high-yielding seeds, enabling farmers to fetch better prices in the market.

The use of polyhouses has also been encouraged, allowing farmers to grow crops in controlled environments and increase yields, she added.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

## BIHAR TO APPOINT 140 'PROTECTION OFFICERS'

The move aims to provide more effective protection of the rights of women, guaranteed under the Constitution, to victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, Feb 23:** The Bihar government has decided to appoint 140 full-time 'protection officers' (PO) across the state to support women affected by domestic violence more effectively.

The Social Welfare Department has decided to create a separate cadre under which sub-division, district and state-level protection officers will be appointed.

The decision has been taken in view of the rising number of domestic violence cases in the state. Speaking to PTI, Harjot Kaur Bamrah, additional chief secretary of the Social Welfare Department and chairman cum MD of Bihar Women and Child Development Corporation, said, "The department has decided to appoint full-time POs to effectively deal with cases of domestic violence."

"The process will start soon.

A separate cadre will be created for the purpose... More than 140 POs will be appointed across the state. Of them, 101 will be appointed at the sub-division level and 38 at the district level. A state-level PO will also be appointed," she added.

The decision has been taken as per the provisions of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, she said.

"The move aims to provide more effective protection of the rights of women, guaranteed under the Constitution, to victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto," Bamrah said. As per the Act, the PO will assist the magistrate in the discharge of his functions and the former will also be responsible to get the aggrieved person medically examined, if she has sustained bodily injuries and forward a copy of the medical report to the police station and the magistrate having jurisdiction in the area where the domestic violence is alleged to have been taken place, she said.

The PO will also ensure that

the order for monetary relief under Section 20 of Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is complied with and executed, in accordance with the procedure prescribed under the existing law, she added.

The state government has already taken several steps to ensure justice for women facing domestic violence through the enactment of the Dowry Prohibition Act, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, among others, Bamrah said, adding that different schemes also provide various kinds of services to women who face domestic violence.

"The Bihar government has also initiated the process of opening 11 additional 'one stop centres' (OSCs) in certain districts to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace more effectively. An approval letter for operationalisation and establishment of 11 additional OSCs in the state was recently received by the WCDC from the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (Sambal Division)," she said.

## Ambassadors of 61 countries to visit Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati/ Jorhat, Feb 23:** Over 60 heads of missions of different countries will be on a trip to Assam from Sunday during which they will visit the Kaziranga National Park, witness a mega Jhumur dance performance and attend a business summit in an endeavour by the state government to showcase its potential, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is leading the delegation of ambassadors for the trip during which the focus of the state government will be to highlight the peaceful atmosphere here so that the countries which have negative travel advisory against the state are convinced to withdraw it.

The delegation will then leave for Guwahati to witness a mega Jhumur performance by over 8,500 artists Monday evening and also participate in the two-day 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit' that will get underway at the state's largest city Tuesday

against Assam," Sarma said.

He added that Australia has recently withdrawn its advisory against travelling to Assam, except for the districts still under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

Sarma expressed gratitude to the Central government for this initiative of bringing the ambassadors to the state.

"This will increase tourist inflow drastically," he added.

The chief minister had earlier said that negative travel advisory by several countries is a major deterrent in attracting investors and tourists, with the state government in talks with Japan and Australia, among others, to get it withdrawn.

Meanwhile, elaborate arrangements have been made in Jorhat, Kaziranga and adjoining areas for the high-level visit, official sources said.

Gates of Kohora, Agorotoli, Bagori and Buraphar ranges of Kaziranga National Park, which the foreign delegates will visit, have been decorated, while elephants are being kept ready for safari inside the park.

The sources said the Kaziranga National Park will be closed for regular tourists Monday.



Artists perform during a rehearsal for 'Jhumoir Binandini', an attempt to set a world record for the largest participation in a Jhumoir dance event, ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, at Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium, Sarusajai, in Guwahati, Sunday

## Tripura's bamboo expansion drive for industrial use

Around 70 per cent of the country's requirement of agarbatti bamboo sticks is supplied by Tripura and the government is keen to bring more such industries in the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Agartala, Feb 23:** The Tripura government has taken up a five-year plan to expand the bamboo production area exclusively for industrial use by nearly 100 times to 45,000 hectares of land, a senior official said.

Around 70 per cent of the country's requirement of agarbatti bamboo sticks is supplied by Tripura and the government is keen to bring more such industries in the state, he said.

The northeastern state, which has an abundant bamboo resource, produces 21 species of bamboo.

"As of now, Tripura produces bamboo on 461.32 hectares exclusively for industrial use and we plan to increase that to 45,000 hectares in five years from 2025-26. Nine-thousand hectares will be added in each of these five years," Tripura Bamboo Mission (TBM)'s Ad-

ditional Mission Director Subhash Chandra Das told PTI.

The TBM has raised high-density bamboo plantation in 461.32 hectares from 2018-19 to 2024-25 exclusively for commercial purposes, he said.

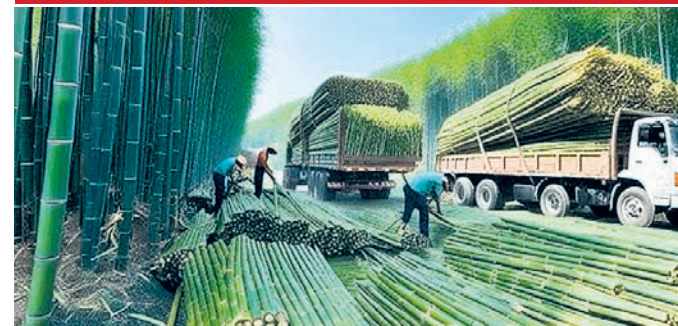
Tripura has 4.20 lakh hectares of bamboo-bearing areas, according to the Forest Survey of India 2023 report.

But, in a major section of those areas, the bamboo cover is either thin or its quality is not good enough to make them useful for industrial purposes, Das said.

The objective of this plan for massive plantation is to supply bamboo smoothly for commercial or industrial purposes, he said.

The official hoped that if the plan, Tripura Bamboo Plantation Development Scheme, is implemented properly, several challenges in the bamboo production sector, especially trans-

### FROM 461 TO 45K HECTARES



portation, will be removed.

"Transportation of bamboo from dense forests or hilly areas has emerged as a major challenge. If bamboo is grown on private land in relatively urban areas, we will not face any problem in bringing bamboo to factories," Das said.

Besides, there will be no need to get permission from the forest department before cutting bamboo produced on private land.

"Thus, this plan will help supply bamboo to the industry in a much easier way," the TBM official said. The ambitious plan will be implemented with convergence of MGNREGA funds by the various government agencies, he said, adding that growers would need to arrange for land only. Several government agencies such as the Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation, Tribal Welfare

Department, Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, Forest Department and the TBM will be engaged in the massive bamboo plantation programme.

Each of the agencies will be given an annual target of increasing the production area for five years, Das said.

He said that two big private firms are engaged at Bodhjungnagar bamboo park in West Tripura district, where they produce sticks for incense and tiles made of bamboo.

"Apart from the two, as many as 24 small-scale factories also produce incense sticks which have great demand in Bangalore, Andhra Pradesh, Guwahati and Kolkata," Das said.

The current requirement of bamboo in the northeastern state stands at about 2 lakh MT per annum, which is expected to rise to 4 lakh MT annually in the next two or three years.



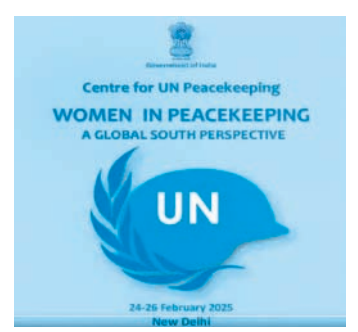


We don't want to create unnecessary euphoria among people, we want to be reasonable and rational

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER

INDIA TO HOST CONFERENCE ON WOMEN PEACEKEEPERS

India will host a two-day conference beginning Monday on women peacekeepers at UN missions to highlight their contributions. The conference will bring together women peacekeepers from 35 Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) from the Global South



of the day quote

I write this letter with a sense of deep anguish as the number of incidents of apprehensions of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy have risen alarmingly in the recent times

The lotus storm will continue until a developed India and a developed UP are formed. Neither Akhilesh, nor Rahul Gandhi - the people of the country now trust only Modi and BJP

All political parties should support NRC. Once BJP comes to power in the 2026 assembly polls, we will implement NRC in Bengal

SHORT TAKES

KITE launches online AI training

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education is launching an online training programme to help people use AI tools in their daily lives. The four-week course, called "AI Essentials," aims to make artificial intelligence easy to understand and use, an official release said here Sunday. Each batch will have dedicated mentors, with one mentor for every twenty participants, said the release.

