

### Tusker electrocuted

Electrocution claims jumbo's life as it comes in contact with live wires under Athagarh forest division

STATE | P5

### India slams Pak

India slams Pakistan after it raked the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in the UN Human Rights Council

INTERNATIONAL | P10

### Pvt consumption up

India's private consumption has almost doubled to \$2.1 trillion in 2024 from \$1 trillion in 2013, faster than the US, China and Germany

BUSINESS | P11

### OFC aim three points

With their playoff hopes hanging by a thread, Odisha FC will aim for maximum points when they take on Mohammedan SC in the ISL

SPORTS | P12

## US cutting overseas aid contracts by over 90%

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 27: The Trump administration said it is eliminating more than 90 per cent of the US Agency for International Development's foreign aid contracts and USD 60 billion in overall US assistance around the world, putting numbers on its plans to eliminate the majority of US development and humanitarian help abroad.

The cuts detailed by the administration would leave few surviving USAID projects for advocates to try to save in what are ongoing court battles with the administration. The Trump administration outlined its plans in both an internal memo obtained by The Associated Press and filings in one of those federal lawsuits Wednesday. The Supreme Court intervened in that case late Wednesday and temporarily blocked a court order requiring the administration to release billions of dollars in foreign aid by midnight.

Wednesday's disclosures also give an idea of the scale of the administration's retreat from US aid and development assistance overseas, and from decades of US policy that foreign aid helps US interests by stabilising other countries and economies and building alliances. The memo said officials were "clearing significant waste stemming from decades of institutional drift."

More changes are planned in now USAID and the State Department deliver foreign assistance, it said, "to use taxpayer dollars wisely to advance American interests."

President Donald Trump and ally Elon Musk have hit foreign aid harder and faster than almost any other target in their push to cut the size of the federal government. Both men say USAID projects advance a liberal agenda and are a waste of money.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



For promotion?



RIOT OF COLOURS: Revellers celebrate the start of the street carnival at the Alter Markt (Old Marketplace) in Cologne, Germany, Thursday

AP/PTI

## Another Class X girl delivers baby

PNN & AGENCIES

Jajpur, Feb 27: A few days after a Class X student delivered a baby in Malkangiri, another Class X girl gave birth to a baby in Jajpur district late Wednesday night, officials said Thursday.

The girl had abdominal pains at her home following which her family members rushed her to a hospital late Wednesday night. "The Class X student gave birth to a baby girl at a government hospital in Bari block," Jajpur ADMO AK Sharma said. The ADMO said that the newborn was admitted in the paediatric ICU as her health condition was not good. The mother, along with the newborn, was later shifted to the Jajpur DHH. Jajpur DCPO Niranjan Kar said that the Class X student had appeared in two papers of the matriculation examination and she was supposed to write the Mathematics paper Thursday.

Meanwhile, on the basis of a complaint lodged by Trupti-mayee Panda, local legal officer, Bari Ramachandrapur police registered a case and detained a youth for questioning.

Notably, a Class X student of Chitrakonda area of Malkangiri had given birth to a baby girl in the hostel of a state government-run residential girls' high school Monday.

# Hindi mask, Sanskrit hidden face: Stalin

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin's vociferous opposition to alleged Hindi imposition on non-Hindi speaking states through the National Education Policy, 2020 took a curious turn Thursday when the DMK supremo claimed that Hindi is actually a pretext for promoting Sanskrit. To drive home his point, Stalin said more than 25 north Indian native languages have been destroyed by the invasion of hegemonic Hindi-Sanskrit languages. "Hindi is the mask, Sanskrit is the hidden face," Stalin told party workers, calling upon them to protect Tamil and its culture.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 27: Upping the ante against alleged Hindi imposition by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Thursday said the state

will not allow the forcing of the language on it and vowed to protect Tamil and its culture.

"Will oppose Hindi imposition. Hindi is the mask, Sanskrit is the hidden face," he said in a letter to party workers.

The ruling DMK has been alleging Hindi imposition by the Centre through the three-language formula as part of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, a charge denied by the Union government. The issue has since become a bone of contention between the two, prompting Stalin to declare the state was even ready for 'another language war', like the anti-Hindi agitation the DMK spearheaded in 1965.

In the letter, Stalin claimed many north Indian languages spoken in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and

Madhya Pradesh such as Mythili, Brajbhasha, Bundelkhandi and Awadhi 'have been destroyed by the hegemonic Hindi'.

"More than 25 north Indian native languages have been destroyed by the invasion of hegemonic Hindi-Sanskrit languages. The century-old Dravidian movement safeguarded Tamil and its culture because of the awareness it created and the various agitations," the ruling DMK chief said.

Tamil Nadu is opposing NEP because the Centre is trying to impose Hindi and Sanskrit through the education policy, he added. Countering BJP's contention that the third language according to the NEP could be even a foreign one, Stalin claimed that according to the three-language policy schedule, 'only Sanskrit is being promoted in many

states'. BJP-ruled Rajasthan was appointing Sanskrit teachers instead of Urdu instructors, he claimed. "If Tamil Nadu accepts the trilingual policy, the mother language will be ignored and there will be Sanskritisation in the future," he said.

He claimed NEP provisions say that other Indian languages will be taught in schools in 'addition to Sanskrit' and that others like Tamil could be taught online. "This makes it clear the Centre has planned to do away with languages like Tamil and impose Sanskrit," the CM charged.

Dravidian stalwart and former Chief Minister CN Annadurai had mandated the two-language policy in the state decades ago to make it clear 'there is no place for imposition of Aryan culture through Hindi-Sanskrit and destruction of Tamil culture', Stalin said.

## UTTAM MOHANTY passes away at 66

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Renowned actor Uttam Mohanty passed away while undergoing treatment at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram Thursday evening. He was 66.

Mohanty had been battling liver cirrhosis for some time. After initially receiving treatment at KIMS here, his condition deteriorated, prompting his family to airlift him to Medanta Hospital February 8. Born and raised in Baripada, Mohanty was a towering figure in the Odia film industry, known for his exceptional versatility. In a career spanning over decades, he had acted in over 110 films, including Hindi and Bengali languages, and numerous television serials, portraying roles that ranged from romantic heroes to intense dramatic characters.

His contributions to Odia cinema earned him unparalleled respect. He remains the only Odia actor to have won the state government's Best Actor Award for three consecutive



1958 - 2025

years. He was also honored with Jayadev Award in 1999.

People from various walks of life condoled Mohanty's demise.

In a post on X, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said, "I am deeply saddened to learn about the demise of Odisha's famous and popular actor Uttam Mohanty. His passing has created a huge void in the Odia art world... I pray for the eternal peace of his immortal soul and express my heartfelt condolences to his grieving family."

SPECIAL P2

## Gene Hackman, wife found dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Santa Fe, Feb 27: Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman and his wife were found dead in their New Mexico home Wednesday, authorities said.

Foul play is not suspected, however authorities did not release any details of the circumstances of their deaths and said an investigation is ongoing.

Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Denise Avila said deputies responded to a request to do a welfare check at the home Wednesday around 1:45 pm local time and found Hackman, his wife Betsy Arakawa and a dog dead.

Hackman, 95, was a five-time Oscar nominee who starred in dozens of films and one of the industry's most respected and honoured performers. His two Oscar wins, for 'The French Connection' and 'Unforgiven',



were spaced out 21 years apart.

News of his death comes just four days before this year's Academy Awards ceremony.

Hackman played a variety of roles, appearing in action movies, thrillers and even appearing in a comedic part in 'Young Frankenstein'.

Aside from appearances at awards shows, he was rarely seen in the Hollywood social circuit and retired in his mid-70s. An email sent to his publicist was not immediately returned early Thursday. P10

## Things you can do to keep hackers at bay

You must have read about former Disney employee Matthew Van Anel, whose world turned upside down when he downloaded an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered photo programme unaware that it was laced with hacking software. Now, you must be wondering how to prevent this from happening to you.

The Wall Street Journal lists out a few things you can do to make it harder for the hackers if they do slide into your digital life.

Van had many usernames and passwords stored in a password manager. It can improve personal security as it eliminates the need to track passwords for dozens of online accounts.

However, the issue was Van did not have two-factor authentication (2FA) - a security system that requires two distinct

forms of identification in order to access something - for the password manager itself.

Not having 2FA can make your life easier. However, make sure it's turned on.

It was shocking that after getting grip on Van's personal computer, the hacker dumped the contents of Van's password manager online. It made the attack worse as it allowed anyone who could see Van's logins and passwords to break into various accounts.

Many people might not realise that a lot of passwords they use frequently are already available online, stolen in data breaches. Password managers or some operating systems can flag when your passwords are exposed online and help create unique passwords that can then be stored.

Think twice when a website offers to 'remember you'.



According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), hackers have ramped up the theft of 'session cookies'. A session cookie gets created

whenever users click 'remember me' while logging into a website. Often they are good for a fixed period, like a week or a month. But once a hacker

gets on your computer, they can use them to gain access to websites that require 2FA. Users should be very careful about using them on sensitive websites, FBI says.

Antivirus software like Microsoft's free Windows Defender is a superb product. However, it cannot protect you from everything. It did not discover that an AI plug-in from GitHub that had positive reviews and seemed to work was actually malicious software (Trojan Horse).

Van tried out Bitdefender and it found the Trojan Horse immediately. If you're concerned, downloading some free antivirus software for a quick scan and a second opinion is not a bad idea. And if you are uncertain about the safety of a plug-in or some free software, ask yourself whether it's worth the risk.

AGENCIES



# leisure



## FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
 Today, you want to do something for the environment. Ganesha says plant a tree, clean up your neighbourhood, ask for a paper bag. You wish to lead the world into a better place? Do it by all means, but one step at a time.

**TAURUS**  
 Anxiety will keep your nerves swollen for most part of the day, feels Ganesha. On the work front, you will face success later in the day. You will be a role model for business efficiency and people will try to follow in your footsteps. Your efforts will be validated with generous profits.

**GEMINI**  
 If you are embroiled in a legal dispute, an out-of-court settlement is likely, predicts Ganesha. You are a courageous person and you'll need a lot of it today. Don't back down from your decisions. You may have to be stern with a few people. Your resilience will pay off.

**CANCER**  
 Ganesha portends that you will remain invincible and unbeatable throughout the day. However, today will be as boring and uneventful as it gets. It will be just another day at office, and an equally simple day at home. There will not be any low points, but no high points either.

**LEO**  
 You will leave no stone unturned to satisfy and please your partner today. So your chances of slipping up are very slight. You will be able to impress your partner today. You need to be careful in all your financial dealings today, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
 Communication is your best handgun and creativity your best bullet. Ganesha feels you are full of energy, enthusiasm and exuberance. Creativity, though, will be at its best in an atmosphere free of pressure and strain, cautions Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
 It is your friends who prove to be lucky and beneficial for you today, especially if they happen to be walking the corridors of power, says Ganesha. Do not hesitate to start that new joint venture today. See your popularity grow by leaps and bounds as you get due recognition for your abilities and efforts.

**SCORPIO**  
 You are likely to get overboard with your ambitions and be loud-mouthed, says Ganesha. But do not be too forceful or severe lest you end up tarnishing your image. It is best to stay clear of conflicts in the larger scheme of things, advises Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Wisdom in words and hero in deeds - this may well be your avatar today. Expect good news at work, especially related to a thicker pay package or an increase in office floor area. Accountants and franchisees - expect to crunch good numbers today!

**CAPRICORN**  
 Lack of proper planning is probably the reason for your not being able to get your work done in time. You'll realise this mistake and today, you will spend majority of time drawing a plan on paper, says Ganesha. You may hit a jackpot, but think twice before spending the money on anything unnecessary. You may come across some good career opportunities, grab them before it's too late.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Some days, you crave to know everything. Today is one such day. You will also prove a worthy opponent. You may upset your adversaries' plans, much to your own advantage. You have it in you to be a scholar. You will also prove the strength of your character, especially when the going gets tough.

**PISCES**  
 Your business associates will marvel at your business acumen, and will respect the insights you provide for them to work with. Meanwhile, you will be busy spending quality time with your family and showing them how much they mean to you today, says Ganesha.

**Uttam Mohanty stood as a luminary in the Odia cinema landscape, having maintained his prominence for nearly two decades -1980s and 1990s, with his movies deeply resonating with rural populace. No wonder, when Odia film industry faced a significant downturn, it was Uttam's relentless efforts and magnetic charm that played a crucial role in sustaining the industry**

# A legend par excellence

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

**BHUBANESWAR:** There are only a few actors from Odisha who appeared in Hindi movies but Uttam Mohanty is the only actor after Prashanta Nanda who headlined a Bollywood movie.

Uttam was more than just an actor. He was a beloved figure whose charm, talent, and versatility made him a household name in Odisha and beyond. From his early beginnings, he captivated audiences with his powerful performances, portraying characters with depth and grace. His ability to evoke emotions and connect with viewers on a personal level is a testament to his skill and dedication to his craft.

He was not just a star; he was a symbol of Odia cinema, a hero in the truest sense. Whether it was drama, romance, or action, Uttam brought authenticity to every role, and his presence on screen was magnetic. His voice, expressions, and on-screen charisma were unmatched, and he became an integral part of the golden era of Odia films.

Off-screen, Uttam was known for his humility, kindness, and warmth. He touched lives not only with his talent but also with his down-to-earth nature and generosity of spirit. His contributions to the cultural landscape of Odisha will continue to inspire generations to come.

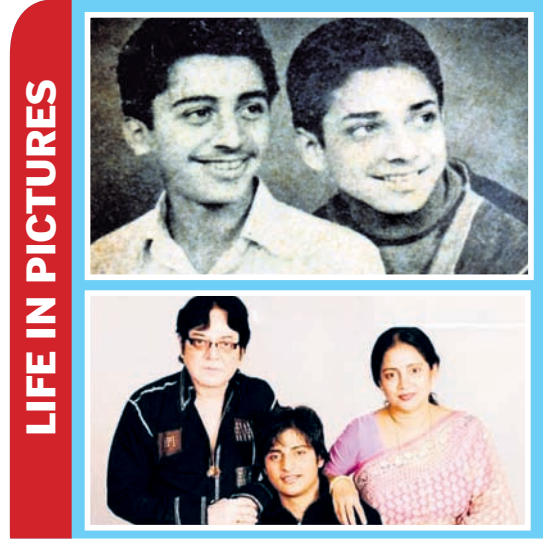
**Early life and foray into movies**  
 Born into a Karan family in Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Uttam completed his early education at M.K.C. High School and later attended Maharaja Purna Chandra College in Baripada. During his college years, he developed a passion for acting, participating actively in dramas and cultural activities. His dedication to performing arts led him to pursue a career in acting, marking the beginning of a remarkable journey in the film industry.

**Notable performance**  
 His filmography boasts over 130 Odia films, along with appearances in 30 Bengali films and a Hindi film, Naya Zaher. He made his acting debut in the Odia film Abhiman (1977), directed by Sadhu Meher. His portrayal of diverse characters in films such as Jar Jar Mulak Tar, Chaka Bhaunri, and Paradesi Cadhei showcased his versatility and depth as an actor. His performances resonated with audiences, earning him a special place in the hearts of Odia film enthusiasts.

**Impact on Odia cinema**  
 Uttam's contributions significantly shaped the landscape of Odia cinema. His ability to portray a wide range of characters—from protagonists to antagonists—with authenticity and emotion set new

standards in the industry. His dedication to his craft and his commitment to bringing stories to life on screen have left an indelible mark on Odia cinema.

**LEGACY :** In 1987, Mohanty married fellow actor Aparajita Mohanty, and together they have a son, Babushaan Mohanty, who has also made a name for himself in the Odia film industry. Beyond his professional achievements, Mohanty was known for his humility, kindness, and dedication to his family and fans. His legacy continues through his films, which remain a source of inspiration for aspiring actors and filmmakers. The passing of Uttam Mohanty marks the end of an era in Odia cinema. His exceptional talent, dedication, and contributions to the film industry have left an indelible mark that will continue to inspire future generations. As we bid farewell to this legend, we remember and celebrate his remarkable journey and the joy he brought to countless lives through his work.



## MAJOR HONOURS

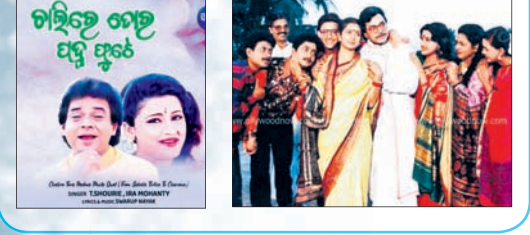
- Jayadeb Puraskar in 1999
- Odisha Living Legend Award 2012
- Orissa State Film Award for Best Actor for Phula Chandana, Jhiati Sita Pari, Danda Balunga, Suna Chadhei
- Orissa State Film Award for Best Supporting Actor for To Binu Anyagati Nahin
- Awards from Citic Association, Chitrapuri, Banichitra, Chalachitra Jagata
- 5th FITAF Biscopo Award, 2008

## UTTAM'S TOP 10

- Phula Chandan
- Danda Balunga
- Suna Chadhei
- Chaka Bhaunri
- Sahari Bagha
- Aei Ama Sansara
- Paka Kambal Pot Chhata
- Chaka Akhi Sabu Dekhuchi
- Jahaku Rakhibe Ananta
- Pua Mora Kala Thakura

## CRITICAL ACCLAIMS

SHASTI | TUNDA BAIDA  
 AKUKA KATHA |  
 MUKTI TIRTHA | JAYDEV



## TRIBUTES POUR IN

The news of the demise of veteran actor Uttam Mohanty has deeply saddened me. His passing has created an irreplaceable void in the Odia cinema world. I pray to the Almighty for the eternal peace of his immortal soul and express my condolences to the grief-stricken family. Om Shanti

PRAVATI PARIDA, DY CHIEF MINISTER

It is with profound sorrow that I extend my heartfelt condolences on the passing of veteran Odia actor Uttam Mohanty. His immense contribution to the Odia film industry and his exceptional talent have left an indelible mark on our cultural heritage. Uttam Mohanty Ji's legacy will continue to inspire and entertain generations to come. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and countless admirers during this difficult time.

