

**Boosting ties**  
 India and the European Union Friday decide to work on a major security and defence partnership  
 NATIONAL | P9

**Students form party**  
 The students' group that led the protests against former B'desh prime minister Sheikh Hasina launches itself as a political party  
 INTERNATIONAL | P10

**Controversial tenure**  
 Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch, who faced conflict of interest allegations by Hindenburg, completes her tenure  
 BUSINESS | P11

**Pragg held again**  
 Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa plays out a second straight draw against Turkey's Gurel Ediz in the second round of the Prague Masters  
 SPORTS | P12

# Avalanche buries BRO camp, 25 trapped

**Dehradun, Feb 28:** Thirty-two of the 57 BRO workers trapped under an avalanche in the high-altitude village of Mana in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district have been rescued, with concern over the safety of the other 25 mounting as night fell on the snowbound slopes and rescue efforts came to a temporary halt.

The snowslide, which buried a Border Roads Organisation camp between Mana and Badrinath, rolled down early Friday morning. Multiple teams battled through tough terrain, heavy snow and icy temperatures through the day to reach the men. They initially pulled out 10 workers and then the others, sources said.

Four of those rescued are reported to be in a critical condition, the Army PRO said. All 32 have been taken to the ITBP camp in Mana for treatment, the sources said.

Mana, three kilometres from Badrinath, is the last village on the India-Tibet border at a height of 3,200 metres.

Visuals from Mana showed rescuers trudging through high piles of snow in a grim landscape bathed in white.

Rescue operations were stopped in view of continuing bad weather and the impending danger of more avalanches in Mana. Two mild avalanches had followed the main one.

The avalanche hit around 7.15 am, burying the workers inside eight containers and one shed, the Army said. Its swift response teams, comprising more than 100 people from the Ibez Brigade, especially trained in high altitude rescue operations, were immediately mobilised. The team included doctors and ambulances.

According to Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Secretary Vinod Kumar Suman, the situation is critical with the containers buried under six to seven feet of snow. The bad weather continues.

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF left for the spot, about 300 km from the state capital Dehradun, amid continuing snow-fall and rain.

Home Minister Amit Shah said rescuing the trapped people is the government's priority. In a post on X, he said he had talked to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and the DGs of the ITBP and the NDRF.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said all efforts were being taken to rescue the trapped personnel by utilising all available resources. "An unfortunate avalanche has occurred in the Mana area of Joshimath (Uttarakhand) today impacting a GREF camp of BRO. Spoke to CM Shri @pushkardhami regarding the situation. The administration is providing all assistance to the affected," he said in a post on X.



**RACE AGAINST TIME:** Rescue operations underway after BRO labourers got trapped under an avalanche in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, Friday

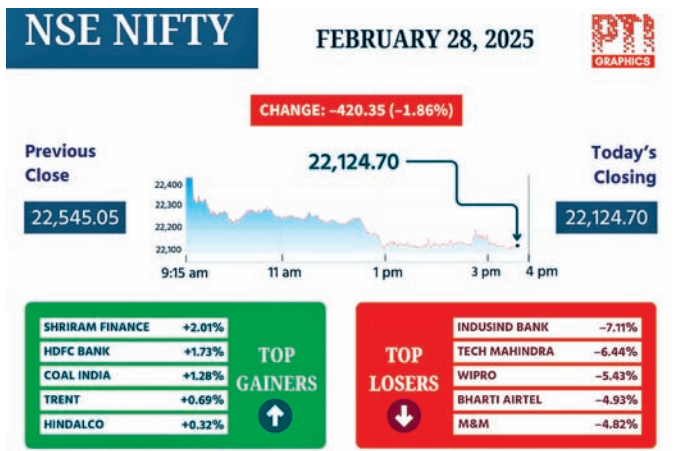
**TB eradication by 2025: Nadda**  
**Bhubaneswar:** Union Health Minister JP Nadda Friday said that India will meet the target of eliminating tuberculosis (TB) from the country by the end of this year, five years ahead of the global target. Nadda said this while inaugurating the 9th National Summit on Good and Replicable Practices and Innovations in Public Healthcare System in Puri. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has organised the two-day-long conference. P3

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

The public has seen your work. Let them see your degree - even if it says you topped, they won't buy it!

# D-St's worst run in 29 yrs

India's benchmark stock indices, Sensex and Nifty, have given negative returns for five consecutive months, marking the longest losing streak since 1996. As a result, India has become the worst-performing global stock market. A host of factors including a slowing economy, persistent foreign fund outflows, disappointing corporate earnings, and uncertainty surrounding US tariffs have contributed to this crash that has erased about \$1 trillion in investor wealth since the indices reached their peak in September last year. Analysts anticipate that the negative sentiment will continue, suggesting that India will remain a sell-on-rise market for the next few months.



came the fifth straight month of the indices witnessing losses. The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,414.33 points or 1.90 per cent to settle at 73,198.10. During the day, it plunged 1,471.16 points or 1.97 per cent to 73,141.27. Extending losses to the eighth straight day, the NSE Nifty slumped 420.35 points or 1.86 per cent to 22,124.70.

From its record peak of 85,978.25 hit September 27 last year, the BSE benchmark index is down 12,780.15 points or 14.86

**Man dies by suicide after ₹16L stock market loss**  
**Nashik:** A 28-year-old man reportedly died by suicide in Pimpalgaon Bahula here in Maharashtra after setting himself on fire, following a significant loss of ₹16 lakh in the stock market. Rajendra Kolhe was employed at a private bank in Nashik. According to police, Kolhe had previously worked at a private investment firm, where he invested his earnings in the stock market instead of sending money home. After incurring substantial losses, he left the firm and secured a position at a private bank. His financial difficulties, compounded by outstanding debts, led to immense distress. On Mahashivratri, Kolhe visited the Trimbakeshwar temple before stopping near Jyoti Vidyalaya in Pimpalgaon Bahula on his way back. There, he doused himself in petrol and ignited himself while seated on his motorcycle.

equity assets worth about \$46 billion. While there could be brief rallies because of oversold conditions, "India will remain a sell-on-rise market for a few more months," Patil said.

Foreign investors have sold Indian equities worth about \$25 billion on a net basis since the end of September, of which \$4.1 billion was in February alone.

# GDP growth rate decelerates to 6.2%

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** India's economic growth rate decelerated to 6.2 per cent in the October-December quarter this fiscal, mainly due to poor performance by mining, manufacturing and all other sectors, with the exception of agriculture.

However, on a sequential basis, the economic growth rate in the third quarter showed improvement over 5.6 per cent recorded in the second quarter. The GDP growth was 9.5 per cent in the October-December 2023 quarter, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) Friday.

It also released the second advance estimate for the current fiscal and pegged the economic growth at 6.5 per cent against 6.4 per cent estimated in the first advance estimate released in January.

The manufacturing sector's output growth, as per the gross value added (GVA), in the third quarter dipped to 3.5 per cent from 14 per cent in the year-ago period.

Mining and quarrying production growth slowed to 1.4 per cent in the third quarter from 4.7 per cent a year ago. The construction sector growth too slipped to 7 per cent from 10 per cent a year ago.

However, the output of the farm sector increased by an impressive 5.6 per cent during the quarter compared to a growth of 1.5 per cent in the year-ago period. The national accounts data showed that the electricity, gas, water supply, and other utility services segment grew 5.1 per cent in the third quarter against 10.1 per cent a year earlier.

The GVA growth in the services sector -- trade, hotel, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting -- was 6.7 per cent during the third quarter against 8 per cent.

Financial, real estate and professional services grew by 7.2 per cent in the third quarter over 8.4 per cent earlier.

# Uttam Mohanty cremated with full state honours

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The mortal remains of popular Odia actor Uttam Mohanty were consigned to flames at the Satya Nagar crematorium here Friday in the presence of hundreds of his fans and followers.

Amid slogans of 'Uttam Mohanty Amar Rahe' (May Uttam Mohanty live forever), the actor's son and cinestar Babushan lit the funeral pyre after the government accorded the guard of honour to the mortal remains.

Mohanty breathed his last at a private hospital in New Delhi Thursday night. The City police had made elaborate arrangements for the funeral procession and cremation of the actor as directed by Chief

Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. Earlier, Majhi, who was in Puri to attend a function, reached Mohanty's Jagannath Vihar residence here and paid floral tributes to the mortal remains and met his actor wife Aparajita Mohanty and consoled her.

President Droupadi Murmu, Governor Hari Babu Kambohampati, CM Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik among others consoled the veteran actor's death. **MORE P2**

# Trump cuts short talks with Zelenskyy after spat

**Washington, Feb 28:** US President Donald Trump cuts short talks with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy Friday after an unprecedented blow up between the leaders right in front of the American media at the Oval Office.

Trump shouted at Ukraine's leader during an extraordinary meeting in the Oval Office, berating Zelenskyy for "gambling with millions of lives" and suggesting his actions could trigger World War III.

The last 10 minutes of the nearly 45-minute engagement devolved into a tense back and forth between Trump, Vice President JD Vance and Zelenskyy -- who had urged scepticism about Russia's com-



for somber diplomacy. Trump laid bare his efforts to coerce Zelenskyy to agree to giving the US an interest in his country's valuable minerals and to push him toward a diplomatic resolution to the war on the American leader's terms.

ward to getting the war finished so we can do other things."

Trump suggested that Zelenskyy wasn't in a position to be demanding concessions. "You're not in a good position. You don't have the cards right now," Trump said pointing his finger toward Zelenskyy. "With us you start having cards."

He also accused Zelenskyy of being "disrespectful" to the US. "It's going to be a very hard thing to do business like this," Trump told Zelenskyy at one point, as the two leaders talked over each other about past international support for Ukraine.

"Again, just say thank you," Vance interjected to Zelenskyy, blasting him for litigating "disagreements" in front of the press. Trump, though, suggested he was fine with the drama.



SID, KIARA ANNOUNCE PREGNANCY

Bollywood star couple Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra Friday announced that they are all set to become parents...

SUSHMITA'S FITNESS MANTRA

Sushmita Sen loves to stay on top of her fitness game and inspire others with her intense workout regime...



FORTUNE FORECAST



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ARIES

Something unexpected may happen. Though you may not comprehend all that takes place...

TAURUS

You are hard working by nature but get highly frustrated when things do not end the way you had imagined...

GEMINI

There is every possibility that you will keep your partner in the loop while making important decisions today...

CANCER

Ganesha says you will win over people with your oratory. So it will speed up your work...

LEO

Businessmen and traders need to be wary of their competitors. They will be jealous of your progress...

VIRGO

You will be very open-minded today, very receptive to ideas from everyone. However, when it boils down to taking decisions...

LIBRA

Ganesha says today you will wish to get away from the monotony of daily life and take a break from your work...

SCORPIO

It seems like a fruitful day in business, and to deal in money matters, foresees Ganesha. On the career front...

SAGITTARIUS

A poignant and disturbing day is in the offing. At work, Lady Luck will be on your team. Don't let your sentiments cloud your logic...

CAPRICORN

The day bodes well, especially for public servants. An impending business transaction with the government will keep you busy...

AQUARIUS

It's time to have a riot with friends! You don't always have to be goody two-shoes. Do something you've never done before...

PISCES

Your peers will be the cause of a few confrontations today. Legal disputes may also arise. Take the advice of your elders to resolve these conflicts...

Uttam: The man you may not know

The throngs that gathered at his residence and the crematorium on Friday bore testament to the fact that Superstar Uttam Mohanty was more than just a box office sensation...

As fans bid a tearful farewell to their beloved icon, Orissa POST delved into some lesser-known facets of his life, uncovering the man behind the legend.

When he proved a point

Following the completion of Abhiman's shooting, he returned to Kolkata to focus on his studies. During this time, he received an offer for the film Gauri...

Five-year courtship Uttam and Aparajita (Tiki) were one of the most beloved on-screen pairs in the Odia film industry. Their first meeting took place on the sets of Ashanta Graha...

An example of generosity During the shooting of Danda Balunga, after distributing food to everyone on set, there was not enough left for the last two people. Demonstrating his generosity...

Acting not in plan Uttam once mentioned that becoming a film actor was never part of his plan. At that time, only one or two films were made each year...

OP DESK

He was Uttam Kumar of Odisha: Rituparna

Just as there is Uttam Kumar in Bengal, there is Uttam Mohanty in Odisha, National Film Award winning actress Rituparna Sengupta said in her reaction to the passing away of the Odia Superstar.

Speaking to Anandabazar Online, the Dahan abazzar said, "We probably acted in five films together. We did so many dance scenes in his hometown of Baripada. Such a popular actor, but how sweetly he behaves...

Rituparna had just entered the acting world at that time. Uttam was very happy to see her. He asked the others on set, "Who is this little, sweet girl?"