UP: Man dies in police custody

Budaun: A 42-year-old died in police custody allegedly after consuming a poisonous substance here, police said Sunday. His family claimed that he was "harassed" by the police at the outpost. The victim was identified as Jagat Veer, they said. Akash, Veer's son, in his complaint, demanded action against Constable Abhishek Kumar who was posted at the time of the incident at a police outpost in Asafpur town under the Faizganj Behtha police station area, officials said.

Congress to hold AICC session in Ahmedabad

New Delhi: The Congress Sunday announced that it will hold its AICC session in Gujarat's Ahmedabad April 8 and 9 to deliberate on the challenges posed by the BJP's "anti-people" policies and its alleged attack on the Constitution, as well as on charting the party's future road map. The session will commence April 8 with an extended Congress Working Committee meeting.

Quake strikes HP's Mandi

Shimla: An earthquake of moderate intensity hit Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district at 8.42 am Sunday. Tremors were felt in parts of the district, though no loss of life or property was reported, officials said. According to the MeT office, the earthquake was of 3.7 magnitude, and the epicentre was located at 31.48 degrees latitude and 76.95 degrees longitude in the Mandi region.

Four killed in road accident

Chandigarh: Four youths were killed when their car ramed into a stationary truck in Haryana's Panchkula district Sunday, police said. The youths were returning from Himachal Pradesh, when they met with the accident on the highway near Pinjore in Panchkula.

Cong slams PM Modi, EAM for govt's silence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Amid the USAID funding row, the Congress Sunday accused the BJP of indulging in "anti-national work" by spreading "fake news from America" and asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also have to answer as to why the government is silent when US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk are "insulting" India repeatedly.

The BJP has rejected all such allegations of the Congress and called Rahul Gandhi a "traitor", accusing him of colluding with foreign forces in his bid to weaken India. Congress general secretary in-charge Jairam Ramesh said, "BJP is a procession of liars and illiterates. The news about USD 21 million, on which the BJP and their bootlickers were jumping on, turned out to be fake. The \$21 million in 2022 was not for 'voter turnout' in India, but for Bangladesh."

"Elon Musk made a fake claim, Trump got confused between Dhaka and Delhi, Amit Malviya spread the lie further, then the rest of BJP's bootlickers seized on it," he charged. Ever since the Trump administration's DOGE said February 16 that USAID has cancelled the \$21 million funding for "voting in India", the BJP has been making fabricated allegations against the Congress, Ramesh said in his post in Hindi on X.

"But now it is coming to light that this entire news is fake. When the money has not even reached India, then what would be the cancellation?" he said. The controversy is actually about two USAID grants on DOGE's list that were given



Ever since the Trump administration's DOGE said February 16 that USAID has cancelled the \$21 million funding for "voting in India", the BJP has been making fabricated allegations against the Congress, Ramesh said in his post in Hindi on X

through the Washington-based Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), the Congress leader said.

The CEPPS was supposed to receive a total of \$486 million from USAID, he said, adding that according to DOGE, the funds included \$22 million for Moldova and \$21 million for "voter turnout in India", he said. "The first fund USAID gave to CEPPS for Moldova was in 2016 with the ID AID-117LA1600001. But the USAID USD 21 million grant for India marked by DOGE is completely fake. Because it was for Bangladesh, not India," he claimed. And the reality is that of the \$ 21 million earmarked for Bangladesh, \$13.4 million has already been disbursed before the January 2024 elections, Ramesh said.

"Every federal grant specifies the country in which it is to be used. According to US federal

spending, there have been no USAID-funded CEPPS projects in India since 2008. The only ongoing \$21 million USAID grant to CEPPS, ID 72038822LA00001, was approved in July 2022 for Bangladesh's 'Amar Vote Amar' (My Vote Is Mine)," he pointed out.

"In November 2022, the purpose of the grant was changed to 'USAID's Nagorik Programme'. A USAID official in Dhaka also confirmed this on social media during his US visit in December 2024: 'I manage the \$21 million CEPPS/Nagorik project funded by USAID', Ramesh said.

"Now the BJP should just answer this: Why did the BJP spread fake news about India's democracy? Why did the BJP did anti-national work by spreading fake news from America? If BJP's accusing India's opposition party over fake news from America is not treason, then what is it?" he said.

Seven held in murder of whistleblower in KCR irrigation scam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Feb 23: Seven persons were arrested in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district of Telangana in connection with the murder of a man, who had filed a complaint against former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy and others alleging corruption in the Kaleshwaram irrigation project, police said Sunday.

Based on investigation so far, police said N Rajalingamurthy (50), was stabbed to death over a land dispute with the accused, February 19 when he was going on a bike in Jayashankar Bhupalpally town.

The Rajalingamurthy had a dispute with the accused over an acre of land and both sides approached a court. Superintendent of Police Kiran Khare told reporters.

Based on credible information, police apprehended seven accused February 22 evening and interrogated them.

EX-CM Atishi chosen as LoP in Delhi Assembly



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Former Delhi Chief Minister and MLA from Kalkaji constituency Atishi was chosen as the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly at a meeting of AAP MLAs here Sunday.

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal was also part of the meeting of the party's 22 MLAs. In a press conference, AAP's Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai said by consensus all AAP MLAs have chosen Atishi as the leader of the Opposition (LoP).

MLA from Burari, Sanjeev Jha, proposed Atishi's name as LoP and all MLAs supported the proposal, said Rai, who

The first session of the Delhi Assembly will begin February 24

In the three-day session, the ruling BJP government has said that pending CAG reports against the performance of the previous AAP government will be tabled in the House

is also the MLA from Babarpur. Speaking at the press conference, Atishi thanked the party chief Kejriwal and all the MLAs.

"AAP will show what a strong Opposition's role is in the House and will raise all issues with full force. AAP will ensure that BJP fulfils all its promise as the party in power. Specifically, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise to provide ₹2,500 to women of the city by March 8. We promise that we will make the Rekha Gupta-led BJP government fulfill this promise."

PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION ACT Preliminary inquiry not mandatory in every case, says SC

The court has said while a preliminary inquiry is desirable in certain categories of cases, including those lodged under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, it is not a mandatory pre-requisite for the registration of a criminal case



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: The Supreme Court has said conducting a preliminary inquiry is not mandatory in every case lodged under the Prevention of Corruption Act and it is not a vested right of the accused.

The court has said while a preliminary inquiry is desirable in certain categories of cases, including those lodged under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, it is not a mandatory pre-requisite for the registration of a criminal case.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Sandeep Mehta has said the purpose of a preliminary inquiry is not to verify the veracity of the information received, but merely to ascertain whether the said information revealed the commission of a cognisable offence. "The preliminary inquiry is not mandatory in every case under the PC Act," the bench said in its verdict delivered February 17.

"If a superior officer is in seisin of a source information report, which is both detailed and well-reasoned and such

that any reasonable person would be of the view that it prima facie discloses the commission of a cognisable offence, the preliminary inquiry may be avoided," it said.

The top court delivered its verdict on an appeal filed by the Karnataka government, challenging a March 2024 judgment of the state high court. The high court had quashed an FIR lodged by the Karnataka Lokayukta police station against a public servant for alleged offences under the PC Act.

The public servant was accused of acquiring assets that were disproportionate to his known sources of income. The apex court dealt with the issue of whether a preliminary inquiry was mandatory before directing registration of an FIR under the PC Act in the facts of the case or whether the source information report could be treated as a substitute for the preliminary inquiry.

Referring to previous apex court judgments, the bench said, "Applying these principles to the case at hand, it is perspicuous that conducting a preliminary inquiry is not sine qua non for registering a case against a public servant who is accused of corruption."



Passengers jostle to board an overcrowded train amid rush owing to the ongoing Prayagraj's 'Maha Kumbh Mela', at a railway station in Patna, Bihar

Prolonged phone use on toilet causing hemorrhoids: Docs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Prolonged mobile phone use while sitting on the toilet is contributing to a surge in hemorrhoids and anal fistulas, doctors have said.