KV SINGH DEO, DY CHIEF MINISTER

I am heartbroken to hear the news of the passing of Uttam Mohanty, the distinguished actor of Odisha. He was not just an artist but was like a member of my family. Odisha has lost a born genius. He will reign in the hearts of Odias for a long time.

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN, UNION MINISTER

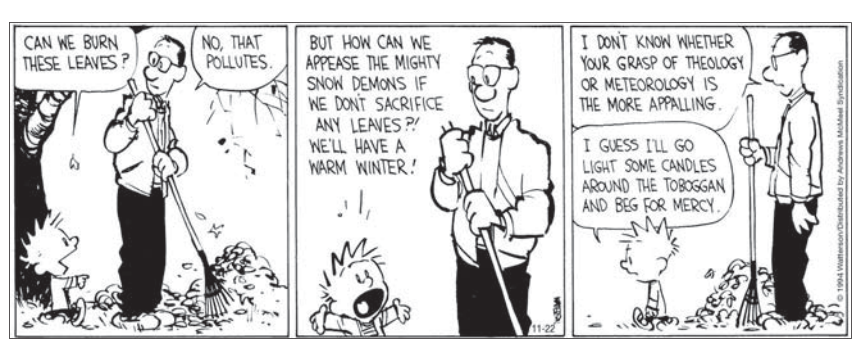
Deeply saddened to hear about the sad demise of the most celebrated odia superstar Uttam Mohanty. I join the people of Odisha in mourning this terrible loss. My deepest condolences to the bereaved family and his fans. Pray Lord Jagannath for the departed soul. RIP

BHAKTA CHARAN DAS, OPCC PRESIDENT

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

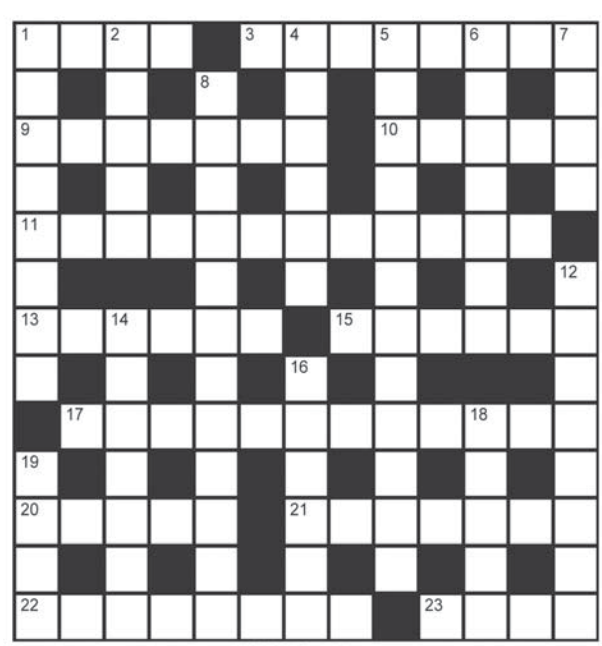


## BREVITY



## FUN POST

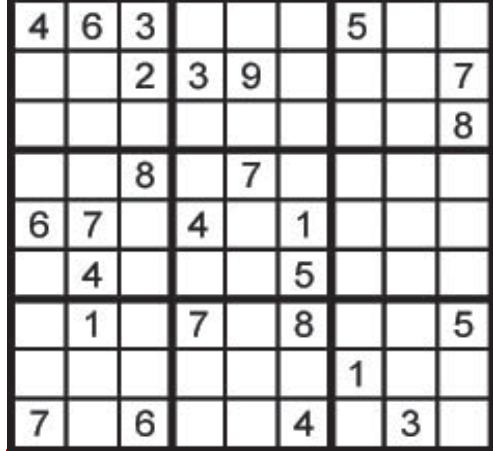
## CROSSWORD



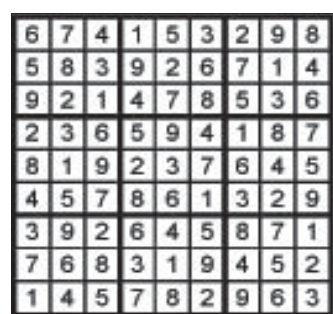
- Across**
- 1 He played Mowgli in "Jungle Book"
  - 3 Oversight
  - 9 Celestial point
  - 10 Distribute
  - 11 Petrol powered vehicle (5,7)
  - 13 Chef's direction
  - 15 Sculpture
  - 17 Veteran (2-10)
  - 20 Dwelling
  - 21 Recline (3,4)
  - 22 Ventured out
  - 23 Fixed costs
  - 6 Like some secrets (3-4)
  - 7 Filberts
  - 8 Risk taker, business-wise
  - 12 Scraps
  - 14 Conceited dandy
  - 16 Slender
  - 18 Northern forest denizen
  - 19 Chaplin prop
- Down**
- 1 Soft-shell clams
  - 2 Candid
  - 4 Chihuahua locale
  - 5 Sporting buy (6,6)

## 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



Deputy Chief Minister Pravat Parida addressing a gathering at a camp for distribution of old age pension at Nimapara block office in Puri district Thursday



# downtown

## Nadda to inaugurate summit at Puri today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda who arrived here Thursday, will inaugurate the 9th National Summit on Good and Replicable Practices and Innovations in Public Healthcare System at Puri Friday.

Chief Minister Mohan Charaj Majhi will be present at the inaugural function of the two-day event which will conclude March 1.

The event serves as a platform for states and Union Territories (UTs) to showcase their innovative practices and effective strategies aimed at enhancing public healthcare service delivery, a press release issued by the I&PR department stated.



Additional chief secretaries/principal secretaries, mission directors, senior state/UT nodal officials (NHM officials), and senior representatives from MoHFW, NHSRC, and RRC-NE will participate in the event, it added.

Since its inception in 2013, the National Innovation Summit has been an annual exercise to promote knowledge sharing and cross-learning among states and UTs. "Over the years, it has successfully documented and disseminated pioneering initiatives that have significantly contributed to strengthening India's healthcare system," the release said.

The previous summit, along with the Chintan Shivir, was held in Kevadia, Gujarat, in May 2022.

## 2 kids critically hurt in Khurda blast



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Feb 27:** Two children sustained critical burn injuries while another suffered minor burns when crackers placed inside a puja room exploded at Kumarabasta village under Khurda Industrial Estate police station Thursday.

Reports said one Tapas

Mangaraj's nephew and niece had visited their uncle's place on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri. Some crackers had been stored in the puja room for bursting during the festival. However, the crackers went off when the children were playing on the room veranda. Hearing the loud explosion, Mangaraj's family members rushed to the

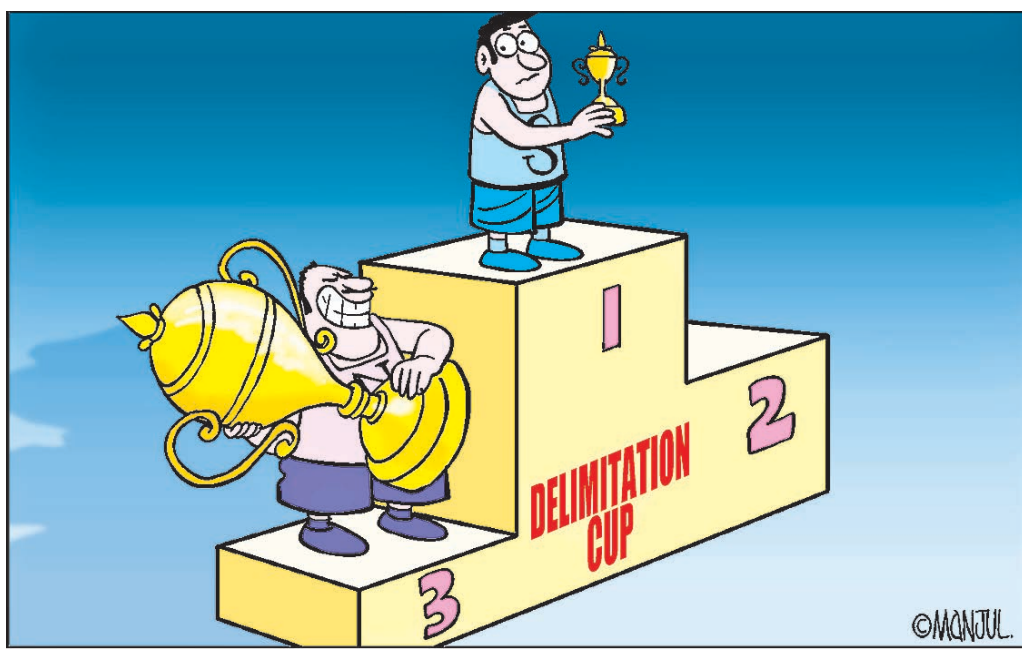
spot and rescued the children who were found lying in pools of blood. The impact of the explosion was so severe that the doors and other puja articles in the room were completely blown off.

Sources said a 10-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl sustained severe injuries while another child was also hurt.

The injured were initially taken to Khurda district headquarters hospital, but later they were rushed to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar.

Although the reasons behind the explosion are yet unclear, Sadar sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Nihar Ranjan Pradhan, IIC Gayatri Mishra and a scientific team have begun an investigation into the incident.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Cong to stage protest if power tariff is hiked

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The Congress Thursday threatened to stage protests across the state if power tariff is hiked from the upcoming financial year 2025-26.

Holding a press conference here, senior Congress leader and former minister Panchanan Kanungo said a hearing to hike power tariff is going on at Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC).

Different power supply stakeholders have submitted their demands before the OERC to hike the power tariff and the commission is conducting public hearings on their pleas. So, there is an apprehension among the domestic consumers that the power tariff may be hiked this time, he said.

Kanungo claimed that the OERC has been engaged in bulk supply of electricity and power distribution companies have been demanding a hike in power tariff in the state.

"Prior to the 2024 Assembly election, the BJP had promised to provide 300 units of free power to the people of Odisha. However, instead of

providing free power, there is a proposal to hike power tariff by 12.42 paise per unit. So, we warn the government not to hike the power tariff," the Congress leader said.

If the power tariff is enhanced by a single paise, the Congress party and its student, women and youth wings along with power consumers will launch state-wide agitations, he warned.

Youth Congress leader Yashir Nawaz, who was present at the press conference, said, "The Odisha government, in the state Assembly, informed that they have waived off electricity dues worth ₹4,097 crore to 14 industries in last 10 years. Similarly, electricity dues worth ₹1,096 crore have been pending against 23 industries."

When such a huge amount of electricity duty is pending against industrial units, on which basis, the power distribution companies have demanded for power tariff hike, he asked.

"Hence, we demand the government to reject the power tariff hike petitions of the power companies and implement the 300 free unit scheme immediately," the Congress leader said.

## OMFED to be empowered in systematic manner: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The state government will adopt the latest technology to empower the Odisha State Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (OMFED) in a systematic manner as the organisation is associated with Oda Asmita (pride), Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry Development and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Gokulananda Mallick said.

Speaking at a special function at OMFED's Dairy Processing Centre in Arilo Thursday, Mallick said modalities are being chalked out to see how the federation could serve people better in future, reach everyone and provide quality products to its millions of customers.

"All the officers and employees of OMFED, including the Managing Director (MD) are working towards this. People of the state have faith and trust in OMFED," the minister said.

On the occasion, Mallick inaugurated the newly installed CCTV surveillance set up at the plant in the presence of OMFED Chairman Kishore Chandra Pradhan and MD Vijaya An-



ruta Kulange.

The new CCTV set up comprises 62 cameras which are connected to a dedicated control room. With the feed received from the cameras on multiple monitors at the control room, the MD can monitor all the activities in the plant - from the quantity of milk received and processed, preparation of various products, despatches, leftovers to the workflow. Mallick said more CCTVs would be installed at the plant in the second phase of modernisation.

Stressing that OMFED will not compromise on quality of each product, the minister said

OMFED ghee is now being used at Srimandir.

He said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has also directed that OMFED will be strengthened and restructured.

"With that objective, the CM has launched the Mukhayantri Kamdhenu Yojana (MKY). OMFED is also a partner in this scheme. Not only that, the Chief Minister has given special attention to OMFED. Special provisions have also been made in the Budget," Mallick said, adding that a laboratory, staff quarters and guest house will be built in Aurelio soon.

## Free treatment, vax for livestock from March 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** Keeping in mind that healthy livestock is essential for agricultural prosperity, the state government has decided to provide treatment and vaccination for livestock at free of cost from March 1, announced Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Minister Gokulananda Mallick here Thursday.

**User fees have been waived off on the treatment and vaccination of animals like cows, bulls, buffaloes, goats and sheep**

Taking to his official 'X' account, the minister said "Respecting the request of the people of the state, the people's government has taken a groundbreaking step. User fees have been waived off on the treatment and vaccination of animals like cows, bulls, buffaloes, goats, sheep etc. The people of the state will get this free medical facility from March 1. We have taken this decision by prioritising free public veterinary care and protection of livestock. I believe this decision will definitely be helpful for the cowherds and farmer brothers and sisters."



**IN MEMORIAM:** Dignitaries unveil a souvenir on Acharya Harihar during a programme organised as part of the freedom fighter and social worker's birth anniversary celebrations at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar Thursday

## Oppn slams govt over temple mishaps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** Opposition BJD and Congress Thursday accused the BJP government of mismanaging major festivals at Srimandir in Puri and Lingaraj Temple in the City here.

A servitor fell from a height of 20 feet while carrying the 'Mahadeepa' (burning lamp) to the top of the 11th-century Lingaraj Temple as part of Maha Shivaratri rituals Wednesday. Three persons were injured in the accident.

In July last year, at least nine servitors of Srimandir were injured when the idol of Lord Balabhadra fell on them while it was being taken out from the chariot to a temple as part of Rath Yatra festival.

"The mishap at Lingaraj Temple during the lifting of 'Mahadeepa' is condemnable.

The state government has failed yet again, having already faltered during the Rath Yatra in Puri. There is still no report on how Lord Balabhadra's idol fell during the procession," BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty told reporters here.

He charged the state administration with remaining busy with VIPs only, rather than ensuring that festivals are conducted without mishaps.

Mohanty said the state government is yet to make its inquiry report public on how the idol of Lord Balabhadra fell.

Bhubaneswar Mayor and BJD leader Sulochana Das said the servitor's hand slipped while climbing due to oil on the stone wall of the Lingaraj Temple. Earlier, sand used to be sprinkled on the stone to protect servitors from slipping due to oil, she said.

Newly appointed state Con-



gress president Bhakta Charan Das alleged the BJP government has twice hurt the religious sentiments of the people.

He asked the state government to issue a white paper on both the mishaps that hurt the sentiment of lakhs of devotees in the state and outside.

Das, who visited the injured servitor at Capital Hospital, claimed that the people were not satisfied with the government's management of the affairs in this regard.

The injured servitor iden-

tified as Jogendra Samartha was admitted to the hospital and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi visited him there Wednesday night.

Senior BJP MLA Babu Singh said the Opposition leaders should refrain from indulging in politicising the matter.

He said the Bhubaneswar Mayor is also part of the administration and she was present at the shrine all day during Shivaratri festival, but did not rectify had there been any error.

The injured servitor's son Ashwini Samartha said there was no sand on the stone in the climbing area of the temple for which his father slipped and fell.

The ghee drops falling from the 'Mahadeepa' made the stone slippery, he said to reporters.

He said his father has been taking the 'Mahadeepa' to the temple top for the last 25 years and he is an expert in climbing the temple.

## Nasal spray may help treat traumatic brain injury

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** A nasal spray being developed to target brain inflammation can also prove effective in treating traumatic brain injury (TBI) - a leading cause of death and disability, according to a study.

In a mice model, researchers from the Mass General Brigham in the US found that the spray could reduce damage to the central nervous system and behavioural deficits.

The research suggests a potential therapeutic approach for TBI and other acute forms of brain injury.

Lead author Saef Izzy, neu-

rologist and head of the Immunology of Brain Injury Programme at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), said that TBI includes cognitive decline and 'chronic inflammation is one of the key reasons'.

"Currently, there is no treatment to prevent the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury," Izzy added.

The team examined the monoclonal antibody Foralumab, developed by UK-based Tiziana, which has been tested in clinical trials for patients with multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, and other conditions.

The team conducted multiple experiments in mouse models



with moderate-to-severe TBI to explore the communication between regulatory cells induced by the nasal treatment and the microglial immune cells in the brain.

They could identify how

these modulate the immune response, which led to "improved neurological outcomes, including less anxiety, cognitive decline, and improved motor skills," Izzy said. The results

are published in the journal Nature Neuroscience.

The findings show that Foralumab may also work "in intracerebral haemorrhage and other stroke patients with brain injury", said the researchers.

"Our patients with traumatic brain injury still don't have an effective therapeutic to improve their outcomes, so this is a very promising and exciting time to move forward with something that's backed up with solid science and get it to patients' bedsides," said Izzy.

The next step in the research is to translate the findings from preclinical models to human patients, said the team.

## 20-yr RI to man for peddling narcotics

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** A special NDPS court Thursday handed down 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) to a drug trafficker after convicting him of peddling more than 1kg brown sugar here in 2020.

Special public prosecutor (SPP) Rashmi Ranjan Brahma said the convict, Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, has been sentenced under Sections 21 (c) and 29 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. He has also been slapped with a penalty of ₹1 lakh while non-payment of the fine will attract additional one-year RI, Brahma said.

He said the special task force

(STF) June 1, 2020 received a tip-off that Jena and his associate Ajaya Mohapatra were planning to deliver brown sugar near Kalinga Vihar. Thereafter, the sleuths laid a trap near National Highway-16. Around 6pm, the duo showed up on a motorcycle. While Jena was apprehended, Ajay managed to give the cops the slip. Later, a search of the motorcycle resulted in the discovery of the contraband under the seat. A court has issued warrant for Ajay's arrest.