"Uttam acted in many Bengali films, and I was also the heroine in a few of his Odia films. In some films, Mahasweta acted with us as well. We all had a lot of fun on set," Rituparna reminisced.

Paying rich tribute to the Danda Balunga star, Rituparna said, "Uttamda created a unique romantic genre in the Odia entertainment world, which is still remembered with respect."

Source: Anandabazar Patrika Online



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi pays his last respect to legendary actor Uttam Mohanty at his residence in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Fraternity yet to process loss

Though actor Uttam Mohanty was airlifted to Delhi in a critical condition, many fans and members of the public were optimistic about his recovery. Prayers were held across the state for Uttam's restoration to health...

The loss of Uttam Bhai is a profound blow to the Odia film industry and to all of us. Legends like Uttam Mohanty, Bijay Mohanty, and Mihir Das have left an irreplaceable void.

During a challenging time for Odia cinema, it was nearly impossible to envision a film without Uttam Mohanty. Producers often struggled to secure funding, and whenever they shared their concerns with Uttam, he displayed immense generosity...

From a small village in Mayurbhanj to becoming the pride of Odisha, our beloved Uttam Mohanty (Uttam Bhai) will always be remembered. He will live on forever in our hearts and memories.

We will miss these conversations uncle. End of an era of Olywood. Not just a Supersar, but an actor who has inspired many May your soul rest in peace.

Mahanayak of odia film industry Shri Uttam Mohanty made his journey to the heavenly Abode yesterday. A beautiful soul is never forgotten, just remembered with great love.

FOR A LAST GLIMPSE



A sea of crowd throngs the residence of late matinee idol to get a last glimpse



A die-hard Uttam fan breaches police barricade to see her favourite actor for one last time



A scene from Satya Nagar crematorium

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

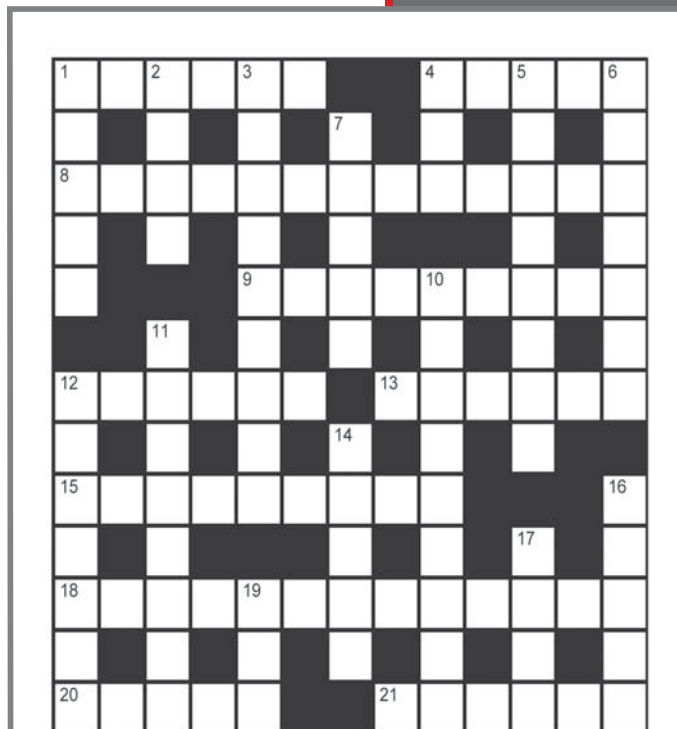


BREVITY



FUN POST

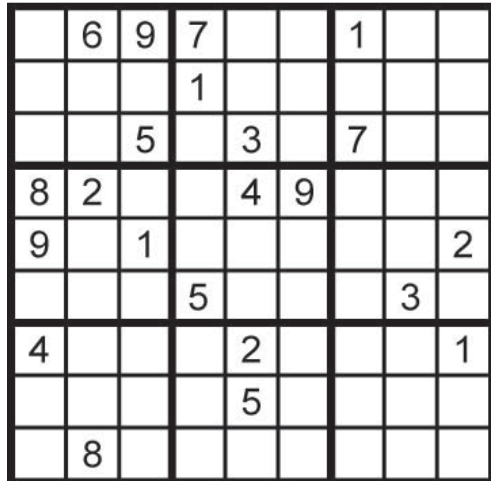
CROSSWORD



- Across 1 Docket, 4 Part of a joint, 8 Yoga pose (5,8), 9 Acquit, 12 Curt, 13 Muggy, 15 Theatre guide, 18 Ornamental tree (7,6), 20 Rope fibre, 21 Greek capital, Down 1 Luminous, 2 Small amphibians, 3 Infectious viral disease of animals, 4 Skater Babilonia, 5 Pain in the neck, 6 Convent, 7 Après-ski drink, 10 Radical, 11 Warplanes, 12 Bellyaches, 14 Rocket section, 16 King protectors, 17 Wild plum, 19 Indisposed

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

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS grid with words like SABU, OMISSION, TLEEEELU, EQUINOX, ALLOT, ANTI, ISKOS, MOTORSCOOTER, EON, PR, RECIPE, STATUE, SORSIEM, EXSERVICEMAN, CKN EK OA, ABODE, LIEDOWN, NMUTTS, EMBARKED, FEES

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS grid with numbers

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Sports and Youth Services Minister Suryabanshi Suraj hands over a certificate to a participant in presence of Deputy CM and Women & Child Development (W&CD) Minister Pravati Parida and W&CD department Principal Secretary Shubha Sarma during the state-level 'Kishori-Kishor Samabesh' at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Friday



# downtown

## India all set to eliminate TB by year-end: Nadda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** Union Health Minister JP Nadda Friday said India will meet the target of eliminating tuberculosis (TB) from the country by the end of this year - five years ahead of the global target.

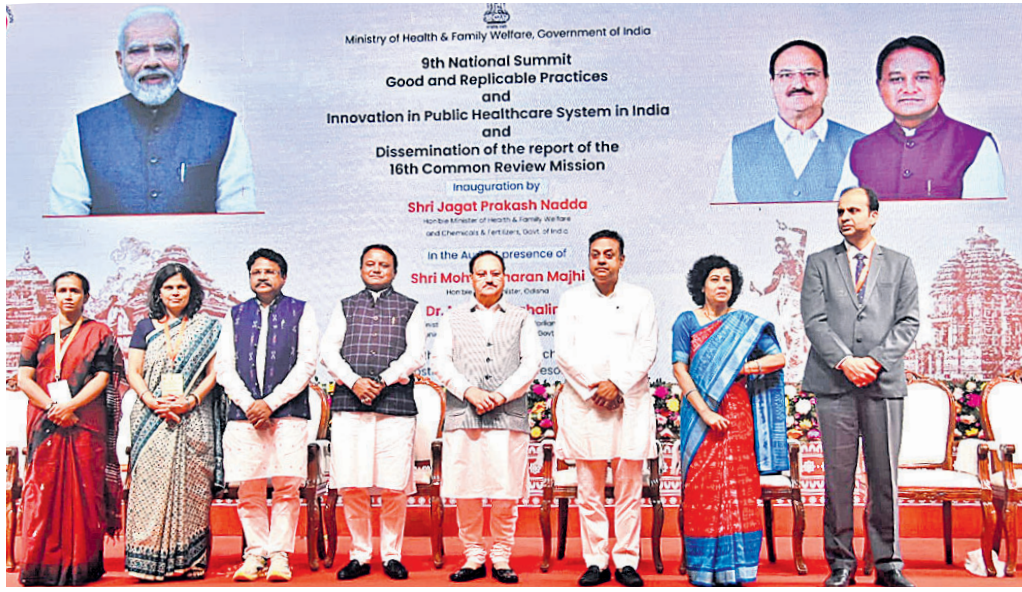
Nadda said this while inaugurating the 9th National Summit on Good and Replicable Practices and Innovations in Public Healthcare System in Puri. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has organised the two-day-long conference.

"As per the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), India has to eliminate TB by 2030. But, we are all set to achieve it by 2025," Nadda said.

"We have already identified 5 lakh TB patients during the ongoing 100-day TB Mukht Bharat campaign in 455 districts across the country. An extensive campaign in this regard is going on. We are going to include all aspirational districts and aspirational blocks under the campaign so that we will be able to eliminate tuberculosis by the end of 2025," he said.

Nadda advised the participating health officers to treat the public representatives as very important messengers and important tools for translation of the policies and programmes of the government.

"I see somewhere that officers are a little lagging behind in this aspect. So, please treat the public representatives as spokespersons of your policies and programmes. Take the PRI on board for better implementation of TB Mukht Bharat campaign along with the 22 lines departments," the Union Health



minister advised the officers.

He said that there is a tremendous increase in non-communicable diseases due to the negative impact on the environment.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed to the people to decrease oil consumption by at least 10 per cent in every household. We have to take it as a movement with a holistic approach," he said.

Emphasising the delivery of quality healthcare at primary healthcare centres (PHC), Nadda said, "Our base needs to be strengthened to provide quality and accessible healthcare to the 1.4 billion population of our country."

While admitting that there is a shortage of doctors in the country, Nadda said telemedicine is the only solution to overcome the problem.

"We have to ensure the advice of specialist doctors to reach the PHC level and Ayush-

### Sharp decline in MMR, IMR lauded

India has made significant strides in healthcare since 2014, with health indicators such as maternal mortality rate (MMR) and infant mortality rate (IMR) showing a sharp dip, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said Friday. "The drop in MMR in India is double that of the global decline, which highlights the efforts made in strengthening the healthcare system from the grassroots level. The IMR and under-five mortality rate have also seen a noteworthy downfall," Nadda said.

man Arogya Mandir Centres. Hub and spoke model needs to be adopted to address the issue," he added.

Drone service was introduced in the healthcare system. It should be expanded to

hilly and remote areas, where travelling is very difficult, he suggested.

Stating that finance is not a problem, Nadda said, "If this government can open 22 AIIMS in a short span of 10 years, we are ready to give funds to provide quality healthcare services at PHC level under the NHM. However, you have to ensure that the fund is being properly utilised to enhance the quality of healthcare services."

The Union Health minister said the ongoing universal screening programme, which was started February 20, will continue till March 31, for early detection of various diseases like diabetes, three types of cancers, etc.

"Our target is to reach 37 crore people through the campaign. We have to do it in a massive way so that every person in our country should know about the government facility," he

## ED unearths ₹2.5cr 'scam' in Forest dept



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday said it has unearthed alleged financial misappropriation of ₹2.5 crore in the Odisha Forest department following raids at a range office in Kalahandi district.

The searches were carried out at the office of Jaipatna Range in Kalahandi south forest division.

The federal probe agency said in a statement that the action came after it received an operational analysis report in a case of 'money mule accounts' from the financial intelligence unit (FIU).

Preliminary investigations suggested that certain Forest department officials were involved in using a number of 'mule accounts' to 'divert' huge amounts of money and 'misappropriate' funds meant for vari-

ous government schemes.

Officials in the ranks of forest guard and ranger were involved in the opening of 121 mule accounts in the name of different individuals in which funds were received through NEFT from the range office.

This was followed by immediate withdrawals through ATMs, the statement said.

A mule account is a bank account used by scamsters to transfer illicit funds.

Many of these accounts were opened using the same mobile numbers. The total 'diversion' of funds of the Forest department is suspected to be more than ₹2.5 crore, as per ED's statement.

The agency seized a number of ATM cards of mule accounts, mobile phones, withdrawal slips, digital devices, incriminating documents and an 'illegal' suspected tiger skin during the searches.

**Initial probe reveals certain Forest officials were involved in using 'mule accounts' to 'divert' huge amounts of money and 'misappropriate' funds**

## City, Cuttack get new DCPs

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** In a major reshuffle in its IPS cadre, the Odisha government Friday changed the portfolios of as many as 26 officers.

It appointed new deputy commissioners of police (DCP) for Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Bhubaneswar DCP Pinaka Mishra was replaced by Cuttack DCP Jagmohan Meena. Mishra, a 2011-batch officer, was appointed as the DIG, STF, Bhubaneswar. Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo (2016-batch) has been appointed as the new DCP of Cuttack in place of Meena, a 2013-batch officer, a notification issued by the home department said. Dnyandeo earlier served as the SP of Bolangir.

A 2002-batch IPS officer, Narasingh Bhol, was appointed as the Additional CP for the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Bhol was earlier working as the Excise Commissioner.

Bhol replaced the incumbent Additional CP for Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, Umashankar Dash. A 2008-batch IPS officer, Dash was transferred and posted as DIG, Home Guards and Fire Services.