The habit, coupled with a sedentary lifestyle and poor diet, is putting increased strain on the rectal area, leading to painful conditions that often require medical intervention, they added.

Dr Jignesh Gandhi -- a senior robotic and laparoscopic surgeon at Gleneagles Hospital in Mumbai -- highlighted the concern, linking it to a sedentary lifestyle and excessive phone use in toilets.

He was speaking at the 74th foundation day of ESIC Hospital in Okhla Saturday. Dr Ravi

Ranjan, a surgery specialist at the hospital, said it recorded more than 500 cases of hemorrhoids and fistulas in a year.

He pointed to poor lifestyle habits such as low water intake, excessive consumption of junk food and extended time on the toilet as key contributors. Marengo Asia Hospital surgeon Dr Birbal said, "Chronic constipation from poor diet and prolonged time spent sitting on the toilet create a vicious cycle."

"This puts undue stress on the rectal area, leading to painful inflammation, which can result in hemorrhoids and, in severe cases, anal fistulas," he added. The experts said the rising number of such cases was straining government hospitals.

They also highlighted the



potential of minimally invasive procedures such as radiofrequency ablation of hemorrhoids under local anaesthesia (Rafaelo) to ease the burden.

"The Rafaelo procedure, approved by the US Food and Drug Admin-

istration and widely used in the UK's National Health Service, offers quicker recovery, same-day discharge, and reduced waiting times compared to traditional surgical methods," said Ranjan.

However, despite being introduced in India about three to four years ago, awareness about radiofrequency treatments remains low among surgeons, he noted. In high-volume institutions such as ESIC and AIIMS, where patient backlogs extend for months due to limited operation

theatres, radiofrequency ablation can prove to be revolutionary, the doctors said.

Since the procedure can be performed in minor operation theatres or outpatient department settings under local anaesthesia, they suggested it could help treat 40-50 patients a day in both government and private hospitals.

Doctors are urging greater awareness and adoption of advanced treatments such as Rafaelo to improve patient care while alleviating pressure on India's healthcare system.

Gleneagles Hospital's Gandhi said, "With wider adoption of radiofrequency procedures, we can ensure faster and more effective relief for patients while easing the load on hospitals."

The experts said the rising number of such cases was straining government hospitals



# national



The Prime Minister has a vision of a developed India by 2047. With a long-term vision, the PM has also laid out his roadmap step by step in every budget

## PUNJAB POLICE BUSTS EXTORTION RACKET

An assistant sub-inspector of police was among two arrested in connection with an extortion racket busted by the Punjab Police. Surjit Singh, the assistant sub-inspector (ASI), was posted in Batala. He has been dismissed from service



### of the day quote

The Gujarat government has been developing a Buddhist circuit with the help of the Central government under the Swadarshan scheme. Tourist facilities have been developed at 12 such places under the scheme

I cannot ascertain the truth of this claim, but such comments tarnish the reputation of the Mahamandal

We are in talks with some private investors who are ready to create more skiing infrastructure in Gulmarg. Talks are on and if there is a good proposal which would create new infrastructure, we will work on it

## Women achievers to run PM's social media on Women's Day

New Delhi, Feb 23: Calling on people to celebrate and respect the indomitable spirit of women, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday that he will hand over his various social media accounts to women achievers from different walks of life to mark the International Women's Day March 8. In his monthly "Mann Ki Baat" address, Modi said these successful women will talk about their work and experience on his social media accounts. The Prime Minister had

handed over his social media accounts to seven leading women from different fields March 8, 2020 in a similar gesture. With followers in tens of millions on X, YouTube and Instagram, among other platforms, Modi is one of the most-followed global leaders on social media. The Prime Minister also renewed his appeal to people to take measures to deal with the growing problem of obesity, saying it is necessary for India to become a fit and healthy country. Citing research, he said one out of eight people is suffering

from obesity and their numbers have doubled in the last few years. What is more worrisome is that it has grown four-fold among children, he added. Modi asked people to cut down on their oil consumption by 10 per cent and said he will request 10 people to do so. Each of them can, in turn, pose a similar challenge to 10 more people, he said. The Prime Minister played audio messages from some noted personalities, including Olympic gold medallist Neeraj Chopra, to impress upon people to take measures to prevent obesity. In the radio broadcast, Modi also appealed to people to try "one day as a scientist" by visiting research laboratories or

planetariums to mark the National Science Day February 28. Modi asked students appearing in the board exams to be "happy and stress-free" and added that the new format of "Pariksha Pe Charcha" has drawn admiration from various quarters. Making a reference to the ongoing Champions Trophy, he said these days, there is an atmosphere of cricket everywhere. Over the last 10 years alone, around 460 satellites have been launched, including many satellites of other countries as well, he added.

Another important fact in recent years is that the participation of women is constantly on the rise among India's team of space scientists, Modi noted. Noting that March 8 is observed as the "International Women's Day", Modi said this is a special occasion to salute India's "Nari Shakti". Highlighting the contribution of Hansa Mehta, the Prime Minister said she had brought to the fore the contribution of women from all over the country, right from the making of the national flag to sacrificing their lives for its sake.

## Lankan Navy arrests 32 Indian fishermen



Colombo, Feb 23: Sri Lankan Navy said Sunday that it arrested 32 Indian fishermen and seized their five fishing boats for allegedly venturing into the territorial waters of the island nation.

In a statement, the Sri Lankan Navy said the arrests occurred during a special operation in the sea area north of Mannar in the wee hours of Sunday. "The Sri Lanka Navy seized 5 Indian fishing boats and apprehended 32 Indian fishermen while they were poaching in Sri Lankan waters," the statement said. The Navy continues to conduct regular patrols and operations in Sri Lankan waters to curb illegal fishing practices of foreign fishing boats, taking into account the impact of those practices on the livelihood of local fishermen, it said.

The arrested fishermen and their boats were brought to the Talaimannar Pier, where they will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Mannar for legal action. The Navy has so far this year arrested 131 Indian fishermen and seized 18 fishing boats for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters, the statement said. Earlier this month, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 10 Indian fishermen and seized their boat for allegedly venturing into the territorial waters of the island nation. In January, five Indian fishermen sustained injuries, including two seriously, in an incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy in the proximity of Delft Island, triggering a strong reaction by India. India said the use of force is not "acceptable" under any circumstances whatsoever.

In 2024, the island nation's Navy arrested 529 Indian fishermen for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters

## TELANGANA TUNNEL MISHAP

### Debris, muck affect rescue ops

Nagarkurnool (Telangana), Feb 23: Despite relentless efforts by the Indian Army, NDRF and other agencies, no breakthrough was achieved Sunday in the rescue operations to extricate eight persons who have remained trapped for over 30 hours inside a tunnel after a section of it collapsed in the SLBC project, with prayers on for their well-being.



Telangana Minister J Krishna Rao told reporters that the chances of survival under the circumstances are "not that good." "Muck has piled up too high inside the tunnel, making it impossible to walk through. They (rescuers) are using rubber tubes and wooden planks to navigate through it," Krishna Rao, who went inside the tunnel, told reporters. "We can't say. We are hopeful, but the kind of incident that took place was very serious and chances are we can not say. The chances of survival we can not predict. Chancer are not that good," he said when asked about the chances of survival of the trapped persons.

Videos released by the state government showed rescuers navigating through thick muck, tangled iron rods, and cement blocks. Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy said there were about 70 people working in the tunnel Saturday morning when a part of it collapsed. Most of them could escape and return using

efforts, with oxygen being continuously pumped inside and motors deployed for dewatering, Reddy further said. The teams that managed to wade up to the 13th kilometer, where the tunnel had collapsed, called out the names of the trapped individuals, but there was no response, sources said. The trapped persons have been identified as Manoj Kumar and Sri Niwas from Uttar Pradesh, Sunny Singh (J&K), Gurpreet Singh (Punjab) and Sandeep Sahu, Jegta Xess, Santosh Sahu and Anuj Sahu, all from Jharkhand.

Nagarkurnool District Collector B Santhosh, who is supervising the rescue operation, said four NDRF teams—one from Hyderabad and three from Vijayawada, comprising 138 members, 24 personnel of the army, personnel of SDRF, besides 23 members from SCCL along with equipment besides members of the infra firm are engaged in the rescue operation. "As of now, we don't have communication with them (those trapped)," the collector said Sunday afternoon.