During the trial, 12 witnesses were examined and 29 documentary evidence adduced before the court pronounced the verdict, said the SPP.



# Cong panel to probe incidents of crimes against women

Opposition slams the government over worsening law and order concerns as Odisha Congress takes proactive steps to address recent crime incidents



The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) has formed a fact-finding committee to investigate rising crimes against women under the BJP government, citing over 1,600 reported cases in the past eight months.

OPCC President Bhakta Charan Das and opposition parties have criticized the BJP government for failing to ensure women's safety and demanded strict action in the KIIT controversy involving a Nepali student's suicide.

Women's safety in the state. "We have constituted a fact-finding committee to assess the ground reality, the committee members will talk to all the stakeholders related to the women atrocity cases

registered during the last eight months and prepare its report. We will take up the matter seriously before the government and the public," noted Das.

He also added that the party will take all the steps to make the state government take the women's atrocities seriously.

Speaking on the KIIT controversy, the OPCC president demanded stringent action against all those who will be found guilty in connection with the suicide of the Nepali girl and the subsequent assault on other Nepali students by the authorities of the private university in Bhubaneswar.

The Opposition parties, Congress and BJD, have been raising the issue of deteriorating law and order situation in the state under the BJP government.

The legislators of both the Opposition parties have also raised the issue of the collapsing law and order situation in the state during the first phase of the current session of the Assembly a couple of days ago.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi recently shared the information in the Assembly that as many as 30,943 cases have been registered in connection with violence against women in the state during 2024.



MESS: Household and construction waste piles up at Kathajodi riverbank near Devigada, Purighat in Cuttack, Thursday

OP PHOTO

## 3-day safety, skill training for CRUT captains

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: The Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT), in collaboration with the State Transport Authority (STA), has launched the Suvahak Residential Refresher Training to enhance the driving skills, safety awareness, and overall well-being of its captains.

The initiative aims to reinforce crucial driving techniques while ensuring a safer and more efficient public transport system.

The training programme is being conducted at HMV Driver Training Institutes in Chhatia, Berhampur, and Bonai. It is designed to equip CRUT captains

with the latest knowledge and practical skills required for their role.

The three-day residential refresher course focuses on several key aspects, including defensive driving techniques, road rule regulations, accident prevention methods, and fuel-saving strategies. Additionally, participants will receive first-aid Training to prepare them for emergency situations.

Given the rapid advancements in automotive technology, the course also includes a session on BS6 technology, ensuring that captains are well-versed in the latest vehicle emission norms. Furthermore, in recognition of the de-



manding nature of their jobs, the training incorporates yoga and wellness sessions aimed at improving the mental and physical health of drivers.

Officials stated that this training is a crucial step to-

wards ensuring passenger safety and operational efficiency. By continuously upgrading the skills of its captains, CRUT is committed to providing a safe, reliable, and passenger-friendly urban transport experience.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	33.5°	32.2°
Min Temp	20.4°	20.0°
Humidity	73%	87%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
<b>FORECAST</b>		
Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later		

## Union Food Secy directs smooth paddy transport



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Union Food and Public Distribution Secretary Sanjeev Chopra has directed officials to ensure that paddy-laden vehicles are transported directly from the mandis to the mills to streamline the procurement process. He issued these instructions during a review meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja at Lok Seva Bhawan here Thursday.

During the meeting, Chopra interacted with senior officials and assessed the ongoing paddy procurement and public distribution system (PDS) operations in the state. The discussions focused on improving efficiency, reducing delays, and addressing challenges in the procurement and distribution network.

The meeting was attended by Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare principal secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh, Civil Supplies Corporation managing director Shubham Saxena, Food Corporation of India executive director Manoj Kumar Gogoi, FCI Odisha branch general

manager Nihar Ranjan Pradhan and Central Warehousing Corporation general manager Narendra Kumar.

Singh informed that approximately 91 per cent of beneficiaries under the National and State Food Security Acts had completed their e-KYC process.

To improve connectivity in remote areas, steps are being taken to provide internet facilities at 341 government-run fair price shops (FPS) where mobile networks are weak.

Singh revealed that e-KYC registration is underway for around 12 lakh beneficiaries under these FPSs, with 111 shops already equipped with internet connectivity.

Additionally, officials are conducting door-to-door verification for nearly 30 lakh beneficiaries who have yet to complete the e-KYC process.

Following the meeting, he visited a fair price shop at Unit IX, a godown in Mancheswar, and a Grain ATM, where he interacted with beneficiaries to understand their experiences and concerns.

## Odisha plans Mahanadi revamp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: The state government, in collaboration with urban development authorities and environmental experts, has announced the Mahanadi waterfront project to transform the riverfront into a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive urban space.

The project aims to enhance the quality of life for locals, boost tourism, and preserve the river's cultural, historical, and environmental heritage.

A high-level meeting was held Thursday, chaired by Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra. Attendees included Cuttack MP Bhartruhari Mahatab, Cuttack-Barabati MLA Sofia Firdous, Cuttack-Choudwar MLA Souvik Biswal, Cuttack Sadar MLA Prakash Sethy, CMC Mayor Subhash Singh, H&UD principal secretary Usha Padhee, and senior officials from various departments.

Officials advised immediate commencement of work as per



the Detailed Project Report (DPR), ensuring the Bali Yatra ground is ready before the next festival. Minister Mahapatra emphasised that the development will integrate green infrastructure, cultural preservation, and modern urban planning to create a balanced mix of leisure, commerce, and environmental sustainability.

Key priorities include water quality management, waste treatment, and aquatic biodiversity protection. The project will introduce river clean-up initiatives, sustainable waste manage-

ment, and eco-friendly practices among local communities.

The waterfront will feature mixed-use spaces, including residential and commercial zones, recreational facilities, green spaces, pedestrian walkways, and cycling paths. Smart technology will be integrated for waste management, water monitoring, and public safety.

Eco-tourism attractions will include boating, kayaking, river cruises, and cultural events. Parks, playgrounds, and accessible recreational zones will be developed for all age groups.

## Int'l mining expo in City from March 6

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: The City is all set to host the 3rd Odisha Mining and Infrastructure International Expo from March 6 to 9 here at the Baramunda Ground.

Organised by Futuress Trade Fair and Events Pvt. Ltd. in partnership with the Odisha Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises (OASME), the event aims to showcase the latest advancements in mining and infrastructure.

At a press conference held Thursday, industry stalwarts shed light on the expo's growing importance. Among the notable attendees were Futuress Group managing director Swami Prem Anveshi, former CMD of Nalco Tapan Kumar Chand, IIG Group director Sudhanshu Sekhar Mohanty, PRO to the MP of Bhubaneswar Bimal Kumar Raul, Futuress Group director Namit Gupta, Equipage Infracor Private Ltd managing director Sanjeev Nayak and, H.E.L.P. secretary Manasmita Jena.

## MAHA KUMBH CONCLUDES

# Railways sets a record with spl services for pilgrims

ECOR ensured smooth travel for thousands of Odisha pilgrims, running 60 special trains from 25 key cities to Prayagraj

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Indian Railways set a remarkable record during the Maha Kumbh by operating over 15,000 trains in just 42 days, far surpassing the initial target of 13,500 trains. The record-breaking achievement included special trains, designed to accommodate the massive influx of pilgrims traveling from across the country.

The East Coast Railway

(ECOR) played a crucial role in this remarkable effort by facilitating the travel of thousands of devotees from Odisha.

A total of 60 special trains were operated from 25 key cities and towns across the state, ensuring seamless connectivity for pilgrims making the spiritually significant journey.

ECOR officials highlighted the extensive planning and execution that went into arranging these special services. Dedicated trains were scheduled from major cities such as Puri, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and Khurda Road, as well as other important railway hubs, including Brahmapur, Balugaon, Jajpur Keonjhar Road, Jakhapura, Bhadrak, Balasore, Kendujhar-



garh, Dhenkanal, Sambalpur, and Rayagada. These trains ensured that devotees from different parts of Odisha had convenient access to Prayagraj without disruptions.

To accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims, Indian Railways implemented additional measures, including keeping extra rakes on standby

near Prayagraj. This proactive approach allowed for the swift deployment of additional train services, particularly after the Maha Shivaratri Snan, one of the most significant bathing occasions during the Kumbh. The railway administration worked tirelessly to manage the surging passenger demand, ensuring a smooth, safe, and comfortable

journey for millions of travelers.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw personally oversaw operations, while the chairman and CEO of the Railway Board, Satish Kumar, monitored and coordinated the large-scale transportation plan. Their leadership, along with the relentless efforts of railway staff, ensured that all necessary arrangements were in place to handle the unprecedented volume of passengers.

Beyond just increasing the number of trains, Indian Railways took extensive measures to enhance the overall travel experience. Ticketing facilities were streamlined to minimize delays, and security arrangements were bolstered at major

boarding stations and en route to Prayagraj.

Additionally, shelters and other passenger amenities were provided at key transit points to offer pilgrims a comfortable travel experience, particularly during peak pilgrimage days such as Maha Shivaratri.

The successful operation of over 15,000 trains, including the 60 special services from Odisha, underscored Indian Railways' unwavering commitment to ensuring a smooth and spiritually fulfilling journey for devotees.

By responding to the dynamic needs of the Maha Kumbh with efficiency and dedication, the railway authorities set a new benchmark in large-scale pilgrimage transportation.

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# NIT Rourkela develops tech to enhance solar energy efficiency

# Brick kilns flout NGT regulations

POST NEWS NETWORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Feb 27:** A team of researchers from the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela has developed a technique to make solar power systems more efficient, affordable, and reliable.



imum Power Point Tracking (MPPT). This system adjusts the voltage and current based on sunlight and temperature changes to maintain peak efficiency. However, traditional MPPT methods can lead to energy waste and slow responses to changing weather conditions.

older techniques struggle with, ensuring stable and efficient power extraction. It also responds quickly to changes in sunlight and temperature, maintaining peak efficiency. Additionally, by using only a voltage sensor or a simple resistor divider circuit, it reduces system complexity and cost. Its adaptable design allows integration into a wide range of solar power setups, making it a versatile solution for various applications," Prof. Samanta said.

This innovation has significant potential for the renewable energy sector. It can be applied in solar-powered IoT devices, such as weather sensors and remote communication towers, where reliable energy output is essential. It can also be used in affordable consumer solar products like home lighting systems and portable solar chargers, where both cost and efficiency are critical. Additionally, it can support microgrid and off-grid energy solutions, providing stable power in remote or rural areas.

The team's research has been published in leading journals, including IEEE Transactions on Sustainable Energy and IEEE Transactions on Industrial Electronics.

**Kendrapara, Feb 27:** Illegal operation of brick kilns, along with sand and clay mining for the purpose, is causing severe damage to riverbeds in Kendrapara district. Rampant sand and clay mining and transportation for the brick kilns without the required No Objection Certificate (NOC) have led to significant revenue loss for the state treasury. While hundreds of brick kilns continue to operate without restriction, issues such as child labour and air pollution remain largely ignored.

Ignoring the directives of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), illegal brick kiln operators continue such activities with impunity, leading to rising temperatures in the area, thereby worsening public life. Highlighting these concerns, the Mangrove Forest Protection Organisation recently submitted a petition to the District Collector during a public administrative hearing, demanding action against the violations.

Prabhu Prasad Mahapatra, an official of the outfit, stated that riverbeds in the district have become prime targets of these businesses and illegal extraction of soil and sand is rampant. Existing environmental protection laws, including



the Forest and Environment Protection Act of 1986, as well as regulations from the Fire, Labour, and Revenue departments, have failed to curb illegal brick kiln operations.

Manufacturing and baking clay bricks without prior permission from the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) and the state government's Industries department are illegal. However, the continued operation of over a hundred brick kilns in the district has disrupted normal life.

Environmental expert Ashok Kumar Swain pointed out that the heat, dust and fumes emanating from these kilns have led to hazardous environmental conditions, making life unbearable for local residents.

Akshay Behera from Bandhapada village under Derabish block said a formal complaint had been lodged at the District Collector's office regarding illegal mining. Certain individuals allegedly extracted soil from Tarajanga (Baladiapatna) pasture land to manufacture bricks, leaving the area unsuitable for grazing owing to craters of up to 3-4 feet depth.

"Brick kiln owners extract soil from pasture lands, uncultivated plots, riverbanks, and floodplains. The tehsil office has failed to take note of these activities, allowing the violations to continue unchecked," alleged Subhendu Kumar Das, a resident of Kendrapara town.

Debasish Jena from Indupur village said riverbanks across

the district have turned easy targets for illegal mining due to the high availability of sand and clay, rendering the landscapes severely degraded.

Brick kiln owners are reportedly employing labourers from Balasore, Bhadrak, Keonjhar, Medinipur in Kolkata, and Chapra in Bihar for these operations. Cases of child labour have also been observed in these kilns.

One brick kiln owner justified the operations citing increased demand for clay bricks in construction due to the shortage of fly ash brick factories. He suggested that if the brick factories were granted cottage industry status, those could generate employment opportunities for youths and address labour issues.

"Despite ban imposed by the SPCB and NGT, illegal brick kilns continue to function. According to the 1986 Pollution Control Act and the 2005 regulation banning sand mining within 500 metres of riverbanks, these operations are prohibited," legal expert Bidhu Bhusan Mahapatra pointed out. He indicated plans to file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) regarding the matter.

Contacted, Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Nilu Mahapatra said action is being taken against illegal brick kilns.

## Love triangle: 2 held for Deogarh teen's murder

## Tusker electrocuted in Athagarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Deogarh, Feb 27:** Police have solved the murder case of a teenage boy at Tungamal village under Kundheigola police limits in Deogarh district with the investigations revealing that the crime was the fallout of a love triangle.

Two accused, identified as Sushil Munda from Chandrapur village under Naktideul police limits and Aman Nayak from Kuradapashi village under Kundheigola police limits, were arrested and produced in court Thursday. Police have also seized the victim's mobile phone and the rope used in the crime. The victim, 17-year-old Amit Munda, son of Bijay Munda from Tungamal, was reported to be missing by his family. After extensive searches, his body was discovered Wednesday inside the Tungamal forest. Preliminary investigations indicated that he was murdered and his body was hidden in the jungle.

Police, along with sniffer dog squad and forensic team, arrived at the scene and launched an in-depth investigation.

According to police sources, both the victim, Amit, and the prime accused, Sushil, were romantically interested in the same girl. Sushil had repeatedly warned Amit to stay away from her, but Amit refused to comply. Enraged, Sushil, along with his accomplice Aman, decided to eliminate him. On the night of the murder, they lured Amit out on the pretext of having a conversation. Once he arrived, they strangled him with a rope, killing him on the spot.

**Athagarh, Feb 27:** A tusker was electrocuted late Wednesday night after coming in contact with live wires at Kuleilo Biribolua crusher under Sadar forest range and Athagarh forest division in Cuttack district.

According to Forest department officials, the dead animal is estimated to be 32-35 years old. The carcass was found about 500 metre away from the crusher unit. The unit was powered by an 11 KV line connected to the Athgarh-Khuntuni 33 KV supply line. Power supply to the crusher unit from the 11 KV line had been disconnected about four years ago but the wires had not been removed. The line had only been disconnected from the 33 KV supply line but remained intact.

Local residents had repeatedly urged the power distribution firm Tata Power and the Forest department to remove the live wires citing frequent elephant movement in the area. However,



er, villagers alleged that their requests were ignored, leading to the fatal incident.

According to locals, overgrown wild shrubs and vines had become entangled with the 11 KV conductors drawn to the crusher unit. They alleged that the incident occurred when the

11 KV conductor, leading to the elephant's electrocution.

Residents have demanded immediate action to prevent similar incidents in the future.

On being informed, senior officials of Tata Power, along with DFO Yajnadatta Pati, Athagarh forest range officer Rabindra Nayak, and other Forest personnel arrived at the scene Thursday morning and conducted a probe. The carcass of the elephant was examined by veterinarians before it was buried in the forest.

RCCF Sudhanshu Shekhar Khara, DFO Yajnadatta Pati, Tata Power's Athagarh Executive Officer Jeetendra Patra, and other officials also visited the site for an assessment.

Following a review meeting, Tata Power was directed to open the inactive conductors of the defunct power lines on priority basis by April 15. Khara stated that action will be taken against the officials found responsible once the investigation is complete.

## Workshop on wildlife reporting held at IIMC, Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Feb 27:** A workshop on 'Sensitisation and Responsible Reporting on Wildlife and Environment Issues' was held Thursday for media journalists at the conference hall of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) here.

The workshop, jointly organised by IIMC and Dhenkanal forest division, aims to promote strong and mindful journalism by sensitising mainstream and

regional journalists about the need for factual, scientific and dignified coverage of wildlife and conservation stories. As many as 23 journalists working in various media houses participated in this workshop.

Chief speaker Dhenkanal DFO Sumit Kumar Kar said climate change and environmental pollution have posed a major problem for the mankind. Media houses can create more awareness through positive news. Media has an important role to play in

controlling man-animal conflict which has exacerbated due to increasing population and environmental pollution.

IIMC regional director Dr Anand Pradhan said issues like man-animal conflict, wildlife, forest and environment protection, climate change movement should be focus of every media house, he said. Dr Biranchi Narayan Sethy of English journalism department and Dr Chirasrota Jena of Odia journalism department coordinated the workshop.

# Widow, daughter perform last rites of man as kin stay away

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boinda, Feb 27:** A heart-breaking incident in Angul district has brought attention to ongoing caste-based discrimination in society. A woman along with her daughter was forced to carry and cremate the body of her husband after his family and community refused to perform the last rites due to his inter-caste marriage.