## Man, daughter found dead



PNN & AGENCIES

**Cuttack, Feb 28:** A 60-year-old man and his daughter were found dead at their rented accommodation in Badambadi area here Friday, with police suspecting the man of killing the minor girl before ending his life over financial burden.

Badambadi police said they have recovered the bodies of Manas Ranjan Dash and Harshrita Hemangini, 17, from Flat No. 1/2A3 on the first floor of the four-storey building at Jagannath Lane here.

According to police, Dash and his daughter were supposed to vacate the

flat during the day.

"When the landlord reached the flat and knocked on the door, no one responded. He asked a person to inquire about Dash and his daughter by climbing through a window. The person found Manas hanging from the ceiling. Immediately, they informed the local police," they said.

Officials from Badambadi police station reached the apartment and broke open the door.

"We found Manas hanging from the ceiling while his daughter's body was lying on the bed in another room," the police officer said.

Later, a forensic team also arrived at the spot and collected samples from the flat. The police sent the bodies to the SCB Medical College and Hospital for post-mortem, the officer said.

"Dash, who hailed from Kendrapara, and his daughter were staying in the rented accommodation for the past two years. He had lost his wife when his daughter was barely one month old. His daughter was a little abnormal and he was also having some financial stress," said a neighbour.

"We suspect Dash of killing the minor girl before ending his life over financial burden," the officer said.

## Woman arrested over ₹3.38L SHG fund fraud



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The Laxmisagar police Friday arrested a 30-year-old woman for allegedly swindling ₹3.38 lakh from four Self Help Groups (SHGs) by forging the bank account details of the beneficiaries.

The accused, identified as Sanjukta Maharatha, succeeded in tricking the members into believing that she was in urgent need of cash to perpetrate the fraud, said Laxmisagar Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) P Shyam Sundar Rao.

Rao said Sanjukta, who lives in the area, served as the sec-

## BMC approves ₹1,000cr Budget

POST NEWS NETWORK

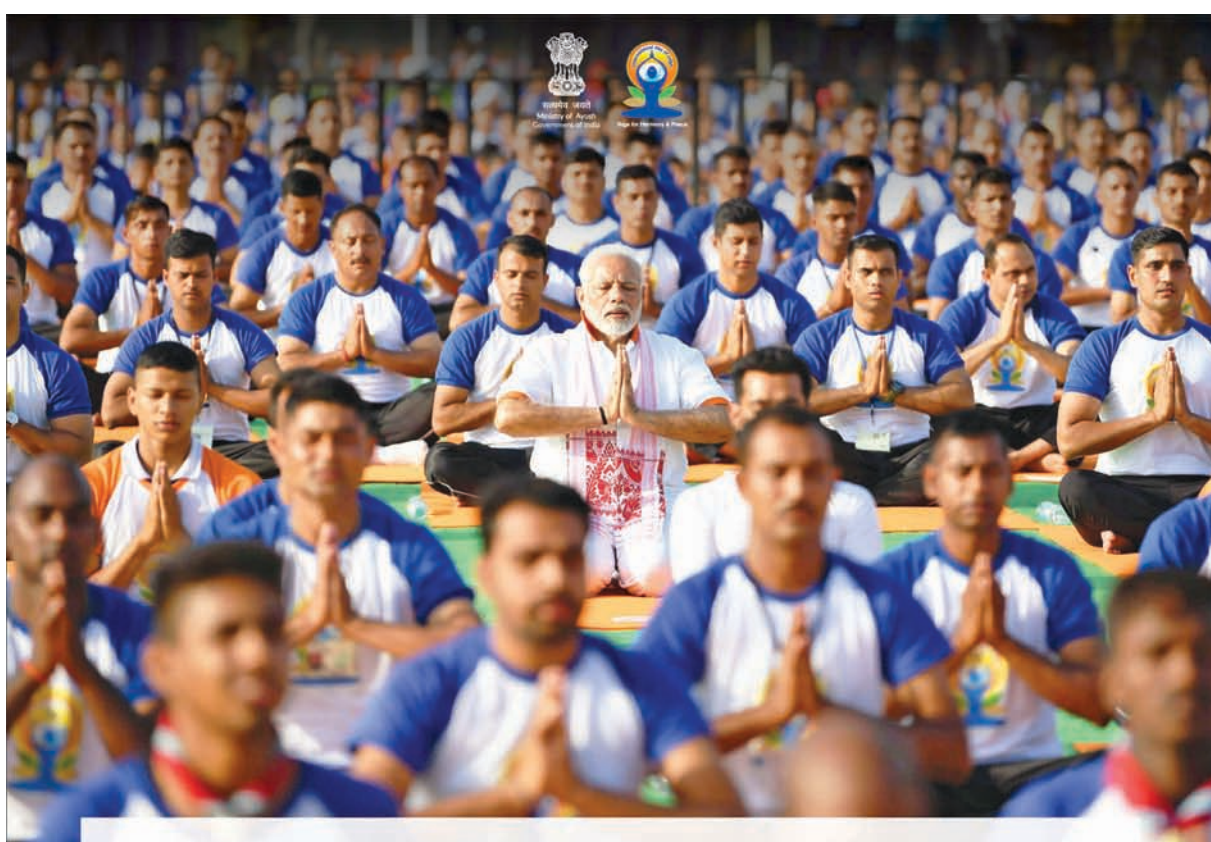
**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) approved a Budget of ₹1,000 crore for the fiscal year 2025-26, Friday.

The estimates were approved at a special meeting held at the civic body headquarters here which was chaired by Mayor Sulochana Das. The total revenue target from various sectors has been pegged in the Budget at ₹1,022 crore, with an estimated expenditure of ₹1,001 crore. "A surplus of ₹168 crore is expected for the fiscal year 2025-26," a release issued by the BMC said.

The breakdown of revenue estimates includes ₹469 crore from revenue grants and subsidies, ₹255 crore from fixed grants, and ₹280 crore from revenue and other incomes, it added.

The expenditure estimates include ₹379 crore for the acquisition and purchase of fixed assets, and ₹301 crore for operation and maintenance.

For the current fiscal year, the total income is estimated at ₹1,169 crore, which includes ₹1022 crore from the current year, and ₹147 crore carried over from the 2023-24 fiscal year. The total approved expenditure for this year stands at ₹1,001 crore, the release added.



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Last date to apply



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# 59% vehicles in state uninsured

# Science Day event highlights progress in geospatial tech

# Kingpin of ₹11.62L trading scam held

**Commerce and Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee urges vehicle owners to renew their insurance policies to avoid legal complications**



**The secretary emphasised the need for an efficient, citizen-friendly approach to insurance settlements and directed insurance companies to develop an SOP for uniform execution**

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** Around 59 per cent vehicles plying in the state are uninsured, leaving many vehicle owners exposed to financial risks and legal consequences, according to a survey by Commerce and Transport department. This was revealed during a high-level meeting at Kharavel Bhavan here under the chairmanship of the department's Principal Secretary Usha Padhee Friday.

The report said out of 1.03 crore registered vehicles, more than 61.57 lakh lack insurance coverage, underscoring the urgent need for improved awareness and enforcement.

The meeting which was also attended by representatives from various insurance firms

focused on reforming existing processes, enhancing regulatory flexibility, and ensuring seamless disbursement of claims.

The department has introduced key reforms to expedite vehicle insurance claim settlements, ensuring swift and hassle-free compensation for beneficiaries under Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. In its ongoing efforts to streamline the claims process, the department has

been actively coordinating with empanelled insurance agencies, the meeting revealed.

Under Section 164 of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, vehicle owners or authorised insurers are mandated to provide compensation of ₹5 lakh in case of death and ₹2.5 lakh in case of grievous injuries to victims or their legal heirs.

Padhee emphasised the need for an efficient, citizen-friendly approach to insurance set-

tlements and directed insurance companies to develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for uniform execution. The department will issue the final SOP to all stakeholders, ensuring greater clarity and coordination in the claims process.

To strengthen insurance accessibility, five leading insurance companies have been empanelled under Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC). As per the latest data, claims worth ₹6.77 crore have been filed while ₹1.45 crore have already been settled.

The state government is actively monitoring the resolution of pending claims to ensure a faster settlement process, re-inforcing its commitment to efficient insurance disbursement.

In a significant digital initiative, the government is set to launch e-DAR (Electronic Detailed Accident Report), an online portal developed in consultation with insurance companies. e-DAR will provide instant access to road accident data, accelerating compensation claims and offering much-needed relief to victims' families.

Padhee urged vehicle owners to renew their insurance policies promptly to avoid legal and financial complications.



**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The Odisha & Chhattisgarh Geospatial Directorate, Bhubaneswar, celebrated National Science Day at Survey Bhawan in Nayapalli here highlighting advancements in geospatial technology.

The event was inaugurated by Director of Geospatial Directorate Ashis Kaushal, who emphasised the pivotal role of Survey of India in modern mapping and topographical studies.

"The use of cutting-edge technology such as drones, GPS, and digital levelling is revolutionising the way we map and analyse landscapes. Our efforts contribute significantly to various national projects," Kaushal said in his address.

This year's National Science Day theme - 'Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for Viksit Bharat' - resonated throughout the event. As part of the celebrations, an exhibition showcased advanced survey instruments, ortho-rectified imagery techniques, and digital elevation models.

Students, teachers and officials from various educational institutions, including Ravenshaw University, Utkal University and Sainik School attended the exhibition. During the event, hands-on demonstrations of high-tech equipment provided valuable exposure, inspiring young minds to explore careers in science and innovation.

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The Cyber Police Friday arrested a man for allegedly duping a City-based investor of ₹11.62 lakh on false promise of attractive returns on investments through online trading. The accused has been identified as Manoj Kumar Sahoo alias Mantu, 30, a native of Chitalpur in Dhenkanal district.

Earlier, three of his associates - Sidhwar Jena, Ashim Kumar Mishra, and Prafulla Kumar Bej - were arrested February 24 in connection with the case, said Cyber inspector-in-charge (IC) Tereskova Mohapatra. A mobile phone and a laptop, along with proofs of cryptocurrency transactions on Binance, were seized during the arrest, she said.

The IIC said Manoj used to collect the amount from investors and distribute the same among other members of the group. The accused men ran advertisements on Facebook, luring the victims to join their WhatsApp group "D53-AXIS Securities Group".

Tereskova also said the complainant, too, was lured to join the group by similar pattern. He was promised with a 100 per cent return on his investment, along with assurances that the funds are managed in compliance with SEBI guidelines and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Trusting their claims, the victim transferred ₹11.62 lakh into multiple bank accounts. However, he was removed immediately from the group. On enquiring, the fraudsters dismissed of receiving any such transactions. Realising that he has been duped, the victim lodged a FIR January 27. Manoj was booked under Sections 318(4) and 319(2) of BNS, and produced before a local court Friday.

# Mock drill on disaster management held

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** A state-level mock exercise on chemical and industrial disaster management was organised, in collaboration with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), at 24 industrial locations in 16 districts Friday.

The objective of the exercise was to streamline emergency response and containment at industries and local level. During the exercise, the industries responded to the situation as per their response mechanism, available equipment, and standard operating procedures. Additional resources like fire brigade and medical teams were also mobilised by the respective district admin-

istration. As a precautionary measure, nearby villagers were evacuated to safe shelters.

In addition to the top management and incident response teams of the industries, officials of district and block administration, district-level line departments, local police, fire and emergency service, medical teams, PRI members and community volunteers were also involved in the exercise.

Six specialised teams of National Disaster Response Force, 3rd Battalion, Mundali and 12 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force teams were deployed at various industries for the mock exercise. A debriefing session was also organised virtually at State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) here, with the participation of representatives from 16 districts, chaired by additional special relief commissioner Padmanav Behera.



Fire Service personnel carry out a mock drill at Sewage Treatment Plant in Cuttack Friday

**Six specialised teams of National Disaster Response Force, 3rd Battalion, Mundali and 12 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force teams were deployed at various industries for the mock exercise**

# OUTR Research Conclave held

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The OUTR Research Conclave 2025 brought together distinguished academics and researchers to a common platform here Friday.

CSIR-IMMT director Ramanuj Narayan graced the occasion as the chief guest and NIT Rourkela former director Sunil Sarangi as the chief speaker. OUTR vice chancellor Bibhuti Bhushan Biswal, deans Achyutananda Acharya and Prashant Kumar Satpathy also attended the programme.

Narayan highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary research and encouraged a broader perspective on scholarly exploration. Speaking at the event, Sarangi inspired attendees with his insightful words, urging them to invent innovative methods that would foster prosperity.

# CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Talcher on dtd 27.02.2025 declare that I Jasmin Naik, D/o- Bimbadhar Naik, resident Karadagadia, P.O./P.S./ Dist.- Angul, that in my HSC Certificate my name has been mentioned Jasmin Naik, D/o- Bimbadhar Naik, but in my Aadhaar my name has been mentioned Rita Naik, D/o- Bimbadhar Naik, Jasmin Naik, D/o- Bimbadhar Naik and Rita Naik, D/o- Bimbadhar Naik is one and same person. Henceforth, I shall be known as Jasmin Naik, D/o- Bimbadhar Naik for all purposes.

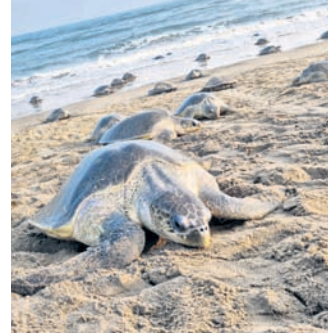
# Odisha steps up marine life conservation efforts

March to be observed as Olive Ridley Turtle & Marine Mammal Awareness Month

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The state Forest, Environment and Climate Change department has decided to observe the month of March as 'Olive Ridley Turtle and Marine Mammal Awareness Month', announced the office of PCCF (Wildlife) here Friday.

The initiative, lead by office of the PCCF (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden, will span across key coastal divisions of Berhampur, Chilika, Puri, Rajnagar, Bhadrak, and Balasore. It will engage local communities, fishermen, students, researchers, scientists, NGOs, and conservationists in a collective effort to safeguard state's rich marine biodiversity, said PCCF Wildlife Prem Kumar Jha.

"By fostering community-driven conservation efforts



and engaging key stakeholders, this initiative represents a significant step in ensuring the long-term survival of Olive Ridley Turtles and marine mammals along Odisha's coastline. Through collaborative action, scientific engagement, and public awareness, Odisha reaffirms its position as a leader in marine biodiversity conservation," Jha added.

# FSSAI conducts training for street food vendors



**Puri, Feb 28:** Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Eastern Regional Office, Kolkata, in collaboration with Odisha Food Safety department, organised a one-day Street Food Vendor Training Programme on food safety and hygiene at Shri Geetagobinda Auditorium of Shri Jagannath Medical College and Hospital here.

The initiative was aimed at equipping street food vendors with essential knowledge on food safety, hygiene and regulatory compliance, enhancing public health and consumer confidence.

The four-hour training programme was conducted through FSSAI's empanelled training partners. Over 800

street food vendors from various regions of Puri participated in the session, covering key topics such as personal hygiene, safe food handling, cooking practices, waste management and compliance with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. Special emphasis was laid on Schedule 4 guidelines, focusing on the licensing and registration of food businesses.

Since its inception in 2017, FSSAI's Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programme has successfully trained over 22 lakh food handlers. The training programme at Puri further strengthens these efforts, ensuring that street food vendors can serve safe, hygienic food while preserving the rich street food culture of the region.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.0°	32.5°
Min Temp	20.2°	20.0°
Humidity	61%	77%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	73198.10	↓ 1414.33
NIFTY	22124.70	↓ 420.35
DOLLAR	87.51	↑ 0.19
EURO	91.10	↓ 0.49
GOLD	₹84,155	↓ ₹1041
SILVER	₹92,886	↓ ₹749

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

CHHELIGADA PROJECT

NHRC seeks ATR on displacement of 4,000 tribals



Kendrapara, Feb 28: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an Action Taken Report (ATR) from the Chief Secretary regarding human rights violations and the displacement of over 4,000 people, mostly from Scheduled Tribe communities, due to the construction of the Chheligada Irrigation Project in Gajapati district.

tion to safeguard the rights of the displaced individuals. He called for an investigation into the matter, proper rehabilitation, consultation with affected communities in accordance with the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and long-term monitoring of rehabilitation schemes and their implementation.

6 poachers arrested, weapons seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 28: Officials of the Bonai forest division successfully apprehended a gang of poachers after months of close surveillance, leading to the arrest of six individuals and the seizure of critical wildlife contraband.



55. Except Sarat Naik and Bhima Kishan, who are from Sambalpur, the others are residents of Kello village under Gurundia police jurisdiction.

deer trophy, snare traps, a bow and arrows, gunpowder, pellets, two mobile phones, one motor-cycle, feathers of the Indian peafowl, and a porcupine spine. "These items are frequently used in the illegal hunting of wildlife, and this is a major setback for poaching operations in Bonai forest division," said Patra.

BJP prioritising political interests over tribal welfare: Naveen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Malkangiri, Feb 28: BJD president Naveen Patnaik Friday came down heavily on the ruling BJP at the Centre and accused it of acting against the interests of tribals to protect its political interests.

RALLY AGAINST POLAVARAM PROJECT

constructed in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. The protest, held at Motu in Malkangiri district, was attended by 14 tribal associations from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana.

is an ally of the NDA. It is evident that for the BJP, political interests outweigh the interests of tribals, Patnaik said, adding that the Polavaram project would adversely affect tribals.

Mother, son among 3 killed as SUV rams into stationary truck

Bargarh/Sohela: Three persons, including a minor boy and his mother, were killed Friday after the SUV they were travelling in rammed into a stationary truck on Bargarh-Padampur road near Ghens under Melchhamunda police limits.

Ministry of Corporate Affairs Government of India (National Financial Reporting Authority) Appointment of Chairperson and three full-time Members

Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society creating competence and values in rural Odisha

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, KALAHANDI NORTH DIVISION NOTICE INVITING SHORT TENDER

Vig nabs LAMPCS branch in-charge

Koraput: Vigilance sleuths Friday arrested Satyanarayan Challan, branch in-charge of the Kunduli LAMPCS under Semliuguda block in Koraput district, for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹3,000 from a millet farmer for procurement of the grains.

TATA STEEL PUBLIC NOTIFICATION Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the complete section of phase-II "Feeder Line & SSP of TATA STEEL PLANT Yard at Kalinganagar of Khurda Road Division of East Coast Railway that the 25,000 Volts, 50 Hz, A.C. Over Head Traction Wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section, on and from the same date the overhead Traction Lines, Feeder Line & SSP-Kalinga Nagar shall be treated as always live and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said Feeder Line & SSP.

Bank of India Gold Auction Notice It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, person engaged in the business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank.

FM varsity observes National Science Day

Balasore: Fakir Mohan University Friday observed National Science Day-2025 on the theme "Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for Viksit Bharat".



Consciousness is the faculty of becoming aware of anything through identification  
**THE MOTHER**

# EV Realities

Tesla's intentions of establishing a manufacturing base in India are well-known, and have sparked a debate, intertwining market expansion ambitions with the intricacies of global geopolitics. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is keen to position India as a hub for electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing, offering reduced import tariffs for automakers willing to make significant local investments. Sources have informed DKB that Tesla is actively scouting locations, with Maharashtra emerging as a frontrunner for its manufacturing plant. The company has also begun recruitment efforts, reinforcing its serious intent to establish a presence in the Indian market. However, U.S. President Donald Trump has raised concerns over Tesla's potential expansion into India. In a recent interview, he criticized India's high import tariffs on EVs, calling them "very unfair." Trump warned that setting up a Tesla factory in India could be detrimental to the U.S., particularly if it allows the company to sidestep these tariffs. His stance underscores a broader policy focus on reducing trade deficits and ensuring that American corporations prioritize domestic investments.

Amid this geopolitical tug-of-war, Indian bus manufacturers find themselves in a delicate balancing act. Hosting a global EV leader like Tesla aligns with India's industrial and environmental goals, yet the implicit caution from Washington calls for a measured approach. India must weigh the economic benefits of Tesla's entry against the potential strain on diplomatic ties with the U.S. This scenario exemplifies realpolitik, where economic ambitions must be carefully navigated alongside strategic international relations.

The next moves by the key stakeholders will be critical. India will obviously not be looking to jeopardize its relationship with the U.S., without harming local manufacturers. Washington, in turn, must balance trade policy with the realities of global corporate expansion. In this high-stakes game, every decision will shape the future of EV manufacturing in India and global trade dynamics.

## Babus, Bandobast and the Big Oath

Delhi's recent swearing-in ceremony for Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was grand. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) marked its return to power in the capital after nearly three decades, and while the politicians soaked in the limelight, another set of professionals got their long-awaited moment to shine—the babus.

For Delhi's government officials, the event was a rare throwback to the days of large-scale state functions where security, logistics, and sheer administrative muscle took centre stage. The swearing-in got the national babus back in action, doing what they love most—bandobast. Managing VIP movement, coordinating convoys, and ensuring no protocol was breached was the kind of assignment they had been waiting for. For months, they had been confined to files and policy papers, but here was a chance to orchestrate a full-blown administrative ballet.

The Ramlila Maidan was transformed into a high-security zone, with over 25,000 personnel deployed and 1,000 buses ferrying guests. It wasn't just about security; it was about optics. Ensuring the Prime Minister, senior BJP leaders, and other dignitaries moved seamlessly through layers of protocol was a logistical marvel. The babus, many of whom pride themselves on their crisis-management skills, ensured everything ran like a well-rehearsed opera.

For some senior bureaucrats, the ceremony was also a moment of political recalibration. A change in power means new expectations, new chains of command, and a fresh playbook for survival in Delhi's ever-evolving political chessboard. Some old hands at Raisina Hill likely viewed the event as a chance to showcase their efficiency and relevance to the new political leadership.

Of course, amidst all this, a question looms—should the capital's resources be channelled into such grandiose events, or could they be better used for pressing civic issues? While the return of the BJP to Delhi's governance is a political milestone, the real work begins now. The babus, having enjoyed their moment of action, will soon return to the grind of governance.

## A vote of confidence or just more of the same?

The recent extension of Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran as Chief Economic Adviser has sparked quite a chatter, especially given the current economic landscape in India. With GDP growth hitting a sluggish 5.40%, the slowest we've seen in nearly two years—it's hard not to feel a bit uneasy about the future.

Now, extending Dr. Nageswaran's tenure until March 2027 does come with its perks. Stability in leadership can be a good thing, especially when it comes to navigating tricky economic waters. The Economic Survey has projected growth numbers for the next fiscal year that sound optimistic—6.3% to 6.8%—but it feels a bit like pie in the sky when the ground realities tell a different story.

What we need is a fresh approach, something that goes beyond just tweaking existing policies. The economy isn't a machine you can just oil up and expect it to run smoothly. Dr. Nageswaran has the credentials, no doubt, but is he ready to shake things up? Are we going to see new ideas that can actually boost growth instead of just wishful thinking?

Experts and observers only hope that Dr Nageswaran will step up with some bold strategies. After all, the economy is not just about numbers. Hopefully, this extension isn't just about keeping the seat warm but about igniting real change.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian). Let's multiply the effect

## WISDOM CORNER

“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.”  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

“It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.”  
MARK TWAIN

“An arrogant person considers himself perfect. This is the chief harm of arrogance. It interferes with a person's main task in life - becoming a better person.”  
LEO TOLSTOY

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1872: Yellowstone National Park, situated in the western United States and designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978, was established by the U.S. Congress as the country's—and the world's—first national park
- 1936: After five years of construction, the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River at the Arizona-Nevada border was completed; it is the highest concrete arch dam in the United States.

## FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

# DIGITAL INCLUSION

We often take the ability to prove our identity for granted, but a government-issued ID is key to accessing essential services like health care, banking, and registering property ownership. And not everyone has one. That is why United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.9, which aims to “provide legal identity for all” by 2030, is so important.



Digital IDs have been especially important in war-torn Ukraine and flood-ravaged Brazil, where they enabled citizens whose physical documents were lost or destroyed to receive critical support—both in person and online

neither practical nor desirable, as ID systems must be tailored to each country's unique needs and cultural norms.

Governments, which typically issue and regulate digital IDs, also pose a risk of misuse or abuse. In the absence of legal frameworks for a standardized global approach, policymakers must establish robust safeguards to ensure ID systems are used responsibly.

To this end, we recently convened senior policymakers, civil-society leaders, and experts on digital infrastructure under the auspices of the 17 Rooms initiative to develop strategies for improving and expanding digital ID systems. Participants sought to identify “good patterns” for digital IDs that—if reinforced by international organizations and funders—could help governments deploy and manage these systems.

National statistics agencies offer a useful model. In many countries, these agencies are relatively insulated from political pressures, enabling them to protect data privacy, maintain credibility, and build public trust. Similarly, setting transparent, independently defined standards for the design, implementation, and maintenance of digital ID systems can facilitate responsible and

scalable development.

We propose five approaches to designing reliable digital ID systems. First, both digital and physical IDs are more trusted when they are testable, tailored to individual preferences, and designed to minimize data collection. Taiwan, for example, collects only the necessary data for each transaction, enabling users to disclose personal information selectively—a practice known as meronymy—through secure verification methods.