## POST OF THE DAY

\*Trump said 21 Million USD went to India to elect someone else\* Media: That someone else must be congress. Why they took money from US. This is criminal. \*Trump changed his statement and said it went to 'friend Modi'\* Media: Let us now discuss Ind Vs Pak Match.

## SHORT TAKES

### FDA issues show cause notice to pharma firm

Palghar: Maharashtra's Food and Drug Administration has issued a show cause notice to a pharmaceutical company here for alleged illegal export of opioids, an official said Sunday. Following the Central government's directives Friday, a joint team of drug inspectors from the Centre and state government raided Aveo Pharmaceuticals, a Palghar-based company allegedly involved in exporting these drugs, the FDA stated in a release.

### Duo held for placing post on train tracks

Kollam (Kerala): The two accused, arrested for allegedly placing a telephone post across the railway tracks, attempted to endanger lives by sabotaging the train, police said Sunday. As per the FIR filed by Kundara police, the suspects placed a telephone post across the railway track between Kollam-Shenkotta route with the intention to cause loss of life by sabotaging the train passing through it. The accused, identified as Rajesh (33) from Perumpuzha and Arun (39) from Ilamballur were taken into custody Saturday and an evidence-gathering was carried out on the spot Sunday morning.

### Five killed in road accident in Gujarat

Surendranagar: Five tourists from West Bengal were killed and five others injured in a road accident in Gujarat's Surendranagar district Sunday, police said. The accident occurred on a national highway around 4.30 pm near Navi Morwad village in Limbdi taluka, said JN Gamarra, sub-inspector of Chuda police station. A group of tourists from Bengal were travelling in a tempo traveller when the vehicle crashed into a dumper, he said.



Tourists enjoy shikara ride on Dal Lake with the snow-covered Zabarwan mountains in the backdrop, after recent snowfall in the upper reaches, on a sunny winter day, in Srinagar

## CANCER DAYCARE CENTRES Govt reviewing infrastructure of district hospitals

The estimated expenditure for setting up these centres will be ₹3,200 crore, Union health ministry officials have told PTI

New Delhi, Feb 23: The government has started a survey to identify gaps and review the infrastructure in all district hospitals in order to implement the budget announcement of setting up daycare cancer centres in these health facilities over the next three years. The estimated expenditure for setting up these centres will be ₹3,200 crore, Union health ministry officials have told PTI. In her budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will facilitate setting up daycare cancer centres in all district hospitals over the next three years and 200 of these will be established

in 2025-26. Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday laid the foundation stone for the Shree Bageshwar Medical Sciences and Research Institute, which will include a cancer hospital, at Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh. After the foundation stone-laying ceremony, Modi said daycare cancer centres will be opened in all districts of the country in the next three years. He pointed to the budgetary announcements aimed at fighting cancer and the decision to make cancer medicines cheaper. "This (daycare cancer centres) will lead to an increase in access to quality cancer care for

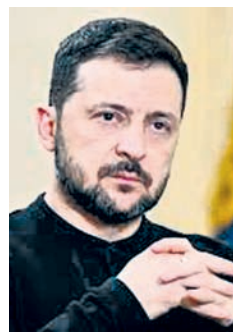


more people, especially in rural areas. Also, this will reduce the burden on the tertiary-care centres, allowing them to focus on more complex cases, by offering such services at the district level," an official said. The official said these centres will have four to six beds and focus on providing chemotherapy services and conducting cancer prevention and awareness programmes. "We have started conducting a gap analysis and reviewing the infrastructure of all district hospitals for setting up these cancer centres. As part of the exercise, we will also

assess the cancer load in these district hospitals," the official added. As part of the government's ongoing efforts for cancer care, over the last few years, more than ₹3,000 crore have been approved for the period from 2014-15 to 2025-26 for 19 state cancer institutes (SCIs) and 20 tertiary cancer care centres (TCCCs). Also, cancer treatment facilities have been approved in all the 22 new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences. Since the inception of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), approximately 68.43 lakh hospital admissions amounting to ₹13,160.75 crore have been authorised for can-

cer-related packages under the scheme, Health Minister J P Nadda said recently. At 217 AMRIT pharmacies, 289 oncology drugs are given at a significant discount of up to 50 per cent of market rates. Also, under the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, affordable anti-cancer and oncology medicines are given. The government has introduced screening for individuals aged 30 years and above under the National Health Mission (NHM) at ayushman arogya mandirs and more than 26 crore people have been screened for oral cancer, 14 crore for breast cancer and nine crore for cervical cancer at these facilities.

# international



If to achieve peace, you really need me to give up my post, I'm ready. I can trade it for NATO

## PROVE YOUR WORTH IN 48 HOURS: MUSK

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers have little more than 48 hours to explain what they accomplished over the last week as part of billionaire Elon Musk's crusade to slash what he describes as "waste everywhere" in the federal government.



### of the day quote

Los Angeles is one of the most economically productive places on the globe, but it can only rebound and flourish with support from the federal government as it recovers from this unprecedented disaster



I lost the battle and not the war. I must reach out to everyone including the opposition. There will be a government of national unity



But after everything that they have suffered, after everything that they have fought for, there could be no discussion about Ukraine without Ukraine, and the people of Ukraine must have a long-term secure future



# Trump attacks USAID again

### US PRESIDENT CLAIMS USD 18 MN GIVEN TO INDIA TO HELP WITH ELECTIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 23: US President Donald Trump has claimed that the Biden administration allocated \$18 million in funding to India to help with its elections, arguing that the country doesn't need this money.

His remarks during a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) Saturday after he repeatedly attacked the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for allocating \$21 million in funding to India for "voter turnout".

In his speech, Trump also accused India of taking advantage of the US.

"18 million dollars for helping India with its elections. Why the hell? Why don't we just go to old paper ballots, and let them help us with their elections, right? Voter ID. Wouldn't that be nice? We're giving money to India for elections. They don't need money," he said.

"They take advantage of us pretty good. One of the highest tariff nations in the world... We have a 200 per cent (tariffs) there and then we're giving them a lot of money to help them with their election,"



Trump said. Trump also criticised the USAID for giving \$29 million to Bangladesh.

"\$29 million goes to strengthen the political landscape and help them out so that they can vote for a radical left communist in Bangladesh," he said, without naming anyone.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that USAID under the previous administration led by Joe Biden allocated \$21 million in funding to India for "voter turnout", sparking a row in the country over the assistance.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Saturday said the information put out by the Trump administration people is "concerning" and that the

government is looking into it. During an interaction at an event in New Delhi, he also said the USAID was allowed in India "in good faith, to do good faith activities", and suggestions are being made out of America that "there are activities which are in bad faith".

"So, it surely warrants a look. And, if there is something to it, I think the country should know who are the people involved in the bad faith activities," the external affairs minister said.

The Congress party on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "talk to his friend" and strongly refute the allegation.

## Trump defends mass deportations

US President Donald Trump has defended the mass deportation of undocumented foreign nationals, saying his administration draining the swamp by sending home fraudsters, cheaters, globalists and deep state bureaucrats. Trump has made the mass deportation of undocumented migrants a key policy. Addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) outside Washington Saturday, he said, "The fraudsters, liars, cheaters, globalists, and deep state bureaucrats are being sent packing." "Illegal alien criminals are being sent home. We're draining the swamp and restoring government by the people," he said. As of 2022, unauthorised immigrants represented 3.3 per cent of the total US population and 23 per cent of the foreign-born population, according to Pew Research Centre. US President Donald Trump has moved to overhaul parts of the US immigration system since returning to office and promised "mass deportations" and arrests.

# Germany's Merz claims victory



REUTERS

Berlin, Feb 23: Germany's Opposition conservatives won the national election Sunday, putting leader Friedrich Merz on track to be the next chancellor while the far-right Alternative for Germany came in second, its best ever result, exit polls showed.

Following a campaign roiled by a series of violent attacks, and interventions by US President Donald Trump's administration, the conservative CDU/CSU bloc won 28.5% of the vote, followed by the AfD with 20%, an exit poll published by ZDF public broadcaster showed.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD) tumbled to their worst result since World War Two, with 16.5% of the vote share, according to the ZDF exit poll.

The Greens were on 12% while the FDP hovered around the 5% threshold to enter parliament. A late campaign surge by the far left Die Linke party gave it 9% of the vote while breakaway leftist party BSW led by Sahra Wagenknecht squeezed in on 5%.