The incident occurred in Sharadh-munda village under Nunukapashi panchayat of Kishorenegar block. Prakash Pradhan, 45, from Pentharabasa village in Athamallik police jurisdiction, passed away Thursday morning after

battling kidney disease for several months.

Prakash had married Rita Bishwal in 2010, defying caste barriers. Their marriage was rejected by both families, and they were ostracised by their communities. The couple was excluded from social events, and any interaction with them was met with fines. Despite the social boycott, they built a life together in Sharadh-munda, raising two daughters and a son, while Prakash worked as a folk singer's assistant.

In 2020, Prakash was diagnosed with kidney failure. Despite under-

going treatment for five years, he succumbed to the illness Thursday. Rita informed both her in-laws and her own family of his death, but they reportedly visited only to see the body and then left without assisting in the funeral rites. They allegedly refused to touch the

body or help carry it, citing caste traditions. Left with no other option, Rita and her children sat by the body grieving, as no one came forward to help with the cremation. Local residents contacted Kishorenegar tehsil administration, but no official arrived, and police

from Boinda outpost reportedly visited and left without taking action. Finally, a group of Boinda residents, including Bijay Sahu, Bishnu Prasad Pradhan, Sarbeshwar Sahu, Rama Behera, Ajit Pradhan, Trilochan Behera, and Giridhari Pradhan, stepped in. They arranged firewood and other necessities for the cremation. Rita and her eldest daughter, Poojarini Biswal, carried Prakash's body on a cot to the cremation ground, where his son, Rajesh Biswal, lit the funeral pyre.

The incident has sparked widespread outrage, highlighting the deep-seated issue of caste discrimination in modern society.

### INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
**E-AUCTION NOTICE**  
No. SDCM/KUR/E-Auction/NFR/Press Clippings/FEB/2024-25, Date : 24.02.2025

- Description of Assets :** Setting up Multi Branded Rail Coach Restaurant at Puri Railway Station.
- Description of Assets :** Setting up Multi Branded Rail Coach Restaurant at Brahmapur (BAM) Railway Station.

**Auction Date / Hour :** 12.03.2025, 1100 Hrs - 1130 Hrs (for Sl. No. 1) & 12.03.2025, 1100 Hrs - 1140 Hrs (for Sl. No. 2)

**Note :** The assets & schedule details of the said e-auction have been uploaded in the website of [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for reference of Bidders.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / PR-1028/P/24-25 | Khurda Road

**REGIONAL OFFICE: 108 - B, Unit-VII, Surya Nagar, Gopabandhu Square, Bhubaneswar-751003, Ph. No.: 0674-2397551, 2397199**

**TENDER NOTICE**  
Central Bank of India invites online tenders from eligible bidders for Furnishing (Furniture, Electrical & Data cabling) work at premises of Naya Chowk Branch under Regional Office Bhubaneswar. For detailed Notice Inviting Tenders visit the website <http://www.centralbankofindia.co.in/en/active-tender> and/or <https://centralbank.abprocure.com/EPROC>. The deadline for submission of tender is 17.03.2025 upto 3.00 P.M.

**Date: 27.02.2025** Sd/- Chief Manager

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
**NOTIFICATION FOR ENGAGEMENT OF COMMISSION AGENT FOR CHATRAPUR COURT (CAPC), BARITHENGARH (BRTG) & JENAPUR ROAD (JPRD) PASSENGER HALTS**

No. G.51/P.H/CAPC, BRTG & JPRD / 811 Date : 20.02.2025

APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FROM INTERESTED CANDIDATES FOR ENGAGEMENT AS COMMISSION AGENT TO SELL TICKETS AT (1). CHATRAPUR COURT (CAPC) PASSENGER HALT IN BETWEEN GANJAM (GAM) AND CHHATRAPUR (CAPC) STATIONS, (2). BARITHENGARH (BRTG) PASSENGER HALT IN BETWEEN BYRE (BYR) AND DHANMANDAL (DNM) STATIONS & (3). JENAPUR ROAD (JPRD) PASSENGER HALT IN BETWEEN DELANGA (DEG) AND BIRAPURUSOTTAMPUR (BRST) STATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

COMMISSION PAYABLE TO THE HALT AGENT WILL BE AS UNDER :

Amount of Sale of tickets per month	Commission payable
₹ 1/- to 15,000/-	15%
₹ 15,001/- to 50,000/-	12%
₹ 50,001/- to 1,00,000/-	9%
₹ 1,00,001/- to 2,00,000/-	6%
₹ 2,00,001/- and above	3%

Security Deposit for above halt is ₹ 2,00,00/- (Rupees Two Thousand) only. Application duly filled in should reach this office by 1500 hrs. on or before 26.03.2025 (Wednesday). If the last day i.e. 26.03.2025 happens to be or is declared to be a holiday, applications will be received by the same time on the next working day. All the received applications will be opened at 1530 hrs. on 26.03.2025. The Railway reserves the right to reject any application without assigning any reason whatsoever. For complete details, application format and other terms & conditions please visit our website: [www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in)

PR-1020/P/24-25 | Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / Khurda Road

**Bank of India**  
Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.: 0674-2362249

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**  
E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-auction of the following property "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for realization of the debts due to the Bank.

Sl. No.	GOPALPUR BRANCH, PH.: 9007488999 / Name & Address of Borrowers/ Guarantors / Total Dues	Description of the Property	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	1) (For Cash Credit & Term Loan) Borrower: Mrs. Aryakanya Maharana, W/o.: Mr. Samarendra Kumar Maharana / Guarantors: 1) Mr. Samarendra Kumar Maharana, S/o.: Mr. Prafulla Kumar Maharana, S/o.: Mr. Prafulla Kumar Maharana, S/o.: Late Krishna Chandra Maharana, All are At: Thoriaasahi, Buxibazar, Cuttack-753001. 2) (For Housing Loan) Borrower: Mr. Samarendra Kumar Maharana, S/o.: Mr. Prafulla Kumar Maharana / Co-Borrower: Mrs. Aryakanya Maharana, W/o.: Mr. Samarendra Kumar Maharana / Guarantor: Mr. Prafulla Kumar Maharana, S/o.: Late Krishna Chandra Maharana, All are At: Thoriaasahi, Buxibazar, Cuttack-753001 / Total Dues: ₹26,32,806.58 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid.	G+1 RCC Residential Building situated over Plot No.: 4, Khata No.: 37 D1, Plot Area: Ac.0.0160 Dec. i.e. 697 Sqft., KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Cuttack Sahr Unit No.: 22 Mirkamalpatna, P.S.: Mangalabagh, Tahasil/SRO: Cuttack, Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha, Standing in the name of Mr. Prafulla Kumar Maharana, Bounded by North: Ghasiasahi Lane, South: Road, East: Mahadev Maharana (Plot No.: 1352), West: Road	₹41,55,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹4,15,500/- / ₹ 50,000/-

**Date & Time of E-Auction: 18.03.2025 From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.** with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

**Last Date & Time for submission of EMD & Documents: 18.03.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.**

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 17.03.2025 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

**\*Successful Bidder to deposit 25% of the bid amount by next working day which includes EMD money. The balance amount to be paid on or before 15th Day of confirmation of sale.**

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. This is also a 15 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com>

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 28.02.2025 Authorised Officer, Bank of India



Inspiration is a slender river of brightness leaping from a vast and Eternal Knowledge, it exceeds reason more perfectly than reason exceeds the knowledge of the senses.



SRI AUROBINDO

# Building Institutions

Public institutions worldwide are in crisis. Trust in them is declining, and US President Donald Trump's administration, working hand in glove with the world's richest man, Elon Musk, views them as enemies that need to be dismantled. In the face of funding cuts and geopolitical fragmentation, multilateral organizations look weaker than ever.

The attacks by Trump and Musk, who boasted about "feeding" US-AID "into the wood chipper" and preparing to abolish the Department of Education, may be ill-conceived and set to backfire. But they are reminding us that there is no good reason why public institutions have to be just as they were a half-century ago. Simply defending existing institutions looks ever less like an adequate response.

Few of humanity's biggest challenges - from shaping artificial intelligence and addressing mental health to managing energy transitions and industrial policy - are likely to be handled well without effective institutions. But today's ministries, agencies, commissions, public services, and regulators often look ill-suited to meet these new needs.

So, what should the alternatives look like? Governments have always depended on institutions to do their work - to enforce laws, educate children, collect taxes, or provide security - and they have often invented new ones for new tasks, like reducing carbon dioxide emissions or fighting organized crime. Amid the funding cuts and attacks, reformers must focus on creating better expressions of the public interest, making the most of new tools and technologies to improve efficiency, and restoring public trust.

But the options for designing institutions today are very different from a generation ago. Global businesses like Alphabet, ByteDance, Amazon, and Alibaba have pioneered radically new business models and tapped into unprecedented economies of scale. A generation ago, few would have imagined that companies like Uber or Grab could provide a taxi service without owning any taxis.

Meanwhile, civil society has also developed new models, such as Wikipedia, Ushahidi (data crowdsourcing), and Buurtzorg (home care), and there are many new forms of public-private partnerships, as well as thousands of B-corps (like Natura in Brazil) guided by social and environmental principles.

There has also been some remarkable innovation within the public sector. Since its launch in 2009, India's Aadhaar program has provided biometric IDs to more than one billion people and helped vastly expand access to financial services. Over the past decade, Narendra Modi has been implementing his motto of "maximum governance and minimum government," while China created the world's first Cyber-space Administration in 2011, and its Government Guidance Funds have mobilized trillions of dollars for new technology since 2002.

But, in much of the world, public institutions have hardly changed. Most are still pyramid structures, as they were a century ago, and are too often opaque and unresponsive. When new institutions are created, they are typically designed by committees of relatively elderly politicians or civil servants and tend to be siloed, hierarchical, and inflexible.

Artificial intelligence shows starkly the gap between what's there and what's needed. It has been 20 years since AI started being widely used in some public services (including law enforcement and health-care) and many private ones (such as credit scoring and search engines). But the world is only just starting to create institutions to govern it well - from procurement to maximize its value for public services to regulation to mitigate abuses, as well as multilateral institutions to pool global knowledge about the risks and opportunities associated with the technology.

One reason for the delay was clever positioning by the industry, which discouraged governments from acting by framing AI as a fait accompli that should just be accepted. As Microsoft's chief economist, Michael Schwarz, put it in 2023: "We shouldn't regulate AI until we see some meaningful harm that is actually happening."

Such arguments are obviously favorable to private interests. But public institutions' duty is to the public. And as Daron Acemoglu, one of last year's Nobel laureate economists, and others have shown, it is institutions that determine why some countries prosper so much more than others.

Still, it is one thing to tout the successes of the Central Provident Fund and Temasek in Singapore, Brazil's Ministry of Social Development, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and the Development Bank of Southern Africa. It is quite another to devise equivalents for our current needs.

What will it take to create agile, flexible, and trustworthy institutions? What is the best design for making the most of AI, data, and collective intelligence (as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change does for climate science)? Can we build on successes like Icarus, which mobilized satellite technology to build the "internet of animals" in an effort to help us track the state of animal populations on the planet?

These crucial questions are already a major focus within global bodies like the United Nations Development Programme. Its Istanbul Innovation Days conference in late March will feature innovators who are pioneering new methods to improve how institutions function.

These innovators are drawing as much from biology as from bureaucracy, thinking more in terms of mycelia (branching fungal networks) than pyramids. They are designing lighter mechanisms that can operate much faster during crises, and others that move more slowly and deliberately - like the establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner in Wales, which has inspired the creation of a similar post at the European Commission.

Work is underway to build new institutions to protect against misinformation and election interference; to mobilize capital for urban energy transitions; to empower indigenous communities; and to help young people navigate the labor market during a period of turmoil and uncertainty. UN Secretary-General António Guterres described the challenge well in 2023: "We cannot effectively address problems as they are if institutions don't reflect the world as it is. Instead of solving problems, they risk becoming part of the problem." Institutions are like buildings: we shape them, but they then subtly influence us and how we operate. We may be in an era of dismantling, disruption, and disorder. But history suggests that such circumstances eventually lead to rebuilding and reinvention. When that time comes, we will need to have already done the work of exploring better options. As the Brazilian sociologist and politician Roberto Mangabeira Unger observes, "the world remains restless under the yoke of a dictatorship of no alternatives." Fortunately, such restlessness can be fuel for imagination.

The writer, a professor at University College London, is the author of *When Science Meets Power (Polity, 2024)*.



Geoff Mulgan

In the face of funding cuts and geopolitical fragmentation, multilateral organizations look weaker than ever



Rajdeep Sardesai

IN RECENT YEARS, THE LIST OF HIGH PROFILE CONGRESS FUNCTIONARIES EXITING THE GRAND OLD PARTY IS A RATHER LENGTHY ONE

If the Congress does not need my services, I do have plenty of other options...,' said Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on a Malayalam language podcast.

In the age of frenzied media noise, a single tweet or a neatly clipped 20 second soundbite can spark off a swirling controversy. Shashi Tharoor, not for the first time, finds himself under the scanner for what he said, or rather didn't quite say, in a recent interview. The Sahitya Akademi winning author listed his 'options' to active politics as book writing, lectures and much more but the instant reaction was to presume that another Congress leader was preparing to fly the coop and switch sides when all he was arguably doing was making a persuasive case for himself as a party nominee for Kerala CM.

In recent years, the list of high profile Congress functionaries exiting the grand old party is a rather lengthy one. A majority of them have left to join the BJP-led ruling alliance, a clear sign that the scent of power remains the ultimate magnet in politics. A few of them like Jyotiraditya Scindia, Jitin Prasad and Milind Deora for example had privileged access to the Congress' first family and yet chose to part ways. Other seniors like Himanta Biswa Sarma and Captain Amarinder Singh left after they found themselves on the wrong side of internal power politics.

Tharoor's case is a bit different. At the outset, he doesn't fit into the stereotypical Congress neta mould. Far from being an entitled dynast, a family friend of the Gandhis or someone who has wormed his way up the Congress ladder, the suave and articulate former UN diplomat turned MP represents a dying breed in Indian politics: a self-made meritorious individual whose career path combines the best of scholarship, hard work and skill.

When Tharoor first made the switch from UN bureaucracy to the hurly burly of electoral politics, there were



It is Tharoor's attempt to rise above the hyper-polarisation of a deeply divided polity that makes him such an attractive leader for the voter, if not the party

the usual sniggers, a belief that he was just another ambitious lateral entrant who would fall flat soon enough. His 'Stephanian' accent, unique vocabulary, personal life and loves were all seen to be unsuited to India's more conservative political milieu. No less than PM Modi had a rather unkind and wholly unwarranted jab at him when he derisively referred to Tharoor's late wife Sunanda as a '50 crore girlfriend'.

And yet, through all the storms in his private and political life, Tharoor has stuck it out as a four-time MP from Thiruvananthapuram, no mean achievement in a seat where the Left has a solid base and where the BJP has attempted to grow one. He may have punched above his weight at times - most notably when he threw his hat in the Congress president election ring in 2022 - but few can deny that he is one of the few English speaking 'outsiders' who has succeeded despite being stymied by an entrenched party system. As I detail in my book, 2024: The Election That Surprised India, Tharoor's bid for Congress presidency was fought on a completely non level playing field. That he still got over a 1000 votes in the contest suggests that his appeal within party ranks was greater than expected.

Part of Tharoor's problem is that he can't be slotted easily into any 'camp', a public intellectual who is perhaps far more comfortable in the

rarefied environs of a literature festival than in the cabals and coteries of Congress politics. Even when his name was propped up as part of the G23 - the grouping that was reportedly pushing for change in the Congress - it wasn't easy to see him spearheading a rebellion or coup in the Congress. Maybe his starkly individualistic style has meant that every time he supports a Modi government idea - be it on the economy or foreign policy - he is instantly viewed with suspicion by those within the Congress who claim to be waging a no holds barred 'war' against the Modi-BJP-RSS 'machine'. So deep are the anxieties and insecurities within a 'closed door' political system that there is an ever shrinking space for anyone who wishes to express even a mildly contrarian opinion.

But a genuinely democratic party should never ossify into an echo chamber of sycophants. Sadly, that's the case with most of our political parties which is why Tharoor becomes a soft target for his critics within the Congress. Paradoxically, it is Tharoor's attempt to rise above the hyper-polarisation of a deeply divided polity that makes him such an attractive leader for the voter, if not the party. If the Congress has lost a large chunk of the urban middle class vote in particular in recent times it is because the party has got boxed into a narrow ideological construct where it finds it increasingly difficult to

appeal to a large fence-sitting populace who have no strong political loyalties. This group of voters is looking for a positive alternative for change, one revolving around a broad-based agenda of inclusivity and growth, not an opposition which is simply driven by a slough of negativism. As an avowed Nehruvian secularist who has repeatedly challenged the BJP's idea of Hindutva while also espousing a liberal outlook on economic issues, Tharoor's arguments offer an important ideological counterpoint to divisive saffronised politics as indeed he does to the left's sterile Stalinism.

Which is also why Tharoor might just be the right person to be projected as a Congress 'face' in Kerala, a state where winning the floating vote outside vocal cadre-based interests is crucial to electoral success. Kerala, in fact, is arguably the only state where the Congress might have a genuine shot at victory on its own in the next two year cycle of state elections. But as has been the case in so many other states, the Congress' capacity to score self-goals cannot be underestimated and having several CM candidates in a deeply factionalised state unit is a recipe for potential disaster. In the circumstances, is the Congress leadership ready to break with the status quo for once and take the 'risk' of elevating Tharoor as a possible Kerala chief minister? It may not be the worst choice a beleaguered party has made in recent times.

Post-script: At a recent dinner, a friend asked why I had never thought of entering politics. I referred to the case of Tharoor and chuckled. 'I guess some of us are far better off as talking heads in a TV studio and writing books on politics than actually being participants.' It is another matter that Tharoor and I went to the same school in south Mumbai: a truly cosmopolitan education may no longer be an asset in public life.

The writer is a senior journalist and author.