Second, governments must work closely with civil-society partners to mitigate risks and develop compelling use cases. One possible approach is to create public-facing mechanisms that allow civil-society organizations to test ID systems and identify potential issues early on. Jamaica's experience with digital IDs serves as a cautionary tale. A lack of engagement with non-government stakeholders has led to widespread distrust, slowing adoption and reducing the system's effectiveness.

By contrast, the West Africa Journalists Association has bolstered state accountability by training journalists to use digital public infrastructure (DPI), including digital IDs, to monitor and report on gov-

ernment actions. Other initiatives, such as SlashRoots in the Caribbean and Taiwan's gov movement, underscore the importance of engaging with civil society and media professionals.

Lastly, emerging economies need sustained international support to develop and maintain digital ID systems, while civil-society organizations also require training to monitor implementation effectively. By directing resources toward strengthening open-source software, international donors could help foster sustainable business models.

These three approaches can and should be tailored to national contexts. Large countries like South Africa and Indonesia are best equipped to develop customized, large-scale digital ID systems that can serve as models for others. Governments of mid-size economies must cultivate an ecosystem of civil-society actors to help guard against state overreach and misuse. And smaller countries with limited state capacity and weaker private-sector incentives would have to rely on low-cost, internationally supported solutions.

The SDGs recognize legal identity as the foundation of societal inclusion and economic opportunity. We now understand the key strategies that governments, civil-society groups, companies, and funders must adopt to achieve universal access to digital IDs. It won't be easy, but the potential benefits are enormous.

David Eaves is Co-Deputy Director and Associate Professor in Digital Government at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. Luanna Roncaratti is Deputy Secretary of Digital Government at Brazil's Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services.



David Eaves and Luanna Roncaratti

**IN THE ABSENCE OF LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR A STANDARDIZED GLOBAL APPROACH, POLICYMAKERS MUST ESTABLISH ROBUST SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE ID SYSTEMS ARE USED RESPONSIBLY**

## SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

# Pakistan at a crossroads

Located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan occupies a strategic place in the balance of geopolitical power, and the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) not only shapes its position in the global economy, but also fits into the competition between powers for dominance in Eurasia.

In 2024, Pakistan grappled with mounting political tensions, serious economic challenges, and growing security threats. While it managed to avoid financial collapse, fundamental structural problems remain unresolved.

Despite political instability posing a serious challenge to the country's stability, the government has embarked on a wide-ranging economic reform program, both to avoid a financial crisis and to boost economic growth.

In response to the improved macroeconomic situation, the Central Bank began a rapid cycle of interest rate cuts – from 22% in mid-2024 to 12% in January 2025. Additionally, foreign investment inflows

increased by 20%, indicating growing market confidence in the country's economic prospects.

Financial support from the International Monetary Fund played a key role in averting a crisis, as it provided Pakistan with \$3 billion under a stabilization program, conditional on tax reforms and reduced subsidies. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provided additional support, extending debt repayment dates, averting the threat of default. The World Bank also pledged \$20 billion for infrastructure projects over the next decade.

However, fundamental economic problems remain unresolved. High public debt and limited capacity to maintain long-term fiscal sustainability remain serious risks. GDP growth in the first quarter of fiscal year 2024/25 was just 0.92%, prompting the government to lower its annual growth forecast from 3-3.2% to 2.5%. Such a low growth rate will not be enough to effectively reduce poverty – which still affects over 40% of the population – or to create enough jobs for the 3.5 million young peo-

ple entering the labour market each year. It could lead to deepening social tensions and increasing labour migration.

The implementation of reforms is also questionable due to political instability and security threats, which are undermining the confidence of both investors and citizens. Over the past year, several major European investors have withdrawn from the Pakistani market, citing regulatory uncertainty and a deteriorating operating environment.

Despite the cooling, cooperation in selected areas continues, especially in the fight against terrorism and counter-terrorism extremism, where the US sees Pakistan as a key element of regional stability.

The strengthening of US military and economic relations with India complicates Pakistan's situation in the region. Although Islamabad does not seek open conflict, it increasingly sees US policy as part of a broader strategy to weaken its position in the subcontinent.

However, Pakistan's relations with India remain tense,

primarily as a result of the conflict over Kashmir, which has been a major factor destabilising relations between the two countries since the division of the subcontinent in 1947. Islamabad has expressed opposition to the political and demographic changes imposed by New Delhi on the territory and the repression of Kashmiri Muslims. Dialogue is blocked by mutual accusations of supporting terrorism – India accuses Pakistan of aiding Kashmiri militants, and Islamabad accuses New Delhi of supporting Baloch separatists.

Hopes for a breakthrough during the first visit in a decade by the head of Indian diplomacy S. Jaishankar to Islamabad (for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit) turned out to be vain. The fundamental conflict of interests and deep lack of trust mean that the rivalry between the two countries is chronic, and regional stability is based more on deterrence than on the real prospect of agreement.

The writer is former Polish Ambassador to Pakistan INFA



Piotr Opaliski

**THE STRENGTHENING OF US MILITARY AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH INDIA COMPLICATES PAKISTAN'S SITUATION IN THE REGION**

## Buzz about weak earnings

Sir, According to stock market experts, the Indian stock market is falling for these five crucial reasons: buzz about weak earnings by Indian banks, MSCI rejig, DIIs stuck at higher levels, rising US bond yield, and FIIs moving from India to China. Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth Rs 44,396 crore from Indian equities so far this month (till January 17). FPIs have been sellers on all days this month except January 2. The principal reasons for the sustained FPI selling are the strength of the dollar and the rising bond yields in the US. With the dollar index above 109 and the 10-year US bond yield above 4.6 per cent, it is logical for FPIs to sell in emerging markets, particularly in the most expensive emerging market, India.

Jayanthy Subramaniam, EAST MUMBAI

## An emotive issue

Sir, Apropos, “Hindi mask, Sanskrit hidden face: Stalin,” Orissa POST, Feb 28. The ongoing row over the three-language formula in school education—a policy embedded in the National Education Policy (NEP)—has once again ignited passionate debates. The TN CM MK Stalin has sharply criticised the Centre for what is perceived as an imposition of Hindi on the state. While some view Hindi as a unifying force, many see its promotion as a threat to regional cultures and identities. The conflict is emblematic of a broader pattern where states feel compelled to assert their linguistic identity against perceived central overreach. PM Narendra Modi has attempted to soothe these tensions by emphasising that the BJP honours every Indian language and that each language reflects the soul of Indian culture. He maintains that it is a collective responsibility of every citizen to enrich and embrace all linguistic traditions. Even so, opinions remain deeply divided. The Hindi imposition row is more than a policy dispute—it is a reflection of deep-seated historical, cultural, and political currents in India. Language is an emotive issue and, if not handled properly, could snowball into a major crisis. The best solution lies in a balanced, flexible approach that honours India's linguistic diversity. Only through respectful dialogue, tailored policies, and a celebration of diversity can India navigate this complex linguistic landscape and move toward a truly inclusive nation.

N Sadasiva Reddy, BENGALURU

## Letters TO THE EDITOR

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









# national

## of the day quote

The NDA will win 225 plus seats of the 243-strong Bihar Assembly under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

We will begin analysing the proposals in the new financial year, and for the next six months, we will prepare the roadmap for implementation of the various proposals received

The people of Haryana will drink poison but give amrit to others. That is our culture

## POST OF THE DAY

Historic Stock Market Crash After 28 Years! Stock market has been on a steady decline for five consecutive months, raising fears of biggest recession since 1996 India paying price for removing an Economist from the PM post #stockmarketcrash

## SHORT TAKES

### Bird flu scare grips Jehanabad

Jehanabad (Bihar): Scare of bird flu has gripped Bihar's Jehanabad district after several crows were found dead recently, officials said Friday. The samples of dead crows were taken from the Police Lines area in Jehanabad and found positive for the avian influenza virus, they said. "Medical tests have confirmed that some crows recently died in the Police Line and surrounding areas due to the avian influenza virus. Samples had been sent to a laboratory in Kolkata and these were found positive for bird flu," Jehanabad District Magistrate Alankrita Pandey told PTI.

### Ramzan to begin from Sunday in India

New Delhi: Ramzan will begin Sunday in India as the crescent moon marking the start of the fasting month was not sighted anywhere in the country Friday. Shahi Imam of Chandni Chowk's Fatehpuri Mosque Maulana Mufti Mukarram Ahmed said Delhi-NCR was cloudy since morning, due to which the moon was not visible here. He said that many places, including Gujarat, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana were contacted, but sighting of the moon was not confirmed from anywhere. Ahmed said that usually the moon is seen in the Kutch area of Gujarat.

### 2.9-acre land seized

Banihal/Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir Police has seized nearly 2.9 acres of land belonging to five operatives of the proscribed terrorist group Hizbul Mujahideen under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the Gool area of Ramban district, an official spokesman said Friday. The five terrorists -- Saraj Din (48) of Sangaldan, Reyaz Ahmed (45) of Dalwah, Farooq Ahmed (46) of Banj Bhimdassa, and Mohd Ashraf (50) and Mushtaq Ahmed(47) of Moila -- have crossed over to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and are operating from there, he said.



Atishi and other AAP MLAs were holding up banners even before we took the oath, asking when will we give ₹2,500 each to women. They dare to question us when they themselves failed to fulfil the same promise in Punjab

## AAI CONDUCTS MOCK SEARCH, RESCUE DRILL

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) Friday conducted a full-scale search and rescue (SAR) operation, simulating a distress scenario involving an aircraft, in West Bengal's Howrah district, officials said



# India, EU to expand ties

Ways to bolster India-EU defence and strategic ties figured prominently in talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: India and the European Union (EU) Friday decided to work on a major security and defence partnership, and explored ways to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific based on global law and respect for sovereignty amid China's military muscle flexing in the region.

Ways to bolster India-EU defence and strategic ties figured prominently in talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. In an address at a think-tank ahead of the talks, the European Commission chief said proposed security and defence partnership will help the two sides to tackle common threats such as cross-border terrorism and attacks on critical infrastructure. Security should be a core part of our new strategic partnership with India, she said.

"This is why I can announce that we are exploring a future Security and Defence Partnership with India in the mould of the partnerships we have with Japan and South Korea," she said. "This will help us step up our work to counter common threats whether on cross-border terrorism, maritime security threats, cyber-attacks or the new phenomenon we see: attacks on our critical infrastructure," she said.

Von der Leyen added, "This is not only about stability in our respective regions. But it is also a key part in strengthening our economic security and



ultimately our prosperity." In his media statement after his meeting with Von der Leyen, Modi described the growing India-EU cooperation on defence and security as a symbol of "mutual trust" and that both sides will take forward the engagement in areas of cyber security, maritime security and counter-terrorism.

"Both sides agree on the importance of peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," he said, welcoming the EU's decision to join the India-backed Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative.

"We will work together on triangular development projects for sustainable and inclusive development in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa," he said. A joint leaders' statement said Modi and Von der Leyen reaffirmed their commitment to promote a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific built on international law and mutual respect for sovereignty and peaceful resolution of disputes.

It said both sides also committed to explore trilateral co-operation including in Africa and the Indo-Pacific. The two

leaders expressed satisfaction at growing cooperation in the defence and security domain, including joint exercises and collaboration between Indian Navy and EU maritime security entities.

The EU side welcomed India's interest in joining the projects under the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) as well as to engage in negotiations for a Security of Information Agreement, the statement noted. It said the leaders also committed to explore a security and defence partnership.

"They emphasised the need to deepen collaboration in counter terrorism and to strengthen international cooperation to combat terrorism, including cross-border terrorism and terrorism financing in a comprehensive and sustained manner," it added.

The two leaders also focused discussions on defence industry and policy to explore opportunities from new initiatives and programmes.

Modi and Von der Leyen also deliberated on the situation in the Middle-East and the war in Ukraine.

## PUNE BUS RAPE

# Thirst forced accused to come out of hiding

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 28: Thirst forced the accused in the Swargate bus rape case to leave the field he was hiding in and approach a house to seek water, but the owner, brother of a police constable, promptly alerted the police teams who were on his trail, leading to the arrest, officials said Friday.

Dattatray Ramdas Gade (37), who was on the run since Tuesday morning, was nabbed around Thursday midnight from his native village Gunat in Shirur tehsil of Pune district. A court Friday remanded him in police custody till March 12. A ligature mark was seen on his neck, and as per the preliminary probe, he tried to hang himself from a tree in the field in which he was hiding for two days, but the rope snapped and the suicide attempt failed, officials said.

Police had pressed into service sniffer dogs and drones with thermal image cameras to hunt for him after realizing that he was probably hiding in the fields, but finally human intelligence proved most helpful, said an official.