The results set the stage for protracted coalition talks and likely mean a three-way coalition made up of one or two of the three same parties that were part of Scholz's unpopular alliance that collapsed in November.

Merz, 69, has no previous

government experience but has promised to provide greater leadership than Scholz and to liaise more with key allies, restoring Germany to the heart of Europe.

A brash economic liberal who has shifted the conservatives to the right, he is considered the antithesis of former conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel, who led Germany for 16 years.

Short of a majority in an increasingly fragmented political landscape, however, his conservatives will have to sound out partners to form a coalition.

Those negotiations are certain to be tricky after a campaign which exposed sharp divisions over migration and how to deal with the AfD in a country where far-right politics carry a particularly strong stigma due to its Nazi past.

That could leave Scholz in a caretaker role for months, delaying urgently needed policies to revive Europe's largest economy after two consecutive years of contraction and as companies struggle against global rivals.

It would also create a leadership vacuum in the heart of Europe even as it deals with a host of challenges including US President Donald Trump threatening a trade war and attempting to fast-track a ceasefire deal for Ukraine without European involvement.

EXIT POLLS SHOW OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVES WIN GERMAN ELECTION  
CONSERVATIVE CHIEF FRIEDRICH MERZ ON TRACK TO BECOME CHANCELLOR  
FAR-RIGHT AfD SCORES HISTORIC RESULT  
COALITION TALKS COULD LAST MONTHS LEAVING VACUUM AT HEART OF EU

## SHORT TAKES

### Israel expands West Bank offensive

Jenin (West Bank): Israel's defence minister said Sunday troops will remain "for the coming year" in parts of the occupied West Bank where they have launched an offensive and will prevent tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians from returning, as Israel deepens its crackdown on the Palestinian territory. Israel launched the broad offensive in the northern West Bank January 21 — two days after the current ceasefire in Gaza took hold — and expanded it to nearby areas, saying it is determined to stamp out militancy amid a rise in attacks. Palestinians view such raids as part of an effort to cement Israeli control over the territory, where 3 million Palestinians live under military rule.

### France knife attack: 4 people detained

Paris: Four people were in custody Sunday after a deadly stabbing in eastern France that authorities linked to Islamic extremism, according to the national anti-terrorism prosecutor's office. A Portuguese man was killed in the Saturday attack in the city of Mulhouse, near the border with Germany. Seven police officers were wounded, including a parking control agent hospitalized with grave injuries, the prosecutor's office said. Those detained include the suspected assailant, a 37-year-old Algerian man identified by prosecutors as Brahim A. The interior minister described him as an Islamic extremist with a schizophrenic profile. Two of the suspect's family members and a person who lodged him were also detained, the prosecutor's office said.

### New York-Delhi flight diverted to Rome

New York: An American Airlines flight from New York to New Delhi was diverted to Rome after the crew reported a "security issue", the Federal Aviation Administration said. "American Airlines Flight 292 landed safely at Leonardo da Vinci International Airport in Rome around 5:30 pm local time Sunday, February 23, after the crew reported a security issue," the FAA said in a statement to PTI. Flight AA292 departed from John F Kennedy International Airport in New York and was travelling to Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, India, it said. In a statement, the airlines said, "Safety and security are our top priorities and we thank our customers for their understanding."

## Pope Francis in critical condition but alert

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, Feb 23: Pope Francis was conscious but still receiving high flows of supplemental oxygen Sunday following a respiratory crisis and blood transfusions, as he remains in critical condition with a complex lung infection, the Vatican said.

"The night passed quietly, the pope rested," Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni said in an early statement.

Further clinical tests were being performed on the 88-year-old pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, and a more detailed medical update was expected later Sunday.

Francis suffered a prolonged asthmatic respiratory crisis Saturday that required "high flows" of oxygen to help him breathe through a nasal tube. He also received blood transfusions after tests showed low counts of platelets, which are needed for clotting, the Vatican said.

Doctors said Saturday his prognosis was "reserved."

Doctors have said Francis' condition is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and pre-existing lung disease. His condition has revived speculation about what might happen if he becomes unconscious or otherwise incapacitated, and whether he might resign.



Mourners hold pictures of Lebanon's former Hezbollah leaders, Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine, as they gather along a highway to attend their funeral procession in Beirut, Lebanon, Sunday

# ITALIAN PM MELONI SLAMS LEFT'S DOUBLE STANDARDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 23: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has slammed the Left's "double standards" in perceiving conservatives globally, saying when leaders like herself, US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi collaborate they are called a "threat to democracy" while leftist leaders are praised for similar alliances.

Meloni's remarks came as she addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington via video link from Rome.

During the address, Meloni praised Trump and said the Left is nervous about Trump's victory.

"Their irritation has turned into hysteria, not only because conservatives are winning, but because conservatives are now collaborating globally."

"When Bill Clinton (former US president) and Tony Blair (former British prime minister) created the global leftist liberal network in the 90s, they were called statesmen."

"Today, when Trump, Maloni, (President of Argentina Javier) Milei or maybe Modi talk, they are called a threat to democracy. This is the last double standard, but we are used to it, and the good news is people no longer believe in their lies, despite all the mud they throw at us. Citizens keep voting for us," said Meloni.



She said people vote for them as "we defend freedom, we love our nations, we want secure borders, we preserve business-

Today, when Trump, Maloni, (President of Argentina Javier) Milei or maybe Modi talk, they are called a threat to democracy. This is the last double standard, but we are used to it, and the good news is people no longer believe in their lies, despite all the mud they throw at us. Citizens keep voting for us

GIORGIA MELONI | PRIME MINISTER, ITALY

remain close under Trump, despite soaring tensions between the allies including over Ukraine.

Ties between Europe and the United States have been strained in the first weeks of Trump's second term after the US leader reached out to Russia and warned of a shift away from Europe, raising fears of Trump's commitment to the NATO alliance.

"Our adversaries hope that President Trump will move away from us (Europe)," Meloni said.

But, "knowing him as a strong and effective leader I bet that those who hope for divisions will be proven wrong," she said.

## NO PASSENGERS, NO PLANES, NO BENEFITS

Located in the coastal city of Gwadar and completed in October 2024, the airport is a stark contrast to the impoverished, restive southwestern Balochistan province around it

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gwadar (Pakistan), Feb 23: With no passengers and no planes, Pakistan's newest and most expensive airport is a bit of a mystery. Entirely financed by China to the tune of \$240 million, it's anyone's guess when New Gwadar International Airport will open for business.

Located in the coastal city of Gwadar and completed in October 2024, the airport is a stark

contrast to the impoverished, restive southwestern Balochistan province around it.

For the past decade, China has poured money into Balochistan and Gwadar as part of a multibillion dollar project that connects its western Xinjiang province with the Arabian Sea, called the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor or CPEC.

Authorities have hailed it as transformational but there's scant evidence of change in Gwadar. The city isn't connected to the national grid — electricity comes from neighboring Iran or solar panels — and there isn't enough clean water.

An airport with a 400,000 passenger capacity isn't a priority for the city's 90,000 people.

"This airport is not for Pakistan or Gwadar," said Azeem Khalid, an international relations expert who specializes in



Pakistan-China ties. "It is for China, so they can have secure access for their citizens to Gwadar and Balochistan."

Caught between militants and the military

CPEC has catalysed a decades-long insurgency in resource-rich and strategically located Balochistan. Separatists, aggrieved by what they say is state exploitation at the expense of locals, are fighting

for independence — targeting both Pakistani troops and Chinese workers in the province and elsewhere.

Members of Pakistan's ethnic Baloch minority say they face discrimination by the government and are denied opportunities available elsewhere in the country, charges the government denies.

Pakistan, keen to protect China's investments, has stepped

up its military footprint in Gwadar to combat dissent.

The city is a jumble of checkpoints, barbed wire, troops, barricades, and watchtowers. Roads close at any given time, several days a week, to permit the safe passage of Chinese workers and Pakistani VIPs.

Intelligence officers monitor journalists visiting Gwadar. The city's fish market is deemed too sensitive for coverage.

Many local residents are frazzled. "Nobody used to ask where we are going, what we are doing, and what is your name," said 76-year-old Gwadar native Khuda Bakhsh Hashim. "We used to enjoy all-night picnics in the mountains or rural areas."

"We are asked to prove our identity, who we are, where we have come from," he added. "We are residents. Those who

ask should identify themselves as to who they are."