## SPECTRUM NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

# Invest in innovation for a developed India



Nikunja Bihari Sahu

FOR A DEVELOPING COUNTRY LIKE INDIA, INNOVATION AND RESEARCH ARE NOT JUST A SCIENTIFIC PURSUIT, BUT A VEHICLE FOR ECONOMIC AWAKENING

National Science Day marks the landmark discovery of Raman Effect by eminent physicist Sir CV Raman on 28 February, 1928 and his subsequent felicitation of the Nobel Prize as the first Asian in Physics. The theme for this year's celebration is 'Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for a Developed India.'

Over the years, India has made rapid strides in the Global Innovation Index (GII) rankings, rising from the 81st position in 2015 to 39th in 2024 among 133 economies. This leap in ranking reflects India's commitment to fostering a robust innovation ecosystem that is catalyzed by strong policies and a collaborative environment for startups and industries. In the 2024 edition of GII, while countries like Switzerland, Sweden, the US, Singapore, and the UK

dominated as the world's most innovative powers, India, along with China, Turkey, Vietnam, and the Philippines, has been recognised as one of the fastest-rising economies in terms of innovation over the past decade. Through its flagship initiatives like Start-Up India, Digital India, and Atal Innovation Mission, the government has strived to continuously foster entrepreneurship, research, and technological advancement.

The life of Raman has several important points to teach that would encourage the spirit of inquiry and innovation in our younger generation today. First, Raman published his first scientific paper "Unsymmetrical diffraction bands due to a rectangular aperture" in the British journal 'The Philosophical Magazine' in 1906 while he was just a graduate of only 18 years. Second, he

contradicted Lord Rayleigh, an established British physicist of that time, regarding the explanation for the blue colour of the sea which was believed to be due to the reflection of the blue sky. He proved that it was only due to the scattering of light rays by particles of water. This he concluded on the basis of an improvised experiment carried out with a Nicol prism from the deck of a steamship in the midst of the Mediterranean during his return voyage from Southampton to Bombay in 1921. It not only proved the Rayleigh explanation theoretically wrong, but represented a revolutionary idea from the Eastern world breaking the monopoly of the scientific supremacy of the West. Thirdly, Raman discovered his Raman Effect with the help of a Spectrometer that cost hardly five hundred rupees at that time.

However, it is lamenting to note the state of poor research in India as is evident from the fact that the country has reportedly only 140 researchers per 1,000,000 population as compared to 4651 in the US.

For a developing country like India, innovation and research are not just a scientific pursuit, but a vehicle for economic awakening, societal transformation, inclusive growth and people's empowerment that leads to the ultimate goal of national development. Hence, building a right mindset and ecosystem for bolstering the research and innovation base in the country would truly establish us as world leaders in the field. Raman's life and work would always be the torch-bearer for us in achieving this goal!

The writer is Education Officer, Regional Science Centre, Bhopal.

### Worrying trend

Sir, Recent news reports about youngsters turning violent and causing deaths to others is something that the society and the nation as a whole have to study, deliberate, debate and find solutions urgently or else rather than taking the nation to progress the youth of the nation are sure to push the society to the 'primitive age' clashes, conflicts and bloodshed. Be it the heart wrenching murder of kith and kin by a youngster in Kerala, blood curdling ragging incidents in some of the schools and colleges in some states, 'psycho type' cyber bullying, gang assaults, vandalism of trains and vehicles and a list of criminal activities that paralyse the hearts goes to show that the path taken by our present day youth is definitely not good. A lot of factors are 'culprits' that make our youth uncontrollable, unsympathetic and cold hearted. Individual attention deficit, lack of checking of conduct and behavioural disorders at a early age, early involvement with alcohol and drugs, low intelligence, poor educational achievement, and also influence of mass media make many a youth turn into anti-social elements. Parents, teachers, society and the state have very important roles to play to mould, develop, care, create and produce the citizens of tomorrow - the hopes of the nation.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

### Policy shift

Sir, The United States' recent shift in policy on the Ukraine-Russia conflict has raised significant concerns about its global credibility. Under the earlier Democratic administration, the US provided substantial military aid to Ukraine, including advanced weaponry like ATACMS missiles, to bolster its defence against Russian aggression. This support was pivotal in enabling Ukraine to withstand the invasion and support its sovereignty. However, the current administration under President Donald Trump has taken a markedly different stance. The US opposed a United Nations resolution condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, aligning itself with Russia and a minority of other nations. This move not only contradicts previous US commitments but also undermines the unified international response to the conflict.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

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



# BLR Airport launches largest domestic cargo terminal

According to BIAL, this state-of-the-art 245,000-square-foot facility marks a significant milestone in BLR Airport's cargo handling capabilities



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 27:** Kempegowda International Airport, Bangalore, operated by Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) in partnership with Menzies Aviation, has launched India's largest Greenfield Domestic Cargo Terminal (DCT) in terms of designed capacity.

According to BIAL, this state-of-the-art 245,000-square-foot facility marks a significant milestone in BLR Airport's cargo handling capabilities. It offers enhanced infrastructure and streamlined processes to meet the growing demands of the domestic market.

This facility will play a key role in connecting industries, strengthening supply chains, and driving innovation toward a more sustainable future for domestic cargo and regional trade, positioning BLR Airport as a leader in cargo handling.

Spanning over seven acres, the DCT has a peak handling capacity of approximately 360,000 metric tons, with the potential to expand to 400,000 metric tons.

"With around 42 truck docks, more than 400 specially designed cargo bins, conveyors integrated with X-ray machines, approximately 30 Unit Load Device (ULD) build-up and breakdown stations, along with real-time data capture using 40 handheld terminals and self-service kiosks for agents, the facility will ensure seamless cargo movement while reducing turnaround times," BIAL said in a statement.

Briefing the media, BIAL COO Satyaki Raghunath said, "This is an initiative we conceptualised over the last two or three years. When we established this partnership, our goal was to prioritise domestic

Historically, international cargo has been the primary focus, but over the last two years—especially in the post-COVID environment—domestic cargo has gained prominence."

Highlighting that Bangalore Airport has effectively tripled its cargo capacity every decade, he said, "When we first started, we handled around 130,000 metric tons of cargo. By our 10th anniversary, this had increased to approximately 350,000 metric tons. This year, we will surpass 500,000 metric tons. The growth of cargo has closely paralleled the rise in passenger traffic."

He added, "We have high hopes that the domestic cargo facility will drive domestic traffic growth. From a South India perspective, Bangalore already holds over 40 per cent of the market share. In terms of tonnage, we expect this year to end with more than half a million metric tons overall. This facility will significantly boost interest in domestic cargo."

According to Anil Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, the terminal is equipped with cutting-edge technology and digital solutions, introducing upgrades such as real-time shipment tracking, data analytics tools, and enhanced communication systems integrated with barcodes and QR codes.

"This integration enables seamless data exchange with airline systems, improves process timelines, and reduces human touchpoints, ensuring faster and safer cargo handling.

The emphasis on digitalisation will streamline operations, enhance visibility across the supply chain, and elevate the overall cargo handling experience for airlines, cargo agents, and end users," he said.

According to the statement, BLR Airport has established a strong reputation as a leading hub for perishables. It is already the largest exporter of mangoes, coriander, and various other perishable goods.

"With the Domestic Cargo Terminal (DCT), BLR Airport is set to further enhance its handling capacity. The new DCT will have the capability to manage perishables, solidifying BLR Airport's position as a key player in the air cargo industry," the statement said.

"The terminal will also include dedicated storage areas for specialised cargo such as valuables, fragile items, live animals, dangerous goods, and radioactive materials, reinforcing its comprehensive cargo handling capabilities," it added.

Elaborating on the terminal's features, Kumar noted that it complies with Indian Green Building Council standards. Its scalable design supports future growth while reducing its environmental footprint.

The terminal integrates eco-friendly features such as skylighting, advanced ventilation systems, water conservation practices, and energy-efficient infrastructure, all designed to minimise environmental impact, he stated.

# 24-hour coastal shutdown in Kerala

The protesters want the Centre to revoke the decision to allow sand mining from three blocks off the Kollam coast with a total area of 242 sq km

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 27:** All fishing activities in Kerala have come to a grinding halt after the Fisheries Coordination Committee called for a 24-hour total coastal shutdown protesting against the Centre's move to mine the sea off the Kollam coast.

The Committee includes members from the traditional political fronts in the state -- the ruling CPI(M)-led Left and the Congress-led UDF.

The protesters want the Centre to revoke the decision to allow sand mining from three blocks off the Kollam coast with a total area of 242 sq km.

The Union Ministry of Mines initiated the tendering process in November 2024, and the winning bidder is expected to be announced by March 27.

Consequent to the protest, all businesses, from the ordinary fish vendors to the fish stalls

## OFFSHORE MINING ROW



in the markets in the state, did not open Thursday. The shutdown began from Wednesday midnight.

Likewise, neither the small nor the big fishing boats have ventured into the sea.

Led by former veteran Congress parliamentarian TN Prathapan and CPI(M) legislator PP Chitharanjan, the statewide protest has turned

out to be a success, as the fishing sector and others are participating in protest meetings.

The Latin Church and its members have also expressed their solidarity and are taking part in the protest.

Kerala's fishing industry directly employs around 2.5 lakh people, with another 15 lakh relying on it indirectly.

The state has approximately

4,000 trawlers and over 25,000 other fishing vessels.

With the 24-hour shutdown turning out to be a success, this is going to give greater impetus to the upcoming Parliament march scheduled for March 12.

Even though both the traditional political rivals are jointly staging this protest, a statewide coastal rally was flagged off by Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan being organised by the Revolutionary Socialist Party -- an ally of the Congress-led UDF.

Former State Minister and the state secretary of RSP Shibhu Baby John, who was leading the rally, said that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was playing a double game.

"On the outside, the Left government says they are against sea sand mining, but the Centre, which went ahead with this, has the silent support of the Vijayan government," said John.



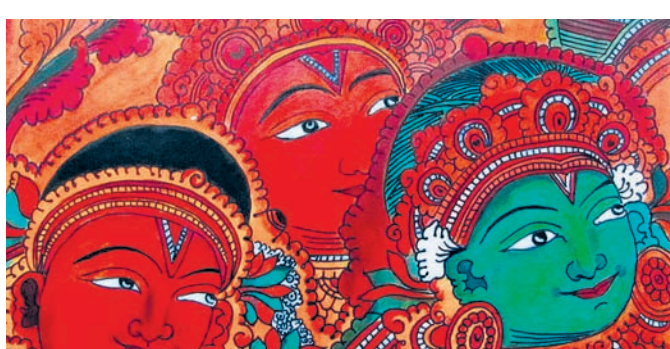
Foreign tourists wait in a queue to offer prayers at the 'Aazhimala Shiva Temple' on the occasion of 'Mahashivratri' festival, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

# Murals at Ettumanoor Temple regain original splendour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kottayam (Kerala), Feb 27:** The ancient murals at the Ettumanoor Mahadeva Temple are set to be restored to their original splendour and uniqueness. Devaswom Minister VN Vasavan announced that the renovation work is progressing and shared a video of the restoration on his Facebook page Thursday.

In his post, he stated that the renowned murals would regain their past glory while preserving their authenticity and beauty.



The conservation work is being carried out by the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) in

collaboration with Vasthuvaidya Gurukulam, Aranmula. The inner walls of the temple's gopuram feature depictions of Pradosha Dance, Aghoramurthy, and Ananthasayanam, while the outer walls showcase Vettashastav, Venugopalan, Gopika Vastrakshepam, and the Lasya Dance of the Gopikas.

These paintings are considered masterpieces of Kerala's unique artistic heritage, according to temple authorities.

Dating back to the 18th century, the murals at this Lord Shiva temple provide valuable insights into the early forms of Dravidian mural art.

# Minister aims to make K'taka global digital creation capital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 27:** Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge Thursday emphasised the need for the right policies to expand India's contribution to the animation and gaming market.

According to him, India currently contributes less than one per cent to the market but has the potential to grow to three per cent with appropriate policies. The global Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR) market is expected to grow to \$882 billion by the

financial year 2030, up from \$596.7 billion in the current fiscal, the Minister, who holds the Information Technology and Biotechnology portfolio, said at the inaugural session of the three-day event, Bangalore GAFK-2025.

"India currently contributes less than one per cent to the global market, but with the right policies, it could expand to three per cent by FY30, reaching \$26 billion," Kharge said.

He pointed out that India's Animation and VFX industry is growing at a CAGR of 10.94 per cent, while the gaming industry follows closely with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 9.64 per cent.

From 2014 to 2020, Indian gaming startups attracted \$350 million in venture capital funding, and the sector is growing at an impressive CAGR of 22 per cent, the Minister told the gathering.

# 2-day vulture census begins in southern states

The survey aims to monitor vulture populations in seven protected areas where these birds are known to exist

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Feb 27:** A two-day synchronised vulture census has commenced in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, covering 106 locations across the three states.

The survey aims to monitor vulture populations in seven protected areas where these birds are known to exist.

According to a statement from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden of Tamil Nadu, the census is being carried out with the participation of Forest department field staff, vulture experts, NGOs, students, and volunteers.

In Tamil Nadu alone, the survey is taking place at 33



The survey follows two primary techniques: the vantage point count and the nest-count method.

locations, with up to 220 individuals involved in the operation.

Ahead of the census, preparatory meetings were held with field officers from the three states to discuss logistics, locations, and methodologies.

The survey follows two primary techniques: the vantage point count and the nest-count

method. Volunteers received training and orientation to ensure the accuracy of data collection.

A synchronous vulture survey conducted in 2024 across the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR), which spans Tamil Na-

du, Kerala, and Karnataka, recorded over 300 vultures.

The survey covered key protected areas, including Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Biligiri Ranganatha Swamy Temple Tiger Reserve, Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, and Nellai Forest Division.

The Mudumalai-Sathyamangalam-Bandipur-Wayanad complex within the NBR accounted for more than 82 per cent of the vultures recorded.

In the February 2023 census, 246 vultures were identified. However, by December 2023, the number had increased to 320, indicating a positive trend in vulture conservation efforts.

The highest concentrations were recorded in the Mudumalai and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserves in Tamil Nadu.

The December 2023 survey identified the following vulture species: 217 critically endangered white-rumped vultures (Gyps bengalensis), 47 long-billed vultures (Gyps indicus), 50 Asian king vultures (Sarcogyps calvus), four endangered Egyptian vultures (Neophron percnopterus), and two near-threatened Himalayan griffon vultures (Gyps himalayensis).

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is home to three main vulture species: white-rumped vultures, long-billed vultures, and Asian king vultures.

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, RPRC, BHUBANESWAR**  
(e-mail Id : rprcbbsr@gmail.com)  
Tel : (0674)-2557925

No.-T-07/387/RPRC Date : 25.02.2025

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**  
Bid Identification No. RPRC/ 25 / 2024-25

No.MM-507 : The Chief Executive, RPRC, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department, Govt. of Odisha invites RFP for Consultancy Services for "Survey, Soil Testing, Design Engineering, DPR Preparation for Drinking Water Project with Automation System at RPRC, Bhubaneswar" from eligible bidders through e-tendering process in two bid system. The bidders fulfilling the eligibility criteria of the RFP document can access and download the complete RFP and other details from RPRC website [www.rprcbbsr.in/](http://www.rprcbbsr.in/) e-portal <https://rprc.ebizard.in/>. The bid calendar under the end-to-end process are -

EMD in Rs	Cost of Bid Document in Rs.	From	To	Date of Opening of (Technical Bid)
7,000/- (online)	6,000.00 (Online)	27.02.2025 / 10.00 A.M.	13.03.2025 / 10.00 A.M.	13.03.2025 / 11.30 A.M.

Addendum/ Corrigendum/ Cancellation, if any, will be published in RPRC website and e-portal. Bidder needs to register on the portal after successful Registration and send a mail to [procurement@rprc.in](mailto:procurement@rprc.in) with details (For New Bidders). For any other queries regarding registration & online tender submission contact to : Mr. Shivendra Kumar, Mobile - 9355030613 and Jitesh Kumar, Mobile - 9355030604, e-mail : [procurement@rprc.in](mailto:procurement@rprc.in)

Sd./- Chief Executive, RPRC, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-08004/11/0027/2425

**OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BOUDH (ODISHA), DIST - BOUDH**  
E-mail : [boudhgarhnac@yahoo.co.in](mailto:boudhgarhnac@yahoo.co.in)

'e' Procurement NOTICE  
No. 520/NAC Dt. 25.02.2025

**Bid Identification No. BOU/NAC/09/2024-25**

No.C-1749 : The Executive Officer on behalf of NAC Boudhgarh invites tenders in Single Cover System. Bid documents consisting of specification of the Schedule of Quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen the Govt. Website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

1. Number of Civil works/Others	(11) numbers
2. Estimated Costs	2.63 lakhs to 42.13 lakhs
3. Period of completion	As per NIT
4. Date and time of availability of the bid documents in the portal	From 10.00 A.M. of 01.03.2025 to 05.00 P.M. of 10.03.2025
5. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal	05.00 P.M. of 10.03.2025
6. Bids will be opened on	10.30 A.M. of Dt. 11.03.2025
7. Name and address of the officer inviting bid	Executive Officer, NAC Boudhgarh

Sd./- Executive Officer NAC Boudhgarh

OIPR-13155/11/0016/2425





The digital revolution has redefined our existence, but has sown new seeds to threaten us collectively

APP CAB STRIKE IN KOLKATA

Commuters were inconvenienced Thursday as around 7,000 app cabs and a few thousand app bikes went off city roads in the morning to press for their demand of hiking fares by the aggregators concerned



of the day quote

India is staring at a global tariff war and trade barriers and the Union budget announcements have turned out to be a damp squib

Had a very good meeting with Dr. Augustine Tano Kouame, World Bank Country Director, India.