As the police surrounded the field, Gade too was observing them from his hiding place, he said.

After darkness fell, the search operation was halted.

Unable to control the thirst, the accused stepped out of the field around 9.30 pm Thursday, and approached a nearby house to request for water.

The house owner happened



Dattatray Ramdas Gade (37), who was on the run since Tuesday morning, was nabbed around Thursday midnight from his native village Gunat in Shirur tehsil of Pune district

A court Friday remanded him in police custody till March 12

to be the brother of a policeman serving with Pune police, a senior official told PTI.

The family did give a bottle of water to Gade, but the owner then immediately called his brother, who contacted his seniors. The search was resumed, and finally the accused was captured.

Besides darkness, the presence of leopards -- who are known to take shelter in sugarcane fields -- in Shirur area was one of the factors that made the operation more challenging, said another official.

Gade, a history-sheeter, fled to his native place after allegedly sexually assaulting a 26-year-old woman inside a state transport bus at Swargate bus station in Pune city in the early hours of Tuesday.

He is named in half a dozen cases including theft, robbery and chain-snatching in Pune and Ahilyanagar districts. He was out on bail since 2019.

## MP: SC sets aside dismissal of two judicial officers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: The Supreme Court Friday set aside the orders terminating the services of two women judicial officers in Madhya Pradesh in May 2023, terming the action as "punitive, arbitrary" and directed their reinstatement within 15 days.

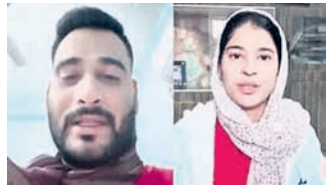
A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and N Kottiswar Singh outlined the importance of a sensitive work environment for women. After pronouncing the verdict, Justice Nagarathna underscored the need to be aware of the difficulties faced by women. Observing one of the judicial officers had even suffered a miscarriage, the bench touched upon the aspect of pregnancy.

"The freedom from discrimination or equal protection of the laws during pregnancy and maternity of a woman are precious rights for women workforce," the bench said.

The court in its 125-page verdict went on, "Much like 'it is not enough to proudly state that women officers are allowed to serve the nation in the Armed Forces', it is not enough to find comfort solely in the growing number of female judicial officers if we are unable to secure for them a sensitive work environment and guidance."

The bench's verdict came over the termination of two women judicial officers by the Madhya Pradesh High Court. The top court November 11, 2023 took suo motu cognisance of the termination of six women civil judges by the state government on the ground of unsatisfactory performance.

# Techie dies by suicide, blames wife in video



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agra (UP), Feb 28: In a case similar to Bangalore techie Atul Subhash's suicide last December, a 30-year-old tech firm employee from Agra has ended his life, leaving behind a video accusing his wife for taking the extreme step.

Manav Sharma, a resident of Defence Colony in Agra who worked as a manager with a tech firm in Mumbai, married Niketa January 30 last year. He ended his life Monday (February 24). Police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the incident after registering a case under Section 108 (abetment of suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). According to a complaint filed by the deceased's father, Narendra Sharma, Thursday, Manav and Niketa came to Agra February 23.

Manav then accompanied Niketa to her parents' home,

where he was reportedly insulted. He returned home and hung himself around 5 am February 24. Before taking the extreme step, Manav recorded a video on his mobile phone, blaming his wife for driving him to his death. As the video went viral, Niketa released a counter-video, alleging that Manav was abusive, especially when intoxicated, and had made suicide attempts previously, which she thwarted. Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Vinayak Bhosale, said Manav's post-mortem was conducted February 24, but no formal complaint was filed at the time. Manav's sister later saw the video on his phone, leading to the registration of a case.

"We will consider Niketa's version of events as well. Appropriate action will be taken based on our probe," Bhosale said, acknowledging that the couple's relationship was troubled. The incident bears similarities with the death of Atul Subhash in Bengaluru December 9, 2024. Subhash too ended his life after recording a video, claiming harassment by his estranged wife.



Heavy smoke rises after a fire broke out on the 42nd floor of a highrise in the Byculla area of south Mumbai, Maharashtra

## Weather office forecasts warmer than usual March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: India is likely to experience a warmer than usual March with a good number of heat wave days, the weather office said Friday, signalling the start of summer across the country.



Addressing a virtual press conference, D Sivandanda Pai, a senior weather scientist at the India Meteorological Department, said monthly maximum temperatures for March are likely to be above normal over most parts of the country, except some southernmost parts of Peninsular India. Pai said below normal maximum temperatures were likely in the southern peninsular region. The prediction for a warmer March comes as the country experienced the warmest February since 1901 with mean temperature of 22.04 degrees Celsius, which was 1.34 degrees above the normal of 20.70 degrees.

# SC laments suicides in IITs, IIMs, assures robust steps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: The Supreme Court Friday said incidents of suicides in IITs and IIMs were "extremely unfortunate" and assured a robust mechanism to check such cases.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh was informed by senior advocate Indira Jaising that in past 14 months, 18 suicides took place in Indian Institutes Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

"It is extremely unfortunate what is happening. We will create a robust mechanism to check this situation. We will take this issue to the logical conclusion," it said. Jaising,

appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvii, who allegedly died by suicide after facing caste-based discrimination, said universities and colleges hadn't given entire data on suicides taking place in their campuses despite a court order.

While Vemula, a PhD scholar at Hyderabad Central University died January 17, 2016, Tadvii, a student at TN Topiwala National Medical College, died May 22, 2019, after she was subjected to purported discrimination by three doctors in her college.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the University Grants Commission (UGC) had for-



The plea sought establishment of equal opportunity cells on campuses on the lines of similarly existing anti-discrimination internal complaints mechanisms, and have representation from the SC/ST, NGOs or social sector to ensure objectivity and impartiality

The top court September 20, 2019 issued notice on the PIL which also sought to enforce the fundamental rights, particularly the Right to Equality, Right to Prohibition of Discrimination against caste, and the Right to Life

The plea alleged "rampant prevalence" of caste-based discrimination in higher educational institutions throughout the country

mulated draft regulations, which took care of majority of the concerns raised by the petitioners, and were upload-

ed on its website inviting suggestions and objections from the public. Jaising said 40 per cent of the universities and 80

per cent of the colleges had not created equal opportunity cells in their campuses. The bench asked Jaising and other counsel appearing in the matter to give suggestions on the draft regulations and directed the UGC to look into these suggestions.

Jaising urged the court to give a hearing before finalisation of the regulations, but Mehta opposed it saying every other person would seek a personal hearing, if allowed.

The bench told Jaising it appreciates the cause raised by the petitioner and assured that court would take it to its logical conclusion. The matter was posted after eight weeks.

The court January 3 called it a sensitive issue and offered to

devise an effective mechanism to combat caste-based discrimination in educational institutions in the country.

It directed the UGC to notify draft regulations to ensure no caste-based discrimination happened with students in the central, state, private and deemed universities and asked for data on the number of institutions that had established equal opportunity cells in compliance with the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations) 2012.

The petitioners said from 2004 till now over 50 students (mostly from IITs) had killed themselves in SC/ST and other institutions after facing such discrimination.



There are, I believe, misunderstandings, design problems in the commercial approach proposed by this administration

SINGAPORE DISAPPOINTS WITH LOW FERTILITY RATE IN 2024 Singapore's total fertility rate remained at its record low of 0.97 in 2024, a disappointment for the birthrate-promoting government initiatives of the prosperous island state.



of the day quote

The PKK sees itself as a defender of Kurdish interests and will not disarm unless there are solid guarantees for the safety and future of Kurdish fighters



The detainee and the seized funds will be handed over to the investigation division at the General Directorate of General Security



I wasn't there to litigate about who's right and who's wrong, though I would continue to defend his views, Francis as one who cares about the flock of Christians under his leadership and the spiritual direction of the faith



Israel and Hamas diverge over truce

The ceasefire agreement last month halted 15 months of fighting and paved the way for talks on ending the war, while also leading to the release of 44 Israeli hostages held in Gaza and around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees held by Israel



Cairo/Jerusalem, Feb 28: An Israeli delegation in Cairo is negotiating to extend the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire when it expires Saturday rather than move to the second phase as originally planned and as Hamas wants, two Egyptian security sources said Friday.

However, Israel and Hamas have accused each other of violating the ceasefire, casting doubt over the second phase of the deal meant to include releases of additional hostages and prisoners as well as steps toward a permanent end of the war.

press Israel to immediately enter the second phase without delay. It is unclear what will happen if the first phase ends Saturday without a deal.

- Ceasefire phase one expires Saturday
No agreement on longer-term plans for Gaza
Israel and Hamas split over extension

CEASEFIRE The ceasefire has mostly held during its first six weeks, although both sides have accused each other of breaches, particularly in the treatment of Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees, and in the handling of releases.

Sanjay Bhandari wins appeal against extradition to India

London, Feb 28: The High Court in London Friday granted Sanjay Bhandari's appeal against his extradition to India where the consultant in the defence sector is wanted to face charges of alleged tax evasion and money laundering.

SHORT TAKES

Guinea's ex-PM jailed for 5 years

Conakry (Guinea): A special court in Guinea has sentenced the country's former prime minister to five years in prison after finding him guilty of corruption and embezzlement of public funds.



A protestor runs as the riot police stand outside of the parliament during a rally in central Athens, Greece to mark two years since a deadly rail disaster that has also triggered hundreds of other demonstrations and a general strike, Friday

BANGLADESHI STUDENTS FORM POLITICAL PARTY

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement or Students against Discrimination (SAD) turned into 'Jatiya Nagorik Party' or National Citizen Party (NCP) at a rally at Manik Mia Avenue in central Dhaka near Parliament with one of the key leaders of the July-August uprising, Nahid Islam, 26, as its convenor



There will be no room for pro-Indian and pro-Pakistani politics in Bangladesh. We will build the state keeping Bangladesh, the interest of the people of Bangladesh ahead

SNIPPETS

Pak reiterates concerns over arms left by US in Afghanistan

Islamabad: Pakistan Friday reiterated its concern over the weapons left by the US in Afghanistan after hasty withdrawal in 2021. Foreign Office Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said at the weekly briefing that those sophisticated weapons were being used by terrorists for attacks inside Pakistan.

Russia offers to restore direct air links with US

Moscow: Russia has offered the United States to restore direct air links between the two countries during the latest round of consultations with Washington, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Friday.

Strong earthquake shakes Kathmandu

Kathmandu: At least four people were injured in Kathmandu and elsewhere due to a strong earthquake in the neighbouring Sindhupalchowk district early Friday morning. The quake measuring 6.1 magnitude was recorded at 2.51 am with its epicentre at Bhairabkunda, Sindhupalchowk district, 65 km east of Kathmandu, according to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre.

5 killed, 20 injured in blast at mosque

Peshawar: A top cleric and four worshippers were killed and 20 others injured in a blast triggered by a suicide bomber during Friday prayers at a seminary in northwest Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province ahead of the fasting month of Ramazan, police said.

Social media posts derail Oscar front-runners

Seemingly every film nominated for best picture this year has been embroiled in some controversy, said Michael Schulman, author of Oscar Wars: A History of Hollywood in Gold, Sweat and Tears



nated for best picture this year has been embroiled in some controversy, said Michael Schulman, author of "Oscar Wars: A History of Hollywood in Gold, Sweat and Tears."

- Gascon's past posts damage Netflix's 'Emilia Perez' Oscar hopes
Controversies affect multiple Oscar-nominated films this year
Oscar campaigns often involve personal and professional controversies

vate Ryan," with its acclaimed recreation of the invasion of Normandy. "Weinstein was telling journalists 'Don't you think that the only really good part of the movie is the first 25 minutes, the D-Day sequence, and then the rest of it is just the standard World War II picture?'" said Schulman, who documented the campaign in his book.

Los Angeles, Feb 28: Netflix's hopes for claiming an Academy Award for best picture appear to have vanished after a series of embarrassing social media posts resurfaced.

But prospects for the movie dimmed after a journalist found and translated a series of Spanish-language posts, dating from 2016 through 2020. In them, the film's Spanish star, Karla Sofia Gascon, described Islam as a "hotbed of infection for humanity" and George Floyd as a "drug addict swindler."

Brazil's Fernanda Torres, who is nominated for best actress for her portrayal of a woman searching for her disappeared husband in "I'm Still Here," apologized for appearing in blackface in a decades-old television skit.

for Pope has some skeleton in his closet," said Schulman. Controversy has often dogged Oscar front-runners.

Weinstein, whose Miramax film "Shakespeare in Love" won best picture that year, denied criticizing the Spielberg film. "I would never stoop to that level," he told New York magazine in 1999.