People in Gwadar see few benefits from China's presence. Gwadar is humble but charming, the food excellent and the locals chatty and welcoming with strangers. It gets busy during public holidays, especially the beaches.

Still, there is a perception that it's dangerous or difficult to visit — only one commercial route operates out of Gwadar's domestic airport, three times a week to Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, located at the other end of Pakistan's Arabian Sea coastline.

There are no direct flights to Balochistan's provincial capital of Quetta, hundreds of miles inland, or the national capital of Islamabad, even further north. A scenic coastal highway has few facilities.

# Business



Food inflation is slightly easing... The entire tax breaks that have been given to the middle class (in Budget) will definitely improve sentiment  
SAUGATA GUPTA | MARICO MD & CEO

## INDIA'S COAL IMPORTS REMAINS FLAT

India's coal imports remained flat at 201.30 million tonnes (MT) in the April-December period of the ongoing financial year. The country's coal import was 201.52 MT in the year-ago period, according to the data compiled by mjunction services, a leading name in the e-auction space. Coal import in December declined to 19.28 MT over 23.35 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal year.



## of the day quote

We welcome Tesla and also all the other global companies who want to invest and manufacture in India  
PIYUSH GOYAL | UNION COMMERCE MINISTER

Am I seeing a slowdown in demand. The answer is 'No'. Because we have seen ₹500 crore plus sales in our new housing project launches in five different cities (during the December quarter) across North, South, West and East India. That to me is pretty indicative of a very strong housing market  
PIROISHA GODREJ | EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF GODREJ PROPERTIES

We are in a planning phase, but year after, we are going to look at certain significant greenfield expansions... We have the scope of investing heavily, but we are not blindly going out...  
SAMIR JOSHIPURA | TRIDENT GROUP CEO

# FPIs withdraw ₹23,710cr in Feb

### Total outflow at ₹1 lakh crore in 2025 amid rising global trade tensions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Foreign investors have pulled out over ₹23,710 crore from Indian equity markets so far this month, pushing total outflows past ₹1 lakh crore in 2025 amid rising global trade tensions. Going forward, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, believes that revival of FPI investment in India will happen when economic growth and corporate earnings revive. Indications of that are likely to happen in two to three months. According to the data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth ₹23,710 crore from Indian equities so far this month (till February 21). This came following a net outflow of ₹78,027 crore in January. With these, the total outflow by FPIs has reached ₹1,01,737 crore in 2025 so far, data with the depositories showed.



This massive selling has resulted in the Nifty yielding negative returns of 4 per cent year-to-date. Market concerns heightened following reports that US President Donald Trump was considering imposing new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, along with reciprocal tariffs on several countries, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director-Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. These developments reignited fears of a potential global

trade war, prompting FPIs to re-evaluate their exposure to emerging markets, including India, he added. On the domestic front, lacklustre corporate earnings and persistent depreciation of the Indian rupee, which breached multi-year lows, further diminished the appeal of Indian assets, Srivastava said. After Trump's victory in US presidential elections, the US market has been attracting huge capital inflows from the rest of the world. But recently, China has emerged as a major

# Mcap of most valued firms erodes ₹1.65L-cr



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms eroded ₹1,65,784.9 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) taking the biggest hit, in line with bearish trends in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 628.15 points, or 0.82 per cent, while the Nifty went lower 133.35 points, or 0.58 per cent. The market valuation of TCS tanked ₹53,185.89 crore to ₹13,69,717.48 crore. Bharti Airtel's market capitalisation (mcap) dropped ₹44,407.77 crore to ₹9,34,223.77 crore. The valuation of ICICI Bank tumbled ₹18,235.45 crore

to ₹8,70,579.68 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever plunged ₹17,962.62 crore to ₹5,26,684.38 crore. Infosys faced an erosion of ₹17,086.61 crore to ₹7,53,700.15 crore from its market valuation. The mcap of ITC eroded ₹11,949.42 crore to ₹5,01,750.43 crore and that of HDFC Bank diminished ₹2,555.53 crore to ₹12,94,152.82 crore. State Bank of India's valuation declined ₹401.61 crore to ₹6,43,955.96 crore. However, the mcap of Reliance Industries jumped ₹14,547.3 crore to ₹16,61,369.42 crore. Bajaj Finance added ₹384.33 crore to ₹5,20,466.75 crore in its mcap.

# Markets to track news flow on tariffs this week: Analysts



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Global trends, trading activity of foreign investors and news flow on tariffs are expected to influence movement in the equity market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Equity markets would remain closed Wednesday for 'Mahashivratri'. "This week, we expect Nifty to remain in consolidation mode; tracking the mixed global market cues, US trade policy announcements and geopolitical developments with regards to the Russia-Ukraine war," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. Movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend would also dictate market trends this week. "Investors are keeping a close eye on upcoming pivotal indicators, such as the US Core PCE Price Index and India's GDP growth rate. The market's mood remains cautious,

with pessimistic sentiments likely to linger until there is a marked improvement in corporate earnings and a conducive environment with easy global liquidity and stabilised currency," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 628.15 points, or 0.82 per cent, and the NSE Nifty went lower by 133.35 points, or 0.58 per cent. "Reciprocal tariff concerns continued to dominate the global and the Indian equity markets," Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research, Kotak Securities, said. Chouhan added that news flow on tariffs is expected to influence equity markets in the near term. "Market sentiment was significantly impacted by US President Donald Trump's announcement of reciprocal tariffs on key trading partners. Additionally, corporate earnings remained under pressure," Puneet Singhania, Director, Master Trust Group, said.

# Coal India and France's EDF to form renewables JV

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 23: India's state-run Coal India will establish a joint venture with an arm of France's EDF to build renewable power plants in South Asian countries, it said Sunday. The joint venture between Coal India and EDF India, will set up pumped-storage hydropower projects and other renewable energy projects in India and neighbouring countries, Coal India said in a stock exchange announcement. The two companies have signed a non-binding shareholders agreement to form the joint venture, it said. EDF also signed a joint venture agreement with state-run Indian power company NTPC to set up hydropower projects and explore opportunities in power distribution, an NTPC statement said. The 50-50 joint venture will set up projects within India and neighbouring countries, the statement said. This JV company will undertake such projects on its own or may create JV and subsidiaries for undertaking such projects within India and neighbouring countries, the statement said. The JV will also develop hydro projects bundled with other Renewable Energy projects and explore opportunities in the distribution business. NTPC Ltd is India's largest integrated power utility, contributing one-fourth of India's power requirements and has an installed capacity of over 77 GW.

# India, UK to resume talks on proposed FTA from today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: After a gap of over eight months, India and the UK will resume negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) here from February 24, an official said. UK's Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds will be here for resumption of the talks. He will hold a bilateral meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, the official said. The India-UK FTA negotiations were launched January 13, 2022. Total 13 rounds of negotiations have been held till December 2023. The 14th round, which began on January 10, 2024, was underway when negotiations were paused by the UK side in May 2024 due to elections in that country. The talks would resume the discussions from the progress achieved previously and seek to bridge the gaps for expeditiously closing the trade deal, the official added. The agreement is aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investments. In such pacts, two countries either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum goods traded between them. They also ease norms for promoting trade in services and bilateral investments. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its



skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services, including banking and insurance. The talks for the agreement may get an impetus as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent in the insurance sector as part of new-generation financial sector reforms. Presenting Union Budget 2025-26, the Finance Minister had said that foreign direct investment (FDI) limit for the insurance sector will be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT). There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which includes goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights. The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23. The average duty on goods imported from India into the UK is 4.2 per cent. According to economic think tank GTRI, items including textiles, apparel (shirts, trousers, women's dresses, bed linen), footwear, carpets, cars, marine products, grapes, and mangoes would be benefitted from the pact as these products face relatively low to moderate tariffs in the UK. Duties on yarn and fabric are 4 per cent, while tariffs on shirts, trousers, women's dresses, and bed linen range from 10 per cent to 12 per cent. Similarly, handbags and trunk cases attract 8 per cent tariffs.