The Maharashtra government holds a 26 per cent share in the Vadhran Port project, which is why Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis is actively engaging with the central government to ensure its smooth implementation

PUNE BUS RAPE

13 police teams to nab accused, ₹1L reward

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 27: Pune police Thursday announced a reward of ₹1 lakh for information leading to the arrest of a history-sheeter who allegedly raped a 26-year-old woman inside an MSRTC bus at the Swargate bus station here, officials said.



DRONES DEPLOYED FOR MANHUNT

Amid mounting pressure, police Thursday deployed drones and dogs in Shirur taluka of Pune district to trace the accused in the Swargate bus rape case, officials said.

Amid the frantic efforts to crack the case, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut drew parallels between the crime and the 2012 Delhi Nirbhaya gang rape and targeted district guardian minister Ajit Pawar over law and order.

As many as 13 police teams are working to nab the accused, Dattatray Ramdas Gade (37) who has been on the run since the incident which took place on a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus early Tuesday morning, a police official said.

A reward of ₹1 lakh will be given to the person providing information about his whereabouts, Pune police commissioner Amitesh Kumar told PTI. Another police official said that information about Gade can be provided at numbers 020-2442769 or 9881670659.

Gade has half a dozen cases of theft, robbery and chain-snatching registered against him in Pune and adjoining Ahilyanagar district, and was out on bail since 2019 in one of the offences. Swargate in Pune city is one of the largest bus depots of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC).

According to the survivor woman, as she was waiting for a bus for Phaltan in Satara district at one of the platforms around 5.45 am Tuesday, a man approached and engaged her in conversation, calling her 'didi'

(sister), and said the bus for Satara had arrived at another platform.

He took her to an empty 'Shiv Shahi' AC bus parked elsewhere on the sprawling station premises. As the lights inside the bus were not on, she hesitated to get in at first, but the man convinced her that it was the right vehicle. He then followed her inside and raped her before fleeing, the woman, who works in the medical field, told police.

Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik announced to dispose of all the scrapped buses and other vehicles parked in MSRTC depots before April 15, 2025.

Addressing a press conference at Mantralaya after taking a review of security concerning buses of MSRTC and its premises in the wake of the Swargate rape case, Sarnaik also said that around 15,000 buses, including hired ones, will be

fitted with GPS, panic buttons, and CCTV cameras.

Sarnaik also demanded the appointment of an IPS officer for the vacant post of security and vigilance officer in MSRTC. He said that presently MSRTC has around 2,700 security guards, which are appointed through various security boards, but their number is very low, and hence 15-20 more female security guards will be increased in the corporation.

The shocking incident in the heart of Pune caused uproar, with the opposition lambasting the BJP-led Maharashtra government over women's safety.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut compared the crime to the 2012 Delhi gang rape and targeted district guardian minister Ajit Pawar over the law and order situation. The Rajya Sabha MP said crime against women had increased drastically in Maharashtra.

26/11 TERROR ATTACK

Court summons trial records from Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: A Delhi court has sought the trial records of 26/11 terror attack from a Mumbai court ahead of the expected extradition of the crime's alleged mastermind Tahawwur Hussain Rana to India from the US.

District judge Vimal Kumar Yadav directed the officials of a Mumbai court to supply the records in an order passed January 28.

The trial court records were previously sent to Mumbai due to the presence of multiple cases related to the 26/11 attacks in both cities. A court in the US previously ruled that Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Rana could be extradited to India where he is wanted in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack carried out by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists. Rana, who was detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks.

Congress slams govt over household indebtedness

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed a hundred crore Indians did not have any extra income to spend and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's version of Viksit Bharat emptied ordinary Indians' pockets and filled the coffers of select billionaires

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Feb 27: Flagger the issue of household indebtedness, the Congress Thursday said the root cause of such a "deep-seated" malaise was the stagnation in real wages and claimed the government had failed to acknowledge the "crisis".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed a hundred crore Indians did not have any extra income to spend and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's version of Viksit Bharat emptied ordinary Indians' pockets and filled the coffers of select billionaires.

India is staring at a global tariff war and trade barriers and the Union budget announcements have turned out to be a "damp squib", he further said.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh cited the recent-

ly-released Indus Valley Annual Report 2025, an examination of India's economic landscape and start-up ecosystem by VC firm Blume Ventures, to attack the government. The report offers a granular look into the Indian economy, he said and asserted that its most worrying implications were for India's household finances. Ramesh said India's recovery from COVID-19 was based on consumption growth that was driven by loans. Consumer loans in the post-Covid years were about 18 per cent of the Private Final Consumption Expenditure, he said.

SHORT TAKES

CPI leader P Raju dies

Kochi: Veteran CPI leader and former Kerala legislator P Raju died at a private hospital here Thursday. He was 73. He had been unwell for some time and was undergoing treatment for liver-related ailments, party sources said. He passed away at 6.40 am. His mortal remains are currently at the hospital and will be brought to North Paravur at 8 am Friday. From 9 am to 11 am, the body will be kept at Paravur Municipal Town Hall for the public to pay their last respects.

Assam hit by earthquake

Guwahati: An earthquake of 5 magnitude jolted the central part of Assam Thursday morning, an official bulletin said. There is no immediate report of any injury to anyone or damage to any property, officials said. A National Center for Seismology report said the quake was recorded at 2:25 am in Morigaon district on the southern bank of Brahmaputra, at a depth of 16 km. The exact location of the epicentre of the earthquake is around 52 km east from Guwahati in central Assam.

22 Naxalites held in Chhattisgarh

Sukma/Bijapur: A total of 22 Naxalites have been arrested and explosives seized from them in separate operations carried out in two districts of Bastar division in Chhattisgarh, police said Thursday. While 18 of these Naxalites were held from three places in Bijapur district Thursday, four others were arrested in Sukma Tuesday, they said. "Security personnel apprehended 10 lower-rung cadres from a forest of Gunjapati village under the Usur police station limits in Bijapur district during the anti-Naxal operation," an official said.

Rain in parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh

Chandigarh: Light rain during the day in Chandigarh and surrounding areas sharply lowered maximum temperatures, the Met office said Thursday. A few parts of Haryana, including Ambala and Panchkula, and Punjab's Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala and Pathankot also received rain, it said. According to the Met office's weather report, Chandigarh received 2.5 mm rain during the day. The city's maximum temperature settled at 21.0 degrees Celsius, 7.9 notches down below Wednesday's 28.9 degrees.

Can show PM Modi's degree to court, not strangers: DU to HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: Delhi University (DU) Thursday informed the Delhi High Court that it was willing to show to court its records on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's degree but not disclose it to strangers under RTI.

Appearing before Justice Sachin Datta, solicitor general Tushar Mehta made the submission following which the court reserved its verdict on DU's plea against a CIC order directing disclosure of information with respect to the bachelor's degree of the prime minister. The order of the CIC, he said, deserved to be set aside for the "right to privacy" superseded

the "right to know". "What is demanded is the degree of an erstwhile student who is the Prime Minister. As a university, we have nothing to hide. We have the year-wise record. University has no objection in showing the record to the court. There is a degree from 1978, bachelor of art," Mehta submitted.

Following an RTI application by one Neeraj, the Central Information Commission (CIC) December 21, 2016, allowed inspection of records of all students who cleared the BA exam in 1978 - the year Prime Minister Modi also passed it. The RTI plea sought details of all the students who wrote the exam in 1978.

CAG report on liquor policy referred to PAC

The CAG report on the regulation and supply of liquor in Delhi, which was tabled in the house February 25, has highlighted irregularities in the implementation of the excise policy by the AAP government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The CAG report on the Delhi liquor policy has been referred to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for examination, with the panel expected to submit its report within three months, Speaker Vijender Gupta said Thursday. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the regulation and supply of liquor in Delhi, which was tabled in the house February 25, has highlighted irregularities in the implementation of the excise policy by the Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP) government.

"Members as is evident, the CAG's Performance Audit Report on Regulation and Supply of Liquor in Delhi' has brought out grave irregularities in the implementation of the excise policy in Delhi by the Aam Aadmi government. The report has brought out in detail how the public exchequer incurred huge loss so that private firms could profit illegally at the expense of the government," the speaker said. According to established parliamentary procedure, the report will be examined in detail by the PAC of the



Delhi Assembly and it should submit its report within a period of three months, he added.

During the discussion on the CAG report, Delhi minister Kapil Mishra said, "AAP-da government tried every possible way to stop CAG report from being presented in the assembly, if I have to summarize the report in one line, then I will say 'Jhaddu wala ki daru wala hai'." Delhi has shown that

only the public is 'malik' in democracy as those people (AAP) are ineligible to even enter the house today, he added.

Speaking on the CAG report on AAP government's excise policy, several other ruling party MLAs slammed the party's chief Arvind Kejriwal. Vishwas Nagar MLA OP Sharma alleged the "liquor" scam was not about loss of ₹2,000 crore, it involved ₹20,000 crore scam.

He said the policy also endangered life of poor people living in JJ clusters of non conforming areas where liquor shops were not allowed, due to over-consumption. BJP MLA Harish Khurana alleged the excise policy of AAP government was not just a "financial scam" but it also shredded the values of humanity.

Bhopal tragedy: Burning of carbide waste begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhar/Indore, Feb 27: The process for the first round of trial incineration of 10 tonnes of waste connected to the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy has begun in Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district Thursday amid tight security, officials said.

Thursday's trial disposal. The SC asked aggrieved parties, including members of civil society organisations opposing waste disposal, to approach the MP HC, which is hearing the case.

Following the apex court order, security has been enhanced at the disposal site with deployment of 500 personnel from 24 police stations, an official said. Senior officials from the police and civic administration are present at the site, he added.



"The testing process has started before burning the Union Carbide factory waste in the waste disposal unit in Pithampur. The waste containers are being opened and the waste is being transported to the plant as per the set parameters," Indore division commissioner Deepak Singh told PTI. Meanwhile, those opposing the disposal of the waste said that

they would knock on the doors of the HC. On the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984, highly poisonous methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal. At least 5,479 people were killed and thousands were crippled. It is considered one of the world's biggest industrial disasters. Officials transported 337 tonnes of

Apex court refuses to interfere with HC order

The Supreme Court Thursday refused to interfere with a Madhya Pradesh High Court order on shifting of toxic waste of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy and disposing it in Pithampur area in the state's Dhar district. A bench of Justices B R Gawai and Augustine George Masih disposed of a petition which challenged an order of December 3, 2024 of the high court directing the state government to take steps for removal of toxic waste material from the site of Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL). The bench said the high court had passed the order after considering views of an expert committee comprising directors of the National Environmental Engineering Institute (NEERI), the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) and chairman of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

waste from the defunct Union Carbide factory in the MP capital to a facility in Pithampur, about 250 km away, January 2 as part of a plan to dispose of the material.

On January 16, the HC had directed the state government to take steps within six weeks to dispose of the waste by following safety guidelines.

In its order of February 18,

MP Chief Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Vivek Jain had directed that the state government undertake "first trial run of 10 metric ton by taking all protocols into consideration" February 27.

During the hearing, the MP government said it may take three-four days to dispose of the first consignment of 10 tonnes of waste.

Officials transported 337 tonnes of waste from the defunct Union Carbide factory in the MP capital to a facility in Pithampur, about 250 km away, January 2 as part of a plan to dispose of the material





Whereas it has been two-and-a-half years since the Congress came to power in Himachal Pradesh, but it has not fulfilled its promise of giving gas cylinders to women for ₹500 and ₹1500 per month

MANUAL SCAVENGING: SC SAYS DISSATISFIED WITH AFFIDAVITS

The Supreme Court has expressed displeasure on the responses of the Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad authorities on how they stopped manual scavenging in their respective cities



of the day quote

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested

Poor governance will never be hidden by such shallow attempts to divide society

Unfortunately, these hardships persist, and the collective voice of our people demands attention and meaningful action.

'Third of newborns admitted to district hosps with sepsis could die'

New Delhi, Feb 27: More than a third of newborns diagnosed with sepsis, a life-threatening condition triggered by an infection, could be expected to die, a study conducted across five district hospitals in India has found.

and control measures while implementing programmes that ensure a judicious use of antibiotics, researchers said.



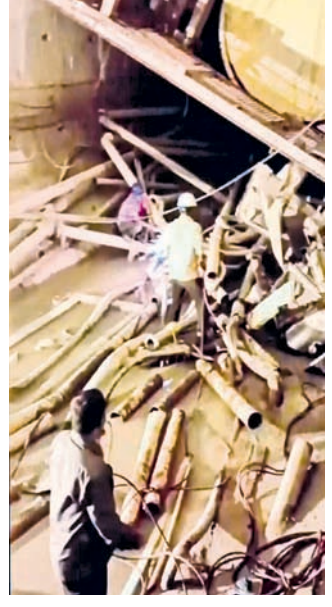
More than 39 million are projected to die due to antibiotic-resistant infections during the next 25 years, with most of them estimated to occur in South Asia, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, according to a 2024 analysis, published in The Lancet journal.

The study, which analysed data from over 6,600 newborns, found that the overall incidence of sepsis ranged from 0.6 to 10 per cent across the hospitals

The incidence was higher among newborns referred from other hospitals than in those born at the same facility

able patient outcomes, she said. The study enrolled neonates admitted to newborn care units in five district hospitals, including Government Hospital, Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, in India between October, 2019 and December, 2021.

Tunnel mishap: Rescue operation intensifies



work and complete this project in record time. It is a natural accident. The debris and the machine will be removed. Whether it is one day, two days or two and half days, the work is in full swing," he told reporters when asked about the status.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagarkurnool (Telangana), Feb 27: Rescue teams working to save eight people trapped for over five days in a partially collapsed SLBC tunnel in the district have started cutting parts of the tunnel boring machine and other obstacles hindering their access to the area where the victims are believed to be.

He further said national and international agencies and experts in a coordinated and unified manner. He had said Wednesday the TBM that is stuck inside will be cut into pieces using gas cutters and removed.

TELANGANA IRRIGATION MINISTER UTTAM KUMAR REDDY SAID THE RESCUE AND RELIEF WORK IS IN FULL SWING, AND THE OPERATION WOULD BE COMPLETED IN TWO DAYS

"Yes, it's already (gas cutting machines went inside). (even during) Nights they did some cutting. Yes, it has already started last night," the official told PTI to a query if the gas cutters started working.

reports that labourers panicked following the accident and are planning to leave, the official said there will be apprehension among the workers.

POST OF THE DAY

This is a great data-set. India's population= 140Cr 40% own vehicles= 56Cr And 80Cr people are availing free rations.

SHORT TAKES

Dowry: Man sentenced to ten years in prison

Mainpuri (UP): A court here sentenced a man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and his parents to seven years each for killing his wife over dowry in 2021, an official said.

4 killed as truck rams into tempo

Ara (Bihar): At least four people were killed and seven others were injured when a speeding truck rammed into a stationary tempo in Bihar's Bhojpur district Thursday, police said.

Fresh snowfall in J&K

Srinagar: Srinagar and parts of Kashmir received fresh snowfall Thursday, while the higher reaches of the valley received moderate to heavy rainfall, officials said.

2026 BENGAL POLLS Mamata targets 215 plus seats

Mamata targets 215 plus seats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 27: Setting the stage for next year's 2026 Assembly elections, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday set an ambitious target of winning over 215 of the 294 assembly seats to secure a fourth consecutive term in power, while vowing to cut down the BJP's tally significantly.



The TMC supremo slightly revised the 2021 Assembly polls battle cry of the party, and declared: "Khela Abar Hobe" (the game is on again) for the next year's elections.

her party would stage an indefinite dharna in front of the EC office.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Plastic use in idli preparation banned in K'taka hotels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 27: Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao Thursday announced a ban on the use of plastic in idli preparation after samples tested positive for carcinogenic elements due to the use of polythene sheets.



Earlier, cloth was used for cooking idlis, but we received information that hotels have recently started using plastic. So, our officers conducted inquiries at various locations," Rao told reporters.

Out of 251 hotels, 52 were found using plastic, the minister said, adding, "Hoteliers should never have done this because plastic is carcinogenic, meaning it can cause cancer. These carcinogenic elements can enter the idli."

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said the Karnataka Food Safety Department found that 52 hotels were using polythene sheets to prepare idlis

According to him, polythene, especially thin sheets, is carcinogenic, and the government will not allow such practices in the hotel industry

Later, in a post on 'X', Rao stated, "The use of plastic (polythene) in idli preparation has been increasing, posing severe health risks. To safeguard public health, the use of plastic in cooking idlis has been strictly banned. Public health cannot be compromised."

AAP stages 'dharna', writes letter to Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: After being denied entry to the Delhi Assembly premises Thursday, Leader of Opposition Atishi and other AAP MLAs staged a "dharna" outside and the LoP also sent a letter to President Droupadi Murmu.

In her letter to the president, the former chief minister said the BJP is "crossing all limits of dictatorship" after coming to power in Delhi.

When the AAP opposed this move and tried to raise the issue in the Assembly, Speaker Vijendra Gupta undemocratically expelled 21 party MLAs from the meetings of the House for three days February 25, it added.

The AAP leaders staged the "dharna" outside the gate of the Assembly premises Thursday. With "dafli" beats in the background, they held placards with photos of Ambedkar and raised slogans against the ruling party, such as "BJP sun le, Jai Bhim, Jai Bhim" and "BJP ki tanashahi nahi chalegi (the BJP's dictatorship will not work)".