India is the world's fastest-growing major economy, with a thriving manufacturing sector, a booming e-commerce industry, and expanding exports. This economic momentum stands in contrast to the stagnation of many other parts of the world, making India not just a key market, but a beacon and an opportunity for confidence in global trade

VINCENT CLERC | CEO, MAERSK

## UPI TRANSACTIONS SHINE IN JAN

UPI transactions in January surpassed 16.99 billion and the value exceeded ₹23.48 lakh crore, marking the highest number recorded in any month, the Finance Ministry said Thursday. The total transaction volume exceeded 131 billion and the value exceeded ₹200 lakh crore for the 2023-24



## of the day note

As of 2025, India has emerged as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, with a combined valuation exceeding \$354 million

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

During one of the peak days, Jio network catered to 20 million voice and 400 million data service requests on 5G successfully. An estimated 55 per cent of the total data traffic during the event has been served by Ericsson 5G solutions

VJAY SHARMA | HEAD OF CUSTOMER UNIT, RELIANCE JIO

With occupancy close to the peak of 65-70 per cent and continued demand for quality healthcare, private hospitals are investing ₹25,000 crore this fiscal and the next, nearly 80 per cent higher than the average annual investment in the previous four fiscals

ANUJ SETHI | SENIOR DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

## SHORT TAKES

**Forex kitty jumps to \$640.479bn**

**Mumbai:** India's forex reserve jumped by \$4.758 billion to \$640.479 billion in the week ended February 21, the Reserve Bank said Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped by \$2.54 billion to \$635.721 billion. The reserves have been on a declining trend for the past several weeks due to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatility in the rupee. The forex kitty had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in end-September 2024. For the week ended February 21, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$4.251 billion to \$543.843 billion, the latest data showed. India's reserve position with the IMF was up by \$7 million at \$4.09 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

**India, Japan renew currency swap pact**

**Mumbai:** India and Japan have renewed the \$75 billion bilateral currencies swap agreement, the Reserve Bank said in a statement Friday. The Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) is a two-way arrangement where both authorities can swap their local currencies in exchange for the US dollar. The Bank of Japan, acting as agent for the Minister of Finance of Japan, and the Reserve Bank of India signed the Second Amendment and Restatement Agreement of the BSA, the central bank said. The renewed BSA is effective Friday (February 28, 2025). The size of the BSA remains unchanged -- up to 75 billion US dollars, the RBI said.

**RBI conducts forex swap worth \$10bn**

**Mumbai:** The Reserve Bank Friday conducted US dollar-rupee swap worth \$10 billion for injecting long-term liquidity in the system, with the auction eliciting robust demand. The settlement of auction will take place March 4 and March 6. The USD/INR Buy/Sell swap auction for a tenor of 3 years was oversubscribed 1.62 times. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it received 244 bids during the auction and 161 of them were accepted for amount totalling \$10.06 billion.

## HIGH-INCOME ECONOMY BY 2047

# India needs to grow at average 7.8%: WB

The country witnessed an average growth of 6.3% between 2000 and 2024, says the World Bank report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** India will need to accelerate reforms to achieve an average annual growth rate of 7.8 per cent for becoming a high-income economy by 2047, a World Bank report said Friday.

To achieve this goal India would require reforms in financial sector as well as in land and labour market, the World Bank said in its India Country Memorandum titled 'Becoming a High-Income Economy in a generation'.

Recognizing India's fast pace of growth averaging 6.3 per cent between 2000 and 2024, the report notes that India's past achievements provide the foundation for its future ambitions.

"However, reaching the ambitious target of becoming a high-income economy by 2047 will not be possible in a business-as-usual scenario... for India to become a high-income economy by 2047, its GNI (gross national income) per capita would have to increase by nearly 8 times over the current levels; growth would have to accelerate further and to remain high over the next two decades, a feat that few countries have achieved.

"To meet this target, given the less conducive external environment, India would need to not only maintain ongoing initiatives but in fact expand and intensify reforms," the World Bank report said.

In recent years, India has



FOR INDIA TO BECOME A HIGH-INCOME ECONOMY BY 2047, ITS GNI PER CAPITA WOULD HAVE TO INCREASE BY NEARLY 8 TIMES OVER THE CURRENT LEVELS; GROWTH WOULD HAVE TO ACCELERATE FURTHER AND TO REMAIN HIGH OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES, A FEAT THAT FEW COUNTRIES HAVE ACHIEVED

introduced a host of structural reforms to transform the country into a global manufacturing hub, to boost infrastructure, improve human capital, and leverage digitization, while at the same time bolstering macroeconomic stability.

"To reach high income by 2047, India's growth rate needs to average 7.8 per cent, in real terms, over the coming decades... Only an 'accelerated reforms' package would put India on track to become high-income by 2047," the report said.

World Bank India country director Auguste Tano Kouame said lessons from countries like Chile, Korea and Poland show how they have successfully made the transition from middle to high-income countries

**India can chart its own path by stepping up the pace of reforms and building on its past achievements**

AUGUSTE TANO KOUAME | COUNTRY DIRECTOR, WORLD BANK INDIA

by deepening their integration into the global economy.

Stellar growth The report said that over the past decades, India has developed at a scale and pace that few would have thought possible.

From 2000 to today, in real terms, the economy has grown nearly four-fold, and GDP per capita has almost tripled. Because India grew faster than the rest of the world, its share in the global economy has dou-

bled from 1.6 per cent in 2000 to 3.4 per cent in 2023. India has become the world's fifth largest economy.

"This remarkable development story also includes a steep decline in extreme poverty, and massive expansion of service delivery and essential infrastructure. Building on these achievements, India has set the ambitious goal of becoming a high-income country by 2047," the report added.

The report evaluates three scenarios for India's growth trajectory over the next 22 years.

"India can take advantage of its demographic dividend by investing in human capital, creating enabling conditions for more and better jobs and

## Key infra sectors growth picks up to 4.6% in Jan



REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** India's infrastructure output grew 4.6% year-on-year in January, backed by a pick up in cement and refined petroleum product output, government data showed Friday.

Infrastructure output, which tracks activity across eight sectors and makes up 40% of the country's industrial production, grew at a revised 4.8% in December, compared to the initial estimate of 4%.

Infrastructure output rose 4.4% in April-January, compared to a 7.8% increase in the year-ago period.

Cement output rose 14.5% year-on-year in January, compared to a revised 4.6% increase in December, while steel production climbed 3.7% against

a revised 7.3% climb a month earlier.

Coal production increased 4.6% year-on-year compared to a 5.3% gain in December, while refinery products output advanced 8.3% compared with 2.8% growth in December.

Electricity generation was up 1.3% against a revised 6.2% increase in the prior month, while fertilizer production grew 3% compared with 1.7% in the prior month.

Crude oil output dropped 1.1% year-on-year compared to a 0.6% increase in December, while natural gas production declined 1.5% compared with a 1.8% drop in December.

Separately, India also raised its growth forecast slightly to 6.5% for the year ending March 31, from its previous projection of 6.4%.

## UCO celebrates Agriculture, MSME and CASA Carnival



BHUBANESWAR: UCO Bank, Zonal Office Bhubaneswar celebrated its Agriculture, MSME and CASA Carnival. The event was attended by MSME, Agriculture, Resources customers, Self Help Group Members and Bank Mitras. The occasion was graced by Goutam Patra, General Manager Business Development & Convener SLBC, Odisha, Ankit Rana, General Manager, Recovery Department, Head Office, Kolkata, Smarajit Mohanty, President Odisha Small Scale Industry Association (OSSIA), and Chinmaya Kumar Sahoo, Deputy General Manager & Zonal Head Bhubaneswar. Sahoo welcomed all the dignitaries and guests at the event. Patra addressed all the participants and shared the bank's journey, growth and commitment for the current financial year along with valuable insights on the opportunities in the MSME, agriculture, and resources sectors. Rana expressed his profound gratitude to participants and customers for their long standing association with UCO Bank and future commitment for better customer service. Few customers also expressed their valuable banking experiences and feedbacks. During the event, the bank's Resources Department highlighted the Key benefits of bank's newly launched products i.e. UCO Unique, UCO Royal & UCO Privilege.

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## Fiscal deficit at 74.5% of annual aim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** The Centre's fiscal deficit touched 74.5 per cent of the annual target at the end of January 2025, according to the data released by Controller General of Accounts (CGA) Friday.

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between expenditure and revenue -- was ₹11,69,542 crore during the April-January 2024-25 period.

The deficit was 63.6 per cent of Revised Estimates (RE) of 2023-24 in the year-ago period.

The CGA data showed that the central government's tax revenue (net) was ₹19.03 lakh crore, or 74.4 per cent of the RE of 2024-25. It was at 80.9 per cent during the corresponding year of the last financial year.

The total expenditure was at ₹35.7 lakh crore, or 75.7 per cent of the RE, according to the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government. In the year-ago period it was at 74.7 per cent of that year's RE.

In the Union Budget presented in Parliament, the fiscal deficit for 2024-25 has been pegged at 4.8 per cent of GDP (lower than earlier estimate of 4.9 per cent) and at 4.4 per cent for 2025-26.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit for the financial year ending March 2025 is estimated



**Revenue expenditure rose by 5.1% year-on-year in January 2025, whereas capital expenditure surged by about 51%, which would augur well for economic activity in the ongoing quarter**

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

at ₹15.69 lakh crore.

According to the data, ₹10,74,179 crore has been transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by Government of India up to January, which is ₹2,53,929 crore higher than the previous year.

Out of the total revenue expenditure (Rs 28.12 lakh crore), ₹8,75,461 crore was on account of interest payments

and ₹3,37,733 crore on account of major subsidies.

The Centre's capex needs to expand by about 15 per cent (y-o-y) in February-March 2025, on a high base, or record a monthly run rate of ₹1.3 lakh crore, to meet the FY25 RE, Aditi Nayar, chief economist ICRA said.

"A slight miss in capex relative to the target of ₹10.2 lakh crore for FY2025 can't be entirely ruled out. Overall, ICRA expects the fiscal deficit to print in line with the FY2025 RE of ₹15.7 lakh crore or 4.8 per cent of GDP," Nayar said.

A fiscal deficit is the difference between the total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowing needed by the government.

## Buch to hang boots as Sebi chief after controversial 3-year tenure

Seasoned bureaucrat Tuhin Pandey to take over as 11th SEBI chairman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** India's first woman Sebi Chief Madhabi Puri Buch, who faced conflict of interest allegations by the US-based short-seller Hindenburg and also political heat thereafter, would complete her three-year tenure later Friday and will be succeeded by Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey.

Before her appointment as Sebi chief, veteran investment banker who has also worked with country's leading private sector lender ICICI Bank, joined Sebi's

board as a whole-time member in April 2017 and was later elevated as a chairperson in March 2022.

She succeeded former IAS officer Ajay Tyagi, who held the top position for five years, from March 1, 2017, to February 28, 2022.

Buch's stint at Sebi Chief has been marked by both significant strides and notable challenges. Taking charge March 2, 2022, Buch made history as the first woman to lead the market regulator, as well as the first private-sector individual to hold the position.

Although, Buch in her tenure made significant strides in areas like faster settlements in equities, enhanced FPI disclosures and increasing mutual



fund penetration through ₹250 SIP, the last year of her tenure saw heightened controversy, when she battled a series of allegations by Hindenburg

and the Congress party, while simultaneously dealing with in-house employee protests against "toxic work culture".

In August last year, Buch

faceted pressure to resign after the Hindenburg Research accused her of having conflict of interest that prevented a thorough examination of manipulation and fraud claims at the Adani Group.

Hindenburg accused Buch and her husband, Dhaval Buch, of investing in offshore entities that were allegedly part of a fund structure in which Vinod Adani -- the elder brother of Anand Adani group founder chairman Gautam Adani -- also had investments.

Buchs had denied the allegation saying the investments were made before she joined the regulator and she had complied with all disclosure requirements.

Hindenburg earlier this

month announced shutting down its business.

The government, on its part, did not publicly say if it had sought an explanation from Buch. She was summoned by Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in October 2024 as part of its review of financial regulators. However, she skipped the meeting citing personal reasons.

Despite the controversy, Buch has built an extraordinary career spanning various top positions at leading companies, most notably at ICICI Bank, ICICI Securities, and ICICI Web Trade Ltd. Her tenure at these institutions played a significant role in shaping India's banking and financial services sector.

# Rahul junks injury scares

With big wins against Bangladesh and Pakistan, Rohit Sharma's side has already secured a spot in the knock-out stage with a game to go against New Zealand Sunday

AGENCIES

**Dubai, Feb 28:** After both Rohit Sharma and Mohammed Shami had left the ground with respective fitness issues during their win against Pakistan, wicket-keeper batter KL Rahul confirmed there are no concerns fitness-wise heading into the final group clash against New Zealand Sunday.