# Why's Warren Buffett amassing more cash, selling more stocks?

AGENCIES

Omaha, Feb 23: The mystery over Warren Buffett's surprisingly defensive stance deepened over the weekend. The 94-year-old CEO of Berkshire Hathaway sold more stocks in the latest quarter and grew a record cash pile even larger to \$334 billion, but failed to explain in his highly anticipated annual letter why the investor known for his astute equity purchases over time was seemingly batten down the hatches. Instead Buffett said that this posture in no way represented a move away from his love for stocks. "Despite what some commentators currently view as an extraordinary cash position at Berkshire, the great majority of your money remains in equities," Buffett wrote in the 2024 annual letter released Sat-

urday. "That preference won't change." Berkshire's monstrous ownership of cash has raised questions among shareholders and observers especially as interest rates are expected to fall from their multi-year highs. The Berkshire CEO and chairman in recent years has expressed frustration about an expensive market and few buying opportunities. Some investors and analysts have grown impatient with the lack of action and have sought an explanation why. Despite his repeated selling of stock, Buffett said Berkshire will continue to prefer equities to cash. "Berkshire shareholders can rest assured that we will forever deploy a substantial majority of their money in equities - mostly American equities although many of these will have international operations of significance," Buffett wrote.



"Berkshire will never prefer ownership of cash-equivalent assets over the ownership of good businesses, whether controlled or only partially owned." Shareholders will have to wait a little longer it seems as the Omaha-based conglomerate

net sold equities for a ninth consecutive quarter in the final period of last year, according to the company's annual report, which was also released Saturday. All told, Berkshire sold more than \$134 billion worth of stocks in 2024. This is mainly due to

the shrinking of Berkshire's two largest equity holdings - Apple and Bank of America. Meanwhile, it appears Buffett is not finding his own stock attractive either. Berkshire continued its buyback halt, repurchasing no shares in the fourth quarter or in the first quarter through Feb. 10. This is despite a massive increase in operating earnings reported by the conglomerate Saturday. Buffett's sitting on his hands amid a raging bull market that's seen the S&P 500 gain more than 20% for two years in a row and move into the green again so far this year. Some cracks have begun to develop in the past week, however, with some concerns growing about a slowing economy, volatility from rapid policy changes from new President Donald Trump and overall stock valuations. Berkshire shares were up

25% and 16% respectively the last two years and are up 5% so far this year. Buffett did offer perhaps a small hint about stock valuations being a concern in the letter. "We are impartial in our choice of equity vehicles, investing in either variety based upon where we can best deploy your (and my family's) savings," wrote Buffett. "Often, nothing looks compelling; very infrequently we find ourselves knee-deep in opportunities." In this year's letter, Buffett did endorse designated successor Greg Abel in his ability to pick equity opportunities, even comparing him to the late Charlie Munger. "Often, nothing looks compelling; very infrequently we find ourselves knee-deep in opportunities. Greg has vividly shown his ability to act at such times as did Charlie," Buffett said.

# India hope to win

India aims to maintain winning streak ahead of English challenge



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 23:** Back-to-back victories against Ireland would have given India the confidence to go into the FIH men's Pro League contest against higher-ranked England Monday with renewed vigour, after having started the home leg on a topsy-turvy note.

India are currently placed fourth in the table with 12 points from six games and would be desperately looking for some more success before the home leg of the tournament concludes.

England, on the other hand, are third on the table with 13 points from six games and would be looking to overcome the humiliating 1-4 defeat at the hands of Spain. Paris Olympic Games bronze medallists India haven't had a great start to the new season with the team having mixed luck against Spain and Germany at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium.

The team suffered a shocking 1-3 defeat to Spain, the side they had beaten to clinch the bronze in Paris, before coming back strongly in the second fixture to

## Eves to face mighty Dutch

Faltering Indian eves would look to halt the slide when they take on reigning champions the Netherlands in their women's FIH Pro League match here Monday. The eves' home leg so far hasn't gone according to script with the team currently placed seventh in the standings with seven points from six games. They had opened their campaign with a thrilling 3-2 win over England but lost the second game against the same opponents in the shoot-out. Against Spain, the hosts came agonisingly close but suffered back-to-back defeats, first losing 3-4 and then being edged out 0-1 in a tightly-fought match. Against Germany, India endured a 0-4 defeat in the first leg but bounced back by securing a 1-0 win in the second leg. The team would look to forget the dismal run and just carry forward the momentum of defeating Germany in the previous match and hope the Dutch are not at their menacing best. India captain Salima Tete acknowledged that getting past the Dutch would be easier said than done, though she added her team was motivated as they wanted to end the home leg on a high. India and the Netherlands have faced each other seven times since 2013, with the European powerhouse winning five of those matches, while India has secured just one win.



win 2-0. Their patchy form and frailties with penalty-corner conversion were on show again in the 1-4 loss to Germany.

However, Harmanpreet Singh's return to the side in the second game infused confidence and the home team avenged the loss with a solitary goal win.

The two emphatic wins against Ireland, placed last in the nine-team table, would certainly have boosted their morale

going into the contest against the third-ranked team in the world.

The likes of Mandeep Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Nilam Xess, Abhishek, and Shamsher Singh finding their rhythm in the 3-1 and 4-0 victories against Ireland bodes well for the fifth-ranked Indian side. England has been stung by the 1-4 loss to Spain after the shootout victory and would be itching to get back to winning

ways. In search of a much-needed win, England will bank on their ace goal-scorer Sam Ward, who has nine hits to his name and is ranked second among the highest goal-scorers in the League.

It's no surprise that Ward's heroics have seen England score the second-most goals in the competition so far (20). However, their attack won't have it easy against a resolute Indian defence.

## CHAMPIONS TROPHY

# Kohli becomes fastest batter to reach 14,000 ODI runs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Dubai, Feb 23:** Talismanic batter Virat Kohli has become the fastest batter to reach 14,000 ODI runs, a landmark which he achieved during India's high-stakes Group A clash against Pakistan in the 2025 Champions Trophy at the Dubai International Stadium.

In India's chase of 242, Kohli reached the milestone of 14,000 ODI runs with a crisp drive off Haris Rauf for four on the second ball of the 13th over. Kohli has now become just the

din to become the new record holder for the most catches by a fielder for India in ODIs.

Kohli, 36, took the catch of Naseem Shah at long-on off Kuldeep Yadav's bowling in the 47th over to record his 157th catch, taking him past Azharuddin's 156 catches. He then took the catch of Khushdil Shah at deep mid-wicket off Harshit Rana's bowling, as India bowled out Pakistan

**At 36, it takes a lot out of me to put in that much effort: Kohli**

Virat Kohli said his plan was to attack the pacers and take less risk against the spinners in the high-pressure Champions Trophy clash against Pakistan here on Sunday and having steered the team home with a sparkling hundred, his 36-year-old body is happy to get a week-long break before the next game. India's six-wicket win against arch-rivals has almost sealed a semifinal spot for the side and all but knocked the hosts out of the tournament. Kohli got majority of his runs from running the quick singles and doubles as he collected only seven fours in his 100 not out off 111 balls. At 36, a week off is very good. He completed his 51st ODI hundred with a four off the last ball of the match. Heading into the high-stakes game, Kohli had his fair share of struggles against the spinners. It feels good to bat in that manner in an important game, where a spot for semis was there to be taken, after Rohit (Sharma) fell (20 off 15 balls).

third batter and the quickest one to reach this landmark, in 287 innings.

India batting great Sachin Tendulkar, who leads the list with 18426 ODI runs, took 350 innings to reach 14,000 runs mark, while Sri Lanka's legendary wicketkeeper-batter Kumar Sangakkara, currently at second place with 14,234 runs, did so in 378 innings.

Kohli, who made his ODI debut against Sri Lanka in 2008, is now the quickest men's batter to reach 8000, 9000, 10000, 11000, 12000, 13000 and 14000 runs in the international 50-over format. He got to 14,000 ODI runs in 63 fewer innings than Tendulkar.

Kohli also holds the record for most hundreds in ODIs via his 50 tons, a record previously held by Tendulkar that he broke during the 2023 Men's ODI World Cup. Previously in the match, Kohli surpassed Mohammad Azharud-

for 241.

Sachin Tendulkar (140), Rahul Dravid (124), and Suresh Raina (102) are the others on the elite list from an Indian perspective. Kohli now ranks on the third spot in the list of most catches taken by a fielder in men's ODIs after Mahela Jayawardene (218) and Ricky Ponting (160).