# international



**We should use AI and digital technology to create a situation where crimes cannot be committed, and even if a crime is committed, we should be able to conduct an impartial investigation and ensure justice**  
KP SHARMA OLI | PRIME MINISTER, NEPAL

## 100 MONUMENTS AT LAHORE FORT

A US-based researcher has identified some 100 monuments at the Lahore Fort from the era of the Sikh Empire (1799-1849) detailing its historical significance. Of them around 30 monuments do not exist today



### of the day quote

**The erosion of multi-lateralism presents a threat to global growth and stability. We know from the experience of past decades that a fair, transparent and inclusive rules-based international order is an essential requirement for economic stability and for sustained growth**  
CYRIL RAMAPHOSA | PRESIDENT, SOUTH AFRICA



**Convene your congress and make a decision. All groups must lay their arms and the PKK must dissolve itself**  
ABDULLAH OCALAN | IMPRISONED KURDISH LEADER



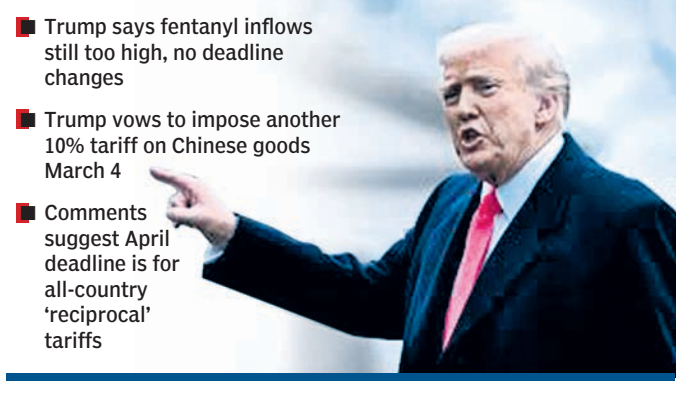
**China and Russia are two major countries. Our bilateral relationship has a strong internal driving force. It will not be affected by any third party**  
LIN JIAN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, CHINA



# Trump expands tariff war

US President vows March 4 tariffs for Mexico, Canada; China faces extra 10%

WASHINGTON, Feb 27: US President Donald Trump said Thursday that his proposed 25% tariffs on Mexican and Canadian goods will go into effect on March 4 as scheduled because drugs are still pouring into the US from those countries. Trump also said he would impose an additional 10% duty on Chinese goods on that day -- on top of the 10% tariff that he levied Feb 4 on imports from China.



- Trump says fentanyl inflows still too high, no deadline changes
- Trump vows to impose another 10% tariff on Chinese goods March 4
- Comments suggest April deadline is for all-country 'reciprocal' tariffs

April 1. "The schedule is that there's a study coming out April 1, and after that the president is going to decide what to do about tariff policies for all countries," he said, but specifically mentioning Mexico and Canada.

Meanwhile, Mexican Economy Minister Marcelo Ebrard will meet with newly confirmed US Trade Representative Jamiens Greer Thursday and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick Friday in an effort to head off the tariffs.

In Canada, Public Safety Minister David McGuinty said Thursday that the progress Canada has made on tightening security along the border with the United States and combating drug smuggling should satisfy the Trump administration.

China, in a letter to US Trade Representative Jamiens Greer, said China and the United States should address concerns in economic and trade fields through equal dialogue and consultation.

wise be charged an additional 10% Tariff on that date." The statement cleared up some confusion Wednesday over deadlines for the punishing tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods that Trump has threatened over the fentanyl crisis and US border security.

Comments from Trump administration officials indicated that the April deadline was for Trump's "reciprocal tariffs" matching import duty rates of other countries and offsetting their other restrictions. His trade advisers consider European countries' value added taxes to be akin to a tariff.

Kevin Hassett, the top White House economic adviser, told CNBC television that Trump would determine new tariffs after a study is completed by

Trump said drugs were still flowing into the US at "very high and unacceptable levels," with a large percentage of them the deadly opioid fentanyl. "We cannot allow this scourge to continue to harm the USA, and therefore, until it stops, or is seriously limited, the proposed TARIFFS scheduled to go into effect on MARCH FOURTH will, indeed, go into effect, as scheduled," Trump said in a post, opens new tab on his Truth Social media site. "China will like-

# INDIA SLAMS PAK AT UN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations/Geneva, Feb 27: India has slammed Pakistan after it raked the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in the UN Human Rights Council, saying the "failed state" that survives on "international handouts" "dutifully" spreads "falsehoods handed down by its military-terrorist complex."

India exercised its Right of Reply at the high-level segment of the 58th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva Wednesday to lodge a strong retort to Pakistan after it raised, as it habitually does, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at the multilateral global organisation.

"India is exercising its Right of Reply in response to the baseless and malicious references made by Pakistan. It is regrettable, yet unsurprising, to see Pakistan's so-called leaders and delegates continuing to dutifully spread falsehoods handed down by its military-terrorist complex," Counsellor at India's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva Kshiti Tyagi said.

Delivering India's powerful response, Tyagi said it is unfortunate that this Council's time continues to be "wasted by a failed state, which thrives on instability and survives on international handouts. Its rhetoric reeks of hypocrisy; its actions, of inhumanity; and its governance, of incompetence."

Asserting that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were, are and will

**Wasted by a failed state, which thrives on instability and survives on international handouts. Its rhetoric reeks of hypocrisy; its actions, of inhumanity; and its governance, of incompetence**  
KSHITI TYAGI | COUNSELLOR AT INDIA'S PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN

always remain an integral and inalienable part of India, Tyagi said the unprecedented political, social and economic progress in Jammu and Kashmir in the past few years speaks for itself.

"These successes are a testament to the people's trust in the government's commitment to bring normalcy to a region scarred by decades of Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism," he said.

He emphasised that as a country where human rights abuses, persecution of minorities and systematic erosion of democratic values constitute state policies, and which brazenly harbours UN-sanctioned terrorists, Pakistan is in no position to lecture anyone.

"Instead of its unhealthy obsession with India, Pakistan should focus on providing actual governance and justice to its own people," he said.

Tyagi further said that Pakistan is even making a mockery of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) by "abusing it as its mouthpiece, which is fooling nobody. We do not wish to dignify such propaganda, but are constrained to make a few simple points for the record."

## Taiwan condemns China for conducting shooting drills off its coast

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei, Feb 27: Taiwan Thursday condemned China's military exercises after Beijing designated an area to conduct shooting drills off the self-governed island's southwest coast.

China considers the island a renegade province to be taken by force if necessary and in recent years has increased military activity around Taiwan's waters and airspace.

"China is the biggest troublemaker for regional peace and stability, and the sole and greatest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the Indo-Pacific region," Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in its statement.

In Beijing, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian accused Taiwan of playing up what he called routine activity of China's military, officially called the People's Liberation Army.

"The comments made by the relevant authorities of Taiwan on the routine exercise and training activities of the PLA are purely hype-ups," he said at a monthly news conference.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said in a 24-hour period it detected 45 aircraft, 14 navy vessels and one ship from the Chinese military operating around Taiwan, of which 34 had crossed into its waters and airspace.

Taiwan said that it "responded accordingly" without elaborating.

This comes after Taiwan said four Chinese coast guard boats entered into its waters near Kinmen island earlier this week, and that Taiwan dispatched its own boats to drive them away.



A child plays among ice hummocks on the frozen Taganrog Bay of the Sea of Azov, in the southern port city of Taganrog in the Rostov Region, Russia

# Gene Hackman, wife, dog found dead at home

REUTERS

New Mexico, Feb 27: Gene Hackman, the intense character actor who won two Oscars in a more than 60-year career, has died alongside his wife, pianist Betsy Arakawa, and their dog at home, the sheriff's office in Santa Fe, New Mexico, said Thursday.

A statement from the sheriff said deputies had found the 95-year-old actor and Arakawa, 64, deceased Wednesday afternoon at around 1:45 pm.

"Foul play is not suspected as a factor in those deaths at this time, however exact cause of death has not been determined. This is an active and ongoing investigation by the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office," it said.

Hackman, a former Marine known for his raspy voice, appeared in more than 80 films, as well as on television and the

stage during a lengthy career that started in the early 1960s.

He earned his first Oscar nomination for his breakout role as the brother of bank robber Clyde Barrow in 1967's "Bonnie and Clyde." He was also nominated for best supporting actor in 1971 for "I Never Sang for My Father."

It was his turn as Popeye Doyle, the rumped New York detective chasing international drug dealers in director William Friedkin's thriller "The French Connection", that assured his stardom and a best actor Academy Award.

He also won a best supporting actor Oscar in 1993 as a mean sheriff in the Clint Eastwood western "Unforgiven", and was nominated for an Academy Award for his turn as an FBI agent in the 1988 historical drama "Mississippi Burning". Hackman could come across



on the screen as menacing or friendly, working with a face that he described to the New York Times in 1989 as that of "your everyday mine worker".  
DYSFUNCTIONAL BACK-

- Sheriff's office says couple found dead on Wednesday
- Sheriff says no indications of foul play
- Hackman won two Oscars in 60-year career

abandoned the family when Hackman was a teenager. The future actor remembered seeing his father wave as he drove away, instinctively knowing he would not come back. His mother later died in a fire.

"Dysfunctional families have sired a number of pretty good actors," he once said.

Hackman appeared on Broadway in "Barefoot in the Park", and "Any Wednesday". A bit part in a low-budget movie, "Mad Dog Coll" (1961), was followed by a critically acclaimed supporting role in "Lilith" (1964), starring Warren Beatty.

# S Korea's birthrate rebounds for 1st time in nearly decade

**Country's fertility rate – the average number of babies born to each woman in their reproductive years – was 0.75 in 2024, up from 0.72 in 2023**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul (South Korea), Feb 27: The number of babies born in South Korea rebounded for the first time in nine years in 2024, welcome news for a country grappling with one of the world's most serious demographic crises.

South Korea's statistics agency said Wednesday that 2,38,300 babies were born last year, an increase of 8,300 from a year

earlier. It said the country's fertility rate — the average number of babies born to each woman in their reproductive years — was 0.75 in 2024, up from 0.72 in 2023.

It's the first time that the yearly number of births has increased since 2015.

"It's fair to say this is a considerably meaningful rebound," Choi Yoon Kyung, an expert at the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, said. "We still have to see figures in the next few years to find whether it was a temporary rebound or it was driven by structural changes."

Park Hyun Jung, a senior official at the Statistics Korea, said that her agency assessed the increase in births was partly attributable to an increase in marriages among couples who delayed weddings during the



COVID-19 pandemic period.

Park said another factor behind the rebound was a growing number of people entering their early 30s. She also cited a government survey showing a small increase in the number of young people hoping to have

children after marriage.

Official data show South Korea's fertility rate has been the lowest in the developed world in recent years. In 2022, it was the only country whose fertility rate was below 1 among members of the Paris-based Organ-

Official data show South Korea's fertility rate has been the lowest in the developed world in recent years

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The low fertility rate is considered as a major potential threat to South Korea's economy, Asia's fourth largest, as it will cause labour shortages and greater welfare spending

isation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The low fertility rate is considered as a major potential threat to South Korea's economy, Asia's fourth largest, as it will cause labour shortages and greater welfare spendings. South Korea's central and regional governments have been increasingly offering a variety of financial incentives and oth-

er support programmes to those who give birth to children.

But experts say it's will be extremely difficult to address the country's demographic challenges as young people do not want to have to babies owing to a mix of factors that make it difficult to raise them in this brutally competitive, fast-changing country. They cite expensive housing, low levels of social mobility, the huge cost of raising and educating children and a culture that requires women to handle far more of childcare.

Park said that the fertility rate will likely stay on an upward trend at least for another year. But observers say it remains to be seen whether the rate will go back down as post-pandemic marriages even out. The country's demographic structure will also eventually see a drop in the people in their early 30s.





**Bilateralism is now taking the top of the agenda... It is for us to ramp up our bilateral relations with many countries, not just for trade, not just for investment, but also for strategic relations**

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER**

## COCA-COLA'S NEW DRINKS

Coca-Cola is encouraged by "early arrivals" of summers this year and is introducing beverage brands like Honest Tea, BodyArmorLyte and Vita-minwater in the Indian market, besides expanding Coke Zero Sugar and Sprite Zero Sugar, providing a larger choice, its Vice President, Operations, Coca-Cola India & Southwest Asia Sundee Bajoria said



## of the day quote

**Till when can we look up to the government (for support)? Or, till when can we win on crutches of subsidies and support, incentives, high import duties, the protectionist mindset, and being very defensive in our engagement with the world?**

**PYUSH GOYAL | UNION COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES MINISTER**

**The Australian government is working with KABIL... There are also other countries like Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and few other countries where through our missions... (we) are working on trying to get critical mineral assets for exploration and mining for Indian companies in those countries**

**VL KANTHA RAO | MINES SECRETARY**

**As organised retail and new commerce models expand, businesses that align with these trends will unlock immense opportunities for growth and innovation**

**KUMAR RAJAGOPALAN | CEO, RETAILERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA**

# Private consumption at \$2.1tn

Gen Z and millennials, who account for 52% of the population, are driving the consumption boom

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** India's private consumption has almost doubled to \$2.1 trillion in 2024 from \$1 trillion in 2013, growing at 7.2 per cent CAGR, faster than the US, China and Germany, according to a report.

On course to become the world's third-largest consumer market by 2026, India is well-positioned to reap the benefits of a demographic dividend, said the report titled 'India's changing discretionary spending: Key insights for brands' launched by Deloitte India with Retailers Association of India Thursday.

"Surpassing Germany, India's private consumption has almost doubled to \$2.1 trillion in 2024 from \$1 trillion in 2013, and during 2013-23, India's consumption grew at 7.2 per cent CAGR, faster than China, the US and Germany," it said.

By 2030, the report said, "The number of Indians earning over USD 10,000 annually is expected to nearly triple, increasing from 60 million in 2024 to 165 million. This reflects the significant growth of the country's middle class and a fundamental shift towards discretionary spending."

It pointed out that several key forces are driving the consumption boom, including premiumisation and evolving consumer preferences, as with rising af-



**India set to be 3rd largest consumer market by 2026, says report**

**Consumption grew at 7.2% CAGR, faster than China, US, Germany**

**Number of Indians earning over \$10K annually is expected to nearly triple**

**E-commerce adoption fuelling a new wave of digital-first consumption**

fluence, consumers are prioritising quality, convenience and experiences over price.

Gen Z and millennials, who account for 52 per cent of the population, are driving this shift and the demand for premium brands, sustainable products, and personalised experiences.

"India's consumer landscape

is undergoing a fundamental transformation. The surge in discretionary spending, expanding digital commerce and increasing access to credit are redefining the rules of engagement for brands," Deloitte India Partner and Consumer Industry Leader Anand Ramanathan said.

By 2030, he said, "India's per capita income is expected to exceed \$4,000, unlocking new opportunities across sectors. Businesses have an incredible opportunity to tap into evolving consumer expectations - by balancing affordability, convenience and sustainability while harnessing data and technology to create highly personalised experiences."

The report said digital and financial inclusion is driving spending in India with credit access expanding at an unprecedented pace, while credit card

**India's discretionary spending is entering a new phase of growth, driven by rising incomes, digital adoption and evolving consumer preferences. As organised retail and new commerce models expand, businesses that align with these trends will unlock immense opportunities for growth and innovation**

**KUMAR RAJAGOPALAN | CEO, RETAILERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA**

penetration is set to triple from 102 million in 2024 to 296 million by 2030, enabling increased consumer spending.

Fintech solutions and digital payments such as UPI are reshaping how consumers engage with brands, boosting e-commerce adoption and fuelling a new wave of digital-first consumption, it noted.

Moreover, rise of organised retail and experience-led consumption has also helped in driving consumption.

"Organised retail is expanding rapidly, registering a 10 per cent CAGR. It is expected to reach \$230 billion by 2030. Consumers are increasingly drawn to experience-led retail spaces, omnichannel shopping and hyper-personalised services, pushing brands to re-think engagement strategies," the report said.

# Markets close flat on monthly expiry day

Indices trade dull closing nearly unchanged for the second straight session; GDP data awaited



TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
BAJAJ FINSERV	+2.59%	ULTRATECH CEMENT	-4.99%
BAJAJ FINANCE	+2.39%	TATA MOTORS	-2.05%
SUN PHARMA	+1.63%	M&M	-1.95%
ZOMATO	+1.53%	KOTAK BANK	-1.43%
TATA STEEL	+1.17%	NTPC	-1.00%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 27:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed almost unchanged Thursday in a volatile trade amid unabated foreign fund outflows and monthly derivatives expiry.

The 30-share BSE Sensex eked out gains of 10.31 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 74,612.43. During the day, it hit a high of 74,834.09 and a low of 74,520.78, gyrating 313.31 points.

The NSE Nifty slipped 2.50 points or 0.01 per cent to 22,545.05, registering its seventh day of decline. As many as 31 Nifty components declined while 19 closed higher.

Gains from financials and metal shares were offset by losses in capital goods and auto shares.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Sun Pharma, Zomato, Tata Steel and Nestle were the biggest gainers.

UltraTech Cement was the biggest loser, dropping by 4.99 per cent after it announced entry into cable and wires segment with an investment of ₹1,800 crore in a plant in Gujarat. Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra and State Bank of India were among the major laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge tumbled 2.09 per cent and midcap index declined 0.97 per cent.

"Markets ended flat with a mixed bias as traders preferred to exercise caution on the expi-

ry day after witnessing sell-offs over the past few weeks. While India's expensive valuations have been driving foreign fund outflows over the past 3-5 months, the ongoing tariff-related concerns coupled with falling currency have made investors jittery," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Financial sector shares gained after the RBI's decision to ease lending norms for microfinance institutions and NBFCs, according to Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Among BSE sectoral indices, industrials tanked the most 2.47 per cent, followed by realty (2.06 per cent) power (1.80 per cent), capital goods (1.58 per cent), auto (1.57 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.34 per cent) and utilities (1.18 per cent).

Financial Services, telecommunication and metal were the gainers.

Among Asian markets, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. US markets ended on a mixed note Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.69 per cent to \$73.03 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,529.10 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data. Stock markets were closed Wednesday for 'Mahashivratri'.

## Sebi allows long-short equity, debt funds for wealthier individuals

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Feb 27:** India's market regulator said it will allow asset managers with more than a three-year track record to offer a range of investment strategies under its newly created 'specialised investment fund' (SIF) category, aimed at wealthier investors.