Both India and New Zealand have qualified for the semifinals from Group A, with hosts Pakistan and Bangladesh set to make early exits after consecutive defeats in the tournament.

The two sides last faced each other in an ODI in the 2023 World Cup semifinal, where Men in Blue sealed the tie by 70 runs at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai to qualify for the summit clash. "Fitness-wise, everything seems pretty okay. There are no real concerns about anyone missing, as far as I know. Everyone has been at the gym; everyone has been in training," said KL Rahul.

With there being only one rest day between India's Group A clash against New Zealand and their semifinal, it would not have been unprecedented if some senior players were to rest ahead of the knockout stages. However, Rahul does not see that happening.

"Luckily, I am not part of the leadership group. I don't have to make that decision. There will be some temptation to try out players who have not gotten a game. But I don't think that will happen in the Champions Trophy because there is just



one day's break between the final group-stage game and the semifinal," he added.

Rahul also addressed his selection over Rishabh Pant in the ODI setup and claimed that with high-level backups, the temptation to keep changing the side is always there.

When Pant was recovering from a life-threatening car crash, Rahul became India's primary keeper-batter in ODIs since August 2023, proving to be a great middle-order bat and reliable keeper in the 50-over World Cup, amassing 452 runs and effecting 17 dismissals.

"There is (competition with

Pant), I won't lie. He is a very talented player and has shown all of us what he can do, how aggressively he can play, and how quickly he can change the game. So there is always a temptation in the team with the captain and the coach to think if they should play him or play me," said Rahul. 'New Zealand cannot be taken lightly'

Rahul said a team like New Zealand can never be taken lightly. They defeated India in the three-Test series recently and had also beaten them in the 2021 T20 World Cup.

"It's my first Champions Trophy and what I've realised

is things happen really quickly. It's not like the World Cup where even if you don't start well, there's an opportunity for you to come back. But in this tournament, it's just really hard. You need to be really switched on."

"No game is easy or no team can be taken lightly. So, yeah, that's how we've looked at things in New Zealand. They've always been a very formidable team and a very competitive team. We've played against them a lot of times in ICC events and they've ramped up against us. It's been quite even in the contest."

# OFC playoff hopes fade

Kalinga Warriors play out 0-0 stalemate against Mohammedan SC

POST NEW NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** Odisha FC's hopes of securing a playoff spot faded after a 0-0 draw against Mohammedan SC Friday at the Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar.

Despite a solid first half and some promising moments in the second, the Kalinga Warriors were unable to break the deadlock. With only one point from the match, Odisha FC's playoff aspirations effectively ended for the season.

The match began with Odisha FC playing aggressively, knowing the importance of securing a win. In the 5th minute, Isak delivered a precise long diagonal pass to Rahul, who cleverly laid it off to Rahul KP. However, Rahul's shot sailed high over the bar, missing an early chance to take the lead.

Defensively, the team looked solid in the opening 25 minutes. Carlos Delgado and Thoiba stood strong in defense, with Delgado making crucial interventions to deny Manvir, who was poised to score on two separate occasions.

The first came when Delgado and Thoiba blocked Manvir's shot and forced a corner for the opposition, and later, Delgado made a brilliant sliding tackle to clear a clear opportunity inside the box.

Odisha FC continued to press for an opener, and in the 27th minute, a well-executed set-piece by Saviour found Thoiba, but his header went wide. Just a few minutes later, a long ball into the box fell to Isak, whose low shot was saved by the Mohammedan goalkeeper.

The Kalinga Warriors' defense, led by Delgado, held firm,



The Juggernauts are at the seventh place with 30 points from 23 games

and the first half ended without any goals, despite a couple of close calls.

The second half began with Odisha FC showing intent, as they pushed forward in search of the opener. In the 50th minute, Isak's curling shot from outside the box narrowly missed the target, going just over the bar. Two minutes later, Isak fired a cross from the left, which was deflected off the goalkeeper and away from onrushing Diego, who had been waiting to pounce on the loose ball.

The attacking play continued, and in the 58th minute, Isak and Rahul linked up well just outside the box, but Rahul's shot was collected eas-

ily by the goalkeeper. As the match wore on, the Warriors grew more desperate for a goal. In the 70th minute, Saviour whipped in a dangerous cross into the box, but the ball was deflected out for a corner, signaling a missed opportunity for Odisha FC.

In the dying moments of the game, Odisha FC threw everything forward in search of a late winner. Rahim Ali drew a foul just outside the box in the final two minutes, giving Odisha a free-kick in a dangerous area. However, the resulting set-piece failed to produce the desired outcome, and the match ended in a goalless draw.

Looking ahead, the Kalinga Warriors will play their final league game of the season Wednesday against Jamshedpur FC at the JRD Tata Sports Complex, Jamshedpur.

## SHORT TAKES

### Ranji Trophy final: Harsh makes history

**Nagpur:** Vidarbha edged ahead in an attritional Ranji Trophy final against Kerala by eking out a 37-run first-innings lead on day three with Harsh Dubey (3/88) creating a record for most wickets by any bowler in the tournament's history Friday. The young left-arm spinner has taken 69 wickets so far this season, eclipsing the 68 by Bihar's Ashutosh Aman in 2018-19. Kerala skipper Sachin Baby struck a valiant 98 and Aditya Sarwate fought hard for his 185-ball 79 but Vidarbha held their nerve to gain a vital lead after dismissing the visitors for 342. Vidarbha had made 379 batting first.

### Buttler to step down as England's captain

**Karachi:** Jos Buttler Friday said he will step down as England white-ball captain after the team's exit from the ongoing Champions Trophy. The 34-year-old will lead England for the last time in their final group match against South Africa Saturday. England made an exit from the Champions Trophy after losing to Afghanistan Wednesday. "I'm going to stand down as England captain. It's the right decision for me and the team," Buttler said. "This tournament was important for my captaincy, but results did not go our way. I feel it's the right time to step aside."

# Hockey India brings new format for Sr Women National C'ship



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** Hockey India Friday unveiled a new format with a promotion and relegation system for the Senior Women's National Championship to be held in Panchkula from March 1 to 12.

The competition will feature 28 teams divided into three divisions titled 'A', 'B' and 'C'.

The new format aims to enhance competition but also provides intends to provide a pathway for teams to ascend to higher divisions or risk relegation based on their performances.

"The introduction of the promotion and relegation system is a significant step in raising the standard of hockey across the country," Hockey India Presi-

**The introduction of the promotion and relegation system is a significant step in raising the standard of hockey across the country**

DILIP TIRKEY | PRESIDENT, HOCKEY INDIA

dent Dilip Tirkey said.

"It ensures that every match in the Championship holds importance, whether it's a battle for the title or to avoid relegation. We look forward to an exciting tournament where teams can showcase their skills and aim for the top."

The top 12 teams will compete in Division A which will be further split into four pools of three teams each and will play in a league format within

their respective pools. The top two teams from each pool will advance to the quarterfinals, scheduled for March 9, followed by the semifinals March 10 and the final and 3rd/4th place playoff March 12. The bottom two teams will be relegated to Division B for the next edition.

Nine teams will compete in Division B, with the goal of earning promotion to Division A. Here, five teams are in Pool A and four are in Pool B.

"The top two teams will earn promotion to Division A for the next season, while the bottom two will be relegated to Division C. No knockout rounds will be held in Division B; the league standings will determine promotions and relegations," HI said.

Seven teams in Division C will vie for promotion to Division B which will have three teams in Pool A and four in Pool B. Division C will also only play league matches, with the top two teams securing promotion to Division B.

During the league stage, teams in all three divisions will earn points based on their performance. Each team will be awarded three points for a win, one point for a draw, and no points for a loss.

## RARE MILESTONE

### F1 ACADEMY PICKS 10-YEAR-OLD ATIQA FOR DRIVER PROGRAM



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Portimao, Feb 28:** 10-year-old karting sensation Atiqa Mir Friday became the first Indian and Asian to be signed by Formula 1 Academy for its driver program, a testament to her rapid growth in the world of motorsport.

F1 Academy, a female only racing series owned by Formula 1, has decided to take Atiqa on board for its Discover Your Drive Program (DYD) after closely tracking her stellar performances on the karting circuit.

The racer from Jammu and Kashmir is only one of three drivers in the mini category (age 8-11) worldwide to be chosen for the DYD program.

# Boris, Soviet chess champ who lost famed Cold War-era match, dies

The televised 1972 match, at the height of the Cold War, became an international sensation and was known as the "Match of the Century"

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, Feb 28:** Boris Spassky, a Soviet-era world chess champion who lost his title to American Bobby Fischer in a legendary 1972 match that became a proxy for Cold War rivalries, died Thursday in Moscow. He was 88.

The death of the one-time chess prodigy was announced by the International Chess Federation, the game's governing body. No cause was given.

Spassky was "one of the greatest players of all time," the group said on the social platform X. He "left an indelible mark on the game."

When Fischer won the international chess crown in



Reykjavik, Iceland, the then-29-year-old chess genius from Brooklyn, New York, brought the US its first world chess title.

Fischer, known to be testy and difficult, died in 2008. After his victory of Spassky, he later forfeited the title by refusing to defend it.



# Liverpool coffers take a hit

The Premier League club reports losses of \$71.8 million, highlighting the cost of missing out on Champions League

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Liverpool, Feb 28:** Liverpool reported pre-tax losses of 57 million pounds (\$71.8 million) in its latest financial accounts Friday.

The losses came despite the Premier League club reporting record commercial revenues of 308 million pounds (\$387.8 million) for the year.

The accounts for the year ending May 31, 2024, underline the importance of Champions League qualification for England's leading clubs, with Liverpool pointing to a sizeable fall in media revenue due to its absence from the competition last season.

A drop of 38 million pounds (\$47.9 million) to 204 million pounds (\$257 million) came after the club missed out on qualification for European club soccer's most prestigious competition.

Matchday revenue was up 22



million pounds (£27.7 million) to 102 million pounds (\$128.4 million) and the record commercial revenues came after a rise of 36 million pounds (\$45.3 million). Overall revenue rose by 20 million pounds (\$25.2 million) to 614 million pounds (\$773 million).

Liverpool said administrative costs "increased significantly," with salaries one of the main causes. Administrative costs rose by 38 million pounds (\$47.85 million) to 600 million pounds (\$755.5 million).

# In a first, El Clasico legends to clash in India

Now, with the arrival of Real Madrid Legends vs Barcelona Legends, India takes centre stage in world football, setting the stage for a new era of international sporting spectacles

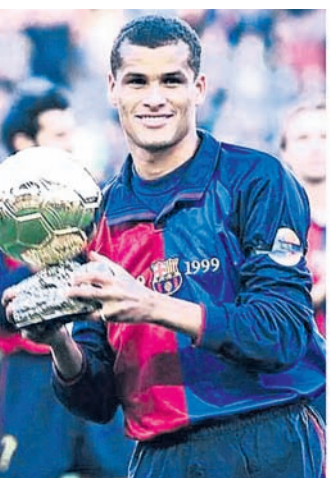
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Feb 28:** One of the greatest rivalries in world football is coming to Indian soil for the first time as the legends of Real Madrid and Barcelona will reignite their iconic battle, 'Legends Faceoff'.

This historic faceoff will take place at the 55,000-capacity DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai April 6. The match kicks off at 7 pm IST. Some of the biggest names in the game, including Luis Figo, Fernando Morientes and Rivaldo, are already confirmed, with more

**Real Madrid vs Barcelona is one of the most iconic sporting spectacles in football history. Now, Indian fans will experience it first-hand. Our vision is to establish India as a key destination for marquee global sporting events, and this match marks a major step towards that goal**

ANIRUDDH PODDAR | COO AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE SPORTS FRONT



**Some of the biggest names in the game, including Luis Figo, Fernando Morientes and Rivaldo, are already confirmed**

from Mohun Bagan, comfortably winning 6-0.

With over 40 million La Liga fans in India, the country has become a powerhouse in the global football ecosystem. From record-breaking screenings to some of the world's largest digital football communities, Indian fans are shaping the future of the sport's viewership like never before.

The battle between Real Madrid and Barcelona is more than just football - it's

a collision of legacies, philosophies, and the relentless pursuit of greatness. Dating back to 1902, this legendary rivalry has been shaped by some of football's most iconic figures, from Di Stefano and Cruyff to Messi and Ronaldo. Now, for the first time ever, Indian fans will witness this historic showdown live.

This rivalry's global influence is so profound that Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself acknowledged the immense following of Real Madrid and Barcelona in India during a public address.

Football lovers can now register exclusively on the District app by Zomato for early access to tickets before they officially go live. The ticket launch date will be announced soon, with sales available on the District app.