## SHORT TAKES

### GM Iniyar bow down

**Dunkirk:** Indian Grandmaster P Iniyar finished runner-up in the 41st Cappelle La Grande International Open Tournament after losing to IM Mahel of France in the tie-breaks here. The fifth seed Indian scored 7.5 points, with six wins and 3 draws to be tied first alongside Mahel after nine rounds. However, luck was against Iniyar in tie-breaks as the French IM emerged victorious. After starting with four wins in a row, Iniyar drew the fifth game with fellow Indian IM Muthaiah. He then drew with the eventual third-place finisher GM Raja Rithvik of India. A win in the penultimate round left him leading the event along with Mahel. The result has helped Iniyar gain 16 rating points and his live rating now is 2566.

### Man Singh, Bhagirathi win titles in marathon

**New Delhi:** Uttarakhnad's Man Singh and Bhagirathi Bisht respectively won the men's and women's titles at the Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon race here Sunday. The 35-year-old Singh, the 2024 Asian Marathon Championship winner, clocked an impressive time of 2:15:24 to emerge winner in a competitive men's elite field. Pardeep Chaudhary (2:15:29s) and Akshay Saini (2:15:34s) were right on his heels, but finished second and third respectively. Bhagirathi, also from Uttarakhnad, claimed the top spot among elite women with a time of 02:48:59s.

### Sports Min leads 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle'

**New Delhi:** Sports Minister Manuskh Mandaviya led the 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' campaign here, with Olympic rower Arjun Lal Jat among a host of other participants. Drawing from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to fight obesity by reducing oil consumption by 10 per cent, exercising and eating right, Mandaviya dedicated the initiative to nation's fight against obesity.

## BENGALURU OPEN

### Dhamne looks to 'enjoy and grow'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bengaluru, Feb 23:** India's rising star Manas Dhamne is set to make his main draw debut at the 2025 Bengaluru Open, carrying momentum from his recent ITF title win at the M15 Monastir in Tunisia.

The 17-year-old, who has been making waves on the circuit, is eager to take another step forward in his young career after receiving a wild card for the singles' main draw.

"I have been playing some good tennis and I am practising very well, importantly. I feel my chances are good; I feel confident. This tournament is a great experience for me. It

will help me grow a lot, playing against good players. I love the stadium and the facilities, and I feel people here are really passionate about tennis, which is nice to see," said Manas.

With his first-ever Bengaluru Open main draw match ahead, Dhamne is focused on his performance rather than his opponent. "It's my first main draw match, so I will try to put up a very good performance. I don't know yet how I am going to approach the match, because it doesn't matter who the opponent is. I just want to approach the match like how I play, it doesn't matter who the other guy is. I just want to try to enjoy it as well," he added.

## LA LIGA

# BARCA STAY ON TOP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Madrid, Feb 23:** Second-half goals from substitutes Dani Olmo and Ferran Torres gave Barcelona a 2-0 win away over Las Palmas that keeps them top of La Liga.

Olmo came on at halftime after Barca had struggled to get into a game against an aggressive rival and soon made an impact when he controlled a pass from Lamine Yamal and showed quick feet before rifling home with his left foot.

Las Palmas caused Barcelona problems but failed to create clear chances, although they thought they had a penalty after Eric Garcia blocked a shot with his upper arm in the closing minutes, only for the



VAR to spot a previous offside, reports Xinhua.

Ferran sealed a tense win in injury time when he controlled in space in the Las Palmas area and fired home off the underside of the crossbar.

Atletico Madrid enjoyed a 3-0 win away to Valencia, with Julian Alvarez scoring twice in the first half, while Angel Correa added a third in the 85th minute in a result that lifts them above Real Madrid, who

will play Sunday.

Alvarez opened the scoring in an excellent first half for Atletico after Samuel Lino hit the bar following a wonderful pass from Antoine Griezmann. Griezmann was the provider again with a cross for Alvarez to head in Atletico's second goal after 29 minutes.

Valencia improved after the break, but failed to take their chances and Correa made them pay by finishing a counter-attack launched by Conor Gallagher.

Ayoze Perez's 66th-minute goal gave fifth-place Villarreal a 1-0 away win to sixth-placed Rayo Vallecano, who were handicapped by Jorge de Frutos' 42nd-minute red card that left them with 10 men.

# OFC playoff hopes in limbo

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata, Feb 23:** Odisha FC's chances of making the ISL playoffs now depend on other results, following a heart-breaking 1-0 stoppage-time defeat to Mohun Bagan SG at the Salt Lake Stadium, Kolkata Sunday. The Kalinga Warriors were reduced to 10 men after Mourtada Fall's red card in the 85th minute, and despite a stellar performance from goalkeeper Amrinder Singh, who made several crucial saves, they couldn't hold on.

The game began with a tense atmosphere as both sides struggled to find an early breakthrough. In the 4th minute, Odisha FC showed intent when Isak made a good run down the defensive third, but the Mohun Bagan SG defense remained sharp. Mourtada Fall attempted to feed Boumouss inside the box with a lofted ball, but it was overhit and the chance was wasted. A little later, in the 14th minute, Hugo sent in a well-executed corner kick, but



Fall's header sailed high over the target.

Amrinder Singh was the standout performer, making crucial saves throughout the match to keep his side in contention. In the 17th minute, Amrinder dealt with a shot from Deepak outside the box with ease. He then pulled off a remarkable save in the 32nd minute, denying Jamie's powerful strike. As the first half neared its end, Amrinder produced two more heroic stops, first blocking Stewart's shot from the edge of the box and then recovering quickly to prevent McLaren's follow-up.

Odisha FC's best chance came when Hugo threaded a superb through ball to Rahul

inside the Mohun Bagan box. Rahul attempted to lob the goalkeeper, but unfortunately, there was no one to finish the opportunity.

In the second half, Odisha FC continued to threaten. Fall nearly found the net after a sliding challenge, but the ball ricocheted off Liston and out for a goal-kick. In the 66th minute, Hugo produced another dazzling run and a low shot that was saved by Mohun Bagan's goalkeeper Vishal Kaith. Odisha's defence held firm, and in the 81st minute, Amrinder made a brilliant flying save to deny a long-range shot from Petratros.

However, the turning point came in the 85th minute when Mourtada Fall was sent off with a red card following a foul. Odisha FC was reduced to 10 men, and despite their valiant efforts, Mohun Bagan SG capitalized on their numerical advantage. The match went into extra time, where Odisha's hopes of securing a vital point were dashed by a late goal.

# Bumrah receives his ICC awards for 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Feb 23:** India pacer Jasprit Bumrah Sunday received his ICC honours, including the Men's Cricketer of the Year and Men's Test Cricketer of the Year awards, before the start of the Champions Trophy match between India and Pakistan here.

Bumrah is not playing in the Champions Trophy as he has been sidelined with a back issue. The 31-year-old was present here to collect the awards, which also includes a place in the Men's Test and T20I Teams for 2024.

The ICC posted photographs of Bumrah with each of his four awards — including two caps — and wrote on X, "Jasprit Bumrah receives his #ICCawards and Team Of The Year caps for a stellar 2024."

Bumrah had also met his India teammates on Sunday during their warm-up drills before the match against Pakistan. Bumrah had an outstand-



ing Test season last year, taking 71 wickets in 13 matches with the second-best effort coming from England's Gus Atkinson who claimed 52 wickets in 11 matches.

Bumrah averaged 14.92 in Tests in 2024 and ended the year with a strike rate of 30.1. He also became only the fourth Indian bowler to take 70 or more wickets in the conventional format in a calendar year after Kapil Dev, Anil Kumble and R. Ashwin.

He had successful outings against England at home, taking 19 wickets in the five-Test series in the first half of 2024, and finished the year with 32 wickets in another five-Test affair in Australia.

# Hermoso says guilty verdict for Rubiales kiss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Madrid, Feb 23:** Spain forward Jenni Hermoso said Saturday that the guilty verdict given to Luis Rubiales for his unsolicited kiss after the 2023 Women's World Cup final sets an "important precedent" for women's rights.

"After everything, this will create an important precedent in society, where there is still much work to do," she wrote in Spanish on Instagram. "My heart is full of each person who was with me and will stay with me in this fight."

It was her first public statement since a Spanish court ruled Thursday that the former president of Spain's soccer federation had sexually abused her when he kissed her without consent during the World Cup celebrations.

Spain's National Court ordered Rubiales to pay more than 10,000 euros (\$10,400) in fines and prohibited him from getting within 200 meters of Hermoso or communicating with her for a year. Prosecutors had asked for a prison sentence.

She ended her post with the message "And now, it is over," ("Y ahora si, se acabó) in reference to a phrase that went viral during the kiss scandal that meant "enough is enough."