The new category of investment funds, first announced last year as a way to offer sophisticated investors a wider range of options, can begin operations starting April 1, when the new rules kick in.

The minimum investment size of these funds is Rs 1 million Indian (\$11,478.55).

"The current range of investment products with varying risk-reward profiles are intended to meet the investment needs of retail, high net-worth and institutional investors," the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said Thursday, releasing detailed regulations.

SIFs can offer equity long-short, debt long-short and sectoral long-short funds, along with other investment strategies.

The funds can be launched as open-ended or close-ended, and can take exposure to derivative instruments up to 25% of the fund's net assets.

# House price index rises 3.1% in Q3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 27:** All-India House Price Index (HPI) increased 3.1 per cent in the third quarter of 2024-25 as compared to 4.3 per cent growth in the preceding three months and 3.8 per cent growth in the year-ago period, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The RBI released its quarterly house price index for the December quarter of 2024-25 Thursday, based on transaction-level data received from the registration authorities in 10 major cities.

The cities are Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kochi, Kolkata, Lucknow, and Mumbai.



The RBI said the annual HPI growth varied widely across the cities - ranging from a high growth of 8.1 per cent (Kolkata) to 0.1 per cent (Kanpur).

On a sequential (q-o-q) basis, all-India HPI increased by 0.4 per cent in Q3:2024-25.

Mumbai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Kolkata, Chennai, Jaipur and Kochi recorded a sequential rise in house prices during the latest quarter.

# IMF KEEPS INDIA'S 'STABILISED' EXCHANGE RATE CLASSIFICATION

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Feb 27:** The International Monetary Fund retained its classification of India's "de facto" exchange rate regime as "stabilised" for the period of December 2022 to November 2024 after its latest article IV review, it said in a statement Thursday.

"While the exchange rate has depreciated moderately from

November 2024, more observations are necessary to determine its new trend. Until then, the de facto exchange rate arrangement remains classified as a stabilised arrangement," IMF said.

While IMF directors recommended greater exchange rate flexibility as the first line of defence in absorbing external shocks with interventions limited to addressing disorderly market

conditions, a few saw the need for FX interventions in other cases, noting limitations in the current global financial safety net.

The IMF had first moved to the "stabilised" classification for India from "floating" in December 2023. "Greater exchange rate flexibility would reduce the need for holding costly precautionary FX reserves, promote FX market develop-

ment, prevent moral hazard by encouraging firms to actively manage their currency risk through hedging, and reduce fluctuations in domestic financial system liquidity," it said.

IMF expects India's real GDP to grow at 6.5% in 2024/25 and 2025/26, supported by robust growth in private consumption on the back of sustained economic and financial stability.

## SHORT TAKES

### LIC gets GST demand notice of ₹479.88cr

**New Delhi:** Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Thursday said it has received a demand notice of ₹479.88 crore for short payment of Goods and Services Tax (GST) for 2020-21. The company has received a communication/demand order for interest and penalty for Maharashtra on February 27 from Deputy Commissioner of State Tax, Mumbai, LIC said in a regulatory filing. The demand notice pertains to wrong availment and short reversal of Input Tax Credit (ITC), Interest on late payments, short payment of tax liability, it said. The order is appealable before the Joint Commissioner of State tax (Appeals), Mumbai, it said.

### Gold dips over ₹1K

**New Delhi:** Gold prices tumbled by ₹1,150 to ₹88,200 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday, tracking a bearish trend in global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also slumped by ₹1,150 to ₹87,800 per 10 grams from the previous close of ₹88,950 per 10 grams. Silver prices tanked by ₹1,000 to ₹98,500 per kg from the last close of ₹99,500 per kg. Bullion markets were closed on Wednesday for Mahashivratri. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for April delivery declined ₹554 to ₹85,320 per 10 grams.

### Amazon to pay \$39mn

**New Delhi:** An Indian court has ordered an Amazon unit to pay \$39 million in damages for infringing the "Beverly Hills Polo Club" trademark after garments with identical branding were sold on Amazon's India website, a court order showed Wednesday. Indian lawyers called the ruling a landmark judgment in terms of the amount of damages assessed against a US firm in trademark cases. It comes after an India antitrust investigation found Amazon flouted competition laws by giving preference to select sellers on its India website - charges the company denies.

# America First? Not when it comes to stock markets worldwide

*US stock market has risen in 2025 and isn't far from its all-time high set last week. But it's climbed less than stock indexes in Mexico City, Paris and Hong Kong*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**New York, Feb 27:** When it comes to stock markets around the world, this year has clearly not been "America First."

The US stock market has risen in 2025 and isn't far from its all-time high set last week. But it's climbed less than stock indexes in Mexico City, Paris and Hong Kong.

The difference in performance has been so stark that an index of stocks from 22 of 23 developed economies around the world, excluding the United States, has trounced the S&P

500: a 7.5 per cent rise through Monday versus 1.7 per cent for Wall Street's benchmark.

The split in performance has many causes, and if it continues, it would mark a sharp reversal following years of US exceptionalism. The US stock market has been the clear winner for so long among global markets in large part because the US economy's growth has been so much stronger and more stable than nearly anywhere else.

But the steep divide means many other stock markets now don't look as pricey as Wall Street, where critics say prices for many stocks rose too quickly relative to their companies' admittedly booming profits. And the Big Tech stocks that have accounted for more and more of the US stock market as they kept soaring look particularly expensive to some.

Morgan Stanley strategist Michael Wilson said many of



his clients in recent weeks have been asking if they should be focusing more outside the United States. That includes tech stocks from China, where an upstart called DeepSeek rocked the artificial-intelligence industry by saying it had developed a large language model that could compete with big US rivals but at a much lower cost.

Central banks in other countries also seem much more willing to cut interest rates, a move that often tends to boost stock prices there. The European Central Bank eased rates in January, for example. A day later, the Federal Reserve in Washington said it would hold rates steady, and minutes from that meeting indicate US poli-

**The recent outperformance for stocks outside the United States may show a peak in investor conviction of US exceptionalism**

**MICHAEL HARTNETT | STRATEGIST, BANK OF AMERICA**

cy makers may not move rates for a while given worries about how President Donald Trump's tariffs and other policies could keep upward pressure on inflation.

The rise in the US dollar's value against other currencies has also helped big exporters from other countries. Some big US companies, meanwhile, have already begun cutting their forecasts for upcoming profits in part because of the bite that a stronger dollar will take from their

results.

At Amazon, shifting currency values erased about \$900 million of its revenue during the latest quarter, which totalled \$187.8 billion, for example. The tech giant said the pain will likely continue, and it forecasted an "unusually large, unfavorable impact

of approximately \$2.1 billion" for its revenue in the current quarter from currency shifts.

Professional investors have noticed. It's still popular among global fund managers to bet on Apple, Nvidia and the other five Big Tech US stocks that make up the group known as the "Magnificent Seven."



# OFC eye crucial win to stay afloat in playoffs

# Players credit success to McCann

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Indian men's hockey team has credited its impressive performance in the FIH Pro League to a week-long camp with legendary Australian forward Michael McCann, with players vouching for his cutting-edge techniques that helped them dominate the rivals in Bhubaneswar.

The Paris Olympics bronze-medallist side, led by Harmanpreet, won five of the eight Pro League matches in the home leg, losing one game each to Spain, Germany and England before beating them in the return matches. India also thrashed Ireland 3-1 and 4-0.

India are currently third in the table on 15 points behind England and Belgium, who have 16 points apiece.

India have the most number of wins, followed by England, Belgium and fourth-placed Germany, who have four victories each after eight games.

The 47-year-old McCann was part of Australia's dream team that won the 2004 Athens Olympics gold besides the 2005 Champions Trophy in Chennai.

McCann, who was in Bhubaneswar from February 6-12, has been working for nearly eight years with the German U21 and Senior squads.

Experienced India forward Mandeep Singh said McCann paid special attention to the minute details that go into scoring field goals.

"I particularly enjoyed the basics inside the 'D', shot on target two-feet from the goal," said Mandeep, who played a key role upfront, scoring some fine field goals, including a breathtaking goal against Ireland in India's 3-1 win.

"He also taught us new things specific to strikers' lead and re-lead within the circle and how to deflect from the nine-yard mark near the D with two-touch to the goal were some of the interesting aspects he made us work on."

## PRO LEAGUE



**It was a very good camp and Michael was not only extremely informative on the field but his off-the-field meetings were also extremely knowledgeable where he showed us a lot of short clips on specific areas**

MANDEEP SINGH | FORWARD, ODISHA

"Small things like, angle of the body while receiving the ball, fake-passing to beat the defenders in the D was fun to learn. If you see our performance in the Pro League, we scored a lot of field goals. This was a very good learning point for us," he added.

India chief coach Craig Fulton said the short camp would have definitely helped the youngsters a lot.

"It was great to have Michael here ahead of our Pro League campaign. This would particularly help the youngsters in the squad and though it was a short camp, it was very effective. We worked a lot of basics and also had one-hour off-the-

field sessions so players could also interact with him. We look forward to having more such sessions leading up to the World Cup and Asian Games next year," said Fulton.

McCann coaching will come in handy as India prepare for the gruelling European leg of

the Pro League in June, the Asia Cup this year and the World Cup next year.

Former India Colts captain Uttam Singh said McCann's lessons on finishing the moves was very much beneficial for him.

"The things I particularly enjoyed working on was on my finishing. Michael touched upon how to finish, when we can't get a full attempt on goal. Receiving the ball and what position we must be in while receiving in the second post, and which side we must hold the stick and how important it is to look at the goalkeeper's position when we take strike were some of the finer details which will help me in the long run," said Singh.

## Odisha FC aim three points against Mohammedan SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: With their playoff hopes hanging by a thread, Odisha FC will aim for maximum points when they take on Mohammedan SC in the Indian Super League here Friday.

The Juggernauts have struggled in recent weeks, registering just one win in their last five outings (W1, D2, L2) as they have slipped to seventh place with 29 points from 22 matches -- three points adrift of sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (32), who have played one game fewer.

Odisha also face stiff competition from East Bengal FC (27 points from 22 matches) and Kerala Blasters FC (24 points from 21 matches) in their bid to secure a top-six finish.

To stay in contention, Sergio Lobera's side will be also hoping for favorable results from Mumbai City FC and NorthEast United FC in the coming rounds.

Odisha FC are unbeaten in their last three home games (W1, D2) in the ISL. A victory on Friday would mark their first consecutive home wins since their four-match winning streak between February and April 2024.

Odisha failed to score in their last ISL outing, a 0-1 loss to Mohun Bagan. They will be eager to avoid back-to-back goalless matches for the first time since early 2023.

With 41 goals this season -- the second-highest in the league -- Odisha FC's attack will be looking to fire once again.

Isak Vanlalruatfela, who has three goals, four assists, will be one of their key players as they would also look forward to Diego Mauricio who has nine goals and six assists, boasting 95 touches inside the opposition box this season.

"As a team, we want to believe until the end, keep fighting, and hopefully qualify for the playoffs. We also want to make our fans happy and put a smile on their faces," said Lobera, Odisha FC coach.

Rooted to the bottom of the table, debutants Mohammedan

**The energy and attitude in the last match were good. We'll keep doing the same and hope to get the result**

RAHIM ALI | FORWARD, ODISHA FC

SC have endured a torrid run, losing all of their last five games. Another defeat would mark Mohammedan SC's longest losing run in ISL history and they would be keen to avoid that.

With just 11 points from 21 matches, their chances of survival look bleak.

However, their two wins this season -- against Chennaiyin FC and Bengaluru FC -- have both come on the road, offering them a glimmer of hope as they take on Odisha FC.

"We have been doing good preparation for the last few days to play against Odisha FC. Our performance off late hasn't been great, but we always try to give our best for the club. It's a game we want to win," said Mohammedan SC's Indian assistant coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo.

## Asia Cup likely to be staged in September

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: Asia Cup, which will serve as a preparatory event for the 2026 T20 World Cup, is likely to be held in September this year at a neutral venue though the hosting rights are with India.

The last Asia Cup was held in the ODI format ahead of the 2023 50-over World Cup in India. "The tournament will be held in September. India has the hosting rights but it will be played in UAE or Sri Lanka," said a source in the Asian Cricket Council.

The highlight of the event will be the India-Pakistan contest and if they reach the final, both teams could play each other as many as three times.

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, UAE, Oman and Hong Kong will be the eight participating teams.

Though BCCI has the hosting rights, it could go for a neutral venue with Pakistan unlikely to travel to India given what transpired in the ongoing Champions Trophy. India are playing all their Champions Trophy games in Dubai thought the hosts are Pakistan, where Rohit Sharma's team has not travelled due to security concerns.

# IOC gives recognition to World Boxing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lausanne, Feb 27: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) Wednesday granted provisional recognition to World Boxing, effectively reducing the International Boxing Association (IBA) to a non-entity and giving the reins to the new body.

The move increases the chances of boxing being retained at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics as WB will henceforth conduct the affairs of the sport.

The IBA was de-recognised in 2023 after a year-long dispute for defying advice and instructions from the IOC, which had long cited concerns about the sport's governance and the integrity of bouts.

"The Executive Board (EB) of the International Olympic Committee provisionally recognised World Boxing as the International Federation (IF) within the Olympic Movement governing the sport of boxing at world level, during a remote meeting held today," said IOC in a statement.

The IOC said it gave recognition to WA after assessing its functioning and the fact that four continental confederations and a majority of national fed-



erations were affiliated to it.

"Following an assessment of the situation of World Boxing, it was noted that, among the criteria for recognition that the IF has satisfied, World Boxing is composed of 78 National Federations from the five continents; and four continental confederations are already established.

"Has provided evidence that 62 per cent of the boxers and 58 per cent of the boxing medalists at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 are affiliated to National Federations that are members of World Boxing.

"Applies the sports integrity process implemented during

governance (including the World Boxing Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest Policy and declaration form, Anti-Corruption Policy, and Finance and Audit Committee Terms of Reference), and has demonstrated strong willingness and effort in enhancing good governance and implementation, to be compliant with the appropriate standards."

IOC stated that WA had provided assurance with regard to its revenue-generating process on the basis of multi-year commercial partnership agreements covering the period 2025-2028, among other things.

The global sports governing body also stated that WA had recognised the jurisdiction of the Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS) and had successfully applied for World Anti-Doping Code Signatory Status, "which has been accepted by WADA".

"The assessment concluded that World Boxing has continued to make progress regarding the identified areas of consideration in order to be recommended for IOC Provisional Recognition as the IF within the Olympic Movement governing the sport of boxing at world level."

The Olympic Games Paris 2024 by the Paris Boxing Unit, including with independent oversight," it said.

The IOC said with regard to the governance criteria, WA has put in place the "structure and documentation for good

# PRAGG, ARAVINDH ESCAPE WITH DRAW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prague, Feb 27: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa split points with Czech hero David Navara while compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram escaped with a draw with another local star Nguyen Thai Dai Van in the first round of the Prague Masters.

German Vincent Keymer, who was famously part of team D Gukesh's team during the World Championships, scored the first big upset of the tournament taking down top seed Wei Yi of China.

American Sam Shankland was the other winner of the day as he defeated Gurel Ediz of Turkey while the game between Quang Leim Le of Vietnam and Anish Giri of Holland ended in a draw.

Keymer and Shankland emerged as early leaders after round one with Shankland stealing the limelight in his first upset against Ediz.

Praggnanandhaa, Aravindh, Giri, Le, Dai Van and Navara share the third spot on a half point each and they are followed by Wei Yi and Ediz who will look forward to opening



their account in the next round. Praggnanandhaa faced the Ragozin out of a Queen's gambit declined as white and did not get much to have a go in the ensuing middle game.

It was a timely pawn sacrifice by Navara that equalised the position and after the trade of queens the players reached a theoretically drawn rook and pawns endgame.

Despite having an extra pawn, Praggnanandhaa tried on till the last nail but the outcome of the game was never in doubt.

Aravindh also played white and Dai Van showed that his victory at the Tata Steel Challengers earlier this month was no flash in the pan.

The Neo-Grunfeld by the Czech Grandmaster faced no problems by the Indian. A few pieces changed hands and it looked as though the game would end soon.

## CHAMPIONS TROPHY

# Pakistan's campaign ends on winless note

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rawalpindi, Feb 27: Pakistan's campaign in the Champions Trophy ended on a winless note after their match against Bangladesh was called off without a ball being bowled due to incessant rain here Thursday.

The match was effectively a dead-rubber, with both teams already out of contention after failing to secure a win in their two previous matches. Pakistan, hosting an ICC tournament for the first time in 29 years, had hoped for a strong finish but ended their disastrous campaign without a victory.

Persistent downpour left the ground soaked, with covers



in place and puddles forming around the field. With weather not improving, match officials called off the game nearly two hours after the scheduled start time. The gloomy weather prevented even the toss from taking place.

As a result, the two teams shared one point each, though both Pakistan and Bangladesh finished the tournament winless.

# Sports Minister launches course to develop more home-grown coaches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Thursday launched a special capacity building course in collaboration with Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports, Patiala for current and former elite sports persons in an effort to help India produce more home-grown coaches and officials.

The course has been designed and developed for athletes who are currently employed and serving in various central government or autonomous departments, organisations under central government or Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

The eligibility criteria for this course are participation



or medal winner in Olympics, World Championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games. The medal winners of Youth Olympics, Junior World Championship, World University Games, senior National Cham-

pionship and National Games can enroll for the course.

The educational qualification required is minimum graduation or equivalent degree from any recognized university in India.

The course consists of four certification levels -- foundation, pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced certificate.

"We are suffering from a crisis of coaches, referees and trainers, so to bridge that I am starting a special capacity building course and give them a six week course. If they pass this course, some will become coaches, some will become referees, and they can be utilized in different sport-related work," Mandaviya said in a meeting with reporters.

## DECLARATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGISTRATION OF NEWSPAPERS (CENTRAL) RULES 1956 PARTICULARS OF DAILY Orissa POST

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